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DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE MAKING IN AFRICA: NEGOTIATING PEACE IN A NEO-LIBERAL WORLD

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between the neo-liberal ideology and practices which dominate current development policy in Africa and official negotiation of civil war in Africa. The purpose is to establish the implications this relationship poses to forging alternative self-reliant approaches to peace making. Given Africa’s dependent status in the world economy which is driven largely by the dominant neo-liberal agenda, how does this agenda influence the diplomatic negotiation of civil war in Africa? What implications does this have for alternative ways of peace making in Africa? I argue that negotiation from a position of economic dependence may limit or enhance the forging of a self-reliant approach to peace making. On the one hand, the increasing donor fatigue, and the reluctance of the international community to directly intervene in African civil wars has opened up possibilities for African solutions to African problems. However, Africa’s dependence on donor aid and its use as an instrument of peace conditionality privileges a neo-liberal and remedial approach to peace making rather than a self-reliant and transformative agenda. I draw on the notion of mediation as part of politics and the use of aid as peace incentives to make this argument using the Burundi Peace Negotiations (1996-2000) as my empirical case. The aim is to understand what kind of society a neo-liberal peace envisions for Africa, how viable this project is for the African communities affected by war, and whether feasible alternatives exist for resolving conflict in the continent.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War and collapse of the USSR, spurred a number of significant political and economic changes internationally and domestically with both adverse and favorable effects. Among the latter effects is a change in political climate in favor of democratic and participatory politics, and the value of human rights and humanitarian principles as valid premises for intervention in crises. An unfavourable consequence is the way the shift in international policy on developing countries aggravated existing crises in African societies. The combination of the neo-liberal set of economic policies referred to as the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS), Western donor pressure on authoritarian regimes to democratize, and the reluctance of these very regimes to do so, elicited response that varied from public protest to outbreaks of new conflicts (Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, Rwanda) and worsening of older conflicts originating from the Cold War politics era (e.g. Angola, Mozambique).

The Cold War ideologies that had earlier informed response to internal conflicts, that is stamping them out militarily with the assistance of either one of the Super powers (US, USSR) were abandoned for policies dominated by humanitarian imperatives. This saw an increase in the use of the official negotiations, humanitarian interventions by the international community (UN and International NGOs), and unofficial conflict resolution approaches to address the civil wars and their effects.

This paper explores the relationship between the neo-liberal economic agenda and official negotiations of civil wars in Africa. The purpose is to establish the implications this relationship poses to forging alternative self-reliant approaches to peace making. Official negotiations are defined here as a phase in the national peace process, in which conflicting parties with the leverage to alter the direction of the conflict, agree to settle their disputes using non-violent means. It is a decision making phase involving the incumbent government and one or more armed groups opposed to it. Among the many valuable outcomes of this phase, the peace agreement is critical because it signals to the public that the parties to the conflict have agreed to end the violent conflict and work together to restore peace.

Official negotiations of civil wars are mediated by an international or regional third-party and so are instances of international mediations. Rather than a neutral and autonomous decision making process that is merely impacted by politics, the official negotiation is part of politics in the sense that it serves political purposes (Touval 2003). In the African context, official negotiations are part of the political economic context characterized by political transition and economies largely dependent on foreign aid which is premised on neo-liberal policies. They are conducted in the context of dependence on aid and this has implications for their success, in particular the long term sustainability of the peace agreements.

Given Africa’s dependency on international foreign assistance, what challenges and opportunities does this pose for alternative self-reliant approaches to peacemaking in Africa? I argue that negotiation from a position of economic dependence may limit or enhance the forging of a self-reliant approach to peace making. I draw on the Burundi Peace Negotiations (1996-2000) to probe the relationship between the neo-liberal economic agenda in Africa and international mediation of civil wars. Observations of this mediation are drawn largely from newspaper reports, archival material on the Burundi peace negotiations. The following section discusses the diplomatic peace
negotiations in light of studies of neoliberalism and international mediation and elaborates an analytical framework for exploring the relationship between neo-liberal agenda and the official negotiation of civil war in Africa. The next section provides an overview of the international and regional context of the Burundi Peace Negotiations. This is followed by an analysis of the mediation which highlights the limitations and opportunities this presents for forging self-reliant approach.

1. Neo-liberalism and official negotiations of Civil Wars in Africa.

How does peace making occur in global political and economic context dominated by neo-liberalism, and in an African development context characterised by a high dependency on economic aid of Western countries and institutions? Neo-liberalism describes a particular theoretical and policy position which gained much appeal in the 1980s. At the time, academic and policy communities realised that their theories and strategies failed to address the economic crises of the period. Theoretically neo-liberalism is driven by the principles of free trade, care for micro-economic efficiency and absence of government controls (Toye 1987, 73). This view privileges the market as the most efficient mechanism of allocating resources and stresses the primacy of the individual and private sphere. As a policy, the neo-liberal economic agenda advocates for a reduction in state role in the economy and greater dependence on free market; removal of state restrictions on money, goods, services and capital; removal of state controls on prices, wages and foreign exchange rates; privatisation of state owned productive assets; privatisation of welfare services (health, pension, education). The State is only important in so far as it facilitates economic growth in line with the neo-liberal agenda, for instance, ensuring technical standards between countries or enforcing neo-liberal policies where there is popular resistance to them. The key principles guiding policy are efficiency and effectiveness of instruments to achieve goals of economic growth (Colclough 1991).

