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MAKING A CASE FOR HUMAN PEACE MODEL FROM BELOW

Mbombo Jean-Marie Kasonga

Abstract

At the end of the Second World War, winning allies handed over to the world a victor peace model through the United Nations Charter. Post-independent Africa inherited this dominant model of peace at the peak of the Cold War in the 1960s. Granted that fragile nations continue to depend on the generosity of donor countries to meet their fiscal obligations, the peace of the battle field seems to be pie in the sky for the hapless masses that are exposed to all forms of violence. Using the content analysis method, the paper reviewed the literature on the merits of the liberal peace model in contrast with the victor peace. It found out that the association of the Kantian peace project with western interventionism in conflict zones around Africa was problematic before proposing a human peace paradigm as a contribution towards sustainable peace from below.

Keywords: *Africa, Conflict, Liberal peace, Interventionism, Human peace*

Introduction

Most African nations gained their independence at the peak of the Cold War in the 1960s and became ipso facto bona fide members of the United Nations Organisation. Unfortunately, these young nations were introduced to the model of peace of the battlefield as they quickly got involved in proxy wars soon after independence. For more than three decades of military dictatorship, individual freedoms and human rights were sacrificed on the altar of political stability and state security. As if that was not enough, the implementation of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in the 1980s led many governments to abdicate their primary responsibilities towards the welfare of the citizenry. The negative impact of the holy trinity of liberalisation, de-regularisation and privatisation on poor economies was such that the public sector was downsized, leaving millions of families without income. Restrictions on foreign investments were equally scrapped while banking and telecommunication systems were open to private ownership (Friedman 2000, 104). Moreover, military expenditures continue to occupy the top priority in national budgets of poor nations, thus depriving vital sectors (education, health, job creation, social development and many more) of adequate funding. It is in the context of apparent armistice which is prevalent in most post-

conflict countries that we celebrate the kind of peace which only the barrel of the gun can sustain. However, given that donor countries support to a large measure national budgets of poor nations, the peace of the battlefield remains a luxury on the African continent. Such a victor peace is not only unsustainable but elusive as the war on terror being fought by multinational troops in the Maghreb region, the Lake Chad region or the Horn of Africa against the Jihadists, Boko Haram and El-shabab defies conventional wisdom. 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 before proposing as alternative the human peace model which is apparent in the actions taken by every individual in a given society to advance the common good based on their God-given talents.

Theoretical framework

In his classic work, *To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (1795), Immanuel Kant lays the foundations for the liberal peace project when he contrasts what he describes as 'the lawless state of savagery' with a project of long-lasting peace among nations. Such a peace model requires the implementation of three principles (articles), namely republican constitutions, federation of free states and

universal hospitality (Kant 2003). Republicanism is about people's participation in government via their representatives. According to German philosopher, "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 2003, 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) in order to transform the anarchical behaviour of states into cooperation at the international level. Far from implying the formation of a mega state which may cause independent states to forfeit their respective sovereignties, the federation of free states implies that each independent state retains its autonomy but together they subscribe to a kind of collective security pact known as a league of peace (*foedus pacificum*). Such a league 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 2003, 14).

The league of peace affirms the citizens' common right to peace with a domino effect beyond national boundaries (cosmopolitan right as third article). In the long run, this cosmopolitan right will facilitate the

emergence of "a nation of peoples (*civitas gentium*), that continually growing, will finally include all the people of the earth" (Kant 2003, 16). It seems therefore that the focus of Kantian peace is not the taming of bellicose states but the emancipation of the citizens whose consent militates against the war-making logic of sovereign states both at home and abroad. How does the vision of a cosmopolitan society put on the mantel of liberal peace theory?

