AFRICAN PERSPECTIVES TO PEACEBUILDING?: REFLECTIONS ON NORMATIVE PRINCIPLES AND PARADIGMATIC IMPERATIVES IN RESEARCH AND PUBLICATION

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Introduction: Remembering the Ancestors

This lecture explores African perspectives to peacebuilding. Is there an African perspective to peacebuilding different from the leading international perspective(s)? What are the defining characteristics of the African perspective? What normative principles and paradigmatic imperatives should undergird peacebuilding research in the African context, and why? In attempting to answer these important questions, this presentation partly adopts an anecdotal approach, but without compromising the impersonal imperatives of scholarly inquiry and analysis in advancing the frontiers of social knowledge. I will intentionally use this opportunity to reflect on some of the things I have learned in my 30 years of academic engagement in the field of peace, conflict resolution, security, and peacebuilding, which started with two turning point events at the early stage of my professional career.

The first turning point in my career was my holding the SSRC Visiting Scholar Research Fellowship in African Peace and Security in 1992 at the Center for African Studies, University of Florida in Gainesville (February – May 1992). That prestigious research fellowship helped me to attend a few international conferences and seminars in the United States, and also to learn more about further career development opportunities in peace and security studies around the world. In those pre-internet years, information about fully-funded international career development opportunities were scarce for most early-career scholars in Africa.

The second turning point event was in the spring of 1993, with my securing the Austrian government/UNESCO scholarship to attend the International Civilian Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Training program at the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR) in Stadtschlaining, Austria. This culminated in my eventually taking a master's degree course in Peace and Conflict Studies at the European Peace University (EPU) also located in

Stadtschlaining, both between 1993 and 1994. I was privileged enough to be taught by some experts in the field of peace and security studies, including the likes of professors Hakan Wiberg, Dennis Sandole, Anatol Rapoport, Bjørn Møller, Simon Fisher, and the world-renowned Johan Galtung, who is widely regarded as the founder of modern peace studies. Prior to the two professional courses in Austria, my personal and academic perception of the world were heavily shaped by the contending ideological perspectives of the Cold War era, where I was heavily leaning to the left of the ideological spectrum. The Austrian programs, among other experiences, exposed me to diverse new security theories that were emerging after the Cold War, which helped me to interrogate and unlearn some of my fixated ideological views of the world.

Prior to participating in these scholarly programs, I was originally trained in political science, sociology, and anthropology at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, at the undergraduate level, and trained in international relations at the master's degree level. Much later in the early 2000s, I completed a doctorate degree program in Peace and Security Studies at the University of Bradford, UK. Subsequently, I worked with the university as a research fellow in African Peace and Conflict Studies for many years. In between my graduate studies in Austria and Bradford, I worked as a Research Fellow in Development Studies at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka, which offered me the opportunity to apply some of the intellectual knowledge and skills I acquired from Austria in action research and peacebuilding problem-solving interventions at grassroots community level.

Principally, studying and working at the University of Bradford gave me the extraordinary opportunity to partake in designing soft security sector and peace education programs (often in partnership with local stakeholders), which we implemented in a number of war-affected countries and regions of Africa, notably Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and northern Uganda. In a broad sense, I was nurtured in peace and conflict research in Austria. Bradford essentially offered me a significant international opportunity to link academic theory with practice.

We had extensive seminal debates about peacebuilding in Austria in those early years, which centred heavily on the critical interrogation of Boutros Boutros-Ghali's re-conception of peacebuilding in his famous 1992 report to the UN General Assembly and Security Council, An Agenda for Peace, which had then just been recently published. Suffice to say, my understanding and perspectives on peacebuilding have not changed significantly from the intellectual convictions and perspective I developed in Austria.

The Concept and Context of Peacebuilding: The Intellectual and Policy Debate

Galtung's Irenology

The conceptualisation and theories of peace, violence, conflict, and peacebuilding were among the core subjects I learnt from the 1993 and 1994 classes of Johan Galtung, who profoundly re-theorised peace, violence and conflict, and further enunciated the concept of peacebuilding (Galtung, 1964; 1969; 1976).[1] Without delving into Galtung's theories of peace, conflict and violence in detail (as they lie outside the purview of this paper), we can sufficiently conclude that Galtung is of the view that while peace and conflict are closely interrelated, – two sides of the same coin – the meaning and value of peace must go beyond the absence of physical conflict or direct violence as noted experts such as Quincy Wright (1890-1970), Pitirim Sorokin (1889-1968) and Lewis Richardson (1881-1953) had previously defined it. Galtung (1996) believes that peace can be defined qua peace, having its own intrinsic values, and pursued and built within society by peaceful means. The intrinsic values of peace can be found in its ontological nature, characterized best by features and processes like amity, cooperation, harmony, tranquillity, serenity, cultural co-existence, and social integration. Therefore, peace in Galtung's view cannot be derived from the nature of conflict or the absence of it.

Galtung coined the concept of peacebuilding in his 1976 pioneering study titled, "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding." In this essay, Galtung (1976:299) defines peacebuilding as "the process of establishing structures of sustainable peace by eliminating root causes of war and offering alternatives to war in situations where war might occur."[2] By emphasizing the issue of "eliminating root causes of war and offering alternatives to war in situations where war might occur," Galtung was more concerned with using peacebuilding to address the interconnected issues of "structural violence" and "negative peace," which are major discursive pillars in the pioneering scholar's irenology. More fundamentally, Galtung's original conception of peacebuilding as an activity aimed at eradicating or deconstructing the embedded structures of "structural violence" and "negative peace" was intended as a pre-conflict affair "in situations where war might occur." Galtung was much more concerned with using peacebuilding as a force for good in transformative conflict prevention, as opposed to the orthodox paradigm of conflict prevention that is more superficially aimed at averting the outbreak of imminent hostilities essentially from a negative peace perspective.

Negative Peace, from Galtung's (1967) perspective, is the absence of war or organized violence between groups which can inflict human suffering at different levels of society. Galtung formulated the concept of negative peace as a way of characterizing the inadequacies in the dominant conceptions and

theories of peace, which in his view, do not go beyond "ending direct hostilities or organized violence" to address the underlying root-causes of conflict. In his view, neglecting the root causes of conflict would lead to a relapse to, or resurgence of, armed conflict. In contradistinction to negative peace, Galtung (1967:14) coined the concept of positive peace as part of his vision of going beyond the superficial end of violent conflict to advance the cooperation between human societies in working towards the elimination of unjust structures and inequitable relationships, which can exist at various levels: interpersonal, group, national, regional and international. The primary goal of positive peace is the elimination of structural violence, which Galtung (1969) defines as the "systematic constraint on human potential due to economic and political structures, reproduced in unequal power distribution, unequal resource distribution and unequal life chances." In his threefold typology of violence, Galtung further depicted the phenomenon of cultural violence which is often expressed by the invocation of certain obnoxious norms, customs, and traditions in society to justify or legitimise the violation of people's rights and dignity, including brutal harm and death (e.g. infanticide associated with fetish religion). In Galtung's conception, structural violence (which broadly encapsulates cultural violence) is the key underpinning of negative peace in society.