Jamie Peck and Henry Yeung (2003) note that neo-liberalism is not a totalising idea with a homogenising effect in practice. This impression results from a failure to problematize the notion. When seen as a process of political and economic change rather than an institutional outcome, neoliberalism is a socio-political construct with the capacity to morph depending on the particularity of the context. They argue that conceptualising neoliberalism requires a consideration of the way it is politically negotiated and mediated and therefore socially and historically contingent. It's development, adaptation, and reshaping depends on the specific context. In light of this, neo-liberalism is a process of political and economic change rather than an institutional outcome and so has the capacity to morph. According to Peck and Yeung, a better understanding of this process requires specifying the process and mechanism of its institutionalisation; identifying different institutional variants; examining the way the institutional variants are interconnected through translocal channels of policy formulation; a qualitative analysis of it as spatially differentiated, historically changing, and institutionally specific; explaining how its creative and destructive moments coalesce historically and geographically; and recognising that politics matters in emergent forms of neoliberalism (2003, 179). The outcome of the process is not neo-liberal homogenisation but a continuous uneven development and intensification of neo-liberal impulses (2003, 164). The state does have a role and it is not that of a neutral arbitrator. State power is deployed in the “contradictory extension and reproduction of the market rule (2003, 167).

The neo-liberal view of conflict is that of a crisis. In market terms this is considered an absurdity, an outcome of inadequate information, or the obstruction of market mechanisms (Jessop 1997, p.294). Liberal economic theories of peace see war as a disruption to the economy brought about by politically ineffective regimes. Free trade, democratic political systems, and international institutions are ingredients for the promotion of peace (Levy 2001). This thesis is premised on the empirical evidence of OECD states which have not gone to war with each other since 1945, and of the reduction of military conflicts in East Asia, a region that has seen the development of Newly Industrialised Countries (South Korea, Malaysia, Taiwan, and Singapore). The greater economic interaction of these states has developed powerful markets and dulled any motivations for conquest (Scholte 2000, p.26). In the neo-liberal vision, a stable society is maintained when the market place and economic life are free of constitutional, legal and administrative constraints (Colclough 1991, 1).

The view of conflict as disruptive is shared by the World Bank whose structural adjustment programmes were the main vehicles for the institutionalisation of neo-liberal economic policies in Africa. These programmes also shaped bilateral aid policies towards Africa. In World Bank discourse, various expressions used to describe conflict reflect this. Conflict is a ‘vicious cycle of poverty’ in which it is both a cause and effect. Conflict is also ‘development in reverse’, a regional bad because it affects neighbouring economies, an economic and social disaster, and a ‘creator of chronic instability’. According to the World Bank Report on Sustainable Development, conflict threatens the institutional framework required to manage the broad portfolio of assets with which wealth is built. Civil war stems from potential gains from looting, presence of national resources, extreme poverty and unsustainable development (WB 2002, 153). This view suggests a solution that privileges the autonomy of the market.

In The Role of the WB in Conflict and Development, the World Bank states that it does not engage in peace making and peacekeeping because these roles fall within the mandate of the UN. However it does spell out the forms of engagement in situations of conflict. The specific activities are spelled out in its Operational Policy/Bank
Procedures 2.30, Development Cooperation and Conflict. Taken together these documents spell out the following three forms of engagement in conflict affected countries. In situations of conflict where normal assistance (guided by the Country Assistance Strategy) is impossible, the Bank maintains a minimum engagement and keeps a Watching Brief to monitor developments. If the government requests additional assistance the Bank may offer it. This comprises efforts at poverty reduction an maintenance of socio-economic assets and providing information on socio-economic impacts of emergency assistance. In post-conflict situations, the Bank follows a Transitional Support Strategy for up to a year. This strategy is aligned to the objectives and priorities of the peace accords and recovery plans. It comprises investment and development policy advice aimed at economic and social recovery and particularly targeted at the needs of war-affected groups. The Country Assistance Strategy is used in post-conflict situations that demonstrate a successful transition out of conflict (WB no date, p.9; WB 2001). It is apparent that World Bank engagement is determined largely by how the organisation defines the conflict situation. A closer look at practice reveals that the Bank uses different terms for countries in conflict, for instance Sri Lanka which is experiencing an ongoing conflict involving the Tamil armed groups, is considered as a successful post-conflict context (Klengebiel 2001, 8). In a later document, the Bank suggests institutional remedies for resolving conflict, in line with its framework on sustainable development. These include: developing civil society organisations to act as checks to war economy; expanding democracy; leveraging of international aid so that it aids the poor and marginalised; and international community guarantee of agreements so as to overcome serious commitment problems with peace accords (WB 2003, p.153-6).