Toward the end of World War I (1914-18) which pitted great powers against each other, US President W. Wilson sought American intervention in Europe for a post-war settlement which was to become a milestone for international peace. At the Paris Summit the League of Nations was then launched and Wilson became the first statesman to have articulated what is now called the democratic peace thesis: democracies do not fight each other (Paris 2004). Reminiscent of the Kantian league of peace, the League of Nations embodied the collective security of member states but it lacked explicit reference to the consent of the people (Goldstein 2005, 109). As far as the Kantian peace is concerned the failure of the League of Nations demonstrates the flaws of promoting one principle of the *Perpetual Peace* in isolation and to the detriment of the two others.

On his part, Michael Doyle undertakes to test Kant's principles of perpetual peace in his

famous article, *Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs* (1983) with a focus on the behaviour of liberal states in their foreign policies over a period of 180 years. The empirical study reveals not only the growth in number of constitutional republics but also the development of pacific unions between nations “as if the Kantian treaty had already been signed” (Doyle 1983, 227). Doyle’s claim of the pacific union between two or more liberal states (apparent absence of interstate war) rests on the fact that the sampled states have consistently maintained peaceful relationship with each other over a long period of time. More specifically, the scholar argues that “even though liberal states have become involved in numerous wars with non-liberal states, constitutionally secure liberal states have yet to engage in war with one another” (Doyle 1983, 209). The scholar is credited for being the enunciator of the liberal peace theory by establishing a correlation between liberal states and peace.

Referring to Kant’s three articles of peace and in response to a critique, Doyle recasts his claim as follows: “No one 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). From a dyadic perspective, contend Danilovic and Clare (2007, 401),

“liberal states are less likely to initiate conflict against other liberal states than they are against illiberal states.” However, Doyle remains cautious about forcibly converting illiberal societies into the new religion of liberalism. He rather argues that the existing zone of peace shared by like-minded liberal states must be protected against external aggression coming from authoritarian states. The double invasion of Iraq (1990/2003) and the war against terror in Afghanistan provide plausible examples of the illiberal war initiated by liberal states. NATO airstrikes on the oil-rich country that paved the way for the rebels to topple the longstanding dictatorship of Colonel Gaddafi in 2011 is another case in mind. Consequently, the application of the Doyle theory raises many questions to such an extent that it is still far from becoming “something close to an empirical law in international relations” (Paris 2004, 43). In particular, it is worth asking the question as to why Western interventionism parallels liberal peace in conflict-prone countries of Africa.

Interventionism disguised as liberal peace

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). This brings to mind the so-called African new wars of the 1990s that were driven by private interests in contrast with the old wars understood as rational and politically legitimate (Kaldor 2007). 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. In the course of heavy fighting, the incumbent may retreat but what looks like a regime change being enforced by the liberal states is still regarded as an internal armed conflict that enables policymakers to devise a one-size fits-all solution. As Francis (2012, 9) contends, "From Bosnia to Kosovo, El Salvador to Haiti, from Angola to Rwanda, Afghanistan to Iraq and from Sierra Leone to Liberia, the story is the same."

In compliance with the UN Agenda for Peace initiated by the then Secretary General Boutros Boutros Ghali (1992), such an interventionist strategy includes aid packages conditioned by power-sharing transition government and elections to be monitored by the UN peacekeeping forces before embarking upon state building or post-conflict

peacebuilding. Put differently, the end of an armed conflict opens the door for the rebuilding of damaged infrastructure and dysfunctional institutions of government. Such a laudable project of reconstruction can be appreciated as one strategy for ending a violent conflict but it is far from becoming a liberal peace agenda in the vision of Kant's *Perpetual peace*.

In the same way, the happy ending of general elections here and there is not convincing enough to claim that the liberal peace has been injected into African countries by Western democracies (Richmond 2008, 105). As Danilovic and Clare (2007, 403) observe, "The spread of 'democracies' through force would be incompatible with Kant's view that republican constitutions should rather be developed through a gradual process of domestic reform." Put simply, a logical reasoning based on the Kantian peace would locate the *raison d'être* of the liberal peace not in the post-war reconstruction masterminded by external agents as a remedy to violence but in its capacity to preclude the occurrence of conflicts within and between states.

