

**ORIGINS OF POLITICAL
CONFLICTS AND PEACE
BUILDING IN THE GREAT LAKES
REGION**

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1. The Great Lakes Region

The current perception of the Great Lakes Region (GLR) constitutes an area occupied by countries of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. There is need to show briefly the historical background of this perception. Besides the current perception there have been other perceptions of the GLR.

One of these constitutes the actual geographical context of the GLR. Great Lakes constitute Lakes Victoria, Tangayika and Nyasa. This means that the region should constitute all or even parts of all countries bordering and around these lakes. This would therefore, include the six countries mentioned above plus Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique. It is possible that the meaning of the Great Lakes Zone includes this area. The second perception is contained in a map in the Pan-African Office in Kampala, Uganda. According to the map the GLR constitutes core countries and parts of countries. Core countries include the Burundi, DRC, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Parts of countries include parts of Congo Brazaville, the Central African Republic, Chad, Sudan and Zambia (Salim, 2003).

The third perception defines the GLR as that part of Africa which constitutes countries of Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda (Mbwiliza, 2002). The fourth perception takes the region to mean the same as the Interlacustrine Region. This is a historical region which constitutes the area between and around Lakes Victoria, Tangayika, Kioga, Kivu, Edward and Albert. It, therefore, includes Burundi Western parts of Kenya, North Western Tanzania, Rwanda, Uganda and Eastern parts of the DRC. The fifth perception is the current one constituting the six countries mentioned above, though there are situations when Zambia is also included (Mbwiliza, *ibid*).

However, it is important to note that the current perception is a product of historical developments. Such developments are traced from the 13th A.D. when the Hima and Nilotic pastoratists from the north interacted with the Bantu agriculturalists around the Interlacustrine Region.

These interactions gave rise into the establishment of centralized Hima, Bito and Hinda Kingdoms. The 19th c marks another historic landmark due to the long distance trade from the East African Coast to the interior based on ivory and slaves. The trade activities and caravans linked all the six countries and marked the beginning of the spread of Kiswahili (Mwansoko, 2002).

Colonialism was another historic event that further provided links to the six countries. First, German East Africa constituted Tanzania Mainland, Rwanda and Burundi as one German colony for thirty years. Later, Rwanda and

Burundi came to be linked to the Congo under Belgian Colonialism. Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar were linked under British colonialism. Colonial language policy and labour movements linked the six countries, facilitating further development of Kiswahili as a language spoken in all the six countries (Mwansoko, *ibid*).

The last period of colonialism from the end of the second World War in 1945 to the 1950s was characterised by nationalist struggles for independence. During this period new forms of linkages began to be established in the Region. First, some nationalist political parties established political relations in order to assist each other in the anti-colonial struggles. For instance, The Tanganyika African National Union (TANU) established relations with the UPRONA Party of Burundi, the UPC of Uganda, the KANU of Kenya, the ASP of Zanzibar and the MNC party under Partice Lumumba in Congo. Second linkages were established through the establishment of regional organizations to further facilitate coordinations in the struggle for independence.

The first such organization was the Pan-African for East and Central Africa (PAFMECA) which included all the six countries of the GLR, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Later the organization was extended to include other countries of Southern Africa, and thus its name was modified into the Pan-African Movement of East, Central and Southern Africa (PAFMECSA).

The post-independence period has been characterised by developments that have made the region to forge greater linkages. They have in one way or another shared the impact of continuous conflicts in some of the countries of the region including the problem of the refugee crisis. They have made common strategies in efforts to solve the problem of conflicts such as regional peace initiatives such as that on Burundi. They have also made efforts to form regional integrations such as the East African Community. Though the Community constitutes only Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, but Burundi and Rwanda have also applied to join.

While discussing the origins and impacts of conflicts in the GLR this paper will, therefore, have a focus on the six countries of the region. It will also take into consideration the above historical perspective.

2. Origins of Conflicts

2.1. Conceptual Framework

This paper discusses origins of conflicts in the GLR. It has decided to avoid the common approach of discussing factors or causes of conflicts. When discussing factors or causes the focus is, in most cases, on the immediate events at the time when the conflicts are taking. Although the origins may also be taken as part of the factors or causes, they may not carry significant weight.