Following from the above analysis how can we see the relationship between neo-liberal agenda and the official negotiations of civil war in Africa? Since the 1980s, neo-liberal policies adopted by Western governments, and international organisations like the IMF, World Bank, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), have been institutionalised in Africa through the mechanism of bilateral and multilateral aid policy. Central to this mechanism is the use of political and economic conditions to disburse aid. Clapham (1996) identifies two phases of aid conditionality: the 1980s period which saw the disbursement of aid according to whether countries had met the prescribed economic conditions. During the 1990s, aid disbursement became contingent also on political conditions. However, in practice, the foreign policy interests of donor countries, rather than a strict adherence to conditionality, motivates the disbursement of aid. With regard to official negotiations, Ehrenfeld, Kogut and Hove suggest that foreign aid serves as an incentive for peace, a means of entice the conflicting parties to engage in official negotiations of civil war (2003, 59). Official negotiations may be seen as institutions that play an ameliorative role in resolving conflict. They are welcome interventions in the vicious cycle of poverty caused by conflict because their use is in line with one of the principles of guiding management of portfolios, that is they minimise the cost of meeting other objectives in a trade-off situation (WB 2002, 38). Aid as an incentive for peace amounts to a kind of peace conditionality defined as ‘the use of formal performance criteria and/or informal policy dialogue to encourage the implementation of high-priority peace programs and mobilization of domestic resources to this purpose.’ It comes in the form of capital, vital resources, institutional technical assistance, development of justice and security systems, and the support of regional cooperation and consultation. Multilateral and bilateral donors use it to persuade, support or pressure the government to adhere to the peace accord (Ehrenfeld, Kogut and Hove 2003, 60-63). Although this analysis applies to post-conflict situations, I apply it in this paper to examine the relationship between the neo-liberalism and the official negotiation in Africa in terms of the role of aid incentives in official negotiations. Alex Vince argues that the use of aid incentives in making final settlement of peace accords is a little understood aspect of the peace negotiations in Mozambique (1998, 66). This may apply to other official negotiations including Burundi. This paper applies Ehrenfeld’s model to identifying when aid conditionality is used (at what moment in the official negotiation) and the form it takes, and the method used.

Official Negotiation of civil wars in Africa

Official negotiation refers here to those occasions where parties to the conflict with the leverage to alter the direction of the conflict meet to negotiate. A party with leverage is one that has the coercive means to alter the situation. They can choose to cease or continue the conflict. In the case of contemporary civil wars in Africa, these parties are the existing government and armed groups that have taken arms against the government. Official negotiations of civil wars in Africa are in actual fact mediations because they are conducted with the assistance a third party. Ideally, mediation are convened at the request of states that are party to the conflict, and their international or regional mandate is based on the UN Charter which provides for the intervention of the international community in situations of war. The mediator is nominated by the parties to the conflict or by the international community in consultation with the parties to the conflict. A mediator has no authority to impose an outcome. They vary in terms of approaches because these depend to a great extent on the personal style of the third-party (Wall et. al. 2001, p.370-375). In reality, mediations of civil wars may not necessarily be convened at the request of states that are party to the conflict. In the case of civil wars, the incumbent government may not want to request for mediation as doing so expresses recognition of the armed groups opposing it as political equals. Mediation requires a transformation of the incumbent government view of armed resistance or rebellion as banditry or criminal acts to one where they are legitimate political parties. It has also requires in a number of
cases, the transformation of these armed groups into political organizations (Mozambique, Liberia). Mediation of civil war is therefore not necessarily undertaken voluntarily. Much effort goes into persuading parties to the conflict, to negotiate. The Mozambican and Burundian experiences show this.

A typical official negotiation in the African setting begins with an initial meeting often convened by a third party (mediator) considered neutral and trustworthy by the conflicting parties. This role has been played by religious groups (Sant’ Egidio Community in the Mozambican negotiations and the Inter-Faith Mediation in Liberia) international NGOs (Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation, International Negotiations Network), regional states organisations (ECOWAS), or the international organizations (UN). The initial encounters are usually aimed at establishing initial contact, build confidence and gain a commitment from the party to negotiate. This commitment is often expressed in a communiqué which states the parties’ agreement to talk. Doing so also communicates who is considered a representative at the talks, and also demonstrates that the parties consider each other as political equals. Consequent meetings are to as rounds of negotiations. The Burundi negotiations for instance comprised two sets of rounds of talks (Mwanza I – II; Arusha I-VI). Parties negotiate over key issues within a framework developed with the assistance of a mediator. The successive round of talks comprise the actual negotiation and are aimed at the securing an agreement for the cessation of conflict and also a durable peace settlement (Wallensteen 2002, 8-10). After a series of these talks, parties may reach a point where they agree on a final settlement. At the final meeting the parties sign an agreement. This signals to the public that the war has been terminated and a new phase in the national peace process has begun.

