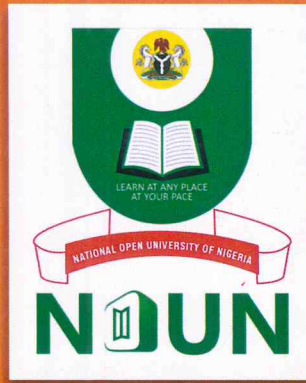




NOUN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PEACE STUDIES AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION (NIJPCR)

VOL. 3, NO. 2 AUGUST, 2023

ISSN: 2756-6099



NOUN
INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
PEACE STUDIES AND CONFLICT
RESOLUTION
[NIJPCR]

VOL. 3, NO. 2, August, 2023

A Publication of
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Faculty of Social Sciences
National Open University of Nigeria

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AN APPRAISAL OF THE LIBERAL PEACE MODEL IN CONFLICT-PRONE AFRICA: A STUDY OF DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

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ABSTRACT

Since the end of the Cold War, the international community spearheaded by the United Nations Organisation (UN) has been involved in conflict zones by ways of helping conflict-torn states to sign ceasefire agreements with rebel groups, monitoring power-sharing transitions and funding general elections. Renowned scholars have decried this one-size-fits-all approach as an attempt to transplant the liberal peace on hostile grounds beyond the Western world. Central to the paper is the question as to why this peace theory that explains the peaceful relationships among Western democracies has become a cure for dysfunctional and violent states in Africa. Using the Democratic Republic of Congo as a typical case study of Western engineering for more than two decades, the paper adopts the literature review approach in gathering secondary data and reopens the debate on the merits of the liberal peace model in conflict zones. The study unveils the misreading of Kant's theory of peace with its attendant divide (in theory) between the West and the rest. It proposes as alternative, the human peace model to advance the common good, irrespective of culture, religion and nationality. Such a bottom-up model is apparent in selfless actions that are in the reach of every individual by virtue of God's given talents.

Keywords: Africa, Conflict, Liberal peace, Intervention, Congo

Introduction

The wave of democratization that began in Eastern Europe in the early 1990s compelled a few dictators on the African continent to quickly organize multiparty elections and gracefully step down after the defeat at the polls. Others held national conferences to delay positive changes and allowed the formation of political parties in a desperate attempt to either buy in opposition candidates or gerrymander a part of the electorate altogether. The unlucky among them led

their respective countries into civil wars (Kaldor, 2006; Meredith, 2006; Collier, 2008). From Bosnia to Kosovo, El Salvador to Haiti, from Angola to Rwanda, Afghanistan to Iraq and from Sierra Leone to Liberia, the same method produced the same result (David, 2012). In other words, policymakers had to devise a one-size-fits-all interventionist strategy that includes aid packages conditioned by power-sharing transition and elections to be monitored by the UN peacekeeping forces.

Even though ending an armed conflict may open the door for the rebuilding of damaged infrastructure and dysfunctional institutions of government, such a laudable project of reconstruction is far from covering the whole agenda of the liberal peace. In the same way, the good conduct of general elections is not convincing enough to claim that liberal peace has been injected into African countries by Western democracies (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2007). Using the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as a typical case study of a conflict-torn country in Central Africa, this paper reviews the literature on the mainstream theory of liberal peace by taking a cursory look at its intellectual origins and its association with Western (military) intervention in conflict zones. Central to the paper is the question as to why the liberal peace theory that explains the peaceful relationships among liberal states has become a cure for dysfunctional and violent-prone states in sub-Saharan Africa (Campbell, Chandler & Sabaratnaam, 2011). Such an appraisal of the Western model requires a new conceptualization that aligns with the way of life of local populations.

The argument is thus organized around four sections as follows. First, the study opens with the theory of liberal peace as enunciated by Immanuel Kant and expatiated by liberal scholars. Second, the study reopened the discussion on the application of Kant's theory of peace in conflict-torn states in Africa construed as a one-size-fits-all interventionist strategy. Third, Western intervention in the Congo war provides a case study that seems to focus on political and economic liberalization without addressing the root causes of the perennial conflict. Fourth, the paper proposes, as an alternative, a peace model which is apparent in the actions taken by every individual in a given society to advance the common good.

Theoretical framework

Most liberal theorists concur that the liberal peace theory originates in the classic work of Immanuel Kant, *To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795), in which German philosopher contrasts what he describes as 'the lawless state of savagery' with a project of long-lasting peace among nations. Oneal & Russett (1997) postulate that trade and foreign investments, as well as democratic governance, reduce the probability of armed conflict between two liberal countries. Such a peace model requires the implementation of three principles (articles), namely republican constitutions, a federation of free states, and universal hospitality. Republican constitution is centred on the citizens' participation in government via their representatives because "Every form of government that is not representative is properly speaking without form because one and the same person can no more be at one and the same time the legislator and executor of his will" (Kant: 8).