Even though Galtung's original conception of peacebuilding was aimed at dealing with the related issues of structural violence and negative peace prior to conflict escalating to a violent hostility phase, Galtung did foresee a place for peacebuilding in the aftermath of armed conflict as a way of preventing a relapse to armed struggle and violent engagement. The latter was mainly implicit in his analysis, but less prominent in his original conception of peacebuilding.

Boutros-Ghali's Re-conception

The concept and practice of peacebuilding gained global publicity following the UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's promulgation of his policy report to the General Assembly and Security Council, An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping[3] in January 1992. In the highly seminal policy report, Boutros-Ghali (1992:11) was more concerned with "post-conflict peacebuilding," which he defined as "action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid relapse into conflict." Linking peacebuilding to key preceding conflict intervention activities in his analytical matrix, Boutros-Ghali (1992:11, 33) argued that: "Preventive diplomacy seeks to resolve disputes before violence breaks out; peacemaking and peacekeeping are required to halt conflicts and preserve peace once it is attained…post-conflict peacebuilding is to prevent a recurrence of crisis."

Adopting what seems like Galtung's positive peace approach without explicitly using the concept or acknowledging Galtung, Boutros-Ghali argued that in its role as the central instrument for the prevention and resolution of conflicts and the preservation of peace in the world, the aim of the UN must be:

· Identify, at the earliest possible stage, situations that could produce conflict for the sake of trying (through diplomacy) to remove the sources of danger before violence results
· Engage in peacemaking wherever conflict has erupted, to resolve the issues that have led to conflict
· Preserve peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted, and to assist in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers
· Assist in peacebuilding in its differing contexts: rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war
· Address the deepest causes of conflict: economic despair, social injustice and political oppression. It is possible to discern an increasingly common moral perception that spans the world's nations and peoples, and which is finding expression in international laws, many owing their genesis to the work of this Organization (Boutros-Ghali, 1992:7-8).

While Boutros-Ghali redefined peacebuilding as a post-conflict activity, he recognized that the UN must begin "to address the deepest causes of conflict: economic despair, social injustice and political oppression." However, Boutros-Ghali did not place this seemingly "conflict transformation" task within the conceptual or operational purview of "peacebuilding." He posited that the latter, along with other key tasks of the UN, will "demand the concerted attention and effort of individual States, of regional and non-governmental organizations and of all of the United Nations' system, with each of the principal organs functioning in the balance and harmony that the Charter requires" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992:8).[4]

In our Austrian graduate school in the early 1990s, where we extensively dissected Boutros-Ghali's re-conception of peacebuilding, we had several problems with his analysis, namely his appropriation of the concept of peacebuilding without any citational acknowledgement of Johan Galtung, as research tradition demands. If Boutros-Ghali's policy report had been subjected to the rigor of academic peer-review, he could have possibly been compelled by specialist reviewers to duly acknowledge Galtung. Another significant problem we had with Boutros-Ghali's analysis was his restricted conception of peacebuilding as a post-conflict activity, which most of us saw as an underdeveloped application of the theory. Despite its shortcomings, it is remarkable that most international organizations, including the UN Peacebuilding Commission (UNPBC, established in December 2005 and the Organisation for Economic

Co-operation and Development (OECD), tend to adopt a minimalist definition of peacebuilding, i.e., limiting peacebuilding to an essentially post-conflict activity (OECD, 2010; UNPBC, 2023).[5]

In his Supplement to an Agenda for Peace published in 1995,[5] Boutros-Ghali apparently responded to the barrage of criticisms indicting his restriction of peacebuilding to a post-conflict activity by acknowledging that the vast range of measures used in post-conflict peacebuilding "can also support preventive diplomacy" or be "invaluable in preventing conflict," measures such as "demilitarization, the control of small arms, institutional reform, improved police and judicial systems, the monitoring of human rights, electoral reform and social and economic development" (Boutros-Ghali, 1995: para. 47).)[6] The supposedly revisionist proposal of peacebuilding in practice by Boutros-Ghali has not been significantly acknowledged in the discourses of peacebuilding as much as his original 1992 definition.

A More Balanced Conceptualisation of Peacebuilding

A more balanced and acceptable definition of peacebuilding will be one that integrates the conflict prevention approach of Johan Galtung that aims at dealing with the related issues of structural violence and negative peace, and on the other hand, integrate Boutros-Ghali's post-conflict priorities of [re]building institutions and infrastructures of sustainable peace. In this context, conflict prevention is used as a pre-violence activity in a conflict-prone situation or environment. In between the pre-violence and post-conflict phases, any deterioration in the relationship between the conflict parties resulting in escalation of hostilities will require mixed methods of conflict resolution, depending on an accurate context-specific assessment of the situation and the marshalling of the required technical and financial resources to address the situation. Some of the measures of conflict resolutions recognised in the international system, and by academic and policy practitioners, include shuttle diplomacy and peace-making, negotiation and third-party mediation, peace enforcement; ceasefire agreement, verification and monitoring; conflict control and conflict settlement, peace support operation and peacekeeping, conflict stabilisation and transformation (Ginty & Wanis-St.-John, 2022; Zartman, 2022; Lederach, 2022).[7] Typically, conflict resolution may or may not involve the use of force or a military enforcement action. Peacebuilding, as a matter of necessity, is a non-violent activity.

Based on the foregoing exposition, it suffices to define peacebuilding as a "non-violent project designed to promote capacity-enhancing investments in different aspects of people's lives complemented by creating and strengthening the necessary conditions, institutions and infrastructures for sustainable peace in societies prone to violent conflicts or grappling with the effects of

past conflicts." Fundamentally, peacebuilding must be people-centred and, for meaningful impact, conceived as a long-term project. Peacebuilding intervention projects could be designed and implemented at various levels of society, such as the grassroots community level, sub-national provincial level, national level, as well as trans-national and international levels.

