Political instability in Africa
Where the problem lies and alternative perspectives

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Introduction

The International Day of Peace which was established by a U.N. resolution in 1982, and is marked every year on September 21, is a global event whose activities are significant in highlighting the worldwide efforts towards conflict resolution and peace building. This day is however more relevant to the continent of Africa where most conflicts have taken place, with some running into decades, with limited solutions. Therefore seen from the perspective of political instability and as a "drifting continent", many questions come up, which demand more than just simple answers, or repeated mythical notions about Africa's problems, as purely inherent in the African way of doing things.

That there are problems in Africa for several decades even after many countries in the continent went through transitions from colonialism to independence, is not a deniable fact. However the African situation is not as bleak as portrayed in the media or by Africanists. In terms of political instability in Africa, it is also undeniable that the continent has had some difficult moments during the last fifty years or so. But what is still unexplained in the many analyses that have been looking at events in Africa is the fact that in almost all the cases of political instability in Africa, it is evident that the major problem is leadership. In this context, Africa has seen its freedom heroes turn into dictators, while plunder of natural resources, politics of exclusion and deprivation to tilt the balance of power continues to dominate the public sphere. Moreover, these problems have been pointed out and fought gallantly by ordinary Africans who have over the years, expressed their discontent with regimes imposed upon them, through the complicity of the international community.

To-date, almost every country in Africa is still haunted by historical injustices and oppressive structures that were bequeathed to the post colonial leadership. This is an aspect which informs the weak institutions of the state, flawed legislative systems and constant struggles for political power to the detriment of the well being of many nations, which could have moved on a path of development as part of modern societies. While the international community, whose geo-security and resource interests seem to benefit from the status quo in Africa, has not been pro- the establishment of functioning systems in Africa, instead, their involvement, continue to undermine Africa's stability through the militarization of conflicts for accumulative purposes.

Political instability in Africa may owe much of its cause to internal factors, however the interpenetration of internal and external factors especially geo-political and economic interests of the international community constantly play a significant role in undermining the very processes and institutions that are expected to nurture democracy and to instil a sense of stability for societal development in Africa. In combination to such factors as unequal development, poverty, disease, violence and the manipulative tendencies of the local elite, political and economic stability in Africa is constantly under threat. This threat is however not emanating from within the continent but from external interests whose thirst for African resources, continue to shape the dynamics in areas related to governance. Resources in Africa if well managed are capable of providing for its entire population, hence the potentials for a more stable environment, however, it is well documented that stolen wealth from Africa often end up in banks abroad (Africa Focus Bulletin, 2006), be it money stolen by the political elite (the case of Mobutu of Zaire, Abacha of Nigeria, and Moi of Kenya, just to mention a few or the recent Kibaki regime Anglo-leasing scandals in Kenya), they still end up in banks in the western capitals.

Also problematic in the African context are the existing institutions of the state and how they function. Despite the existence of institutional frameworks that are supposed to guide processes and delivery on essential services, the continued weakening of these institutions, through political mechanisation and predatory nature of African elites, working in cohorts with external interests also contributes further to the undermining of stability in Africa. These tendencies exacerbate resources wars, ethnic rivalry, and more recently, the emergence of electoral violence as a characteristic of multi-party era elections in African. Although many events and occurrences might give the impression that African continent is still "drifting", there are also positive things taking place in the continent and "the drift" needs to be analysed from several perspectives that capture both the positive and negative developments and what informs the direction of these developments. There are pull and push factors, which keep shaping the internal dynamics in Africa. However, African people have not remained static, even though there are some retrogressive tendencies. The majority, whose perspectives are hardly captured in western media or academia, have made great leaps, in a number of areas, including their level of political awareness and popular participation in the political processes. The leadership dilemma and many other governance related malpractices are being challenged more and more from within, as people begin to understand the broader implications of bad politics and the consequences of governance structures that are autocratic and oppressive.

