



The future of peace in Africa: complexities of local conflict(s) and liberal peace interventions

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that a systematic understanding of local populations and their worldviews of what constitute peace – as expressed in their norms of relations holds promise for the future of peace in Africa. Africa continues to be the centre of international efforts at peacebuilding. These efforts at best have achieved mixed results, while barely addressing the root causes of violent conflicts by transforming state-society relations that fosters inclusivity and assures the progress of the collective regardless of geographic, social, economic, and political differentiations. To achieve this, it is important for actors in the peacebuilding industry to emphasise the local as fundamental to building durable peace. This stems from the knowledge that all societies embody the idea of peace with different connotations. Such worldviews are important starting points for post-conflict peacebuilding efforts that portends for the collective good. In this article, the Bimbilla case shows how local spaces that have suffered violent conflicts have inbuilt ideational and normative structures that can be used to address the anomaly of state-society relations. This is indicative of the many conflict and post-conflict spots in Africa. Emphasising the norms of the locale as a critically anchor to effective contemporary peacebuilding, and the future of durable peace in Africa.

Keywords: Leadership, Conflicts, Chieftaincy, Northern Ghana, Peacebuilding

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, Africa remains prone to conflict arising out of inter-related sets of societal constraints: political, social, and economic. It is home to the highest number of raging inter and intra-state conflicts currently.³ According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), Africa is presently home to nearly half – 25 of the world's 54 active state-based conflicts (see figure 1). Furthermore, West Africa and Central Africa constitute the dominant conflict-prone regions of Africa

by accounting for more than half of the continent's active state-based conflicts. The attendant insecurities and instabilities continue to make the continent a key theatre of peace initiatives by the international peace and aid community working directly or indirectly through their local collaborating actors. In essence, intra-state conflicts are triggered and driven by relational issues of the locale. According to Dürschmidt, the locale is a “medium for ‘time and space distinction’, characterised by the intersection of presence and absence... to new forms of

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³ See Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2022)

https://ucdp.uu.se/downloads/charts/graphs/pdf_22/armedconf_by_region.pdf

situatedness beyond a nostalgic understating of “home”⁴. In this study, the locale is framed as the composite of everyday inter-relations – conscious and unconscious, embedded in the history-making of a people. Despite recent emergence and involvement of rising powers in the international arena such as China, India, Russia and Turkey in the conflict, peace, security and development nexus in the Sahel, Horn, Central and Southern Africa regions, there continues to be Anglo-Saxon ideological dominance in the framing of peacebuilding interventions at both the micro, meso, and macro strata of African states. Much of the overriding ideational foundation of the many peace intervention activities is undergirded by the Kantian thesis of liberalism, which posits that the creation of western-liberal state prototypes in Africa will lead to less violent conflicts and advance the collective progress of society. In fact, the articulation of this western-liberal episteme is anchored in hyper-deductive teleological transplantation of best practices. With this in mind, significant resources have been channelled into peace and peace-related programs by multi-lateral and bilateral institutions headquartered in western capitals such as the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, DFID, UN-WOMEN among others. In some instances, peace and conflict interventions have been funded by notable international non-governmental organizations in the peace industry such as the Save the Children Foundation and Care International.

Yet, the evidence from the various peace interventions in Africa and elsewhere suggest they have yet to produce the ‘expected’ outcomes.⁵ In a way, the continuous conception of what constitutes peace from Anglo-Saxon ideational perspectives continues to de-historicize and decontextualize what peace is and should be or the practice of peacebuilding. It is also imperative to prioritize how such interventions should be pursued in recognition of the diversity that embodies the locale. In this sense, Africa is framed by Western-based institutions and their collaborating local agents as a geography of peoples with a market value that needs to be managed

and integrated into a ‘western-liberal-civilisation’. Thus, Africa is construed as the bottom-billion problem for which the Western countries and institutions are ‘responsible’ for solving – a continuity of the (neo)colonial civilizing mission. African states need to be ‘managed’ through policy interventions to make them ‘worthy’ of participating in the international order for the benefit of corporate capital accumulation that has become the ethos of the current neoliberal order⁶. Rethinking this ideational gaze to peacebuilding is crucial to the future of effective governance and development in Africa.

The contention here is that Africa, like any geographical space, is an ideational creation that must be understood within its formativeness. We argue that the solution to the root causes of violent conflict is embedded in the historical manipulative or exploitative state-society relations that occasions violence. Thus, any attempts at addressing conflict must be fundamentally informed by the mutating nature of societal relations and their influences thereof. Historically, and at present, Africa is politically, geographically, and socioeconomically a co-constitutive of cephalous and acephalous agonistic societies. Hence, state-formation, statehood or nationhood must be understood from this agonistic perspective, which recognizes the multiplex character of social, political, and economic identities and relations. This provides a legitimate basis to question the inner logic of the extant consensus-oriented interventions pursued by the dominant actors in the peace industry. Similarly, public policy in whatever form must be foregrounded by this constitutive ideational source of Africa.

A crucial strand to building inclusive local peace in African societies is engaging the normative relational dynamics between leaders and followers. The nature of conversations that shape norms of relations are context-specific. Hence to address the triggers of conflict in ways that ensure such issues are transformed requires attention on the relational nature of leadership – how persons who lead in society building legitimacy and animates

⁴ Dürschmidt, Jörg. (2013) *Everyday lives in the global city: The delinking of locale and milieu*. (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 2 (quotations original).

⁵ Willett, Susan (2005), ‘New barbarians at the gate: Losing the liberal peace in Africa’ *Review of African Political Economy*, 32(106), pp. 569-594; Richmond, Oliver P. (2011), ‘Critical Agency Resistance and a Post-Colonial Civil Society’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 46(4), pp. 419-440; Richmond, Oliver P. (2015), ‘Dilemmas of a hybrid nation: negative or positive?’ *Cooperation and Conflict* 50(1), pp. 50-68; Pugh, M., 2013. *The UN, Peace, and Force* (London: Routledge); Mac Ginty, Roger and Richmond, Oliver P. (2009), *The Liberal Peace and Post-War Reconstruction. Myth or Reality*, 1st Edition, (London: Routledge); Richmond, Oliver P. and Roger Mac Ginty (2020), ‘Peacebuilding and Legitimacy: Some Concluding

Thoughts’ *Local Legitimacy and International Peace Intervention* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press); Richmond and Mac Ginty (2020), pp. 216.; Ikpe, Eka, Abiodun A., and Kamau Nyokabi (2021) “Beyond liberal institution (re) building: conversations on peacebuilding and state building in Sierra Leone.” *Conflict, Security & Development* 21(4) pp. 431-453.

⁶ Pugh, Michael (2013), “The problem-solving and critical paradigms.” In *Routledge handbook of peacebuilding*, pp. 28-41. (London: Routledge); Richmond, Oliver P., Stefanie Kappler, and Annika Björkdahl (2015), “The ‘field’ in the age of intervention: Power, legitimacy, and authority versus the ‘local’.” *Millennium* 44(1); Chandler, David (2006) *Empire in denial: the politics of state-building* (London: Pluto) Willett, (2005), pp. 56-594

authority as part of state-society relations. The extent to which persons in position of authority build trust and identify with the everyday of the people offers a pathway to kneading together effective co-existence. In part, this remains a crucial component of the policymaking and practice process in addressing post-conflict peace-making and peacebuilding issues. According to Olonisakin while

the intervention process of “institution building focus in the UN peacebuilding agenda does not preclude leadership dimensions, it is often not in policy practitioners’ direct view”⁷. The inclusion of leadership that revolves around the normativity of particular spaces presents a pragmatic approach peacebuilding process.