Discussion on origins puts emphasis on historical perspective of the factors or causes. Origins have often been conceptualized in terms of

root causes or historical or underlying factors. In this paper we shall mainly examine colonial and neo-colonialist struggles for independence, and the project of nation-building.

An understanding of origins of conflicts is important in terms of two dimensions. First it is very useful in facilitating processes of conflict resolution. Implementation of peace agreements are likely to fail if the analysis leading to such agreements has not seriously taken into consideration origins of the conflicts. Second, an analysis of origins of conflicts is very useful in processes of peace-building. Peace-building is not a simple exercise. It calls for a deep understanding of the society in which peace is being constructed. This should include an understanding of the origins of conflicts in such a society.

2.2. Colonial and Neo-Colonial Forces:

The GLR is part of the African Continent that was colonized during the last quarter of the 19th c. There were two phases in the establishment of colonialism in the Region. During the first phase during the 1880s and 1890s the colonization process took place as follows: Congo which is now the DRC was colonized by the Belgians; Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar were colonized by the British; and Burundi, Rwanda and Tanzania Mainland were colonized by the Germans under the name of German East Africa.

The second phase followed the end of the First World War in 1918 when the Germans got defeated. Their colonies in Africa had to be taken over by the League of Nations and handed over to other nations. Thus German East Africa was divided. Tanzania Mainland was given to the British as a trusteeship territory. It came to be called Tanganyika. Burundi and Rwanda were given to the Belgians, and hence they became Belgian colonies. The other countries remained as they were during the first phase.

The objectives of establishing colonialism were obvious. Colonialism was an instrument of imperialism whose central motive force was to advance the interests of capitalist expansion in the colonies and semi-colonies of Africa, Asia and Latin America. Such interests included production of agricultural and mineral raw materials for the Industries of Western Europe and North America and creation of markets for the industrial commodities. In order to fulfil these objectives it became necessary to dominate and control societies in these continents politically and ideologically. In the African Continent this took the form of establishing colonial states.

Our main interest in this paper is to understand how the colonial political and economic system contributed to the growth of conflicts in the GLR during the post-independence period. In an inaugural lecture he delivered at the Nigeria War College, Abuja, on the 16th September, 2002, His Excellency Paul Kagame, President of the Republic of

Rwanda, traced the causes of the conflicts in the Great Lakes Region in historical perspective. He outlined them in three phases: the colonial period, the post-independence period and the contemporary era.

On the colonial period he emphasized the fact that the colonial system was greatly responsible for the post-independence conflicts in African countries and even between African countries. The seeds of conflicts were sown under colonialism through three main aspects. First, colonialism created and consolidated divisive ideologies of ethnicity, racialism, regionalism and religious antagonism (Mpangala, 2000). Prominent Historians such as Iliffe (1979), Kimambo (1983), Ranger (1983) and Vail (1989) have all pointed out as to how colonialism created and invented ethnicity and promoted ethnic consciousness among the colonized people. Such creations and inventions were also true with racialism, regionalism and religious antagonism.

Second, colonialism divided people through the policy of divide and rule and creation of artificial borders between colonies (Kagame, op.cit.). For instance, artificial borders divided people who before colonialism were under same political organizations.

The Wanyarwanda who before colonialism were under the Kingdom of Rwanda were separated, some came under colonial Rwanda, while others under colonial Congo. Within Rwanda they came to be divided first by German and then by Belgian colonial powers into antagonistic ethnic groups of the Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. Third, and along similar principles, colonialism divided people in the colonies along economic lines by creating colonial division of labour on the basis of superiority and inferiority principles.

In order to be able to understand clearly how colonialism created conditions for conflicts let us examine the colonial ideology of racism. Racism was one of the most important imperialist ideologies. Its origins was the development of capitalism in Europe (Nyirenda, 2000). The concept of race was part of capitalist reorganization from the 17th to the 19th centuries. Ruth Benedict (1942:6) defined racism as a classification based on traits which are hereditary in men. It is the assigning of moral, intellectual and political character to a group of human beings on the basis of its physical characteristics. Its origin coincides exactly with the formation of capitalist societies and even more especially linked with the development of imperialism.