In order to address the theme of peace and the relevance of peace day to Africa, there is need to reflect on and critically analyse the view that Africa is "a continent on drift". In the foregoing, I argue in the paper that the view that Africa is a continent on drift is a notion, which fails to recognise the positive developments in Africa, but also the complex mix of factors at local, national, regional and international levels that impact upon governance in Africa. This view also fails to recognise the major problem which underpins all the problems in Africa, that is, the leadership problem both in Africa and in the West. Furthermore the notion that Africa is a continent on drift is a view point that seems to confine Africa to a static position where it operates in a vacuum and is indulgently involved in its own self-destructive tendencies. Because the subject is too broad to receive a fair treatise in this paper, focus will be given to a few political developments in Africa, in order to highlight examples of the complex mix of both internal and external factors in the overall political and economic developments in Africa. These are points that can also help explain the direction of the "drift" and what its major causes are. In order to do so, the paper will briefly look at the factors underpinning political stability in Africa, while using, the issue of leadership, Africa's economy and political instability, political violence and emerging power sharing arrangements, as points of reference. The paper also highlights some perspectives on conflict resolution and peace building initiatives, the relevance of the Diaspora input and on the issue of peace building, migration and development

Africa's leadership problem and political instability

The African political instability and other related problems is basically a consequence of its leadership problem. At domestic level, African governments are run in ways that have been regarded as far from the modern western state systems,(Osei Tutu, 2004) upon which they are modelled. However, it should be noted that leadership per see is not a new concept to African traditions or cultural practices. The forms and context could be different, but systems of governance in many cultures had characteristics that can be found in modern systems of governance.[2] But in the context of adoption of the modern western state system, many African communities abandoned their ways[3] during the colonial period, and where they embraced the western models, with the ushering in of independence", the implementation was distorted and entailed a lot of arm twisting at the height of the transition from colonialism to independence. The colonialist did not leave the continent willingly. The post-colonial Governments "sought national unity through the centralization of political and economic power, employing vestigial colonial laws and institutions to stifle and suppress pluralism" (Annan, 2008)

For example, the constitutions that were bequeathed to the newly independent states were the products of protracted negotiations in western capitals, whose outcomes were in most cases favourable to the departing colonial powers. It can therefore be argued that from the very start, leadership problem crept into the new states, as the new African leadership became the neo-colonialists, while the liberators turned into oppressors of their own people. Instead we have an African leadership which is not in Fanons, words "engaged in production, nor in invention, nor building, nor labour; it is completely canalized into activities of the intermediary type. Its innermost vocation seems to be to keep in the running and be part of the racket" (Fanon, 1967).

These domestic factors have contributed significantly to the shape of political and economic transitions, in Africa. As argued by O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986), "Domestic factors play a predominant role in the transition". These domestic factors often range from "corrupt rulers, repression, a colonial legacy, "swollen" states, and insufficient political structures and a destruction of democracy from above (Diamond, Linz, and Lipset 1989; Diamond and Plattner 1999). However, the international context often plays an important role in both the transition in general and the presence of violence in particular (Lupo, 2004).

Linz and Stepan (1996) on the other hand stress the importance of "international influences", which includes foreign policies and the diffusion effect which oftentimes adversely impact upon stability of African countries. However, positive developments have seen the reverse of some of these negative conditions in terms of people involvement to bring change. For this reason many countries in Africa have seen an increased level of political awareness in their people as citizens are demanding accountability in their governments. Participatory democracy is taking root,[4] as country to country move from single party dictatorship to pluralism, while military take-overs are getting less and less. These are signs that Africa is not static, but progressively adjusting to universal standards as far as governance is concerned. The pace is however slow and sometimes, experiencing setbacks, especially by the few remaining big men in Africa. However it is also important to caution about these developments, since global events keep changing, hence creating new challenges for Africa. In this regard, efforts towards fast tracking certain political

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[2] The Buganda Kingdom, Mwene Mutapa, Shona-speaking kingdom of Karanga people of the 1400s to 1600s in what is now Zimbabwe and Mozambique among others.

[3] Cabral argues that colonialism by "denying to the dominated people their own historical process, necessarily denies their cultural process." (Cabral, 1980:142)

[4] See for example the large turn out during the 2007 elections in Kenya, the resilience of Zimbabwean voters in the face of political brutality by the Mugabe regime in 2008, the peaceful transition in South Africa, Ghana, Tanzania, Botswana and Namibia, the latest peaceful elections in Angola, just to mention a few

processes, establishment of institutional and legislative frameworks that can with stand global and domestic pressures, needs to be speeded up. The political stability as a result of these framework and redistributive systems is therefore essential to Africa's socio-economic development.