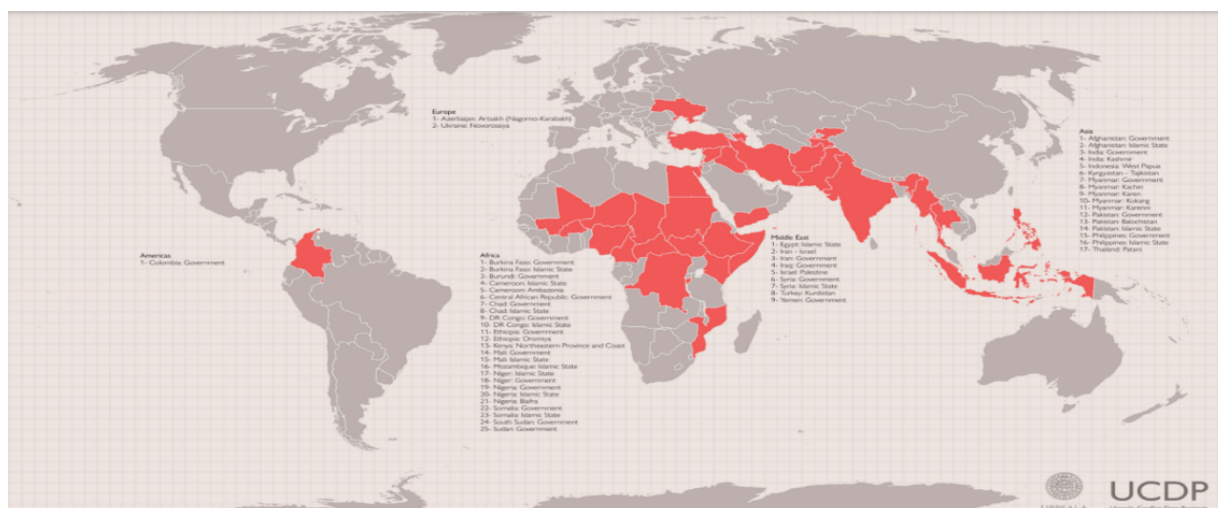


Fig. 1: Active state-based conflicts in 2021
Source: Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) (2022)

What does peace mean in Africa as an ideational space? And what is the feasibility of a contextualised connotation of peace for the collective good? What is the role of leadership in the conscious application of such framings of peace in conflict prone communities? To begin a journey of understanding this, we must first examine the past and present mundane triggers of conflicts. Centrally, this paper seeks to emphasise the unusefulness of the current technical or managerial logic of liberal peace in Africa. Further, we will show how the indigenisation of ideas of peace presents a more robust approach to securing the future of peace in Africa. To do this, the paper adopts a single-case study approach to weave the central gist of the paper. This research is a qualitative single case-study. A single case study is typically an 'empirical inquiry'⁸, employed to understand or present counter explanations of issues, or the falsification of hypotheses, capable of replication with multiple case

study designs, and useful for generalizations⁹. The principal method used for collecting primary data for the study was interviews. This was supplemented with archival materials and secondary literature. Hence, this research approach represents an effective methodology to enquire and understand complex policy issues in the everyday world; “to encourage active learning...that demonstrate theorizing that is situated in real-life historical and contextual details of human action.”¹⁰ This approach has been used by sociologists, anthropologists, and other social scientists to make meaning of people's lived experiences, by understanding the social and cultural context of their worldview. The importance of using this methodological approach is to generate knowledge about an issue by gaining insight into how a society, or communities and individuals interpret and

7 Olonisakin, Funmi, (2017) 'Towards re-conceptualising leadership for sustainable peace.' *Leadership and Developing Societies* 2 (1), pp 1-30.

⁸ Yin, Robert. (2014). " *Case study research: Design and methods* (London: Sage)

⁹ Harrison, Helena, Birks Melanie, Richard Franklin, and Mills Jane (2017), 'Case study research: Foundations and methodological orientations' In *Forum qualitative*

Sozialforschung/Forum: qualitative social research 18(1), pp. 1-17;
Flyvbjerg, Bent (2011), 'Case study.' *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* 4 pp. 306-316

¹⁰ Yanow, Dvora, Schwartz-Shea Peregrine, and Freitas Maria J. (2008), 'Case study in political science' In *Encyclopedia in Case Study Research*, pp. 108-113. (London: Sage); Harrison, Birks, Richard, and Mills (2017), pp. 1-17

attribute meaning(s) to their lived experiences¹¹. Policy-wise, it helps bureaucrats to analyse contextual information and offer meaning-centred policy options that aid inclusive state-society relations progressively. Additionally, this paper adopts Parson's ideational approach to knowledge to discursively trace how indigenised notions of peace is a *useful approach to securing the future of peace on the continent*¹².

This paper tries at advancing our knowledge on building inclusive peace in Africa. Using the Northern Region of Ghana as a case study, we take a critical look at the logic underpinning peacebuilding practices in Africa. Our contention is that the plethora of unresolved conflicts on the continent can be attributed to the ideational underpinning of the policy practices and interventions adopted to address them. Hence, we question the notion and implementation failures preferred by the peace industry, because such a thought invariably leads to replication of failed logics and ends up *problematizing the intervened population*. Currently, the Northern Region of Ghana is home to myriad unresolved conflicts. This has led to several interventionist programs by both the national government and other international governmental and non-governmental organizations. On one count, these interventionist's efforts to address the ongoing conflicts, contestations and grievances are commendable. However, the inability of these efforts to translate into sustainable solutions for resolving the numerous conflicts in the region may be attributable to the transposition of what constitutes 'peace'. This alters the role of local norms and institutions as a crucial software in conflict resolution and has beguilingly given credence to the wave of 'local turn' within the peace industry.

Furthermore, this leads to both institutional inefficiencies and perfunctory policy practices by the many actors involved in the peacebuilding process. Also, this hinders the quest for relative stability and inclusive development in the region. Among others, the recurrence of the Konkomba-Nanumba conflict among others makes the region insecure. The focus of this paper in the more recent Bimbilla conflict in the Northern Region of Ghana as a

referent case to unpack the critical place of the local in securing peace in Africa. It bears noting that Northern Ghana is the epicentre of violent and durable conflicts in Ghana, and the Northern Region is the hotbed of conflicts in the three regions that constitute Northern Ghana. Out of the 35 violent conflicts that took place in Northern Ghana from 1981-2021, 26 occurred in the Northern Region. These conflicts range from inter-ethnic and intra-dynasty (regicide) hostilities. For instance, the 1994 Konkomba-Nanumba conflict is reckoned to be the most violent inter-ethnic conflict in Ghana as it recorded an estimated 2000-20,000 casualties.¹³ Indeed, the Rwanda and Somali genocides muted the international significance of this historical conflict in post-independent Ghana. Thus, it is not surprising that the Northern Region of Ghana has witnessed the most state-led, international, and local interventions to resolve the recurring conflicts. Importantly, Torto notes that these interventions have largely been driven by liberal conflict resolution initiatives such as negotiated settlements and peace accords¹⁴. Indeed, these liberal peace undertakings are akin to what Olonisakin refers to as the 'failure of leadership' by international peace actors.¹⁵ Similarly, MacGinty and Richmond¹⁶ and Chandler problematization of liberal peace practices in post-conflict countries in Africa as elite-based and consensus-building bias.¹⁷

The paper is divided into four main parts besides this introductory section, followed by the conclusion. The next section provides an overview of the liberal peacebuilding and its application to conflict resolution. This is followed by a justification of the local turn in peacebuilding. The subsequent section provides a historical introduction to the referent case, with the aim of establishing the importance of the embeddedness of inclusive peace in the local. Section four contains a presentation of the Bimbilla conflict in Northern Ghana that in many aspects symbolises the historical causes of many intra-state conflicts on the continent of Africa. Next, we, provide insights into liberal peace interventions undertaken by the Government of Ghana and Civil Society Organizations in ensuring peace is restored in Bimbilla and its inadequacies. We also discuss the

¹¹ Johansson, Rolf (2003), 'Case study methodology', *Open House International* 32(3) pp. 22-24; Simons, Helen (2009), *Case study research in Practice* (London, Sage publications).

¹² Parsons, Craig (2007), *How to map arguments in political science* (Oxford, Oxford University Press).

¹³ Bogner, Artur (2009), "The peace process in the wake of Ghana's Northern conflict. Its course and conditions for success." (Berlin: LIT Verlag), pp. 41-62.

¹⁴ Torto, Eric O. (2013), *Securing the Northern Regions of Ghana? Development Aid and Security Interventions*. Unpublished PhD Thesis.

¹⁵ Olonisakin, 'Funmi. (2015). Re-conceptualising Leadership for effective peacemaking and human security in Africa. *The Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, 37(1).

¹⁶ Mac Ginty, R., & Richmond, Oliver. (2016). The fallacy of constructing hybrid political orders: a reappraisal of the hybrid turn in peacebuilding. *International Peacekeeping*, 23(2), 219-239.

¹⁷ Chandler, D. (2015). Resilience and the 'everyday': beyond the paradox of 'liberal peace'. *Review of international studies*, 41(1), 27-48.

normative usefulness of the local turn in peacebuilding in ensuring effective peace, with insights from respondents. The concluding section teases out the feasibility and fundamental nature of the local turn in securing the future of Africa.