The negotiation as an occasion for decision making involving all conflicting parties with the power to alter the circumstances if they so choose, is distinct from other official (diplomatic) processes such as regional summits of heads of state convened to discuss the conflict, bilateral peace efforts of UN, EU or AU special envoys, and international conferences. These meetings draw attention to and mobilise support for the peace negotiations. However, in reality, particularly in the negotiation of civil wars in Africa, the picture is more complex if not confusing. In addition to the rounds of talks that comprise the negotiations, there are occasions where decisions on the agreement are made at summit meetings (e.g. ECOWAS and Liberian negotiations). These summit meetings are considered part of the official negotiation as defined here as long as they involve all conflicting parties with the power to alter the circumstances.

The official negotiations of civil wars in Africa are an instance of international peace mediation. Studies of international peace mediation focus on the factors explaining the success or failure of the peace talks in arriving at a negotiated settlement, whether the nature of the bargaining process, the role of the third-party, the intrusiveness of the parties to the conflict, or the conditions under which the mediation takes place. Two main strands are evident in this literature. The first is descriptions of the mediation process and the second is devoted to prescriptions of how third-party may influence disputants to be more accommodative (Gilady, et. al. 2002; Wall, James, et al. 2002). Both view the official negotiation as an autonomous unit rather than very much embedded in the political and economic dynamics of the day. Touval suggests that the study of mediation would benefit from an analysis that examines it as part of politics rather than merely impacted by it. Seen this way, mediation can for instance be seen as a foreign policy tool that straddles the domestic and international arena. As a foreign policy tool mediation initiated by states perceptions of the international system, domestic needs, and foreign policy objectives. Inquiry thus focuses on “how goals and strategies of the states lead them to mediate in a conflict.” (Touval 2003, p.91-92). This view is of interest to this paper because it considers the socio-political and economic influences, in this case the neo-liberal agenda. It allows us to see how official negotiations of civil war can be used to pursue the political interests of the various actors directly (indirectly) involved, instead of its depiction as a neutral and autonomous site created solely to arrive at a peaceful resolution of conflict.

If the official negotiation is part of politics, then it is possible to see it as a site of political struggle over different economic and political agendas involving domestic, regional and international actors with interests in the outcome of this struggle. This struggle takes place at two levels. At one level it, is expressed in the conflicting political and economic interests of the parties to the conflict and the mediator’s approach. In most cases the mediator exercise great influence in the development of the framework of negotiation and the drafting of agreements. The mediator may play a direct role in influencing the insertion of political and economic liberal agenda into peace settlements (Richmond, 2004, 141). At a second level this plays out in the use of peace conditionality to entice the parties to negotiate and to encourage a speedy settlement of the accords.

2. The international and regional context of official negotiations in Africa

Compared to the Cold War period, there is a greater use of official negotiations to resolve internal conflicts in Africa and elsewhere (Wallenstein 2002, 31). More importantly they take place in a changed international and regional political and economic context in which Africa (compared to Latin America and Asia) ceased to be of significant strategic military and economic interest to the West. First, with the collapse of the USSR, Western donor aid policies ceased to be contingent on Cold War ideological preferences and welfare ideas. They are now informed by neo-liberal ideas and so emphasise opening up of national markets, pulling down protectionist barriers, a reduced
role of the state in the economy and a greater role of private economic actors. In Africa, the World Bank Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) became the main vehicle for implementing these policies. This amounted to an “externalization of economic management” a notion that allows one to see how Western donor governments and international aid institutions put pressure on African governments to reduce the state role to that of regulating the economy, privatize state run corporations, downsizing government bureaucracy and departments, removal of subsidies, opening up the domestic market, and introduced political reforms aimed at ensuring order and stability needed for the economy (market) to function well (Clapham 1996, 169).

These set of neo-liberal policies challenged the political and economic basis of the governing elite by threatening the patronage basis of regime, in two ways. First they reduced or denied easy access to resources that the governing elite used to sustain their political power. Secondly, the governing elite could no longer direct economic benefits to supporters or potential opposition. Neither could they manipulate ethnic politics to favour certain communities over others. At this point it is important to note that effects of the SAPs were mediated by three conditions: the economic interests and political strength of governing elite; their international bargaining power; and the personal ideologies and decisions of individual rulers. Secondly, their impact varied in terms of government response: resistance, acceptance and subversion, or a combination of the two. Nevertheless, in a number of countries, the austerity measures not only provoked riots, but also reduced the authoritarian regimes’ access to state resources which they used to maintain support and buy out opposition (Clapham 1996, 176-181). This undermined the regimes’ power and provided an opportunity for political opposition, which in some countries like, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, took the form of armed resistance or coup d’etat. In Burundi for instance, when the Bagaza regime instituted the initial SAPs in 1986, this resulted in a military coup d’etat by military officers who resisted the reforms (Lemarchand 1994, p.116-117).