Africa's economy and political instability

Despite the bleak predictions, most African economies are doing well even though some country cases are still experiencing difficult times in terms of political stability, economic development and challenges posed by poverty and diseases, trade volumes and foreign investments have increased over time. However the political instability in Africa, which also underpins the economic development often, has strong links to internal and external special interests time and again. Africa's resource in this case has never been its blessing, but a curse. There is no explanation for the under development of the continent while it sits on massive natural resources. For decades, western companies involved in extraction in Africa have never declined in numbers nor have their profits plummeted. Rodney (1981: 244) asserts that "previous African development was blunted, halved and turned back" by colonialism without offering anything of compensatory value. Moreover these profits have never trickled down to the very basic level in Africa where they are used to improve the living conditions of populations whose resources are being exploited. If that was the case, we could have not had the Ogoni plight or the recent revolt in the Niger Delta, or witnessed the recent atrocities in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The existing economic conditions based on western policy prescriptions also play a significant role in the deprivation of African populations, of the essential services, which are key to development. While it can be argued that it is not the responsibility of the "investors" to improve the living conditions of the people in the regions where they make profits, notwithstanding the calls for or cosmetic expression of corporate responsibility policies of multinational companies, the integrated nature of global economy and security concerns, dictates that such factors cannot be ignored. The economic policies in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs)[5] packages entailed sweeping economic and social changes designed to siphon the indebted country's resources and productive capacity into debt payments and to enhance international (TNCs) competition (Hong, 2000:14). Examples included "massive deregulation, privatisation, currency devaluation, social spending cuts, lower corporate taxes, export driven strategies (i.e. export of agricultural products and natural resources) and removal of foreign investment restrictions (Clarke 1995:301). The consequence of these economic conditions in Africa has obviously had serious ramifications for essential services such as health, education and infrastructure. Cuts in public expenditure under SAPs led to a drastic decline in control and prevention measures against diseases such as cholera, yellow fever and malaria that were once under control while new diseases remain a big challenge. The absence of these fundamental services implies that generations and generations go through deprivation which impacts upon their potential to be productive members of their own societies. In the context of SAPs under which budgets for essential services like education were cut, how else would one expect the countries that implemented these austerity measures to overcome the problem of illiteracy? In this regard, the problem might look African, but the cause is western based financial institutions whose interference through conditionality and economic policy prescriptions, contribute to the instability in Africa.

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[5] See Thandika Mkandawire and Charles C. Soludo (eds) 2003

As noted elsewhere, the accumulative and exploitative tendencies, "along with demographic and multifarious other pressures, greatly increased government indebtedness and reinforced a spiral of decline in the delivery of public services and of the economy generally" (Southall, 1998:102). In countries where SAPs were implemented, there were massive lay outs and retrenchment in the civil service, in this case, many people lost their source of livelihood, hence increased levels of poverty and struggles for scarce state resources, which subsequently led to internal conflicts as the appropriation of state resources take an ethnic or nepotism dimension. Privatisation of public enterprises and downsizing of the civil services have "engendered the spread of corruption as multinationals supported by Western governments and their agencies continue to engage in corruption on a vast scale in North and South alike" (Hawley, 2000). These conditions therefore "reinforced the systematisation of corruption and graft that is common in Africa, as ruling politicians use such the opportunities of incumbency to loot the public domain" (Rok, 1997).
 Such bad governance practices and loopholes for plunder of public funds, demands an extensive regulatory system of contract rules and an effective legal supervision of their observation. As long as these mechanism are being flouted in Africa, the markets even though touted as the solution to economic development problems, has still shown its failures due to misuse of power in relationships. These included corruption, rent seeking behaviour and the existence of externalities and related problems of free riding.

The market outcome of the allocation of resources especially in Africa is socially unacceptable; they cause massive deprivation and inequalities, marginalisation and in some cases, trigger inter-ethnic conflicts, as various groups struggle for scarce state resources. Again, this is more common in countries less endowed with natural resources while in those cases with natural resources, regional conflagrations emerge as different parts of the country compete or lay claim to such resources. Furthermore, the consequence of external pressure combined with internal malgovernance problems in Africa are enormous and have had serious implications for political stability. For instance in Kenya, "the presidential centralisation of power and the intensification of kleptocracy were backed by an increasing resort by the regime to greater repression and intimidation" (Southall, 1998:102). These kind of hostile political environments have consequently contributed to the exodus of many highly qualified persons, a further contributing factors the problem of brain drain (Adepoju, 2008), but also the exodus of their next of kin, or general refugee migration as part of populations seeking safety in foreign lands including Europe and North America.