When it comes to the expansion of the liberal peace in conflict-prone countries by other means as opposed to the Western-sponsored military interventions, it is important to look into emerging democracies. Doyle (1999) advocates a variety of economic and diplomatic means which he categorises into

three clusters: inspiration, instigation and intervention. First, the people living in democratic societies may inspire and support a struggle for individual freedom in illiberal states. The popular demand for individual freedom and democracy witnessed during the Arab spring (2011) illustrates clearly this form of inspiration from Tunisia to Egypt, Syria and Yemen, Burkina Faso, DRC and Sudan, as people here and there demand an end to dictatorship. They do not reinvent the wheel but as mimetic beings, they simply try to domesticate what works elsewhere. In other words, the flat world described by Friedman (2006) makes it easy for the people everywhere on the planet to follow what goes on thousands of miles away from home, thanks to the digitization revolution.

Second, economic restructuring may cause positive changes within illiberal regimes. Successful implementations of economic reforms have contributed in the long run to improve economic performance and attracted foreign investments with the possibility of job creation in poor countries such as Botswana, Ghana and Rwanda to name but a few. Finally, legitimate intervention may be required in order to save life. As Paris (2012, 28) contends, the failure to intervene “would be tantamount to abandoning tens of millions of people to lawlessness, predation, disease and fear.” Nevertheless, states coming out of protracted conflicts lack needed institutions

and they must be given enough time as well as adequate means to function with regards to the establishment of basic institutions (civil service, legislation, police and military forces). However, the trouble with 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. Even though economic restructuring and legitimate intervention have gained currency through IMF-led SAPs and UN Peace Support Operations, these two strategies do not underrate the power of inspiration behind the cosmopolitan rights underpinned by the Kantian peace which was visible in the Arab awakening. What is more, the inspirational strategy of expanding the liberal peace appears more attractive, mutually enriching and cost-effective in comparison with military intervention in authoritarian states.

It is understood that the liberal peace theory makes sense of an empirical outcome of peaceful relationships among free individuals and between liberal states. Through inspiration, illiberal countries gradually learn from and partner with mature democracies in order to avert possible liberal 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 (Campbell 2011, Francis 2012, and Chandler 2017). MacGinty and Richmond (2007, 492) capture this polemic in terms of

“Polarisation 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.”

Therefore two filters of interpretation can be used to address the question as to why the same liberal peace becomes a cure for dysfunctional and violence-ridden states in Africa, namely Euro-centrism and Afro-pessimism. On one hand, Euro-centrist scholars contend that the liberal peace is a kind of peace that is apparent only in Western societies where liberal values have evolved and are internalised. Accordingly, this ‘Western peace’ is non-transferable in the poor countries of the South where different values are operating. Interestingly, any effort to disseminate these Western values is denounced by radical critics as a replay of imperialism or neoliberalism. As MacGinty (2008, 156) puts it,

The liberal peace is not just a framework, it is also a mechanism for the transmission of Western-specific ideas and practices whereby its local agents are not merely compelled to receive, they must also transmit. Thus they become facilitators and enforcers of the liberal peace for municipalities, communities and individuals further down the political chain.

In other words, what goes on in terms of Western-sponsored conflict resolutions is nothing more than “liberal peace by proxy, whereby resources from African countries are mobilised to undertake security mandates determined by the powerful vested interests of Western liberal democracies” (Willett 2005, 573). MacGinty (2007, 495) contends that building a 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.” Euro-centrism is also apparent in the work of Richmond (2008) who notes that different methodologies reproduce different concepts of peace.

However radical scholars advocates an accommodated (hybrid) peace model in order to avert the risk of idealising ‘indigenous’ and ‘traditional’ peace-making. They call on the local peoples to “forcing recognition by powerful international actors that peace can be plural rather than singular” (MacGinty 2008, 159). Against the current trend of transplanting the Western liberal peace in illiberal countries of SSA via international intervention (global governance), (Richmond 2008, 162) advocates an indigenous peace without attempting to give it any substance. Notwithstanding his support for an indigenous peace which is emancipatory, self-sustaining, bottom-up, suitable to the everyday life and locally owned, the scholar

concedes in the closing pages of his book that the liberal peace still offers a form of emancipation even though it is potentially hegemonic, a 'liberal utopia.'