"Peacebuilding activities that lack a long-term perspective differ somewhat from quick-impact projects and cannot bring lasting peace" (Olonisakin, Ebo & Kifle, 2020:72).[8] It is pertinent to mention that most discussions about peacebuilding are focused on the state level because being a long-term engagement, peacebuilding comes with the requirements of local driving actors and national ownership, capacity and responsibility (Khadiagala, 2021:200).[9] Where the institutions and functional capacity of the state have been massively destroyed by armed conflicts, as is often the case in many war-affected developing countries, the peacebuilding project would necessitate wide-ranging activities aimed at rebuilding the institutional and governance capacities of the state. Some of these post-conflict peacebuilding activities include the return of refugees and displaced persons; the provision of humanitarian assistance; the design and supervision of constitutional, judicial and electoral reforms; economic rehabilitation and reconstruction, governance reform, the verification of respect for human rights; security sector reform, development re-engineering and public service delivery (Boutros-Ghali, 1995:21).[10]

War-affected States in the Developing World and Liberal Peace-building

One of the cardinal features of peacebuilding in war-affected developing countries is its internationalisation tendency, a phenomenon that has resulted in what is popularly known as "liberal peacebuilding" or what scholars like David Chandler (2022:3)[11] have alternatively describes as "international peacebuilding." The principal aim of international peacebuilding is to build [sustainable] peace in fragile conflict-prone and war-affected states based on liberal institutional frameworks of constitutionalism, free market reforms, multi-party democracy, the rule of law and an active civil society (Chandler, 2022:3).[12] Among the key justifications of liberal peacebuilding is the idea that an open society marked by democracy and free-market economy enables people to resolve their differences peacefully, to accomplish their aspirations and make governments accountable and responsive to people's basic needs (Tanabe, 2019:24).[13] Working in concert with institutions of global governance such as the UN, EU, and international financial institutions such as the World Bank and International-al Monetary Fund (IMF), the West has successfully foisted or imposed liberal peacebuilding on many developing countries emerging from war in Africa and beyond, including countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC, Central African Republic, Mali, Somalia, Libya, and Iraq. In Afghanistan, the

liberal peacebuilding project was eviscerated and reversed by the Islamist Taliban regime after 20 years of American occupation of their country.

The transplantation of liberal peacebuilding to war-affected developing countries by the West and leading institutions of global governance has attracted scathing criticisms in academic literature. Among other things, liberal peacebuilding has been criticised for inadequate appreciation of how local conditions and sociocultural realities may contradict the engrafted peacebuilding project, inadequate consultation with local actors who are often arm-twisted to accept the peacebuilding package, and the imposition of Western values upon post-conflict zones as a means to maintain the prevailing hierarchical global structures reflecting Western dominance (Tanabe, 2019:26).[14] Tieku (2021:67)[15] has argued that liberal peacebuilding is neither a value neutral exercise nor a purely technical project, but rather it is a political enterprise designed to change post-war African societies to reflect the image and interests of peacebuilders, a process imbued with Western civilising intentions and modernisation activities. Furthermore, the liberal peacebuilding project in Africa has been criticised for promoting a top-down, one-size-fits-all approach to conflict resolution and peacebuilding, which "often ignores local contexts, informal actors, and initiatives, which if brought on board could lead to longer-term, sustainable, context-specific programs that produce better outcomes" (Aubyn, 2021:21).[16]

Perhaps the most insidious but often overlooked problem with liberal peacebuilding is in its jaundiced problematisation of the state in non-Western societies where the state is perceived as weak, corrupt, unaccountable, repressive and not-fit-for-purpose. "The state has increasingly been cast as a problem" and therefore cannot be trusted to be part of the solutions moving forward (Chandler, 2022:72).[17] The war-torn states in Africa and the non-Western world are imagined from the structural pragmatism standpoint of Charles Tilly (1985) as merely government-run "protection rackets" based on the repression and exploitation of their citizens in the interest of criminal or self-interested elites.

This pathological characterisation of the war-torn or conflict-affected states in the non-Western world, from the proponents' standpoint, can only be challenged through the liberal peacebuilding agenda. It is for this reason that the liberal peacebuilding agenda is predesigned as a state-building project – but the nature of the state it seeks to build is a defective one, with utterly devalued sovereignty. In summarising the depiction of critical theory literature on the nature of the state immanent on the liberal peacebuilding process, Chandler (2022:73)[18] argues that the humanitarian and human rights interventions of the international community, as early as the 1990s, has resulted in the "sucking out" of the fragile state's capacity as core state functions are taken over by UN agencies, international institutions and international NGOs, undermining the

legitimacy and authority of these non-Western states. Clearly, even if there are some truths in the way liberal peacebuilding characterises the deeply belea-guered and war-affected non-Western state, the remedy it proposes is defec-tive. One is inclined to agree with the observation reported by Aubyn (2021:23) that "liberal peacebuilding is better in ending wars than in fixing democracies and building durable peace."[19]

Are there African Perspectives to Peacebuilding?

From the preceding sections of this paper, two important points are notewor-thy about peacebuilding. The first is that the whole idea of peacebuilding as championed by the international community since the end of the Cold War – thanks to Boutros-Ghali's secretaryship of the UN – was conceived for the purpose of helping to rebuild developing countries of the global South affected and devastated by armed conflicts. The need for this post-conflict reconstruct-ed strategy coincided with the emerging "the new war paradigm" at the end of the Cold War which, among other things, meant that intra-state conflict and civil wars had become a greater threat to regional and international peace and security than the inter-state conflicts of the preceding dispensation (Kaldor, 1999).[20] Over the past three decades of the international peacebuilding cam-paign, the focus has largely been on the global South, and Africa has had a preponderant share of it. Eight of the eleven developing countries prioritised in the peacebuilding commitments of the UNPBC in 2022 - 2023 are in Sub-Sa-haran Africa (SSA) - Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Chad, Colombia, The Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Timor Leste (UNPBC, 2023). Similarly, all the six past and prospec-tive commitments of the UNPBC to support regional peacebuilding activities in 2022 – 2023 are in the global South, four of them in SSA - Central Africa, Great Lakes region, Gulf of Guinea, Lake Chad Basin, Sahel, and the Pacific Islands (UNPBC, 2023).

The second noteworthy point is that even though peacebuilding was suppos-edly conceived to serve the purpose of the war-affected fragile states of the global South, the dominant philosophical perspective, values and interests that shape and drive it are Western. In the African context, where most of the inter-national peacebuilding activities have taken place in the past three decades, the dominance of the Western liberal peacebuilding model has literally meant that "peacebuilding is what the West does to Africa or in Africa."

This begs the question: are there African perspectives to peacebuilding? To answer this question in the singular form: There is an emerging African per-spective to peacebuilding. The emerging African perspective is an amalgam of thoughts that have crystallised from various schools of thought over a long period of historical and political struggles, with the aim of achieving collective

freedom from external subjugation and fostering peace and security on the continent — all for the benefit of the African people. But most significantly, the emerging African perspective has developed out of a more conscious response by African researchers to the universalising tendency of liberal peacebuilding theory and practices on the African continent, especially in the post-Cold War dispensation. The various works we have done and still do under the intellectual umbrella of the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) represent a strong contribution to the emerging African perspective on peacebuilding. To strengthen this perspective, we need to be more deliberate in our conceptualisation and promotion of the core values and interests that drive it or that ought to drive it.