Political violence and political instability

During the onset of multi-party democracy in the so called third wave of democratisation, (Huntington, 1991), most regimes in Africa did not fully embrace the changes that accompanied the transition. Many autocratic regimes, for instance accepted multi-party democracy out of western donor pressure and agitation for change by local civil society groups (in most cases funded by the international community. As a consequence, the constitutional frameworks and state institutions have been tampered with, in order to create an uneven play field against the opposition. Some of these processes have seen sporadic violence during electioneering periods, leading to political instability. However the degree of violence and the manner in which they are perpetrated vary from country to country as the recent elections in Uganda, Nigeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe can show. The reluctance of some incumbent regimes in Africa has been due to the fear of being held accountable for past misdeeds. In this context, a combination of external and internal factors namely; "the impact of global economy driven by the logic of the market, sectarian and particularistic tendencies, ethnic, religious, linguistics or cultural differences, or political and economic insecurities" (Mohamoud, 2006:15), continue to pay a significant role in

shaping the political processes in Africa and how the incumbent regimes respond to demands for change

With many countries holding their third or fourth multi-party elections, internal power struggles have taken a violent dimension, thereby threatening the very existence of many countries. Since the onset of multi-party democracy in most African countries electoral processes have been accompanied by political violence[6], as part of the democratisation process (Lupo, 2004; Huntington, 1991). Most violence in such cases are often state sponsored, to the advantage of the incumbent, while various groups that struggle for state power also deploy hired violence, in the form of informal groups, militias and gangs. In the context of all the violence, it is the ordinary people who loose out in terms of lives and property. The tragedy is that the political conflict is not about alternative political programmes that could address the major problems such as poverty, disease and illiteracy, but merely a fight over who has access to the state resources.

The African elites, who are bent on hanging to power at all cost and for the purpose of primitive accumulation, have perfected the art of political expediency even when these acts threaten the stability of their countries. But in all these cases, there is always a hidden hand of external interests, who would like to retain the status quo or where they support political change, and then their choice of preference is always contradictory to the wish to the people. For instance while many countries took a tough stand on Moi regime in 1980s and early 1990s, Britain did not take a strong stand against Moi's regime, due to their interests in Kenya. Britain had an investment worth $1billion in Kenya (Murunga, 2004:198).In this case the safety of their investments and profits was enough justification to accept the Moi regime after flawed elections in 1992 and 1997 (Rok 1997, Murunga, 2004, Oyugi et. al 2004). Similar cases can be found elsewhere in the continent. In this regard, questions that still beg answers in relation to the political instability in Africa are to what extent is the international community willing to see a stable Africa? From whose perspective do we talk of Africa's stability? And when do we talk of stability? Is the status quo the stability that Africa needs or what Africa need are solutions to its leadership and governance problems that is durable, especially the type and functioning of the institutions of the state that can withstand domestic and internal pressures, in less homogeneous societies? Solutions that fail to address these concerns will tend to contribute to the very instability that is constantly talked about.

Examples of external interests playing a significant role in either contributing to the positive developments in Africa or exacerbating the already worse situation can be seen in the electoral process. As the most advocated process that is supposed to usher in a democratic culture, holding free and fair elections in a competitive manner has been touted as crucial step in that direction, however, the connivance of western interests seem to contradict these principles time and again. For instance many external observes have been deployed during general elections in many African countries in the recent past, and despite open knowledge of widespread violation of electoral laws, massive rigging and use of undemocratic means to tilt the electoral outcomes, "stability" of the concerned countries have been suggested as good reason enough to let the incumbent continue. This was the case in Nigeria in 2007, Kenya in 1992, 1997, and 2008. The super nations, who often emphasises democracy as the way forward for Africa, are often the same forces that provide legitimacy to flawed processes. Recent example was the congratulatory message by the US government to Kibaki after the 2007 elections in Kenya, just to turn round when the EU and other countries took a different position based on the facts on the ground and the verdict of the monitors. These contradictions often end up undermining the efforts and the resolve of many African who endure harsh political conditions, to express their democratic rights through the vote. Worse still, is the fact that after such flawed outcomes, negotiations through

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[6] For an elaborate definition of political violence, see Lindsey Lupo (2004) and Ted Robert Gurr (1980)

threats and arm twisting have been the main tools used to coerce wayward African leaders to toe the line. These kind of measures are rarely long lasting and their outcomes, often suspend the very transitional processes that majority of African have sacrificed their lives for, either in detention, prisons, through tear gas or police bullets.