2. THE LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING – AN OVERVIEW

Historically, inherent in communal relations is cooperation and competition over resources and values, the contest of ideas, beliefs, and needs, as it relates to assumed goals of either a group, community or as it may relate to others. Similarly, communities the world over have evolved context-specific mechanisms for resolving issues of conflict arising out of societal competition. It is our approach that what constitutes peace is informed by normative views or assumptions of what the term embodies. Many a times, both academics, researchers and policymakers subconsciously hold deeply patterned views of how to interpret and process concepts. Indeed, it is important to reflect on how we unpack such concepts.¹⁸ In particular, do we process the term ‘peacebuilding’ with a particular epistemic assumption, worldview, or conflict in mind? In applying liberal peacebuilding policies to conflict management, do some conflict(s) appear more manageable, solvable, or have better outcomes than others, and if so, why? This emphasis on what understanding is placed on peacebuilding calls for a look beyond universalised technocratic framings of peacebuilding and state-building practices, interventions, initiatives, projects, and programs.¹⁹ In adopting a context-specific normative understanding of peace, there is the need to place salience on the culturally specific cognitive sets of ideas and structures that shape peacebuilding practices. As current peacebuilding interventions, policies, and practices embody Anglo-American ideological notions that influence how policies are made to resolve specific conflicts in ways that are

difficult to notice.²⁰ Liberal peacebuilding and the associated neoliberal state-building practices carries a sanguinity that believes Anglo-American norms and institutions can be transplanted to other societies and perfected to fix conflictual issues. Yet, this has been near impossible to achieve in many of the conflict theatres that have received liberal peace interventions such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, Timor – Leste etc.²¹ Thus, although many of the liberal peace interventions are well-intentioned, they carry along with them immense cultural baggage.²²

Since the beginning of Europeanisation of the world especially from the 16th Century, there have been constant attempts at supplanting society-specific ways of mediating and addressing conflict with Eurocentric ideas.²³ In recent times, since the end of the Cold War, Africa remains the theatre of peace initiatives by the international community, working directly or indirectly through their local collaborating actors. Much of the overriding ideational foundation of the many peace activities has been the Kantian liberal logic of liberalism. This posits that the creation of western-liberal state prototypes in Africa will lead to less violent conflicts and advance the collective progress of society.²⁴

Immanuel Kant notes that a powerful and enlightened nation constituted on a republican status will provide the focal point around which all other nations will associate and corporate in the interest of perpetual international peace.²⁵ In espousing Kant’s liberal postulation on peaceful coexistence, Michael Doyle contends that liberal peace policies for post-conflict peacebuilding have the predictive capacity of reconstructing societies in a modern liberal frame. Seen this way, Doyle, Paris, Ignatieff and other liberal peace advocates maintain that the orthodoxy of liberal peace practices position states in the global system such that it allows for the easy diffusion of the liberal ethos of governance and economic reforms – claimed as the only means to achieving the needs of humanity²⁶. Also, this approach to peacebuilding secures

¹⁸ Mac Ginty, Roger (2013), ‘Look who’s talking: terrorism, dialogue and conflict transformation’, *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 6(1) pp. 216-223.

¹⁹ Ibid; Duffield, Mark (2014), *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed books Ltd); Chandler, David (2015), ‘Rethinking the Conflict-Poverty Nexus: From Securitising Intervention to Resilience’, *Stability: international journal of security and development*, 4(1), pp. 13; Sabaratnam, Meera (2011), ‘International Relations in Dialogue...but can we change the subjects? A typology of decolonizing strategies for the study of world politics’, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 39(3), pp.781-803; Sabaratnam, Meera (2013), ‘Avatars of Eurocentrism in the critique of the liberal peace’, *Security Dialogue* 44(3).

²⁰ Mac Ginty (2013), pp. 216-223 Chandler (2015), pp.13

²¹ Richmond, Oliver P. (2009), ‘Becoming Liberal, Unbecoming Liberalism: Liberal-Local Hybridity via the Everyday as a Response to the Paradoxes of Liberal Peacebuilding’, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 3(3), pp. 324-344; Richmond, Oliver P. (2013), ‘Failed State building versus Peace Formation’, *Cooperation and Conflict* 48(3), pp. 378-400

²² Mac Ginty and Richmond (2009), pp...?

²³ Sabaratnam (2011), pp. 781-803

²⁴ Doyle, Michael W. (1997), *Ways of War and Peace: Realism, Liberalism and Socialism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co)

²⁵ Kant, Immanuel. (1795), *Toward perpetual peace. In Theories of Federalism: A Reader.* pp. 87-99. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan).

²⁶ Paris, Roland (2020), ‘Saving liberal peacebuilding’ *Review of international studies* 36 (2) pp. 337-365; Doyle, Michael W. (1997) *Ways of war and peace.* Vol. 219. New York: WW Norton.; Doyle,

states against what they term the 'illiberal other' – states that do not religiously follow the liberal scripts of organising society; and thereby preventing the possibility of conflict. Taking cognisance of the domineering posture of international institutions, Doyle further notes that the global design of economic and political institutions are needed to compel non-western states to choose between liberalisation and state decay. Hence states that go through conflicts are considered dysfunctional and as such need peacebuilding programs to modernise them into liberal entities to fit into the global liberal architecture of civilised states.

In effect, Kant's liberal ideas of a peaceful world embodies liberal internationalism as the overriding framework for political civilisation and economic development²⁷. Consequently, peacebuilding, and later state-building policies and practices which emerged in the early 1990s after the end of the Cold War, prioritised political and economic liberalization as the main policy frameworks for resolving civil wars, through the roll-out of interventions by international organizations, Western state agencies and transnational civil society.²⁸ Concurrently, significant resources have been channelled into peace and peace-related programs since the early 1990s by these actors and national-level state governments. However, these state-building policies have recorded a mix of significant deficits in the attempts at reconstruction and building peace.²⁹ This has been argued as due to the technocratic westernized conception of peace and policies initiated to achieve the same.³⁰

There is a growing volume of critical scholarship that emphasises the place of social norms: local customs, cultures, identities, and histories as a robust framework for achieving emancipatory peace³¹ and inclusive development.³² This partly reflects a recognition that the westernised conception of what constitutes peace has produced substantial inconsistent outcomes of inequality, poverty, and underdevelopment as is recorded in Timor-Leste, Bosnia, Sierra Leone, and Burundi, among others. Equally liberal peace practices have courted significant defence in the face of its obvious flaws³³, with a call on the 'local' although this call situates the local as an appendix to the liberal peace.³⁴ And in some cases, the local is pitched as a resistance to the neoliberal state-building policies of the major international organisations.³⁵ Relatedly, the literature that calls for alternatives to liberal peacebuilding and its associated neoliberal state-building policies has fallen prey to the orthodoxy of Western epistemological parameters.³⁶ Like concepts of 'justice', 'poverty', or 'time' which have context-specific understanding, peace is equally subjected to different localised meanings. Whereas in many societies in Northern Ghana 'poverty' requires thinking about the absence of communal substance which may be because of natural or human-induced factors. Likewise, the thinking of what constitutes peace has divided connotations in different non-western societies, usually evoking norms of conciliation, evolved over centuries. Hence, Anglo-Saxon epistemology for understanding of peace construction thrives on third-party interventions and interests³⁷. In this respect, the technocratic program of liberal peacebuilding is premised on this minimalist sense of intervention to

Michael W. (2008) "Liberalism and foreign policy." *Foreign policy: Theories, actors, cases*, pp. 49-70.; Ignatieff, Michael (2003). *Empire lite: nation building in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan*. Random House.

²⁷ Paris, Roland (1997), 'Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism', *International Security* 22(2), pp. 54-89; Paris, Roland. (2010), 'Saving liberal peacebuilding' *Review of international studies* 36(2), pp. 337-365; Doyle, (1997).

²⁸ Lewis, David. (2018) 'The myopic Foucauldian gaze: discourse, knowledge and the authoritarian peace', In *Knowledge and Expertise in International Interventions*, pp. 118-140. (London: Routledge); Newman, Edward (2013), "The violence of state building in historical perspective: implications for peacebuilding." *Peacebuilding* 1(1), pp. 141-157; Richmond, Oliver. (2014) *Failed state building: intervention and the dynamics of peace formation*. (London: Yale University Press)

²⁹ Ikpe, Eka, Abiodun Alao, and Kamau Nyokabi, (2021) "Beyond liberal institution (re) building: conversations on peacebuilding and state building in Sierra Leone.", *Conflict Security & Development* 21(4), pp. 431-453; Richmond, Oliver (2014). "Peace during and after the age of intervention." *International Peacekeeping* 21(4), pp. 509-519.

³⁰ Sabaratnam (2011), pp. 781-803; Chandler (2015), pp. 13

³¹ Lidén, Kristoffer (2009), 'Building peace between global and local politics: The cosmopolitical ethics of liberal

peacebuilding' *International Peacekeeping* 16(5) pp. 616-634; Olonisakin, Funmi (2017), Making a case for reframing narratives of peacebuilding in Africa. Framing Paper presented at the African Leadership Centre methodology workshop convened on 3rd February 2014, Nairobi; Olonisakin, F., Kifle, A.A. and Muteru, A., (2021). Shifting ideas of sustainable peace towards conversation in state-building. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 21(4), pp.409-430.