To further elucidate the emerging African peacebuilding perspective, I wish to adopt a more holistic or integrative approach that tends to view peacebuilding in its complex interconnections with the broad issues of security, development, and governance. This holistic perspective is important because what we call liberal peacebuilding, which is the dominant paradigm of peacebuilding in Africa, does not deal with peacebuilding in isolation but rather represents a holistic package that extends to the specific nature of political institutions and governance, economic reconstruction and development, the model of security sector reforms, issues of sociocultural neoliberalism, and so forth. The liberal peacebuilding model is a total package about state reformation, institutionism, and governance direction.

I wish to highlight three important studies and one practice model that, in my view, stand out in their articulation of the emerging African peacebuilding perspective.

Three Schools of Thought on "African Solutions to African Problems"

The first is the paper by Ndubuisi C. Ani titled "Three Schools of Thought on African Solutions to African Problems" published in Journal of Black Studies (2019).[21] Ani's paper is not strictly focused on peacebuilding, but it explores the rich intellectual foundation of African Solutions to African Problems (AfSol) that dates back to the pan-Africanist movement and decolonization struggles of the 20th century, the emergence of the post-colonial state, the scourge of neo-colonialism, and what some of the founding fathers of modern Africa (like Kwame Nkrumah) saw as the unfinished project of African liberation. Despite all the internal socio-demographic differences shared by Africans and the profound intellectual contentions about AfSol, both of which Ani's paper brilliantly address, it is important to that African peacebuilding is part of the discursive inquiry of African scholars and policy intellectuals who are dissatisfied with the prevailing status quo, and are determined to seek constructive African

solutions to the conflict and security challenges on the African continent. "In Africa," Ani argues, "the shared geographical experiences, challenges, values, interests, and concerns have engendered the prevailing idea of Africa's collective response to common challenges as indicated by the maxim "African solutions to African problems" (Ani, 2018:139).[22] African policy scholars may disagree on what they perceive as "the content of African solutions" – and such disagreement is both healthy and obtainable elsewhere – but we are unlikely to have strong disagreement on the philosophical premise that we do not necessarily need Western or Eastern solutions to African problems, but African solutions. This does not imply that our African solutions may not have elements of what we may consider useful from the West, East, Middle East, and other parts of the world.

Further on establishing the philosophical premise of an African peacebuilding perspective, Ani (2019:146) [23] makes a pertinent point that fundamentally speaks to who we are as Africans by extrapolating or highlighting relevant literature about how "the African system accords greater value to social networks in the comprehension, analysis, and resolution of conflicts, as opposed to individualistic approaches that privilege the interests and views of individual elites." In buttressing his argument that despite the onslaught of colonial conquest of African indigenous institutions and values, there persists a dominant leaning of African conflict resolution and peacebuilding to the preservation of the community and holistic principles, Ani makes the following submission: "Indeed, concepts such as 'Kparakpor' (Yoruba-Nigeria), 'Igwebuike' (Igbo-Nigeria), 'Ubuntu' (Zulu-South Africa), 'Harambee' (Swahili-Kenya), and 'Ujamaa' (Swahili-Tanzania)— which simply refer to the notion of group solidarity and power - "I am because we are"— have become trending terminologies that denote the value of communal relationships in African systems" (Ani, 2019:146).[24] From Ani's paper, the recognition of the African community-centredness as a worthy philosophical value in peacebuilding research and policy interventions comes out quite strongly.

An Overview of Recent Trends in African Scholarly Writing on Peacebuilding

The second publication is the chapter by Festus K. Aubyn, titled "An Overview of Recent Trends in African Scholarly Writing on Peacebuilding," published in the edited volume by Ismail Rashid and Amy Niang (2021).[25] Aubyn's paper addresses three important issues. Firstly, it presents a comprehensive literature review of the key trends, themes, and debates in African peacebuilding. Secondly, the paper discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the peacebuilding literature produced by African scholars, including their contributions to the global peacebuilding scholarship. Thirdly, the paper makes a set of recommendations aimed at addressing some of the gaps and weaknesses identified in

African scholarly writings on peacebuilding.

The paper traces the evolution of peace research globally and in the African context, tracing the former to the Cold War security threats in the ideologically polarised global system, and the latter to the proliferation of armed conflicts in Africa both during and after the Cold War. As a field of study, peacebuilding scholarship is largely post-Cold War, having been greatly influenced by the landmark report of the UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali's report of 1992, An Agenda for Peace.[26] Aubyn pays tribute to the leading African research institutions, policy think tanks, and scholarly journals that helped to pioneer peace and peacebuilding research on the continent, including CODESRIA in Dakar-Senegal, ACCORD in Durban-South Africa, ISS in Pretoria-South Africa, and so forth, highlighting their various periodicals and discussing some of the seminal works they have published over the years.

Regarding the substantive issue of distinctive contributions of African scholars to the global peacebuilding debate, Aubyn (2021:28)[27] argues that "African scholars have not offered anything qualitatively different from their counterparts elsewhere in the world," even though their works have apparently made "incremental contributions to the formulation of national, regional, and global policies and practices of peacebuilding." He attributes the apparent lack of pathbreaking creativity in the African peacebuilding literature to the fact that most of the African experts are trained in Western scholarship and depend on Western literature for research. But quite remarkably, the author highlights "the significant level of convergence that exists between African research and global discourses on a number of peacebuilding issues," as follows:

First, there is some level of convergence about certain key principles of building peace, such as national and local ownership. National ownership is seen as a vital element of the success and sustainability of peacebuilding activities, as it ensures that processes are nationally driven...one of the important issues advocated by a number of African researchers and institutions, like the AU, is local ownership of peacebuilding processes. Thankfully, among the overarching recommendations in the report of the advisory group of experts for the 2015 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture was the need to foster "inclusive national ownership."

Second, another connection between African peacebuilding research and global discourses is the strong emphasis placed on gender, women, peace, and security. Over the past decade, African researchers, policymakers, multilateral organizations, and external partners have emphasized the goal of gender equality and women's empowerment in Africa to address key challenges such as poverty, inequality, violence against women and girls, and the under-representation of women in politics, leadership, and management level positions in the public and private sectors.

Third, criticism of current liberal peacebuilding approaches that emphasize political liberalization (democracy building) and economic liberalization (market economics) as the surest foundations for peace is another similarity between African peacebuilding research and global discourses (Aubyn, 2021:28-29). [28]

Aubyn (2021:30) [29] argues that one of the key weaknesses of African peacebuilding literature is that "despite criticizing Western peacebuilding policy prescriptions, scholarship, and practices, African researchers have not been able to clearly articulate strong countervailing normative frameworks." There persists "a paucity of conceptual and theoretical research on African approaches to peacebuilding that can inform regional and international peacebuilding agendas." Aubyn's research findings underscore the need for greater philosophical and conceptual creativity in researching peacebuilding from an African perspective.