Power-sharing in the context of electoral theft

What has been offered or gaining ground as the middle way, out of the political stalemate with regards to electoral thieving in Africa is the now famous phrase of power sharing (Ongáyo 2008). This view brings to question, the role of the international community, in the political processes in Africa and their potential for enhancing stability or exacerbating instability. While the preservation of some countries affected by violence has motivated the international community to act quickly to stop these countries from sliding into an all out civil war the measures adopted, especially the recent trend of prescribing a power-sharing arrangement between a winning opposition candidate and an incumbent electoral thieving president as was the case in Kenya and now in Zimbabwe, fails to address the fundamental issues around political stability in Africa. Secondly, the international community response has been incoherent and their language, quite contradictory. The situation in Darfur has led to millions of deaths; the same applies to Congo and a number of hot spots in Africa. What was therefore so special about Kenya that makes it that different from Darfur or Congo? What about Zimbabwe? While the speedy response in the case of Kenya helped slow down the country from its destructive path, the consequence of the adopted measures, continue to exacerbate the drift of African continent to the brink of political and economic collapse.

In this context, it is worth asking to whose benefit is this drift? Why for almost five decades, should this trend continue unhindered? The political changes taking place in Africa are often within the context of external interference. Hardly, do we see a home grown solution to Africa's problems, a question whose answer lies in the African leadership problem. Even if power sharing as a formula is the most expedient response in post-electoral violence situations, for instance, these deals also fall short of addressing the very factors that underpinned the post-election violence, namely, the decades of political and economic marginalisation (Ongáyo, 2008). What is observed is a continuation of the old order, where dictators moulded by the West re-emerge at the expense of stability and basic fundamental rights. Instead, we see previous "good Boys" turning out to be the most authoritarian and brutal towards their one people as has been the case in Zimbabwe and Uganda. These tendencies and the nature of endeavours to cling to power in Africa, the brutality, with which African leaders impose their authority on their people, continue to drive many people into exile. As a result of the conflicts, bad governance and poor economic conditions (Mohamoud, 2005:), large numbers flee their countries, a factor that is currently shaping the migration debate, especially in the western countries, but also in Africa with regards to brain drain.

Africa's instability, migration and development

The issue of political instability in Africa is also directly related to the migration and development question. The life threatening political and economic conditions in Africa contribute enormously to the massive exodus of both highly qualified and lowly educated populations in Africa. These include such factors as civil conflicts, bad governance and poor economic conditions (Mohamoud, 2005:20). Many people are on the move as asylum seekers or refuges in a number of countries. They are escaping from civil wars, and oppressive regimes working in cohort with external special interests, especially in countries endowed with natural resources. The end result is migration, both forced and wilful and the final destination is the north. However response at

policy level seems to address the more superficial aspects of migration. Instead of addressing the roots cause of less beneficial forms of migration for instance, forced migration and so on, countries in the north develop responses to manage migration (Adepoju 2008:51) in ways that are counterproductive. For this reason migration is seen as a problem to the recipient countries, due to insensitive understanding, which leads to inappropriate responses.

The sending countries on the other hand struggle to address the challenges posed by brain drain (Mohamoud, 2005). The problem of 'brain drain' has affected Africa more severely than any other region. The problem is more serious for the institutions of higher education and research in Africa as they face serious shortages of qualified academics and researchers. The UN Economic Commission for Africa has estimated that between 1960 and 1975 an estimated 27,000 highly qualified Africans left the continent for the West (ECA, 2000). According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), there are 100,000 skilled Africans living and working in the EU and North America (IOM, 2003) This number is increasing every year (World Bank, 2002) and therefore brain drain in this context is "impeding potential economic growth, and remains a handicap for sustainable development in many countries in Africa" (Mohamoud, 2005: 8).

However the main question is how can this process be managed to the benefit of both the sending and receiving countries? Prohibition and strict rules have increased more than ever, but the problems still persist with the process taking a more dangerous dimension, through illegal means to reach migration destinations. While responses have focussed mainly on formal initiatives through the state agencies, the African Diaspora as a strategic actor, has been missing in the process, hence a lost opportunity for an actor, that is not only crucial for economic development in Africa, but also technological transfer, (brain gain), peace building and a mutually benefiting management of migration potentials to the development of both the sending and receiving countries (Goldin, 2006:111). This is because those migrating are highly educated and skilled professionals, even though there are those with low education. But going by new the migration policies in such destinations as the UK, and the US, where skilled immigrants have a chance to get work permits, those without higher education are obviously left out from such policy considerations. As a consequence majority of the low educated immigrants end up in the "illegal" category.