The violent public reaction to the sudden and drastic cut backs on welfare services and government jobs compelled the World Bank to revise its strategy. This now emphasizes political reforms aimed at building a government capable of providing a stable and secure environment that is necessary for the implementation of liberal economic reforms. Donor pressure on African governments to democratize was carried out through use of political conditionality of aid based on adherence to human rights, democracy and good governance. The aim was to make governments accountable to society although this did not preclude its use to pursue Western donor interests (Clapham 1996, 198). The shifts in aid conditionality to include also political conditions did not necessarily bring about the desired results as authoritarian governments came up with ways of subverting this policy. In Burundi, for instance, the pressure to democratise may account in part for the rejection of the 1993 election outcome by the military who felt threatened. This led to the assassination of Melchoir Ndadaye and triggered an ethnic violence in 1993 that led to a civil war. The changes in aid policy in the 1990s to include political conditions, marks the second phase of the neo-liberal process. In this phase, International Financial Institutions and donor countries adjust their aid assistance to respond to the consequences created by the first phase of economic austerity measures (Peck and Yeoung 2003). These include violent conflict in some countries. This relevant to exploring the relationship between the neo-liberal agenda and official negotiations, because the neo-liberal policies, expressed in the form of aid conditionality (political and economic) serve as the situation of dependence in which official negotiations are conducted. This is a context aptly described by Clapham as the externalisation of economic management and political accountability (1996, 169-176; 192-200).

A second factor in the shift international policy shift towards the third world is that African governments like the former Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo) and Somalia were left to confront political opposition or armed resistance without the military assistance of either the US, former colonial powers or USSR (Clapham 1998, p.4).

This view has changed following the September 11 (2001) terrorist attack on the US. The largely unilateral military interventions of the US in Iraq and Afghanistan may signal a renewed US interest in intervening forcefully in countries considered to be harbouring terrorist organisations, as part of its policy of addressing the threat terrorism poses to its national security. Nevertheless, in Africa, the burden of resolving internal conflict shifted initially to the United Nations. A characteristic of contemporary internal conflict in Africa is the regional impact of the complex humanitarian crises they create by way of forced migration of a large number of citizens of the country to neighbouring countries. Furthermore, the complex humanitarian crises created by the wars in the Great Lakes region (Rwanda, Burundi and Democratic Republic of Congo), the Manu River region (Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea Conakry), and Eastern Africa (Sudan, Somalia, N. Uganda) worsened the security situation in these regions. Third, the protracted and total nature of these civil wars contradicts the notion of emergency assistance as short-term relief aimed at tiding over communities during a period of crisis with the expectation that it will soon be over and they can get on with their lives. Emergency relief assistance morphed into a long-term activity, creating concern over whether this reproduced dependence on humanitarian aid or promoted long-term development. Addressing the complex humanitarian needs created by the civil wars, most of which were occurring almost simultaneously from the late 1980s, stretched the budgets of humanitarian organisations, in particular the UN, resulting in a donor fatigue. Furthermore, because of the adverse experience of military intervention, especially the failed US military operation to restore security in Somalia, the UN Security Council was reluctant to authorise or send peacekeeping or peace enforcement troops to Africa.

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The burden of responding to internal conflicts shifted to regional organizations and international non-governmental humanitarian and conflict resolution organizations. African countries had to look within the continent for support. This explains in part the emergence of the idea of African solutions to African problems, an idea that the international community embraced. African solutions to African problems are expressed on the economic front by a renewed interest in developing regional economic communities and trading blocs. The period since 1990s has seen an increase in efforts aimed at creating common markets, an old idea that now assumed greater importance given the diminished economic support from the West. It is considered a way of addressing Africa's marginalisation in the global economy. It also fits in very well with the neo-liberal thinking about efficient and viable economic units that guarantee better performing markets. Most African countries, especially tiny ones like Burundi are not considered viable enough as economic units to be competitive in the world economy. More importantly, internal conflict is considered as a hindrance to the effective implementation of an initiative that has the potential to mitigate its occurrence.

Within the international and regional context of development discussed above, one observes an interesting development in the official negotiations of civil wars in Africa.

First, a number of international and regional non-state actors have emerged as mediators, playing similar roles to that of the UN led peace initiatives, or neutral country mediators. These are organisations or private individuals that focus on offering mediation as a service, either for altruistic purposes or as a professional job. Examples are the Sant’ Egidio community in Rome (Mozambique and Burundian), the Carter Centre (Burundi, Sudan and Liberian), and the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation (Burundi). Third Party mediation, once limited to diplomatic envoys or eminent statesmen under the auspices of their governments or the UN, is now privatized. It is increasingly open to private citizens and organisations, who can act as governments did in high-level mediation of intra-state conflicts. Mediation is now sub contracted to non-state parties (Hocking 2004).