The federation of free states (second article) conveys the notion that sovereign states can form an association of like-minded nations based on common aspirations (international laws) to transform the anarchical behaviour of states at the international level into cooperation. Far from implying the formation of a mega-state, the federation of free states implies that each independent state retains its autonomy but together they subscribe to a kind of pact known as a league of peace (*foedus pacificum*). According to Kant, a league of peace is different from a treaty of peace (*pactum pacis*) because "the latter seeks merely to stop one war, while the former seeks to end all wars forever" (Kant 1795: 14). As a result, the citizens' common right to peace would transcend national boundaries (cosmopolitan right as the third article) and in the long run, this cosmopolitan right of citizens facilitates the emergence of "a nation of peoples (*civitas gentium*), that continually growing, will finally include all the people of the earth." (Ibidem: 16).

How does the vision of a cosmopolitan society put on the mantle of liberal peace theory? US President W. Wilson who sought American intervention in Europe for a post-war settlement attempted to answer this crucial question. Under his initiative, the League of

Nations was launched at the Paris Summit (1919), to end the First World War, thus making him the first statesman to have articulated what is to be known as the democratic peace thesis: democracies do not fight each other (Paris, 2004). However, unlike the Kantian league of peace which was premised on the consent of the people (Republican constitution), the League of Nations sought to achieve collective security in war-prone Europe without regard to the dictatorial regimes of most states then.

By establishing a correlation between peace and liberal values (rule of law, fairness, freedoms and rights) shared by Western democracies, Doyle is credited for being the enunciator of the liberal peace theory. Referring to Kant's three articles of peace and in response to a critique, he contends that none of these constitutional, international or cosmopolitan sources is alone sufficient, but together (and only where together) they plausibly connect the characteristics of liberal politics and economies with sustained liberal peace" (Doyle, 2005). When it comes to the expansion of liberal peace beyond Western nations, he advocates a variety of economic and diplomatic means which he categorizes into three clusters: inspiration, instigation, and intervention (Doyle, 1999).

Liberal Peace Model in Conflict-Prone Zone: A Discuss

It is understood that the liberal peace theory makes sense of an empirical outcome of peaceful relationships among free individuals and between liberal states. A liberal interpretation of internal conflicts suggests that liberal values of individual freedom and fair play are trampled upon by either an autocratic regime or an aggression of foreign forces. The ensuing breakdown of law and order signals the dissolution of the social contract and the revival of the state of nature in which the specialists in legitimate violence (security agents) are overwhelmed by the demand for fairness and equity expressed by a large portion of the population (Bates, 2008). In any case, both the government and rebel troops usually fight each other with heavy weaponry manufactured elsewhere but the involvement of external actors is hardly exposed so as not to compromise the mainstream definition of civil or intrastate wars.

Accordingly, any Western intervention to shore up a failed state in the South has become problematic since the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the war against terror in Afghanistan as well as the NATO airstrikes on the oil-rich country that paved the way for the rebels to topple the long-standing dictatorship of Colonel Gaddafi in 2011. Mac Ginty & Richmond (2007: 492) capture this polemic in terms of "Polarization between those who support its liberal goals of a democratic and neoliberal framework for peace, which aspires to human rights, the rule of law and development, and those who see this as liberal hubris, replicating the errors of liberal imperialism in the 19th century." Focusing on the second category of critics, two filters of interpretation, namely Euro-centrism and Afro-pessimism, can be used to address the question as to why the Kantian peace should not become a cure for violence-ridden states in Africa.

On one hand, Euro-centrism contends that liberal peace is a kind of peace that is apparent only in Western societies where liberal values have evolved and are internalized. Interestingly, any effort to disseminate these Western values is denounced by radical critics as a replay of imperialism or neoliberalism. In other words, this 'Western peace' is therefore non-transferable in the poor countries of the South where different values are operating. Willett (2005: 573) contends that Western-sponsored conflict resolution is nothing more than "liberal peace by proxy, whereby resources from African countries are mobilized to undertake security mandates determined by the powerful vested interests of Western liberal democracies." As for Mac Ginty, building liberal peace in Africa "represents both liberal naivety and a complete misunderstanding of the nature of the existing and emergent polities in the African context" (Mac Ginty & Richmond 2007: 495). He rather moves on to advocate an accommodated (hybrid) peace model to avert the risk of idealizing 'indigenous' and 'traditional' peace-making (Mac Ginty 2011). Against the current trend of transplanting the Western liberal peace in illiberal countries of sub-Saharan Africa via international intervention (global governance), Richmond advances the idea of an indigenous peace which is emancipatory, self-sustaining, bottom-up, suitable to the everyday life and locally owned but in the closing pages of his book,

the scholar still maintains that the liberal peace offers a form of emancipation even though it is potentially hegemonic, a 'liberal utopia' (Richmond 2008).