Despite the negative connotation around migration, recent studies show some positive trends. Adepoju for instance observes that in sub-Saharan Africa, brain drain is gradually being transformed into brain circulation, especially to Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa". His argument is that as political and economic crises continue to affect traditional countries of migration, highly skilled professionals have found politically transformed places like the post-apartheid South Africa and the booming economy of Botswana as attractive alternatives to Europe, North America and the Gulf States (Adepoju, 2006). The low educated however continue experience difficulties, which is worse in Europe and North America. In this context solution to immigration both desired and unwanted, requires a multifaceted approach which addresses the core issues that underpin migration. For instance those considered less educated, are in many cases victims of African govern tendency to marginalize section of their populations politically and economically, but also resource wars, instigated and sustained by foreign actors. Furthermore, the economic policies prescribed by the international financial institutions, and other donor conditions, which deny many people the chance to go to school, are the major causes of the plight of this category of immigrants. If they had education and skills enough, they would obviously fill the manpower shortages that are experience with lower category jobs, rarely taken by natives of the receiving countries.

In the foregoing, discussing sound migration policies and interventions require more than just singling out simple cases, but more important is that these cases being considered unworthy for work permit for the reason of low education are victims of inequality and economic policies pursued by western governments in cohort with African elites. For this reason, the buck still stop with leadership in Africa and at international level where the realization of the interconnectedness of countries and peoples, and how the decisions and policies that are made by the most powerful countries and global institutions, greatly impact upon the most vulnerable in Africa.

Conflict resolution and peace building initiatives

In terms of conflicts in Africa, many hot spots are recovering, and making big leaps towards peaceful coexistence. Even though there are some pockets of unresolved cases like Somalia, Darfur, Congo and Northern Uganda among others, there are encouraging examples such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Rwanda, and Southern Sudan. In this context Africa is undergoing a complex process of multiple transformations. Solutions to some of these cases have been found from within, coupled with external support. For this reason, it can be argued that part solution to the conflict situation and political instability in Africa lies in the West. More specifically is for the Western governments to address the issue of arms manufacture and sale of arms, weapons to Africa and to address the conduct of their multinational involved in extractive activities at the expense of African lives. On the same breath, we cannot talk of health problems in Africa when countries in the West have not seen the sense and subsequent implications of dumping hazardous technologies and products in Africa.

Calls for African countries to solve such problems on their own ignore the reality on the ground and at the international level where special interests often determine the course of events in the periphery. Just as much as the problem is complex and multifaceted, their solution also requires a similar approach which encompasses, a greater commitment from the leadership in the North. More crucial for international community attentions are the impact of their trade deals with Africa and the distribution of the accruing benefits of foreign economic involvement in the continent. Absence of any form of redistribution does not change the tense situations or lull condition of previous conflicts. As result of unfavourable economic policies from the North, Africa continues to experience social dislocation and unrest. As pointed out by Gerd and Verkoren (2005:1) one of the crucial determinants of weather shooting and looting will start again especially in context that have gone through violent experiences, depend on the degree of economic and social development, and the fair distribution of its fruits to different groups of the population. According to Vanhanen (1999), a lack of equal distribution would be detrimental to the democratization process as the struggle for scarce resources and hegemony of one group would ensue. In the absence of such guarantees, people become vulnerable and feel insecure in their immediate surroundings and with constant power struggles, range from genocide to torture and other in humane treatment by rogue regimes, large sections of African populations have become refugees within the continent and abroad.

Also crucial to the peace building and political stability in Africa is the potential role of the Africans in the Diaspora[7]. But as argued by Mohamoud (2006b: 169) "the contribution of African Diaspora to the promotion of peace in their countries of origin has been largely overlooked, yet it is a critical input for peace building". While much of media attention and recent academic analyses (Burman, 2002) focus more on remittances (Orozco, 2007; Ratha, 2007; Ratha and Shaw, 2007; Sander and Maimbo, 2003; Sorensen, 2004; IFAD, 2007) the potentials of those

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[7] For more elaborate discussion of the concept, see Safran, W. 1999. 'Comparing diasporas: a review essay,' *Diaspora* 8 (3)

behind these remittances to contribute to the resolution of past and ongoing conflicts have received little attention. Diaspora groups have constant links to their homelands and many have a lot of influence as a result of the remittances, but also as members of those societies. Their input if channelled through formal processes and institutional formworks could lead to breakthroughs in areas where western prescribed conflict resolutions have failed or just leading to temporary ceasefire.