A second trend which applies mainly to Africa is the increasing resort to regionally initiated or guaranteed official conflicts. Mediation is now subcontracted to non-state parties (Hocking 2004)."
the President. He suspended the constitution, replaced it with a three year Transition decree, suspended political
responsibility, and assumed the presidency to launch the process of democratic transition in the country in 1991, and which resulted in the
peace talks. However, the latter focused on power sharing agreements which favoured
moderate and centre political parties. Nyerere insisted on negotiations between all parties to the conflict, including
what were considered extremist groups (rebels). This approach reflects his principles of

Nyerere’s approach was not well received by the Tutsi elite who criticised Nyerere of impartiality. The first two
rounds of negotiations in May and June 1996 respectively, did not achieve much in terms of an agreement. Meanwhile, the Burundian government requested military assistance from the neighbouring countries to restore
peace and security. A worrying result of the Ndadaye assassination and ensuing killings, was the increase in
attacks and killings by both Hutu and Tutsi armed groups which the government found difficult to stamp out. At a
regional summit in June 1996, regional leaders decided to send a military force comprising troops from Uganda,
Tanzania, and Ethiopia under Tanzanian command (ICG, 1998). However, the Burundian military fearing that this
regional military force would neutralise their power, staged a coup d'état in July, and declared Major Pierre Buyoya
the President. He suspended the constitution, replaced it with a three year Transition decree, suspended political
parties and planned to begin multi-party talks. Buyoya had been president between 1987 and 1993 and was
responsible for launching the process of democratic transition in the country in 1991, and which resulted in the
multiparty elections that Melchoir Ndadaye’s predominantly Hutu party FRODEBU won in June 1993.

It is important to note that from 1995, the UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros Ghali, US Ambassador to the UN
Madeleine Albright, USAID Director, Brian Atwood, the EU Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid, Emma Bonino, and
the French and Belgium governments repeatedly warned Burundian leaders that the international community
would not tolerate a change in government by force. These organizations and countries also supported Nyerere’s
mediation of the Burundi conflict. The military’s choice of Buyoya is interpreted as a way of rendering the coup
respectable in the hope that his international connections and the respect he gained from launching the transition
to democracy in 1991 would temper international and regional outrage. Instead, at the insistence of Nyerere, the
regional states imposed comprehensive economic sanctions against Burundi in July 1996. These would be lifted
only if the government restored parliament, restituted political parties, and started immediate and unconditional
negotiations between all parties to the conflict. The sanctions were supported by the OAU and remained in place
until January 1999 when they were lifted. Economic sanctions amounted to an embargo on Burundi’s trading
activities in the region.

Sanctions are in themselves a controversial issue, because their effectiveness depends on proper policing which is
costly and specific targeting which is not easy to do. However in this particular case what is interesting thing about
the economic sanctions is the way they became a divisive issue rather than an instrument to enforce a return to
the peace table. Regional states were split as to how effective sanctions would be in promoting a resumption of
negotiations. Kenya, Democratic Republic of Congo, Zambia, and Eritrea were against their use. The remaining
countries and in particular Tanzania and Uganda insisted strongly on their imposition. At issue was the fear that
existing traders would lose business to new players. For instance, Tanzania and Kenya lost transport business to
Zambia and South Africa as Burundian businessmen searched for alternate routes to transport and receive goods.
In a number of cases sanctions were flouted. Internationally, sanctions initially received much support but this
soon waned with reports by international NGOs that sanctions were doing more harm than good to ordinary
citizens. The UN and EU called for a reconsideration of the economic embargo.

Buyoya took advantage of this split to push for the lifting of sanctions and attempt to initiate an alternative peace
process. He lobbied the Francophone countries and the UN to reconsider the sanctions. His refusal to resume talks
began under the regional diplomatic initiative brought this negotiation to a halt. After several months the sanctions
were partially lifted in April 1997 to allow for humanitarian supplies into the region. The following month Buyoya
held secret talks with the CNDD, one of the armed political parties, with the aim of starting peace talks to restore
democracy. These peace talks were mediated by the Community of Sant'Egidio, a non-state organization that has
been actively engaged in mediating in civil wars in Africa and elsewhere since the 80s. The regional states held a
meeting later in September, 1997 at which they declared continued support for Nyerere’s mediation, the sanctions,
and added new conditions.

Buyoya met some of these mainly political conditions and peace negotiations reconvened in June 1998. This third
round of negotiations resulted in the formation of five committees that would negotiate on five thematic issues:
the nature of the conflict, genocide, and exclusion; democracy and good governance – institutional, constitutional,
judiciary, administrative systems and questions of justice and impunity; peace and security – cessation of
hostilities, terms of a permanent ceasefire, composition of the security forces; reconstruction and economic
development- refugee and displaced persons; guarantees for the application of a peace agreement. The European
Union's special envoy to the Great Lakes, Aldo Ajello, participated in the negotiations. The embargo was lifted in
Former South African President Nelson Mandela was appointed to take over as mediator of the Burundi Negotiations, in December 1999 by the regional leaders. At the sixth round of peace talks in February 2000, Mandela emphasised the need for a speedy conclusion to the talks. Unlike Nyerere who was an independent mediator working in consultation with the regional countries, Mandela represented the South African government even as he worked with the regional countries. Mandela concluded work on committees, an approach that Nyerere used, to work on a draft agreement, all the time putting pressure on the parties to the conflict to come to an agreement. A second approach was the way he drew on international support to put pressure on the parties to work faster. This included inviting heads of states from the region and elsewhere to the negotiations, and getting donor commitments to providing material and financial assistance in the event that a peace agreement is signed. This amounts to an internationalisation of the mediation (ICG, 2000, p.24) and resulted in raising the visibility of the negotiations compared to the Nyerere approach. Mandela’s also put a great deal of pressure on the parties to the conflict to desist from delaying the process. Finally he insisted on the inclusion of armed factions in the talks. From February Mandela convened about three rounds of negotiations which culminated in the signing of a peace agreement in August 2000. A noticeable failure was the absence of a ceasefire to guarantee the implementation of the peace accords.