³² Torto, Eric O. (2013), "Securing the Northern Region of Ghana? Development Aid and Security Interventions"

³³ Paris (2010), pp. 337-365

³⁴ Lidén (2009), pp.616-634; Chandler, David (2015), "Resilience and the 'everyday': beyond the paradox of 'liberal peace'." *Review of international studies* 41(1), pp. 27-48.

³⁵ Chandler (2015), pp. 13

³⁶ Lidén (2009), pp. 616-634; Mac Ginty, R. (2008). Indigenous peace-making versus the liberal peace. *Cooperation and conflict*, 43(2), 139-163.; Torto, Obodai (2020), "Analysis of Community-Driven Human Security Interventions in Africa: The Case of the Northern Region of Ghana." In *The Palgrave Handbook of African Political Economy*, pp. 413-432. (Cham, Palgrave Macmillan)

³⁷ Sabaratnam (2011), pp. 781-803.

create a semblance of governability and 'civility'. Disregarding society – specific forms of what constitutes peace, neither are such programs informed or determined by its recipients.³⁸ Hence, when leadership sufficiently understands the complexities of the locale, beyond avatars of Anglo-American worldviews, it offers a robust mechanism for effectively addressing the triggers of conflict for inclusive peace and development.

2.2. Why the shift to the local turn in peacebuilding?

This continuous practice of decontextualizing what peace is and should be is inherently problematic. Africa from the European modern avatar of distinctiveness is seen as a non-rational, homogenous geography of peoples and not a collection of ideas of peoples. According to Mark Duffield, peacebuilding is an instrument of 'global liberal governance' for the self-preservation of an exclusive transnational network of governmental and non-governmental actors, hypocritically preserving their self-interests in the name of global peace, security, and development.³⁹ It bears noting that the very dismal outcomes of the technical social engineering approach to peacebuilding necessitated the shift to the 'local'. The history of this shift dates back to the early 1990s after the failed interventions in Rwanda, Somalia, Liberia, and other conflict-ridden countries. Indeed, those interventions were largely expert driven with standardized tool kit interventions that at best yielded ephemeral peace.

These universal or positivistic interventions sync with what Timothy Donais calls the rule of experts relative to external engagements in Africa.⁴⁰ Notably, the elite based interventions were problematized for the ill-fated negative peace that largely excluded or marginalized the acclaimed local people of the various sites of interventions as noted by Lederach. In fact, Lederach further reified local leaders as experiential knowledge of the particularities of the conflict dynamics and whose knowledge would be crucial in the quest for durable peace in the conflict zones⁴¹. Notably, this focus on local leaders raises a conceptual question about the selectivity of who constitutes the local. This has the tendency to

marginalize vital local people in the quest towards forging sustainable peace and reconciliation.

Additionally, Leonardsson, Rudd, Höglund and Fjelde aver that the failures of the interventions were attributed to over-centralization and neglect of the local.⁴² Hence, a new direction of international peace operations that emerged in the early 2000s prioritized the building of local capacity and ownership. A pertinent issue that is rarely addressed by these mongers of the 'local turn' is the historical structural and evolving complexity of conflicts and peacebuilding dynamics in specific conflict or fragile zones. As a matter of fact, liberal peace foregrounding the relevance of 'local actors' constitutes a simplistic but tactical subjectification of indigenes with Anglo-American normative assumptions of 'peacebuilding'.

Furthermore, the fervour for the local turn from the vantage point of official interveners was the need to ensure the sustainability of interventions to promote and achieve durable peace. This programmatic orientation or policy stance emanates from the need to actualize the key elements of Galtung's Structural Violence theory of conflict such as addressing grievances of local people. Hence, a better way to address these grievances is by embedding local actors. Again, rarely do such technocratic short-term policy interventions help ameliorate the adverse historical and relational processes that produce debilitating discrimination, marginalization, and exclusionary phenomena among different ethnic groups in conflict affected communities. Chandler rightly links these 'local turn-oriented interventions' as unambiguous reinforcement of the technical driven linear solutions to homogenized local people of the conflict-ridden countries in the Global South⁴³. We further aver that this centripetal preference for the local invariably is a reinforcement of the assumed racial superiority of interveners as the local continues to be the source of the problem of the conflict and security rigidities. Thus, like the colonial 'mandated' trusteeship civilizing mission, the local framed as the *other* must be made amenable to the tutelage of Western 'civic' norms, values, and institutional development to achieve peaceful co-existence in conflict-affected societies.

³⁸Lidén, (2009), pp. 616-634.

³⁹ Duffield, Mark (2007), *'Development, security and unending war: governing the world of peoples'* (Cambridge: Polity Press); Duffield (2014),

⁴⁰ Donais, Timothy. (2002). "The politics of privatization in post-Dayton Bosnia." *Southeast European Politics* 3, no. 1. pp. 3-19.

⁴¹ Lederach, John P. (1998), *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press); Lederach, John Paul. (2005). *The moral*

imagination: The art and soul of building peace. Oxford University Press.

⁴² Leonardsson, Hannah and Rudd, Gustav (2015), 'The 'local turn' in peacebuilding. A literature review of effective and emancipatory peacebuilding', *Third World Quarterly*, 5(36), pp. 825-839; Höglund, Kristine and Fjelde, Hanne (2011), *Building Peace, Creating Conflict? Conflictual Dimensions of Local and International Peacebuilding* (Lund, Nordic Academic Press).

⁴³Chandler (2015), pp. 27-48.

Another predisposing factor that undergirds the second wave of preference for the local turn relates to the failed state building and peacebuilding approaches in Timor – Leste, Sierra Leone, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The Anglo-American imposed liberal universal democracy mantra in war-ravaged countries rather exacerbated the conflict proclivities.⁴⁴ We posit that these contradictory outcomes of the external interventions were significantly deficient in understanding the historically complex social relations that underpinned the variegated processes of state formation in those war-torn states.

Notwithstanding this privileging of the local by peacebuilding and aid industry actors, legitimate critical issues of conceptual clarity has been raised by scholars. Particularly, the local could be deemed as represented by domestic NGOs, community leaders, non-state actors and non-elite actors. These institutions act as agents of Western institutions in so-called 'Third World' countries to ensure the post-9/11 'newness' or tenet of liberal imperialism is maintained at the national and sub-national levels of states, to guarantee their participation in the 'new' liberal order.⁴⁵ In effect, this evocation of the local creates a conceptual fuzziness as the local is imbued with uncertainty relative to who and where the local is. This enervates the emancipatory ideals imputed to the local people by international interveners. Furthermore, Paffenholz and MacGinty have raised questions about the possibility of the selective local people to be co-opted by the international peace builders in view of the extant differential power relations.⁴⁶ As such a normative subaltern approach to peacebuilding where communal norms of relations are engaged to transform the sources of conflict(s) is fundamental to progressive peace, security, and development.

3. EMPIRICAL CASE: PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION OF 'NEW' TENSIONS IN NORTHERN GHANA

Northern Ghana is mainly constituted by ranked ethnic acephalous – communities without centralised and hierarchical political authority and cephalous groups – communities organised along centralised and distinct

political forms of authority. The pre-colonial political systems of these groups could be classified into centralized and non-centralized polities. More importantly, the pre-colonial contestations between the different polities endured through colonial rule. As recounted by Staniland, the Dagomba (cephalous) had on an average of a decade constantly waged armed struggles against the Konkomba (acephalous ethnic group) since the 15th century⁴⁷. The first invasions of Konkomba occurred, on average, 10 years into the reign of every Dagomba paramount chief since the mid-16th century, beginning with the regime of Na Sitobu.⁴⁸ These periodic conflicts undermined the colonial administration's conception of harmonious and egalitarian pre-colonial social relations among the diverse groups of people. However, besides the inter-ethnic contestations between the Konkomba and Dagomba, there has equally been intra-group fighting among the Konkomba.⁴⁹

The many intra-tribal fights among the Konkomba may be linked to what Torto terms the 'corporate nature of their clans which thrive on partnership and kithship'.⁵⁰ This way, clans of the same ethnicity are morally bound and obliged to support fellow clan members during inter-ethnic conflicts. Linked to this moral obligation to support clan members or groups, Tait explains that 'inter-tribal feuds among the Konkomba' would rage for aeons.⁵¹ Tait further explains that the threat of fighting is equally used as a social control mechanism to ensure group compliance or good behaviour.⁵² Accordingly, the propensity for fighting among the Konkomba needs to be understood from the perspective of their value systems and ecological circumstances. Such deeper considerations are required by policymakers especially, in terms of conflict transforming and building an inclusive society where groups coexist peacefully in Northern Ghana.