In short, Eurocentrism seems to reinforce the dichotomy between liberal and illiberal states which is apologetically held "to explain the lack of policy success and, through this, suggest that democracy or development are somehow not 'appropriate' aspirations or that expectations need to be substantially lowered or changed to account for difference" (Chandler 2011: 181). Afro-pessimism portrays patronage as a lesser evil in conflict-prone African countries and treats the general public as a mass of victims at the mercy of a national elite but this form of stigmatization undermines any form of capacity building. It is important to note however that a one-size-fits-all interventionist strategy was developed at the end of the Cold War to fix failing states in five stages: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding. It is called the UN Agenda for Peace initiated by the then Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali (1992) and delivered through aid packages conditioned by power-sharing transition government and elections to be monitored by the UN peacekeeping forces. The Democratic Republic of Congo provides a case study of Western intervention disguised as liberal peace in a conflict-prone country.

Case study: Democratic Republic of Congo

Close to the size of Western Europe and one-fourth of the US, the DRC enjoys a geostrategic position in Central Africa concerning its fauna and flora evolving around the beautiful land, the huge rain forest, and the many rivers. It also possesses a wealth of natural resources: cobalt, copper, cadmium, petroleum, industrial and gem diamonds, gold, silver, zinc, manganese, tin, germanium, uranium, radium, bauxite, iron, ore, coal, coltan, hydropower, timber, and many more. Yet such a potentially rich country ranks among the ten poorest nations in the world as far as human development is concerned. One plausible explanation attributes this paradox to the long and painful history of foreign interventions which some analysts trace its origin back to the Fifteen century (Haskin, 2005; Omara-Otunnu, 2007).

Following the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the Tutsi-led government in Kigali launched a manhunt across the border and the Rwandan Patriotic Force (RPF) tracked down the fleeing Hutus accused of genocide in a retaliatory manner and turned the refugee camps in Eastern Congo into slaughterhouses. To disguise the presence of these foreign troops in a sovereign territory, leaders of neighbouring countries met with a long-time Congolese rebel, Laurent Kabila in 1996, and together they formed the Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation (AFDL). In February 1998 Kabila sought the cooperation of bigger states within the region by bringing the Congo into the Southern African Development Community (SADC). As soon as the news of the invasion of troops from neighbouring Rwanda, Burundi, and Uganda in DRC reached the SADC, an emergency meeting of member states took place in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe on 18 August 1998.

L.D. Kabila had his regime shortened when he failed to meet the expectations of his foreign sponsors who decided to invade his country. The next day the leaders of Angola, Namibia, and Zimbabwe undertook to respond militarily. In an act of collective self-defence guided by Article 51 of the UN Charter, they launched the 'Operation Sovereign Legitimacy' (OSL) to shore up the Kabila government. The ensuing 'African World War' involving many African countries testified to the influence of foreign powers in the DRC between 1996 and 2003 (Snow, 2008; Prunier, 2009; Meredith, 2006). OSL was already one month old when the UN Security Council through UNSC Resolution 1234 (9 April 1999) called for an immediate ceasefire and withdrawal of foreign troops (Coleman, 2007).

Consequently, under the new dispensation, DRC resumed its cooperation with important players including the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and other UN sister agencies. Through the financial assistance of the donor countries, the inter-Congolese dialogue was back on track at the Sun City resort, in South Africa (February 2002), with the full participation of all sections of the Congolese society. The Kabila government, in partnership with donor countries, produced the Global and All-Inclusive Accord for the transition in DRC (AGI), which was signed in Pretoria on 17 December 2002 under the watch of the government

of South Africa. AGI recognized the incumbent as Transition President who would share political power with four vice-presidents assisted by ministers and vice-ministers on April 7, 2003. Under the magic formula of 1+4, the power-sharing government awarded the status of political leaders to warlords who would accept to silence their guns and wait for the ballot contest.