4. Analysis of the Burundi Peace Negotiations: Preliminary findings

Apart from the immediate and primary participants to the talks, the conflicting parties and the mediator, official negotiations also brought together a host of other secondary actors – domestic (Women and religious representatives as observers), regional states as guarantors (OAU, East African regional bloc; Southern Africa) and international actors as funders and supporters of the process (UN, EU, Bilateral donors – Belgium, US, France, Japan). Of these actors three stand out as relevant to the question of when neoliberal thinking is evident: 1) the sense of community and belief in pan-Africanism (Legum 1995, 186). Nyerere shunned elitism and racism. A self-ethical one and is based on tolerance, honesty, respect for human rights, democratic principles, a compassionate dignity of the person and the importance of involving people in dialogue (Mmari 1995). The view of society is an internationalist (ICG, 2000, p.24) and resulted in raising the visibility of the negotiations compared to the Nyerere approach. Mandela’s also put a great deal of pressure on the parties to the conflict to desist from delaying the process. Finally he insisted on the inclusion of armed factions in the talks. From February Mandela convened about three rounds of negotiations which culminated in the signing of a peace agreement in August 2000. A noticeable failure was the absence of a ceasefire to guarantee the implementation of the peace accords.

Mediator approach

Two styles of mediation are evident in the Burundi Peace Negotiations. The first is Mwalimu Julius Nyerere’s approach which was largely driven by his principles of self-reliance and represents a non-military version of the liberation model he applied during the anti-apartheid struggle. As President of Tanzania, he led the frontline states struggle against the South African regime. Nyerere’s conception of self-reliance sees solution to problems coming from African initiatives and not external aid lending. It is based on the values of social justice, unity, egalitarianism, dignity of the person and the importance of involving people in dialogue (Mmari 1995). The view of society is an ethical one and is based on tolerance, honesty, respect for human rights, democratic principles, a compassionate sense of community and belief in pan-Africanism (Legum 1995, 186). Nyerere shunned elitism and racism. A self-reliance approach privileges the use of peaceful means in conducting political struggle. War is an option only when peaceful means are not possible (Othman 1988, 162). The economic premise of this model is a reliance on local resources as the way to promote development.

The idea of self-reliance occurs in the Burundi Peace Negotiations as Nyerere’s refusal to involve outside expertise in the negotiations, preferring to consult with regional states and drawing on their support. This is in line with his belief in the reliance on local resources and may suggest a reliance on the expert advice, material and moral support of African peoples and their governments. The idea of self-reliance style of this approach does not suggest a lack of economic interest. The negotiations were funded by the international community which initially provided very strong support to the mediation regardless of the mediator’s self-reliance approach. However, when the negotiations did not result in an expected peace accord, the EU who funded the actual negotiations, US, France, and Belgium (key donors) increasingly became critical of Nyerere’s approach.

Regional States interest

Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Zambia, Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia and Eritrea, Zambiapedia and Zimbabwe all played a key role in the negotiations as guarantors of the process. Of interest here is the extent to which their interests reflect a neo-liberal agenda. At one level, the regional countries supported Nyerere’s approach. Indeed Nyerere constantly consulted with the regional states and briefed them regularly on the progress of the official negotiations. He was persuasive in getting the regional countries to endorse the imposition of sanctions on Burundi. This is a use of an economic incentive to pressure parties to resume negotiations. However, it did not work as sanctions worsened the humanitarian condition in Burundi and failed to achieve its objective. Furthermore sanctions were flouted by the regional states themselves. In this sense the regional countries supported for an African solution to and African problem was tempered by commercial interests of the countries who were affected economically by the sanctions.
The regional guarantors of the official negotiation (with the exception of Ethiopia and Eritrea), are members of the Common Market for Eastern Africa (COMESA). In addition Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania comprise the East African Cooperation, a regional economic bloc that Burundi and Rwanda have requested to join. This paper suggests that, given the serious attention given to initiatives aimed at establishing regional common markets, regional leaders were interested in the restoration of peace in Burundi (and the DRC) as war in these countries constrained efforts at creating a common market as a means of generating economic development of the region. However, this interest lends itself to two readings. First, it may be interpreted within the framework of self-reliance liberation paradigm as an economic initiative largely established and directed by African states in the region to get Africa out of its marginalised position in the global economy. Tanzania and Uganda could be considered as the leading countries, with a greater interest in pursuing peace along these lines. A second interpretation sees these initiatives of creating common markets as reflecting a neo-liberal agenda, that is donor concerns and preferences regarding Africa’s marginalised and dependent position. In this sense, developing economic markets would serve as the most efficient way of addressing both the problems of conflict and economic development in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. It seems here that regional leaders’ interests combine both a self-reliance and neo-liberal agenda.