In some instances, the lack of contextual understanding of the norms of the societies in Northern Ghana, especially the constant fighting among the Konkomba, led the colonial administration to institute simplistic containment measures. For instance, to end the frequent intra-Konkomba violent conflicts, Chief Commissioner

⁴⁴ Chandler, David (2013), 'International State building and the Ideology of Resilience', *Politics* 33(4), pp. 276-284; Paffenholz, Thania (2015), 'Unpacking the local turn in peacebuilding: A critical assessment towards an agenda for future research', *Third World Quarterly* 36(5), pp.857-874; Mac Ginty, Roger (2015), 'Where is the local? Critical localism and peacebuilding', *Third World Quarterly* 36(5), pp. 840-856.

⁴⁵ Okafor, Obiora C. (2021), *Re-defining legitimate statehood: international law and state fragmentation in Africa*. BRILL.; Okafor, Obiora Chinedu. (2005), "Newness, imperialism, and

international legal reform in our time: a TWAIL perspective." *Osgoode Hall LJ* 43: 171.

⁴⁶ Paffenholz (2015), pp. 857-874; Mac Ginty (2015), pp. 840-856

⁴⁷ Staniland, Martin (1975). *The lions of Dagbon: Political Change in Northern Ghana*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.4

⁴⁹ Torto (2020), pp. 413-432

⁵⁰ ibid

⁵¹ Tait, David (1961), *The Konkomba of Northern Ghana* (London: Oxford University Press).

⁵² ibid

C.H. Armitage adopted several strategies. First, the government instituted increased police patrols within Konkomba villages.⁵³ Secondly, the government banned the possession of bows and arrows (bow and arrow ordinance) in the territory. And, finally, it 'implemented movement restrictions into French Togoland (created after the Milner-Simon Agreement in 1919 after Germany's defeat in World War One)'.⁵⁴ In recent times, the government of Ghana has adopted similar measures to mitigate the recurring conflicts in Northern Ghana. However, as was the case during the colonial period, these measures have not deterred the Konkombas from maintaining their social practice of inter-tribal collaborations. With regards to other conflicts in the region, periodic restriction on movements have not only been violated with impunity, but it has also done little to reduce the propensity of conflicts. For the colonial administration, a probable solution to the problem of the constant fighting among the Konkomba was to impose Dagomba rule on the Konkomba.⁵⁵ To animate this policy proposal, the colonial administrator Armitage mandated the Ya-Naa – paramount King of the Dagomba – to enforce the ban on bows and arrows and exact fines on culprits. The delegation of this enforcement mandate to the Ya-Na exacerbated the conflictual relations between the two groups – Dagomba and Konkomba.⁵⁶

Consequently, there is a need to understand conflict affected societies from their pre-colonial societies to current times in a nuanced perspective, instead of relying on colonial configurations of political representations. Essentially, this historically situated/grounded approach would enable rethinking of this myth of novelty as a cardinal inner logic of many liberal interventions. In this sense, Mamdani's caution against the thinking of colonial political impositions inherited into the present times is worthy of note. He suggests that 'at no point was there a centralized juridical institution with exclusive territorial control and the right to demand customary rights and entitlements over a long period of time'.⁵⁷ Accordingly, the conflation of centralized kingdoms with administrative efficiency and political control resulted in widespread abuse against non-centralised societies.⁵⁸ The resulting abuse constantly heightened and structured pre-colonial tensions, particularly between the minority and majority groups as the transfer of authority by the colonial administration to chiefs in centralised states was

poorly exercised. This resulted in what Mamdani calls 'decentralized despotism,' which highlights the incompatible interests between the colonial administration and the chiefs.⁵⁹

To some extent, the sharpened tension between these societies arose out of the corrupt interests of chiefs desiring to accumulate wealth without ensuring the effective implementation of colonial order as consistent with the community doctrine. On the part of the Konkomba the colonial policies jeopardised the essence of their autonomy – culturally and politically, jeopardised by the practice of extortion by imposed chiefs. The most notable resistance resulted in the 1940 'Cow War' when Konkomba attacked and killed the chief of Jagbel for suspicion of conspiring with British Veterinary Officers to kill cattle owned by the Konkomba.⁶⁰ Talton records the cause of this war as 'undue fines imposed on the Konkomba cattle owner for failure to have his cattle vaccinated'. This practice of extortion came in the form of the chief demanding more than a bull for this violation instead of the mandatory £10 fine.⁶¹ The chief's demand for a bull was countered by the Konkomba men, and the dispute degenerated into an attack on the village of Jagbel. In essence, the Cow War was a rejection of the colonial policy that empowered chiefs without restraining their power.⁶² In effect, the Cow War symbolized the Konkomba quest for political autonomy to curb arbitrary extortions.

This overview is symptomatic of the complex nature of conflicts in Northern Ghana, but more so in acephalous societies across the continent. In this stead, some of the intractable intra-state conflicts are rooted in such pre-colonial and colonial histories bequeathed to the contemporary state. Emphasising the need for non-linearity in peacebuilding practices as evidenced by the technocratic toolkits approach to current neoliberal peacebuilding. Contextual understanding beyond sweeping studies and analysis is needed for effective peacebuilding in post-conflict spaces.

4. CONTEMPORARY BIMBILLA CONFLICT AND PEACE INTERVENTIONS

This sub-section addresses fundamental issues associated with the causes, effects and interventions by government

⁵³ Torto, (2013).

⁵⁴ Talton, Benjamin (2010), *The politics of social change in Ghana. The konkomba struggle for political equality* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 59

⁵⁵ Torto (2013); Torto (2020), pp. 413-432

⁵⁶ *ibid*

⁵⁷ Mamdani, Mahmoud (1996), *From conquest to consent as the basis of state formation: Reflections on Rwanda*, *New Left Review* 3

⁵⁸ Torto (2020), pp. 416-432

Mamdani (1996), p. 37

⁶⁰ Torto (2020), pp. 413-432

⁶¹ Talton (2010)

⁶² Torto (2020), pp. 412-432

and civil society organizations. More importantly is the information obtained from the indigenous people about how to resolve the intractable conflicts. The more recent Bimbilla conflict in Northern Ghana is adopted as a referent case to unpack the critical place of the local in securing peace in Africa.

4.1. An overview of the Bimbilla conflict

Bimbilla is the capital town of Nanumba North District, located in the Northern Region of Ghana. It has an indisputable history of communal conflicts. Particularly amongst them is the intense Konkomba and Nanumba inter-ethnic conflict that occurred in 1994 and 1995. The root cause of the conflict was over land disputes as a derivative of the intra-dynasty succession conundrum.⁶³ According to the respondents, several lives and properties were lost during the conflict. Thus, in order to mitigate possible reprisal attacks, Nanumba minorities that settled closer to and among the majority Konkombas during the conflict migrated to areas where Nanumbas' were concentrated. The strategic location of Bimbilla made it one of the ideal destinations that people who were fleeing attacks migrated to due to the large number of Nanumba settlers.

Subsequently, Bimbilla has been experiencing varying degrees of violent clashes over a decade prior to its escalation in 1994. These violent clashes are a result of who occupies the Bimbilla skin, that is, who becomes the paramount chief of the Nanug traditional area. Prior to the contestations that characterise enskinment, Nanug traditional polity was seen among the indigenes as a well-structured chieftaincy institution within the Northern Region. Thus, Ahmed, a 75-year-old resident posits:

Hmmm! It is rather painfully pathetic that Bimbilla chieftaincy title is in this abject mess. The mode of power transition from one gate to another in the past recent times was admired by neighbouring communities. The practice of choosing an appropriate chief was well structured in procedural and ritual terms to the effortless acceptability and recognition by the diverse polities. I can confidently say that it is and was the best within the Dagbon State or tradition.⁶⁴

From field reports, it is recognized that becoming a paramount chief of Bimbilla is rotational between two gates – the Bangyili (The Bangle Gate) and the Gbumayili

(The Lion Gate) gates. Unlike the conventional norm of selecting a qualified candidate to occupy the position of a paramount chief, the practice in Bimbilla is different. To become a paramount chief from the Bangyili gate, a person from the royal family has to pass through the following key communities – Tuo-Sakpe-Gbungbalga-Chamba-Dakpam and finally to the Bimbilla paramountcy. Similarly, for a person to qualify as a paramount chief of Bimbilla from the Gbumayili gate, the person from the royal line also has to pass through Lanja-Mankayili-Beng-Lepusi-Jua-Bakpaba-Nakpaa and finally to Bimbilla. It was revealed from the field that if a person from one of the gates is a paramount chief of Bimbilla, a person from the other gate becomes the “vice” of the substantive chief. And after the substantive passes on, the “vice” becomes the next paramount chief of Bimbilla. However, after the death of Naa Abarika in 1999 who was from the Bangyilli gate, this line of succession has become a bone of contention within the Gbumayili gate.⁶⁵

This struggle over who becomes the next paramount chief of Bimbilla has been between Nakpaa-naa Salifu Dawuni with his supporters on one side and Mr. Andani Dasaana (Son of the late Bimbilla Naa Dasaana Abdulai) and his supporters on the other side – both royals represent the two gates responsible for enskinning leaders of the community. This has become more complex due to the division between the nine kingmakers who have the traditional authority to enskin the paramount chief of Bimbilla⁶⁶. The disputes between the two factions have led to several traditional and stakeholders' meetings including the Nanum Traditional Council, the Northern Regional House of chiefs and the National House of Chiefs without any possibility of resolving the disputes. Consequently, there have also been a series of litigation through the Tamale High Court and the Supreme Court of Ghana. Hence, there had been parallel rule in Bimbilla until March 2014 when Nakpaa-naa Salifu Dawuni died naturally before the verdict of the Supreme Court could be given. According to respondents, efforts to bury the deceased in Bimbilla proved futile due to resistance from the faction of Mr. Andani Dasaana. The body of the late Nakpaa-naa Salifu was then put in Yendi morgue. Subsequently, Mr. Andani was murdered in his residence by an unknown assailant on 19th June 2014.