The Economics of Peacebuilding

The third publication is the chapter by Vera Songwe, titled "The Economics of Peacebuilding: International Organizations for Dealing with Victor and Vanquished," published in a co-edited volume by Terence McNamee and Monde Muyangwa (2021).[30] As an intellectual perspective, the economics of peacebuilding is concerned with how to mobilize resources for a carefully planned economic reconstruction and development after violent conflicts, justifiably because, as proponents argue, most conflicts are caused by economic-related grievances (Collier, 2008, 2009; Songwe, 2021).[31] Some of the economic grievances believed to be at the root of armed conflicts in developing regions include issues of economic deprivation and exclusion, development deficits and marginalisation, exploitation, high level of inflation, extreme poverty, and youth unemployment.

Contrary to the conventional sequence practised today, Songwe (2021:34)[32] argues that economic development must be central to peacebuilding, asserting that "economic development has to be part of peacebuilding from Day One." This implies that conflict settlement and peace agreements must have a comprehensive economic development agenda, and a funding and implementation plan as was the case in Europe at the end of World War II. Conventional practice is to focus on economic development when peace is fully restored, which could take a couple of years after the peace agreement, an approach that Songwe (2021:34)[33] faults as being "clearly contrary to all successful experiences."

Songwe uses the classic example of post-World War II reconstruction of Europe to demonstrate a successful economics-centred peacebuilding experience. To rebuild war-torn Europe, US prioritized mutually beneficial trade with Europe as part of the recovery and development plan, the European Recovery

Program [ERP, popularly known as the Marshall Plan, named after the then US Secretary of State George C. Marshall, who vigorously advanced the plan (Songwe, 2021; Pogue, 2023).[34] Under the US-sponsored ERP, 16 European countries received $14 billion of soft reconstruction and development loans between 1948 – 1951 (today's equivalent of $217 billion) (Songwe, 2021:38).[35] The post-war period witnessed an unprecedented speed of recovery from the inflicted devastations due to the role of the Marshall Plan in stimulating pro-duction and employment in Europe, as well as the role of the newly formed Bretton Woods institutions (World Bank & IMF) in eliminating foreign exchange restrictions and stabilising international trade (WESS, 2017:26).[36]

Songwe (2021:34)[37] argues that the challenge of responding to more internal conflicts in the case of Africa, also requires an alternative response that is underpinned by economic imperatives rather than by an established sequence of political negotiations. But unfortunately, in her view, the "institutional archi-tectures" of the UN and Bretton Woods institutions today do not allow them to play rightful roles in peacebuilding in Africa. In particular, the Bretton Woods Institutions often condition their assistance on the willingness of each African country to undertake necessary structural and monetarist reforms, notably a reduction in the public sector, devaluation of the national currency, deregula-tion of the foreign trade sector, and more reliance on markets for the allocation of resources (Akinola, 2021).[38]

In her policy recommendations, Songwe (2021:44)[39] advocates inter alia that for contemporary conflict intervention and post-conflict peacebuilding in Afri-ca to be effective, there is the need for an Economic Reconstruction Program (ERP) asserting that the US-funded Marshall Plan approach is an imperfect but important model. Like in the example of post-war Europe, committed invest-ment partners and institutions are essential for African post-war recovery and peacebuilding. She submits that post-war Cote d'Ivoire was able to make rapid economic recovery progress because France decided to underwrite an important part of the peacebuilding plan, albeit the author did not provide the necessary facts and figures to substantiate her claim that France's bilateral investment aided post-war recovery in Cote d'Ivoire.

Songwe doubtlessly makes an important contribution, not least through her recognition that peacebuilding is resource intensive and that in planning post-conflict peacebuilding in Africa (the major concern of her paper), serious thoughts and consideration must be given to the funding aspects - the cost involved, funding source(s), the economic and development activities to be funded, accountability measures, and the terms of funding.

Equitable systems of international collaboration

Decolonizing knowledge production in Africa necessitates a paradigm shift.

Some thoughts and consideration must be given to the funding aspects - the cost involved, funding source(s), the economic and development activities to be funded, accountability measures, and the terms of funding.

The Borno Model of Peacebuilding: Integrating International Discourses with Local Realism

As an African scholar that partly studied in the West in the early post-Cold War era (some 30 years ago), one of the intriguing experiences from my Austrian graduate class, which was predominated by Western [Caucasian] students, perspectives and case studies, was that the few of us from Africa always strived to inject African perspectives in all class discussions. We frequently raised questions about the relevance of mainstream approaches, such as liberal peacebuilding to the African context. Interestingly, Johan Galtung would always respond to questions about post-conflict peacebuilding in Africa from a holistic perspective, too often integrating international discourses of peacebuilding with local realism. In doing so, he would constructively blend academic theories with practice. Galtung would also always win our admiration by his adroit coalescing of the diverse themes that cut across his global expertise to elucidate what should be the key priorities for post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding in Africa, most notably: meeting basic human needs through poverty alleviation programs, human capital development, justice and human rights protection, sustainable development, gender equality, environmental security, context-relevant democratic governance, regional security and equitable international cooperation. Galtung's approach privileges the constructive blending of international discourses with local realism to eliminate structural violence and establish structures of positive peace capable of meeting people's human development needs.

The Borno State Model of Peacebuilding in the north-east Nigeria (known as "the Borno Model" for short), implemented by the state government under the leadership of Governor Babagana U. Zulum since 2020, is an impressive people-centred approach to eliminate structures of Islamist insurgency and build sustainable peace by constructively advancing the security, governance, and peacebuilding nexus. Borno is one of the three major states in North-east Nigeria extremely devastated by the Islamist Boko Haram insurgency since the groups' radicalisation and the spread of its insurgency from 2009 onwards. Among other devastating effects, the Boko Haram insurgency has caused more than 38,000 deaths, left 3.5 million people food insecure in the most conflict-affected north-eastern states of Borno, Adamawa and Yobe, and has also left more than 2 million people displaced, the majority of them in Borno state (Delgado, 2022; Sasu, 2023).[40]

The Borno Model of Peacebuilding is a multi-sectoral and inter-agency driven peacebuilding program, comprehensively spelt out in the state government's 25 Year Development framework and 10 Year Strategic Transformation Plan pro-

mulgated in June 2020. The long-term vision of the government's peacebuilding approach is to achieve "a secure, competitive, agri-business and commercial hub anchored on prosperous people and sustainable development" (BSG, 2020).[41] The five drivers of the strategic pillars for achieving this goal are: human capital development, leadership in agriculture, healthy citizenry, sustainable environment, and regional trade hub, while the four enabling transformative pillars are: reconstruct, rehabilitate, and resettle; purposeful infrastructure, accountable governance, and peace and security.