Conclusion

Most solutions that have been prescribed in recent times seem to view Africa through the prism of the continents natural resources and the competition to reap the benefit of their exploitation or as an object of humanitarian or military concerns. However what needs recognition is the fact that Africa is beginning to see the emergence of new social actors, different form of social and political mobilisation. In the process, the political and economic play field is also changing. Long term solutions to Africa instability problems will basically be determined by a new type of leadership both within Africa and in the western countries, where policy issues whose repercussions heavily impact upon development in Africa are made. It has been observed that "migration cannot be managed effectively through unilateral action", therefore "bilateral relations should be forged among the various countries in regions and sub-regions, as well as multilaterally through ECOWAS, SADC, EAC, the EU, the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) group of countries" (Adepoju, 2008:50). However such measures even though urgently needed, they might not entail a complete overhaul of the status quo over night, but a gradual process beginning with a change of attitude and approach. Moreover, most important, is to secure the "political will" and the "will of the capital" in the west. This is based on the argument that it is in the best interests of the Western countries if Africa goes through a transformation from its current state of instability, to one in which the human security is guaranteed.

Although much expectation is placed on African leadership as a solution to its perennial problems, Africa's partners in the West need to realise that marriage between Africa and Europe, whether through default or reinforced further by an integrated global economy and human security concerns, demand a deeper understanding of African interest, which in essence require supporting Africa to lead itself. Key to this process is strengthening Africa's institutions that promote democracy and accountability with an input from the local perspectives. Prescriptions which sideline local views have proved to be unsuccessful. The continued ignorance of African views on how they wish to solve their problems, inform the missteps that continue to bog the political and economic policies, often touted as good for Africa.

In addition, the Diaspora potentials for Africa's stability are factors that urgently require attention. In terms of peace building[8] potentials of the Diaspora, the family linkages and other forms of contact can play a significant role in securing the much needed allegiances to reduce conflagrations in the hot spots in Africa. While it has been argued by some authors that Diaspora groups are risk factors because (i) They have resources to support conflict parties; (ii) They do not suffer from direct consequences of conflict; and (iii) Not having adequate information on the real situation in the field, hence they fail to see the actual consequences and complexity of the conflict (Collier, 2000), diasporas have a potential to contribute to peace in a more sustainable way. The potential lies in the heterogeneous nature of Diaspora and the important humanitarian function of remittances, civic oriented activities, political involvement, advocacy and lobbying (Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom, 2006). The Diaspora can also play an important role during

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[8] See Orjuela, C. 2006. Distant Warriors, Distant Peace Workers? Multiple Diaspora Roles in Sri Lanka's Violent Conflict. Background paper to the Expert Forum on 'Capacity Building for Peace and Development: Roles of Diaspora' in Toronto, Canada, 19-20 October 2006, p. 3.

the post-conflict reconstruction (Mohamoud, 2006a:174), through their skills gained over time in the Diaspora. Dilapidated infrastructure and rundown institutions in such contexts require new insights for their rehabilitation, and due to the links with the countries of origin, their connection places them in a unique position to bring the much needed expertise with hindsight of the contextual knowledge.

In terms of development in Africa, a most valuable offshore asset of Africans is the human, intellectual and social capital (for example policy and managerial expertise) possessed by the Diaspora (ADPC, 2008 also see Oucho, 1990). Such potentials can be of value to the ongoing development initiatives and peace building processes in Africa but also to the benefit of destination countries. However it is the fiscal policies prescribed for Africa from the west that is likely to reverse these trends, if coupled with domestic and international visionary leadership, political will and its influence on capital. As noted by Adepoju (2008: 52) "External factors are to blame for the negative impact of government policies that prompt the exodus of skilled professionals". He further argues that these stringent policies restrict provision for health and education in poor countries that encourage the brain drain. But as can be observed in all problematic areas in Africa, leadership still plays a fundamental role and as a determinant factor on which direction the continent goes; it is the key determinant of the continent's drift in relation to external factors, which includes forces and special interests as well as the possibilities of effecting change in Africa for political and economic stability.

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