Throughout the tussles including both legal and traditional means between the two factions, there have

⁶³ Bogner, Artur (2009), *"The peace process in the wake of Ghana's Northern conflict. Its course and conditions for success."*

⁶⁴ Interview with Ahmed, a 75-year-old man at Masaka

⁶⁵ Torto (2020), pp.413-432

⁶⁶ Tonah, Steve and Anamzoya, Alhassan S. (2016). *Managing chieftaincy and ethnic conflicts in Ghana*, (Woeli: Accra).

also been a series of violent clashes between the supporters of Nakpaa-naa Salifu Dawuni and Mr. Andani Dasaana. However, the respondents identified three major clashes that have led to enormous devastation in Bimbilla. To begin with, in attempts to bury the late Nakpaa-naa Salifu Dawuni, there were reports of gunshots which led to the halting of the burial of the deceased in 2014. Since then, the body had been in the Yendi morgue until October 2017 when the body was finally laid to rest in Bimbilla.

Secondly, what respondents referred to as “*The Bolgu Conflict*” was a violent clash that occurred in Bimbilla in 2016. This conflict was between butchers and supporters of the Mr. Andani Dasaana. According to the respondents, it is a cultural practice that the butchers of Bimbilla are expected to send a part of any animal (cow) slaughtered at the abattoir to the paramount chief as a sign of authority. However, this long-standing tradition was defied by the butchers. This defiance as perceived by the supporters of late Mr. Andani Dasaana led to tension and sporadic shooting in Bimbilla. As one elder put it this way that:

It is not just refusing to send the meat that causes the conflict. How much is even the whole cow that people will have to die because of its part. But the symbolic representation of receiving the meat from the butchers which shows a sign of recognition and legitimacy is what causes the violence.⁶⁷

In February 2017, another major clash occurred between supporters of the late Nakpaa-naa Salifu Dawuni and supporters of the late Mr. Andani Dasaana over the enskinment of sub-chiefs to smaller communities. According to field reports, about 11 people were killed in these clashes. Mostly, the vulnerable and poor are the casualties in these violent clashes.

Although the plausible cause of the conflict is centred on the chieftaincy and succession dispute, respondents were asked on what the drivers of the conflict are, that has made it protracted over a decade. In seeking answer(s) to this, respondents ascribed one of the reasons to the meddling of politicians and influential people in chieftaincy issues in Bimbilla. The primary factions in the conflict agreed that both past and current governments

have been complicit in the chieftaincy affairs. Indeed, this apparent involvement of state actors inevitably questions the reified dominance of non-state actors within such intra-dynasty conflicts. Furthermore, the pristine proclamation of local becomes deflated.⁶⁸ Thus, the local is inevitably interspersed by differentiated actors that operates at multi-scalar levels. During interaction with elders of one of the factions, a respondent stated:

Although the case was still pending in the Supreme Court, we were in this town when appointees of the past administration visit Bimbilla and pay homage to the late Mr. Andani Dasaana without given credence to the other faction [Nakpaa-naa Salifu Dawuni]. This was a direct recognition of Mr. Andani Dasaana as the paramount chief of Bimbilla traditional area which was in violation of our customs and traditions.⁶⁹

During a different interaction with some elders, another respondent had this to say:

The current government did not do due diligence in the burial of the late Nakpaa-naa Salifu Dawuni. We thought that in taking a serious decision like this [the burial of late Nakpaa-naa Salifu Dawuni in Bimbilla], proper consultation should have been done with all the parties involved. However, we only heard it when they were bringing the body to Bimbilla to be buried. But I can tell you that this is a campaign promise been implemented.⁷⁰

The nature and enforcement of formal laws in tensed spaces are relevant to the handling of the triggers of conflict. Notably, respondents revealed that the laws of Ghana in the case of the Bimbilla chieftaincy dispute are not effective. They posited that people whose actions and utterances that has caused loss of lives and instability in the Bimbilla conflict are not made to face the law and been punished. One respondent narrated this:

One thing that is prolonging this conflict is that some people have not been punished for the crime they have committed. For instance, we know people that have shot and killed their opponents in this town, but you see the security men would arrest and send them to either Tamale or Accra. Less than a year, you see them roaming in town again. Imagine if my family member was the one been killed by this person and I see him, would it

⁶⁷ Interview with Danbe, a 64-year-old Farmer

⁶⁸ Hönke, Jana and Müller, Markus-Michael (2012), ‘Governing (in) security in a postcolonial world: Transnational engagements and the worldliness of local practice’ *Security dialogue* 43(5) pp. 383-401; Mac Ginty, Roger and Richmond,

Oliver P. (2015), ‘Where now for the critique of liberal peace?’ *Cooperation and conflict*, 50(2) pp. 171-189

⁶⁹ Interview with Issah, 67-year-old retired civil servant at Masaka

⁷⁰ Interview with 57 years old Kuu-ire.

not make me agree? So, I would want to retaliate. As a result, people that see these people [perpetrators] walking free feels that if they also participate in the violence, nothing will happen to them.⁷¹

Lastly, respondents identified inadequate job opportunities in Bimbilla as a major factor that is contributing to the upsurge of violence in the area. The respondents stated that the majority of the youth are unemployed. As a result, they are usually influenced by powerful people with money who have vested interest in the chieftaincy affairs to engage in violence. Undergirding the unemployment features of Bimbilla is the perceived vertical inequalities between and within the acephalous and chieftdom groups.

4.2. *Effects of the Conflict*

It is evident from the responses that the conflict affects all facets of the people's life. First and foremost, the conflict slows development of the area. Based on the perceptions of respondents, the internally generated funds by the district assembly earmarked for providing public social and economic amenities such as boreholes, markets, and improving health facilities are diverted into providing logistics and food for the security personnel that are in Bimbilla to ensure cessation of hostilities and an atmosphere of calmness. The UNDP estimates about two million cedis (about \$180,000.00)⁷² is spent monthly on Recce and other security related expenses monthly. A respondent succinctly put it this way when he was asked if there are any effects of the conflict:

Eh! For effects, there are so many. Productivity and development got halted. The rate at which development was growing was amazing, but, due to the conflict, it has slowed and people who bought lands sold them at lower prices and moved out. Poverty is evident everywhere in Bimbilla because monies are diverted to stabilize the conflict.⁷³

Secondly, the economic activities of the town have been affected severely. According to the respondents, petty trading is the second major economic activity of the town after farming. However, traders from neighbouring communities and towns have stopped coming to Bimbilla to do business due to the intermittent violence and sporadic shootings. Again, farming which happens to be the major source of livelihood for the people has recorded

low produce due to the conflict. The respondents pointed out that farmers usually prefer staying in the house to going to the farms for fear of being attacked or killed on the farms. This is coupled with a curfew that has been imposed to minimize further escalation of the conflict. Although few people saw the significance of the curfew, a majority of the respondents argued that it has brought economic hardship to them because it affects their daily activities. The incidence of thefts also increases because of the curfew. Due to people's inability to go out or visit the farm because of fear and the curfew, a majority of the respondents have indicated that their farms have been looted and animals stolen. One respondent put it this way that:

The curfew leads to financial difficulties. Our main occupation is farming, and when the violence erupts, people cannot go to farm. The curfew also affected our jobs because you will not be able to spend the hours you want to use in the farm. During that time especially the curfew period, one was compelled to go inside from 4pm-6am. This was the time thieves also have their liberty to operate with impunity. Huh! You can't just do anything my brother. It is even now that they have reviewed the time to 10:00pm that things are better.⁷⁴

Furthermore, several lives and properties were destroyed because of the conflict. According to the respondents, properties including houses, farms and animals are destroyed as a result of the conflict. Most of these destructions are done deliberately to people perceive to belong to one of the warring factions. Respondents also reported that in addition to people having been killed from gun bullets, lots of people have also died from psychological related conditions. Due to the gunshots, indigenes especially the aged, developed conditions such as high blood pressure and heart attacks. As narrated by one of the respondents:

The conflict brings ill health such as psychological stress, heart attacks and high blood pressure. There was this Hajia selling Kooko (porridge) in the market, during the last [February 2017] fight, upon hearing the gun shots, she collapsed and died. As for this story, lots of people are aware of it.⁷⁵

Again, the education of the district is affected because of the conflict. Because of the conflict, new teachers who are posted to the town usually refuse to go for fear of being

⁷¹ Interview with Anonymous.