Among the key areas where the government's peacebuilding program has made a remarkable impact on people's lives include:

1. The Disarmament, Demobilization, Deradicalisation, Rehabilitation, Reconciliation and Reintegration (DDDRRR) program, designed to provide a "root and branch" approach to ending the Boko Haram insurgency.
2. Closing of most IDP camps in the state, resettling of IDPs, and returning refugees from neighbouring countries in their ancestral communities.
3. Distribution of food palliatives and other humanitarian relief items to tens of thousands of people in rural, peri-urban, and urban settlements to offset the harsh economic circumstances faced by the people.
4. Promoting of rural development and sustainable livelihood through citizens' empowerment to engage in sustainable livelihoods in the agricultural value chain, cottage industry, and small businesses.
5. Distribution of hundreds of patrol vehicles and motorcycles to the Nigerian military and volunteers from the 'Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF)' and local hunters involved with securing communities across Borno State.
6. Establishment of five Vocational Training Institutes and rehabilitation of 19 small Technical Skills Centres across the state, including those owned by some "community-based organisations" (CBOs). The training center consists of dozens of workshops equipped with modern training facilities and designed to train thousands of young people per annum in areas such as tailoring and fashion design, hairdressing and cosmetology, welding, plumbing and pipefitting, carpentry, and joinery, building technology, electrical works, solar panel and installation, automobile and mechatronics, agricultural technology, knitting and crocheting, aluminium fabrication, and ICT training facilities.
7. Partnership with the federal government's security forces, local civil defence forces, and non-state security providers to ensure protection of grassroots communities. The state government provides funding support and logistical facilities to all security services in the state, and also ensures accountability.
8. Inauguration of an ambitious tree planting campaign aimed at planting 10 million trees by 2024 across the 27 local government areas of the state to mitigate desertification and other environmental problems.

Fostering meaningful partnerships

To mobilise the necessary financial and material resources to implement this multi-billion dollar long-term peacebuilding program, the Borno state government works in partnership with the Nigerian federal government and its relevant agencies, UN agencies (UNDP, IOM, UNICEF, UNHCR and UNODC), international NGOs, international development agencies, and financial institutions, regional bodies, local civil societies, and voluntary organisations. Some of the major external financiers of the peacebuilding include UNDP and other UN agencies, European Union (EU), African Development Bank (AfDB), and the Islamic Development Bank (World Bank, 2021; ABC News 13/10/2023).[42] The UNDP Administrator and Vice Chair of the UN Sustainable Development Group, Achim Steiner, while receiving the Borno State governor Babagana Zulum and his delegation in his office in Geneva in June 2023 remarked that the UN was considering the adoption of the Borno State's successful humanitarian intervention model as a template to guide UN humanitarian crisis management programs (Ardo, 18/06/2023).[43]

Evidently, the Borno Model of Peacebuilding has recorded impressive achievements since its inception, but that is mainly due to the dogged leadership of the state governor, Babagana Zulum. The governors before him and those in the other two states devastated by Boko Haram have not shown similar leadership strength and capability. This raises the challenge of sustainability because under Nigerian democratic arrangement, the governor can only serve for a maximum two-term tenure of eight years. To achieve sustainable peacebuilding in the Boko Haram insurgency-affected area requires a comprehensive long-term plan over the entire Nigerian North-east region, and possibly the larger Lake Chad Basin. But without doubt, in the Borno model, one could see a far-sighted blend of international discourses and local realism.

The Normative Principles and Paradigmatic Imperatives that Should Guide African Peacebuilding Research: An Applied Social Policy Perspective

In social research, normative principles are prescriptions of moral codes intended to help to minimize risks and harm in the research process and outcomes, while at the same time maximising benefits for society (UKRI, 2023).[44] The term paradigm was popularised in the human sciences by Thomas Kuhn in his famous book, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, published in 1962. However, it was only in the postscript to the 1969 edition of the book that Kuhn clarified his concept of paradigm, giving it two core meanings, which I do not intend to explore in this paper.[45] A paradigm can be generally defined as "a system of beliefs, ideas, values, or principles that form the basis for a way of thinking about the world;" it is "an analytic lens, a way of viewing the world and a framework from which to understand the human experience" (Mauldin,

2020; Proofed, 2023).[46] There are different philosophical paradigms in social research, although two seem to be dominant, positivism and post-positivism, and each subsumes a cluster of explanatory theories. Furthermore, paradigms, in a large sense, subsume normative principles in research.

Fundamentally, peacebuilding research is applied to social policy research geared towards producing empirically valid and reputable knowledge that is potentially useful to policy makers and conflict intervention practitioners, all for the purpose of solving real problems that affect people in their societal systems. Some of the "normative principles and paradigmatic imperatives" that should guide African peacebuilding research and publications could be easily extrapolated from the three studies and one practice model discussed in the preceding section, but they also go beyond the four references.

Let me first summarize the principles and paradigmatic imperatives of African peacebuilding derivable from the four reviewed contributions as follows:

1. From the paper by Ndubuisi C. Ani: The community spirit or a community-centric approach – This concerns the principle of prioritising the public good and the interests of the community over and above the self-serving interests of the political elites. The neoliberal economic and political governance system that Africa has embraced tend to prioritise the individualization of things, which is a contradiction to the African spirit of community-centredness, a philosophical worldview that has already been dealt a devastating blow by the thraldom of coloniality and the misguided tendencies of post-coloniality.

2. From the paper by Festus K. Aubyn: A creative problem-solving approach rooted in African realism – This is about the need for deeper philosophical creativity in research rooted in African realism, further necessitating a systematic and sustained decolonisation of peacebuilding research on the continent.

3. From the paper by Vera Songwe: A thoughtful funding framework captured in an Economic Reconstruction Program (ERP) – This concerns the need to seriously consider the funding aspects of peacebuilding in our research and publications - the cost involved, or the cost of similar projects completed elsewhere, funding source(s), the economic and development activities to be funded, accountability measures, and the terms of funding. A fundamental requirement of the funding aspect is enhancing the capacity for generating African funding (e.g. through public & private initiatives, as well as the African Diaspora), which is essential for strengthening African ownership of the peacebuilding project.

4. From "The Borno Model of Peacebuilding:" An integrative blend of international discourses and local realism with strong commitment to advancing the security, governance, and peacebuilding nexus. – Significantly, this must be steered by local leadership and committed to meeting the human development needs of the mass populations.