International community and use of peace conditionality

From 1998, the donor community dropped support for the sanctions and put pressure on Nyerere and the regional leaders to call for a lifting of the economic embargo. This was in response to research and reports by the international non-governmental organisations that the sanctions imposed on Burundian government worsened humanitarian suffering created by political violence in the country. Prior to the fourth round of negotiations in January 1999, both Ajello and Nyerere attended a meeting of donors in New York which discussed the reconstruction of Burundi. From this point onward the negotiations are marked by an increasing involvement and presence of the international donor community. The fourth and fifth rounds were funded by the donor community, in particular the EU which spent up to 2 million Euros for the negotiations. Donors insisted on a timeframe for the talks, and set October 1999 as the deadline for the talks.

The negotiations were criticized for their slow progress, huge budget and lack of a draft peace agreement despite meeting for over a year. A number of donor countries had resumed ‘extended humanitarian assistance’ to the country, to mitigate the humanitarian effects of the fighting and the sanctions. This assistance was channelled through international humanitarian and development NGOs in Burundi. Sanctions were lifted in 1999, soon after Nyerere passed on, and Mandela was approached to be the mediator. It is interesting to note that the World Bank which had suspended aid to the country, reopened its office in April, and resumed relations with Burundi. This appears to contradict its policy that return is contingent on a peace agreement and its implementation.

The neo-liberal thinking comes out more when Mandela assumed mediation. Before his appointment, the special envoys of the international community met to discuss the future of the Burundi Peace Negotiations. After the meeting the UN Secretary General, recommended that the Security Council find assistance in identifying a new mediator. The special envoys (Howard Wolpe, Aldo Ajello, Berhanu Dinka, Cheikh Tidian Sy, Marc Lamieux, Hassan Lebat, Weille Nhlapo, Stéphane de Louckers) met with regional leaders to try and persuade them to select a mediator based on a profile of an ideal mediator developed by them (ICG, 2000, p.17). The regional leaders declined pointing out that this would be the prerogative of the region. However, the US envoy lobbied for the appointment of Mandela, who was nominated by the regional despite reservations from Tanzania and Uganda which had other candidates in mind (p.21). The US (in particular Ambassador Wolpe) had been very critical of Nyerere’s approach and failure to move swiftly to a peace agreement. Mandela’s mediation marks the entry of South Africa into the negotiations process.

South Africa is an economic power on the continent, and rivals Egypt. With the end of the apartheid struggle, South Africa has developed a great interest in expanding the market for its goods and industrial expertise in central and eastern Africa. In addition to supporting Mandela's mediation in Burundi, South Africa was already leading the peace negotiations in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mandela’s approach can be characterised as based on the South African model of negotiated transition to democracy. This model is economically premised on Thabo Mbeki’s economic vision for Africa – African Renaissance – which informed greatly the current New Economic Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). Mandela internationalised the negotiations, opening the process up to participation by donor governments, and lobbied for their contribution. Multilateral and bilateral donors used pledges of economic aid to persuade the parties to sign the agreement. The entry of South Africa to the peace negotiations could be seen as a way to expand its free market vision into the region. This vision could be interpreted in two ways: First as the pursuit of a neo-liberal agenda or as a strategy promoting self-reliance given that it is led by an African state that not only has the resources to underwrite the peace process but also the political commitment to use them to bring about peace in Burundi.
5. Conclusion

What emerges from the overview of the Burundi peace process is the way mediation may become a site of struggle over alternative development visions. It illustrates that negotiating from a dependent position presents both challenges and limitations to sustaining a self-reliant approach. The initial strong support of the international community to Nyerere’s approach and the strong criticism at a later stage may indicate that self-reliant approaches, though possible, are sustainable only if they do align with the interests of the donor community. The South African entry and its embrace of a neo-liberal agenda may indicate an alternative to promoting peace in Africa which depends not on the donor community, but on the wealthier and powerful African states to do so.

Further research is needed to clearly establish from statements, the Burundi Peace Negotiations protocols, deliberations of the negotiations, and actions of actors not mentioned here (civil society actors, parties to the conflict), whether a neo-liberal agenda dominates the negotiations or whether alternatives exist. Unfortunately, we lack a serious study of the Burundi Peace Negotiations, in particular the processes and political dynamics of actors involved. In addition, comparison with other official negotiations (Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Democratic Republic of Congo) may confirm or disconfirm the extent to which negotiating from a dependent position limits or enhances use of self-reliant approaches to forging peace. Finally, there is need for a specification of the relationship between peace and development, one in which peace is defined negatively in terms of absence of or avoidance of conflict. This idea of peace dominates development policies of multilateral and bilateral donors (Brenk and de Veen 2005, 397). It characterises interventions such as official negotiations as ameliorative and remedial when perhaps what Africa needs is a development definition of peace that is transformative and privileges social justice, the dignity of the person, egalitarianism and encourages the participation of people in political life of the country. Nyerere’s self-reliance approach expresses this, despite its being severely critcized because of its failure as a viable economic alternative.
Bibliography