Without prejudice to a strong batch of trained police officers, thanks to EUPOL and expected international election monitors, approximately, 70 percent of the MONUC 17,600-strong military contingent was expected to handle the election-related duties involving public protection, safety, and escorts. Nevertheless, the UNSC still authorized on 25 April 2006 the deployment of the European force (EUFOR) to the DRC for the period encompassing the country's elections (UN, 2006). Speaking from Brussels a few days before the polls, the German commander, Lt Gen K. Viereck made the following statement: "If deterrence does not succeed, we shall fight against any spoiler. We could use force, even lethal" (ISS Today 2006). Arguably, the election of Joseph Kabila in 2006 was a victory in a pre-emptive war between the Congolese electorate and the external forces made of UN and EUFOR.

External engineering through the accompaniment of the transition government by the international community coupled with enforcement of elections during the 2006 elections underscored the UN Peace Agenda which downplayed the causes of the conflict. As Duffield (2001) contends, the liberal discourse confines the causes of conflict to the South and helps provide the legitimization for outside involvement. Since then, the protracted crisis in East DRC has served to divert the attention of the public from claiming their democratic dividends in terms of security, peace, and development (Galtung, 1969). As far as DRC is concerned, peace accords among warlords are constantly breached, giving way to the multiplicity of armed groups coupled with a plethora of intervening forces, particularly in the Kivu Region where the Movement of the 23 March 2009 (M23) supported by Rwanda continues to make headlines (UN, 2010). The challenge put forward in the field of peace research consists of developing an alternative model which is people-driven and sustainable.

The way forward: A search for alternative

It is acknowledged that "there has been little research on the nature of the liberal peace project." Enforcing façade democracy and opening the economy to foreign investors under the guise of liberal peace is like putting the cart before the horse. Not only does the peace of the battlefield lead to an arms race among powerful nations of the world but it also makes war and violent conflict ubiquitous in the 21st Century. This top-down approach relies exclusively on the know-how of the elite both local and international. It also reduces the rest of the population into passive recipients of peace conceived elsewhere before being transplanted on a conflict-ridden soil.

There is therefore an urgent need for a paradigm shift in the way we conceive of peace which is grounded in the traditional way of life of non-Western societies. Such a peace model implies the agency of the citizens at the grass-root level instead of elite-driven initiative in connivance with external actors. The empowerment of the masses in this regard consists of expanding people's capabilities by encouraging each member of the society, through peace education, to break the chains of ignorance with its attendant victim mentality and become peace actors as opposed to foot soldiers. Such a human peace model implies a lifestyle based on cardinal values of hospitality, generosity, and altruism, to name but a few. It is a relational peace which is characterized by non-domination, mutual recognition and trust.

In the African context, the give-and-take peace model parallels 'African solidarity' whereby altruistic individuals find joy in doing certain things for others without expecting any gratification from above. They live out true humanism which Desmond Tutu described as the African *Weltanschauung* (world-view), popularly known as 'Ubuntu.' As he puts it, A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed, or treated as if they were less than who they are (Tutu 1999: 34).

The Yoruba culture in West Nigeria qualifies such a person who lives for others as *omoluabi*, which literally means the 'one born by God.' Similar expressions can be found in many other cultures on the continent that buttress the human peace model. This alternative is possible if a local community allows everybody, including the poorest of the poor, to bring out the best he or she possesses in life and put it at the service of humanity with no string attached given that true humanity is more in giving than receiving. In the African worldview, everyone is a potential giver and receiver and there would be no one left behind in the pursuit of the Global Vision 2030 (UN, 2015).

Conclusion

The mainstream peace model discussed above hinges heavily on the politics of war and conflict. It is a tacit way of simply saying that what is known, accepted, and visible is war rather than peace while relegating the latter to the realm of abstraction and piety. Even though the liberal peace model conveys a meaning of accommodation rooted in the liberal tradition, this paper has argued that Western intervention in conflict zones has robbed the Kantian project of the capacity to promote international peace based on the power of consent in the hands of the citizenry. The shift towards the local is a clear rejection of the interventionist approach which developed in the 1990s, based on supply-driven templates conceived by Western technocrats. Using the Democratic Republic of Congo as a typical case of external engineering, the transition government was instrumental in the transformation of warlords into politicians and leaders of political parties, thanks to the support of the international community.

The quick-fix approach in the post-war reconstruction is that it reflects the minds of donor countries and makes a mockery of local initiatives. No proclamation of World Peace can make local communities peaceful unless concrete actions are taken by local people themselves to advance the cause of peace. It is in this context that the study advocates the conceptualization of the human peace model which is premised on the deep-rooted values of African solidarity and apparent in the ability to share God-given talents with others

irrespective of creed, nationality, or race. This bottom-up approach allows local communities and nations to take the driver' seat in providing sustainable solutions to their problems.

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