Beyond these four foregoing principles, Gilbert Khadiagala (2021:204-210),[47] in evaluating "The African Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development (PCRD)" policy of the African Union (AU) identifies three underlying principles proposed by PCRD, namely:

1. African leadership – strong political will and determination by African stakeholders to lead the planning and execution of the peacebuilding process and mobilise African resources to support and sustain it.
2. National and local ownership - creative efforts by national leaders in building governance systems that are inclusive, participatory, and restore trust across communities.
3. Capacity-building for sustainability – deliberate and structured investment to build the local capacity to prevent the outbreak of conflicts, manage violent conflicts and prevent the recurrence of armed conflicts, building and strengthening the multi-sectoral infrastructures for peace.

Adopted in July 2006, PCRD is the AU's peacebuilding initiative formulated to complement the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) in promoting peace and sustainable development in countries emerging from war, albeit both mechanisms have struggled with limited resources, expertise, and capacity, especially the former (AU, 2006; Khadiagala, 2021).[48]

Strengthening Triangulation

So much has been written about the need for triangulation as one of the paradigmatic imperatives in qualitative social research, including in researching peacebuilding in Africa (Rashid & Niang, 2021; Omeje, 2021a).[49] Triangulation is largely understood as the mechanism of adopting mixed methods, multiple investigators, and transdisciplinary perspectives in research to help improve the credibility of one's research processes and findings. In mainstream literature, four types of triangulation are often expounded, namely:

(1) data triangulation, which includes matters such as periods of time, space and people; (2) investigator triangulation, which includes the use of several researchers in a study; (3) theory triangulation, which encourages several theoretical schemes to enable interpretation of a phenomenon and (4) methodological triangulation, which promotes the use of several data collection methods, such as interviews and observations (Noble and Heale, 2019:67).[50]

All these methods of triangulation are important, but the emphasis of their application in peacebuilding research do not seem to have yielded much of the desired results in terms of the quality of research produced by scholars and their applied policy dimensions. In most African peacebuilding research and publications, the data presentation and analysis are often weak while the policy recommendations are superficial, which is partly why Aubyn (2021:28)[51]

argues that "African scholars have not offered anything qualitatively different or pathbreaking in peacebuilding research." There are two weak or perfunctory links in most researchers' application of the principle of triangulation to qualitative data and policy recommendations with regard to the field of peacebuilding, in my view. The first is "the poverty of historical context and import in data presentation and analysis," while the second is "inadequate grasp of the political economy of peacebuilding in policy recommendations." The following section is devoted to exploring the two shortcomings, and highlighting how they could be redressed.

Towards Strengthening Triangulation in African Peacebuilding Research

(a) "The Poverty of Historical Context and Import" in Data Presentation and Analysis

Regarding data presentation and analysis in African peacebuilding research, the perfunctory link that needs to be overcome is what I have called "the poverty of historical context and import."[52] I cautiously use this phraseology in a manner completely different from Karl Popper's "poverty of historicism" in which the famous Austrian philosophy rebuked mainstream historicists for wrongly believing that genuine social science must be a kind of "theoretical history" in which the aim is to uncover laws of historical development that explain and predict the course of history (Gorton, n.d.).[53] Popper argues that this version of historicism, among other mainstream versions found in the social sciences, is inclined towards utopianism. In poverty of historicism, Karl Popper repudiates the use of historicism in a classical positivist or structuralist sense in social research because of his rationalist predilection that scientific knowledge is provisional – i.e. the best we can do at the moment – and that there is no unique methodology specific to science; rather, science, like virtually every other organic activity, consists largely of problem-solving oriented inquiry (Thornton, 2022; Guy-Evans, 2023).[54]

I venture to use "the poverty of historical context and import" in a post-structuralist sense to simply imply that most of our research and publications in African peacebuilding are not anchored on a thorough investigation and analysis of the underlying historical context and dynamics, with a view to learning from the past to enrichen our understanding of the present, and designing how we can shape or reshape the future. History is highly invaluable because it is from history that we learn and know who we are individually and as a people, as well as what has happened to us in the past to produce the problems we are trying to solve in the present. It is from history that we learn what has shaped our various societies and people, including the social contradictions and conflicts that have characterised their internal and external relations. adaptive

flicts that have characterised their internal and external relations.

It is, for instance, the poverty of historical knowledge that has made so many African countries literally "copy and paste" the British style of Parliamentary democracy as a political system. When it doesn't work, they jettison it and then "copy and paste" the American presidential model, which may still prove disastrous.[55] I am not by any means implying that Western democratic models cannot work anywhere outside the West. Of course, they have worked in a number of non-Western countries, but not without adapting parts of the Western model to suit the country's historical experiences, national priorities and the dynamics of national elite consensus (e.g. Japan, Singapore, India, and Botswana). But by and large, the British parliamentary system works well in the United Kingdom because it is a product of the British's internal political struggles for individual and collective freedom from monarchical despotism. The American presidential system works well in America, despite all its challenges, because it evolved historically as a product of the internal struggles of the various ethno-racial communities comprised in America for freedom. Externally, the Caucasian Americans of European descent waged a struggle for freedom from European imperial overlords, while internally the different subaltern communities in America have historically waged formidable struggles against ethnic cleansing, slavery, institutional racism, and collective degradation and injustice.

In researching peacebuilding in Africa, it is imperative that we look back historically to research and understand who we are, including the socio-political forces that have shaped our contemporary existence and identities. Fundamentally, Africans are a post-colonial people, and our various states are post-colonial states. From an institutionalist perspective, the post-colonial states inherited top-down colonial institutions designed by the colonial powers to control the populations and protect the state against the people instead of protecting the people (Dia, 1996; Omeje, 2021b).[56]

From a neopatrimonial perspective, the post-colonial state institutions are historically artificial, top-down, anti-people, transactional and therefore too often bypassed by the state officials and citizens, who prefer to use informal societal networks [ethnic, religious, and clannish networks] to address many formal issues (Bach, 2011).[57] In several instances in the African context, the society has strong governance institutions while the state has weak transactional institutions. In many ways, the post-colonial state institutions dysfunction due to overwhelming contestations over transactional and distributive issues (not necessarily economic production and governance issues), leading to armed conflicts, military coups, and instability. It is remarkable to note that the two African states that were not formally colonized (Ethiopia and Liberia) inadvertently developed political structures and institutional behaviours similar

to other post-colonial states, thereby making their politics to become overly post-colonial.