On the other hand, Afro-pessimism (in this context of analysis) underscores the incompatibility of the liberal peace in Africa based on descriptive accounts of contemporary African politics. Chabal and Daloz contend that African peoples are comfortable with being both modern and traditional. These culturologists have eventually come up with a paradigm of 'institutionalised disorder' to make sense of African make-up. As they put it, "what is distinct in Africa is the creative manner in which this overlap of modernity and tradition combines to create a form of political accountability which is rooted in the instrumentalization of disorder" (Chabal and Daloz 1999, 147). Expressing his own scepticism about the promotion of the liberal peace in Africa, Taylor (2007: 561) claims that "a mythical Africa is the terrain upon which the liberal peace is being asked to navigate."

At the same time, Afro-pessimism portrays patronage as a lesser evil in conflict-prone African countries because as Taylor argues, "Corruption, not hegemonic rule, is the cement that binds the system together and links the patron and his predatory ruling class together. When this falls apart, what is left is warlordism" (Taylor 2007, 560). Afro-

pessimism also treats the general public as a mass of victims at the mercy of a national elite but this form of stigmatisation undermines any form of capacity building. It is not only misleading but also dangerous because as Legrain (2002, 21) puts it, "convincing people that they are powerless and that government can no longer intervene for the collective good encourage apathy, frustration and worst still, anger."

The underlying thesis in this regard is that political authority in African states translates the model of neo-patrimonialism which is understood as "the ability to deliver to those who are linked with the political elites through the micro-networks of patronage and clientelism" (Chabal and Daloz 1999, 162). In *Wars, Guns and Votes*, renowned economist Paul Collier contends that political violence in the countries of the bottom billion constitutes an international political bad. He rather advocates Western-sponsored military interventions construed as the global good that is most needed to guarantee the security of the ballots and to secure accountable governments in conflict zones (Collier 2010).

However, in *Identity and Violence*, Armatya Sen convincingly argues that most of what is taken to be Western achievements (including democracy) may have a long history outside of the Western world. As he puts it, "Ideas and knowledge cultivated in the West have, in recent centuries, dramatically changed the

contemporary world, but it would be hard to see it as an immaculate Western conception" (Sen 2006, 57). Moreover, there is a dearth of empirical evidence to support the tacit claim that what is appropriate for poor people is poverty alleviation programmes undertaken by a chain of misery industries that specialise in the supply of potable water, medicines and shelter to the victims of war and violent conflicts.

The articulation of both Eurocentrism and Afro-pessimism around the model of liberal peace overlooks the hegemonic impact of the Western world in shaping global politics. It also legitimates a kind of peace at gunpoint which is only favourable to the myriad of external actors and their local accomplices. The search for a kind of peace that is grounded in the traditional way of life of non-Western societies 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).

More important, this ideological demarcation helps to maintain a polarised value-system which legitimises the growing gap between rich and poor nations in the global economy. Above all, it can be perceived as an intellectual

way of erecting a high fence around the zone of Western (liberal) peace in which military hardware produced inside are only tested across the frontiers under the banner of humanitarian intervention to save endangered species. After more than twenty years of trial and error, this big industry of conflict resolution dominated by foreign experts with little or no knowledge of local realities has lost its credibility (Chandler 2017). The challenge put forward in the field of peace research consists of developing an alternative model which is people-driven and sustainable.

Way forward: a search for alternative

Governments the world over spend billions of dollars in fighting war and insecurity but what goes on in our streets and neighbourhoods depicts a growing situation of peacelessness (Tandon 2009). Perpetrators of violence are not always security agents and invading armies. Very often civilians kill one another for a mess of potage. In case of an aggression by foreign troops, the decision of a legitimate authority is required to launch a counterattack but an individual mind is capable of conceiving and launching a deadly attack on their countrymen and women without the knowledge of the authority at the top. In other words, citizens are not only victims of bad governance in need of humanitarian assistance but they also have a stake in it.