⁷² This amount is potentially higher given the exchange rate volatility among other factors.

⁷³ Interview with Dauda, 49 years old Civil Servant

⁷⁴ Interview with Seidu, 63 years old from Kunkuna.

⁷⁵ Interview with Mariama, 37 years trader in Masaka.

killed. Teachers that are already at post are demanding for transfers to go to different districts. Due to the intermittent violence, schools are normally closed whenever violence erupts. This tends to affect the performance of the students. In an interview with a 67-year-old educationist, he says:

It threatens the education of the area i.e. contact hours between the teachers and students are always lost anytime the shootings start and psychologically it affects the performance of the students. Teachers and other professionals are running away. The district in recent times lack teachers. Up till now we have no district director of education almost a year now. The former district director was a woman and out of fear she left. And no one is ready to accept posting to the position. This conflict is creating a structural effect on education and in future, it will affect the town.⁷⁶

Also, the social cohesion that used to exist among Nanumba is believed to have been broken because of the conflict. The respondents indicated that mutual respect which used to exist most especially towards elders has dwindled due to their support for a particular faction. In addition, marriages, families, or social groups are increasingly disintegrating as a result of contradictory views in supporting either of the factions. Young people who have been in relationships for several years and plan to marry are sometimes prevented from doing so because of their families supporting different factions. During a group discussion, this was revealed by a respondent:

Oh! Bimbilla have spoiled. In the past two to three decades, Bimbilla was like one family. There was no division, and we were each other's keepers. One could just walk into the next house and eat when you are hungry. When you have a problem, people will contribute money and help you to solve the problem. Now you just don't eat carelessly. Because they are just poisoning each other like that. Someone will also have money, and if you are going to die, because of the conflict the person will not help you.⁷⁷

Lastly, the above enumerated effects of the conflict tend to serve as push factors that cause people to relocate within and outside Bimbilla. Respondents point out that there is a new restructuring of Bimbilla Township because people are relocating to areas that their supporters are concentrated. Also, some people have migrated out of Bimbilla permanently and some engaged

in this movement temporarily. Conflicts and peace are generative practices nourished by norms and values that weaves the fabric of society. The destructive effects of violence on society can be effectively addressed when we consider those norms, institutions and practices that nourishes inter-ethnic relations.

5. INTERVENTIONS UNDERTAKEN BY THE GOVERNMENT AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS IN ENSURING PEACE IS RESTORED IN BIMBILLA

From the outset, the interventions deployed by the various state institutions are conflict resolution oriented with the aim of instituting behavioural and attitudinal change and military cum police patrols for stabilization. Thus, the National Peace Council (NPC) which is an independent State institution has been playing a significant role in ensuring that the Bimbilla conflict is resolved. During an interview with the Northern Regional Executive Secretary for NPC, it was revealed that the Council organized several meetings between stakeholders. These meetings involved the Regional Security Council, traditional leaders, and the media to dialogue on means through which the conflict can be resolved. As part of the Council's role in creating awareness among the public about the use of non-violent means of solving conflict, it also spearheaded several public campaigns through radio discussion and workshops on the need for peace in Nanung traditional area. The Council in consultation with relevant stakeholders has considered drafting a chieftaincy succession plan for Nanum. As chieftaincy disputes in the Northern part of Ghana are sometimes attributed to the absence of a clear succession plan⁷⁸, having such a plan will help minimize the controversies surrounding the Bimbilla chieftaincy skin.

Although some respondents are of the view that certain actions either directly or indirectly undertaken by respective governments have contributed to protracting the conflict, the previous and current governments have taken steps that ostensibly aimed at bringing stability to Bimbilla. First of all, the stationing of the Ghana Army and the Formed Police Unit has led to what could be described as fragile peace in Bimbilla. Also, the government's decision in consultation with other relevant stakeholders such as the Northern Region Security

⁷⁶Interview with Alhassan, 67-year-old teacher.

⁷⁷ Interview with Nashiru, 46-year-old farmer.

⁷⁸ Tonah, Steve (2012) 'The politicization of a chieftaincy conflict: The case of Dagbon, Northern Ghana' *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 21(1), pp.1-20

Council on imposing a curfew in Bimbilla during the various phases of violence brought relative calmness to the area. The presence of security personnel has been a motivating factor for some people who migrated during the violence to return to Bimbilla.

The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) has also been mediating the Bimbilla chieftaincy disputes for over a decade. WANEP in collaboration with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through the "Northern Ghana Governance Activity" project has designed and initiated a dialogue framework for the two factions. During an interview with the National Network Coordinator for WANEP-Ghana, it was revealed that prior to the initiation of this framework, it was difficult for the two factions to meet and dialogue on how to resolve the conflict. However, since the start of the dialogue process, stakeholders from both factions have met severally to dialogue on their differences and how to resolve them. Since the youth are usually the perpetrators of violence⁷⁹, WANEP also carried out a training program whereby 70 youth were trained on how they can help in peacebuilding in Bimbilla. Again, as part of the West Africa Early Warning Response Network (WARN) programme, WANEP has stationed a monitoring team in Bimbilla. This team helps in picking up signals of threats likely to culminate into violence. These threats are usually relayed to relevant state institutions for actions to be taken to avert any clashes. Although absolute peace has not been attained following the intervention of WANEP, their involvement has engendered more interest among stakeholders such as the NPC. Evidently, the intervention of peace actors operating with 'Anglo-American standardised' practices of peace intervention have been unable to understand, mitigate, manage, and effectively address the incidence of violence for a secured livelihood that progressively animates the corporate image of the locale.

5.1. Possible Remedies of the Bimbilla Conflict being suggested by Respondents

Respondents were asked how the Bimbilla chieftaincy conflict can best be resolved given that government and Civil Society Organizations have mediated severally but it keeps recurring. Respondents are of the view that until the customs and traditions of Bimbilla are followed,

Bimbilla will never experience absolute peace in the future. According to the respondents, strict compliance with the customs and traditions would imply the granting of full authority and autonomy to the elders to dialogue and choose the rightful person to the throne without external influence. This suggests that the attempted use of local people such as community leaders, religious heads, and market leaders as conduits of peace arbitrators was ineffectual, which invariably questions the authenticity and legitimacy of such actors. Also, the respondents suggested that the laid down rules such as succession lines should be followed since there are both oral and documentary evidence on how a paramount chief of Bimbilla is chosen and enskinned. A respondent says:

People are not just ready to accept and tell the truth. We have oral history that our great grandfathers pass to us. We also have past documents with the National House of Chiefs and the Regional House of Chiefs that contain how one can become a Bimbilla chief. We should follow them in bringing a lasting solution to the chieftaincy dispute.⁸⁰

Also, majority of the respondents indicated the need for the government and the Supreme Court of Ghana to be proactive in solving the Bimbilla conflict. Since the case [the chieftaincy issue] has been passed to the Supreme Court, respondents are of the opinion that the apex court should expedite and pass judgment on the case. Delaying the verdict according to the respondents creates anxiety among the people which sometimes led to violent clashes. Although a few respondents disagree with government involvement, a majority emphasized the need for the government to intervene, in particular to painstakingly enforce the full details of the Supreme Court ruling/judgment to be given. Nonetheless, a raging perception of Government's impartiality is intact. This nagging perception constitutes a plausible source of the contestability of the enforcement of judicial rulings and undermines the search for last-lasting peace. We argue that this running mistrust raises the complex interpretive and discursive positions of diverse actors, which must be thoroughly engaged in the search for durable peace. However, the government's involvement been suggested by the respondents should be impartial. Thus, respondents suggested that in order to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict, partisan politics should be

⁷⁹ Ismail, Olawale, and 'Funmi Olonisakin (2020), "Why do youth participate in violence in Africa? A review of evidence." *Conflict, Security & Development* 21(3) pp. 371-399.; Schwartz, Stephanie (2010), *Youth and post-conflict*

reconstruction: agents of change. (Washington: United States Institute of Peace Press)

⁸⁰ Interview with Asobayire, a 55-year-old trader

decoupled from the chieftaincy issues. Indeed, the perception of partisan political influence as noted by Tonah⁸¹ and Awedoba⁸² has been one of the major drawbacks of the State's peace initiatives relative to the conflicts in the Northern Region. As confirmed by some respondents, that State's actors' portrayal of a neutral stance is a beguiling practice as they manifest in partiality and fails to address the fundamental problem of equity, justice and fairness undergirding the conflicts. Therefore, it is imperative to address this menace of partisan politics as an encumbering factor in achieving a society-wide transformational peacebuilding programme.