In researching peacebuilding in Africa, it is important that we thoroughly investigate and understand how coloniality and post-coloniality have impacted our various African states, sub-national identities, and grassroots communities. This phenomenon is at the root of so many conflicts we have been trying to solve and build peace on the continent. In some African countries like Kenya, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, many academic experts and politicians have come to the realisation that in order to resolve recurrent political conflicts and build peace, there is the need to revisit and address the grave issues of historical injustice. In the case of Kenya and Zimbabwe, these are issues from the co-lonial and post-colonial past. The policy interventions made by the defunct Robert Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe to redress the issues of historical injustice in land ownership and administration in the country were a total failure that ended up aggravating the problem, further provoking unjustified international sanctions from the West. The issues of historical injustice in the Zimbabwe-an land economy are still festering. In Ethiopia, which had no colonial legacy since the country was not really colonized, the issues of historical injustice have to do with the legacies of imperial rule, and the contentious political and economic governance legacies of the defunct Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) regime, including the subsequent efforts that have been made to address them, which have greatly polarised the various ethnic nationalities and regional states in the country. In my view, the recognition of the potent and divisive issues of historical injustice that need to be addressed in any of the African postcolonial states is a step in the right direction. How these problems can be constructively addressed or redressed are debateable issues in conflict and peacebuilding research. Unfortunately, there are many states in Africa that tend to sweep the legacy of violent conflicts and historical injustice in their colonial and post-colonial histories under the carpet, making them flounder into "a conflict trap," "a poverty trap" or in "a no war no peace" quagmire. Hence, investigating our colonial and post-colonial histories, dealing with legacies of conflict and injustice inherent in them, and also learning from those experiences, are important for sustainable conflict resolution and peace-building.

Furthermore, there are also some African countries that did make significant political and economic progress during the first one or two decades of attaining political independence before the onset of the primary commodity crisis and political instability that swept through the continent in the 1980s and 1990s – a devastation from which most countries are yet to make a full recovery (cf. Omeje, 2021b; Chelwa, 2023).[58] Part of the intellectual enterprise of embracing "historical contexts and imports" as researchers is to meaningfully understand and reflect on the specific post-independence development history of the coun-

try concerned to see what could be learned from it— and possibly reinvented it in a better fashion in order to move the country forward (Chelwa, 2023).[59]

Liberal peacebuilding, which has emerged as the conventional model of state-building, post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding in Africa is a continuation of what I have in another publication called "the crises of post-coloniality" (Omeje, 2015).[60] The liberal peace project is part of what coloniality and post-coloniality have done and continue to do to Africa and both need to be profoundly dissected and interrogated.

The Inadequate Grasp of the Political Economy of Peacebuilding in Policy Recommendations

Regarding policy recommendations, the perfunctory link that seems to inundate African peacebuilding research is the lack of understanding of what Vera Songwe (2021)[61] calls "the economics of peacebuilding." I will prefer to call it "the political economy of peacebuilding." With considerable caution, both concepts can be used interchangeably. According to Songwe (2021), the economics of peacebuilding is about marshalling out resources for a carefully planned economic reconstruction and development after violent conflicts because most conflicts are caused by economic-related grievances - e.g. issues of exclusion, marginalisation, development deficits, exploitation, high level of inflation, hardship, and youth unemployment, etc. Peacebuilding is resource-intensive and one of the greatest challenges of post-conflict reconstruction in the aftermath of violent conflicts in Africa is the question of "where will the money come from?" Who will fund the peacebuilding project, and under what terms and conditions? Hence, when we are making policy recommendations about peacebuilding at any level of state and society in Africa it is important to always consider the cost and funding implications. Even peacebuilding at grassroots levels does require some measure of resources and funding. How will the brilliant policy recommendations you have crafted be funded?

The political economy of peacebuilding, which I have said is my preferred terminology, helps us to analytically explore and understand the complex interrelationships between the economics of peacebuilding and the mosaic of vested political interests (local and external) in the peacebuilding project. How do we ensure as researchers that the various competing interests and agendas in the peacebuilding project do not simply gravitate towards principally addressing the interests of the local political elites, and the international or external stakeholders to the disadvantage of the African people and grassroots populations? In practice, peacebuilding is largely interest-driven, and it is important that any constructive and viable peacebuilding project in Africa is not structured in such a way that the masses are disadvantaged.

From the standpoint of critical theory, there is no neutral theory concerning human affairs. Furthermore, to be relevant, social theory must be problem-solving oriented, but historicised from "a world order perspective" to uncover the purposes that the problem-solving theories and knowledge within such an order serve to uphold (Jones, 1999; Cox, 1981, 2001; Malik, 2021).[62] Social theories and their immanent policies, states and inter-state institutions invariably embody and promote diverse interests. What ultimately matters about social theory is whose interests it tends to maximise by the specific problems it prioritises to solve. Neo-Gramscian left-leaning proponents of Critical Theory like Robert Cox and Timothy Sinclair (1996; Sinclair, 2016)[63] are of the view that the most beneficial social theories are those that prioritise the needs and problems of the underprivileged in society and the international system – i.e. the underprivileged states in the comity of states and the underprivileged individuals, groups, and communities within the domestic state systems. If social theories and policies are not neutral but are always meant for someone and for some purpose, Cox (1981)[64] reasons that "organic intellectuals" representing the interests of the subalterns have a crucial role in articulating and fostering a transformational agenda in society through their research and publications.

Concluding Remarks

This presentation has tried to explore the emerging African perspective to peacebuilding, its defining characteristics, and the key normative principles and paradigmatic imperatives that will guide scholars engaged in peacebuilding research. As stakeholders in African peacebuilding, we all have a responsibility to make quality contributions through research, publications, and where possible, policy interventions, with the ultimate object of African transformation.

It is important to emphasis the point that societal conflicts, whether "violent or latent" are "multi-dimensional social phenomena" (International Alert, 2004:1).[65] To adequately understand, analyse, and solve the various conflicts that affect different parts of the African continent, and ultimately build sustainable peace, there is the need to adopt a multi-faceted holistic approach. Our approach to both conflict resolution and peacebuilding must of necessity be "conflict-sensitive." A conflict-sensitive approach is one that understands the peculiar context in which the researcher, interlocutor or intervener operates, the interaction between the proposed interventions and the operational context and acting upon this well-grounded understanding to aim at measures that will maximize positive impacts and mitigate negative outcomes (International Alert, 2004; UNESCO, 2023).[66]

Finally, to strengthen the emerging African peacebuilding perspective, there is

the need for viable social policy think tanks and university departments or schools to grow more peacebuilding-related journals on the continent. The test for institutional viability in founding and growing a new journal would be sufficient financial resources and incubation capacity – including adequate and effective ICT infrastructure, organisational efficiency and predictability, and a critical core team of committed multidisciplinary staff with technical competence, professional reputation, and ethical discipline. Rigorous technical planning and capacity-building workshops involving local stakeholders, external partners, and accomplished experts in academic journal management, indexing, publishing, and dissemination are required before launching such journals. Ultimately, to enhance the journal's credibility, the core management team driving the journal, such as the editorial staff should not all come from the host institution and must be committed to operate within clearly defined ethical guidelines.

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