The state of peace precedes warfare but the mainstream peace models discussed above hinge heavily on the politics of war and conflict. However, a sustained focus on the peace of the battlefield not only leads to arms race among powerful nations of the world but also makes war and violent conflict ubiquitous in the 21st Century. Little wonder that peace is always talked about in its negative sense as the absence of something bad. 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. However, it is war that negates what has been there in the first place because as the great pacifist, A. J. Muste argues, "there is no way to Peace. Peace is the way" (Goldstein 2005, 136). This wisdom suggests that we get stuck in warfare because the goal of fighting is alien to peace.

In the name of global governance, the responsibility to protect endangered populations of failed states justifies the involvement of external actors (state and non-state) with the ambition of rebuilding such states from the ashes of violent conflicts (Duffield 2001) but the balance sheet of more than two decades of shoring up failing states by multinational forces remains largely negative (Chandler 2017). Not only does the top-down approach rely exclusively on the knowhow 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.

Given that countries and cities, institutions and corporations are all made of individuals who are capable of maintaining peaceful coexistence, it is vital to identify with them. There is therefore an urgent need for a paradigm shift: a sustainable peace implies the agency of the citizens at the grass root level instead of external engineering in connivance with local elites. As Lederach (1997, 94) puts it: "The greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term is always rooted in the local people and their culture." 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 (UN Report 2015). The bottom-up approach allows countries to manage their own 'sustainable' solutions. No proclamation of World Peace can make our local communities peaceful unless concrete actions are taken by the people themselves to advance the cause of peace at the grassroots' level. Simply put, sustainable peace requires that Western interventionism being disguised as liberal peace gives way to local initiatives of peace processes because.

The human peace model of peace is associated with a sense of fulfilment that accompanies someone who gives out the best he or she has

for the benefit of others without seeking compensation in return. By way of conceptualising it, peace with a human face parallels benevolence. It is in the context of 'African benevolence' that a bottom-up concept of peace can emerge which engages ordinary people to effect social change on the most local levels by finding joy in doing certain things for themselves without expecting any gratification from above. Such things include hospitality, generosity and voluntarism to name but a few. African peoples in particular have been known for the culture of solidarity since time immemorial.

The human peace model is premised on human responsibility which extends to all and sundries when everybody, including the poorest of the poor is encouraged to bring out the best he or she possesses in life and put it at the service of humanity with no string attached in such a way that no one will be left behind as stated in the Global Vision 2030 (UN 2015). The true humanity is more in giving than receiving. In this regard, empowerment of masses consists of encouraging each member of the society to break the chains of fear with its attendant victim mentality so as to become an embodiment of peace.

Conclusion

The study has attempted to question the relevance of victor peace in contemporary

Africa given its pedigree as a post-war settlement among warring powers. By reviewing the extant literature on the liberal peace theory, it has also unveiled the misreading of Kant's theory when the project of promoting interstate peace runs parallel to Western intervention in conflict-prone countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Everything considered, the victor's peace stemming from the post-war alliance of the winners against the Axis powers (1945) appears to be beyond the reach of poor nations whose absence at the highest decision-making table of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council speaks volumes. Similarly, the liberal peace construed as Western intervention in conflict zones has robbed the Kantian project of the capacity to promote an international peace based on the power of consent in the hands of the citizenry. To put an end to a long tradition of elite-oriented projects and Western intervention in poor nations, the 2015 UN Report of the Advisory Group of Experts calls for local people to occupy the driving seat and so become architects of peace that is sustainable. It is in this context that the study advocates the human peace model, premised on African solidarity and conceived as the ability to share God-given talents with others irrespective of creed, nationality or race. Its sustainability revolves around the capacity of grass root people to overcome the victim mentality

through education in order to reclaim their roles as architects of social change and harmony.

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