The pervasive partisan politics in the conflict interventions in the Northern Region raises the question of what kind of leadership model is at play. We contend that these interventions were essentially driven by simplistic results-oriented leadership orientation and without recourse to the veritable complex social, historical, political, cultural, and economic nuances within the traditional polity. It can be logically inferred that this partisan riddled intervention also denotes a top-down approach that obviates the potential of a resistance and ambiguities as seen in the Bimbilla case. Thus, the dismal outcomes in Bimbilla justify the need to adopt a process-based leadership practice in order to provide a historical relational processes perspective to the interventions. Indeed, this calls for measures to engage the wider domains of Bimbilla's polity and their external relations as part and parcel of creating an inter-subjective space for all actors to engage equitably. Clearly, this pursuit for process-based leadership rests on the nature of institutions (formal and informal) and institutional quality rule making systems, beliefs, values, and norms that shape social relations and other pertinent exogenous forces.

Finally, respondents suggested that the government should create jobs for the youth. This will help to minimize their vulnerability status which are sometimes been exploited by influential people. One respondent clearly put it this way 'Jobs should be created for the youth because the devil finds job for the idle hands'.⁸³ The vital issue to note is the nature of the job creation that must have a long-term orientation and guarantee prosperity. Often many of the youth jobs programs

initiated in Ghana and many African economies have at best been of short-term nature as they fail to address the structural weaknesses of the various economies.⁸⁴ More importantly, is the need to create an enabling environment for job creation, however, this cannot exclusively by prioritizing the local conditions. We aver that given that the Ghana's local economies are manifestly affected by dominant global development policy frameworks and practices; then such a perforce reconsideration of the pervasive neoliberal approach to job creation is apposite. This need to rethink the neoliberal policy blueprint is urgent in the wake of the dismal outcomes of job creation emanating from the logic of privatization, deregulation, and liberalization.

5.2. Rejection or Reformulate 'Local' Interventions?

The methodological implication is to adopt a critical ethnographic method that is devoid of positivistic assumptions as a precondition to provide nuanced and complex subjectivities of the local. Notable positivistic assumptions of the liberal or mainstream interventions are the problematization of the local, possibility/certainty of change, inevitability of external assistance, and standardisation of best practices. Significantly, the mixed outcomes of the liberal interventions in Bimbilla ruins the potency of these assumptions. In effect, this ethnographic approach in our view would be a counterpoint to the existing standardized packages associated with the liberal peace ideology. Furthermore, when well undertaken, ethnographic findings would provide empirically well-obtained findings to improve theories and relevant generalizations. In our view, the utilization of appropriate ethnographic methods would illuminate prosaic contentious social and political realities that would reflect emic viewpoints to provide better meaning and interpretations. The main foci of the critical ethnographic methods would include the everyday forms of conflict and development practices, competing discourses of conflict and insecurities, nature and scale of local agency, and effects of liberal security and political governance.

It is fundamentally crucial to view the local from a heterogenous, messy, uncertain, and unpredictable analytic lens. This is vital to the abandonment of the romanticized view of the local and reiterate the non-

⁸¹ Tonah, S. (2011). Changing characteristics and factors of chieftaincy succession and land disputes in Ghana. *Chieftaincy Bulletin*, 1(2), 40-53.

⁸² Awedoba, A. K. (2010). *An ethnographic study of Northern Ghanaian conflicts: Towards a sustainable peace*. African Books Collective.

⁸³ Interview with Musah, 50 years old farmer.

⁸⁴ See Ayele, S., Khan, S., & Sumberg, J. (2017). Introduction: New perspectives on Africa's youth employment challenge.

existence of any locality. Further, such a complex view would require the shift in ideas about the bounded nature of local; rather view the local as embodying trans-localities. Hence, the local evokes fluidity as seen by Saskia Sassen⁸⁵, which makes it vital to incorporate other actors in alternative metropolises by privileging 'moving centres' as part of the analytical category of the nuanced local. Additionally, more research should focus on the agency of the governed through studying the multiple ways of translating, undermining, or communally resisting and reshaping the expert-driven liberal peace security interventions and their dismal outcomes as adumbrated earlier.

There is a compelling reason for conflict and peace interventionists to recognize and act on external forces that have a debilitating effect on the outcomes in the local space. This call is grounded on the notion that the evocation of local tends to endogenize the idiosyncratic insecurity, instability, and underdevelopment of that particular place. Moreover, there is a natural tendency on liberal peace ideologues as noted by Jenney Peterson⁸⁶ and David Chandler⁸⁷ to overlook the external constraints on the local and rather naturalize existing inequalities in underdevelopment conflict-prone communities. We further suggest that historically external actors have deployed programmatic language and technologies that indict the local as responsible for the insecurity and underdevelopment. This is done under the guise of technical and apolitical diagnostic frameworks, a myth of novelty as an erasure measure to blame endogenous factors is foregrounded. For instance, the numerous meetings with the selected personalities in the various communities ostensibly did not interrogate causal factors outside their immediate territories, which presupposes that the evolving drivers of the conflict are endemically within the locality. However, we suggest that a better way to understand the youth unemployment in the various communities is to embed it within the neoliberal development policy imprimatur of the country in the last three decades and half. Accordingly, Jay Oelbaum explains how the structural adjustment programs and the other post-Washington consensus further enervated the economic and social development of the Northern Ghana.⁸⁸

Finally, the need to question the diagnostic epistemic lens cannot be overemphasized, and this impacts on who is the 'appropriate' analytical category. Essentially, there is a need to repoliticise the knowledge-power couplet that undergirds the interventions. This critical approach invariably would establish the hegemonic ideational persuasions and contradictions at the sites of articulation. Furthermore, repoliticising the epistemic foundations of the mainstream interventions would help to place ontological focus on the interventionist logic(s) against the peace industry's reification of the implementation deficits' buzzword.

CONCLUSION

This paper reifies the centrality of understanding the multifaceted historical and contemporary dynamics of the *local* as foundational to effective peacebuilding. Normatively, the experiences of post-conflict peace interventions in post-conflict settings have rarely built peace that addresses the root causes of conflict. The elusive peace in many post-conflict spaces on the African continent is attributable to the lack of peace building activities that professes contextual grasp of the issues that trigger and grease conflicts. As such, technocratic policy prescriptions that seek to modernise non-western societies on the imagery of the West widened the dynamics of conflict causative. Accordingly, an alternative ideational approach to inclusive peacebuilding that emphasise the essence of understanding the many locales of post-conflict spaces is required. This involves appreciating that post-conflict societies have different worldviews of what constitutes inclusive peace. Such understandings are fundamental to building peace that synchronises the history and everyday of the many locales in particular conflict spaces in Africa. This is inherent to the creation of peaceful and viable states capable of transforming conflictual situations to advance the interest of the collective. The eruption of conflict is a signal that the immediate system of managing state-society relations is incapable of mediating competing sectional interests socially, economically, and politically as it relates to inclusivity. Building inclusive peace requires a new narrative that departs from the current technocratic 'neo'-liberal peace interventions undergird by a custodian mentality and

⁸⁵ Sassen, Saskia (2020), *Whose City Is It? Globalization And the Formation of New Claims* (Oxfordshire: Routledge)

⁸⁶ Peterson, Jenny (2012), 'A Conceptual Unpacking of Hybridity: Accounting for Notions of Power, Politics and Progress in Analyses of Aid-Driven Interfaces', *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 7(2), pp. 9-22

⁸⁷ Chandler (2015), pp.13

⁸⁸ Oelbaum, Jay. (2007 March). Liberalisation or liberation? Economic reform, spatial poverty, and the irony of conflict in

Ghana's Northern Region'. *A paper prepared for the international workshop 'Understanding and addressing spatial poverty traps: An international workshop.*

lacking contextual appreciation and legitimacy. The future of inclusive peace in Africa is imaginable when the change in peacebuilding discourses privileges the *locale(s)* as the basic unit of state-society relations fundamental to securing the integrity of the state and its place among the comity of nations. Given the failure of these liberal peace interventions in such a low intensity conflict zone as the case of Northern Ghana, it would be imperative to study such interventions in spaces nested in global fragility contexts. As a matter of fact, many African states are mired in nascent global issues such as pandemics, food and energy deficits, and ravages of climate change. Indeed, such global fragility issues would inevitably have implications to the specific leadership processes at various scales geared towards conflict transformation: peacebuilding, peace formation, and conflict management.

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