Racism is an ideological notion or dogma that makes one racial group condemned by nature to congenital inferiority and another group is destined to congenital superiority (Kuper, 1974). The ideology can be divided into two categories when it came to be applied to the context of Africans. One category was social Darwinism. This was an ideology which was developed due to the influence of the discoveries of Darwin. One of the most important aspects of Darwin's philosophy during the

19th c was "survival of the fittest" (Balton, 1967:47). Darwinisms later interpreted this theory into racist perspectives..

At first, the social Darwinisms such as Glumpowicz, Benjamin Kidd and Walter Beghot argued that nations, which were the strongest, tended to prevail over others, which were the weakest. The strongest nations tended to be the best. Later on anthropologists developed the theory from the nation to the race. Survival of the fittest now meant survival of the fittest race. It began to be argued that some races have been endowed with traits which ensure their superiority. Such traits include characteristics that can be observed and measured such as eyes, hair, colour, nose and most important the shape of the skull (Balton, *ibid*).

The second category of the racist ideology constitutes biological determinism. This is the category of racist ideology which came to be used to justify colonialism in Africa and exploitation of Africans. According to this ideology biological make up of respective races determined race relations. Races were seen as distinctive biological groups and their relations were regarded as set by differences in their biological make up. The major issues of difference were seen to be intelligence, temperament and character.

Later on intelligence came to be viewed as the most important in determining differences between racial groups. The racial group with superior intelligence comes to occupy the higher social positions in the society directing its major institutions and fashioning the general mode of life that reflects its superior intelligence. The racial group with inferior innate intelligence comes to occupy the subordinate positions in the society and develop a texture of life that is lacking the marks of higher culture within the society. Europeans came to be viewed as the racial group with superior intelligence while Africans, in particular black Africans, were taken to have inferior intelligence.

It was, therefore, logical that Europeans colonized Africans according to this ideology. Thus colonialist historians and anthropologists advanced this theory to justify colonialism in Africa. Hegel (19956) argued that Africans South of the Sahara had no reason and had no religion. The African was wild, untanned, ahistorical with undeveloped spirit. Thus European "civilizing mission" through colonialism was seen as necessary. The African mind was further described as pre-logical, non-conceptual and dominated by emotional thinking. Thus there were significant differences between the mental activity of Africans and Europeans (Levy-Brunli 1975).

It has to be noted, however, that while the racist ideology was used to justify colonial domination, oppressions and exploitation of Africans by Europeans, the same racist ideology was used in the colonies to divide Africans through the ideology of ethnicity, regionalism and religious antagonism as noted earlier Ethnic groups were also categorized into superior and inferior categories . Neo-colonial forces came when

African countries achieved independence. It was a new form of extending the same imperialist economic interests by controlling the economies of the independent African countries. This was partly to be done by ensuring the establishment of puppet regimes. The Congo provides us with a good example of how neo-colonial forces created conditions for post-independence conflicts and instability.

Neo-colonial interests on the Congo are part of historical root causes of the war in the DRC. Unlike other African colonies and neo-colonies the Congo was a unique centre of economic attraction. It has very high agricultural potential due to its fertile soils, and favourable climate for the production of both food and cash crops. It produces a variety of crops including coffee, cotton, palm oil, rubber, sugarcane, maize, groundnuts, tea, tobacco, cassava and bananas. It has huge forests with rich valuable tropical timber.

The Congo has some of the richest mineral deposits in the world with world output percentages as follows: cobalt 75% industrial diamonds 70%, uranium 50%, copper 10%, and gold 1 % (Essack, K., 1997:20). It has also other minerals like tantalite, zinc, coal, tungsten and manganese.

In terms of size it takes the third position in Africa from Sudan and Algeria, constituting 2,344,885 sq km. Within that huge land one finds the largest river basins in the world, possessing electric capacity constituting 13% of the world's total (Essack, *ibid*). The rivers are also navigable providing cheap transport and communication facilities. The Congo has the potential of becoming an economic giant of the African Continent.

The independence of Congo was greatly characterised by neocolonial interests. At the eve of independence, the Belgian colonialists worked out strategies which would make their sponsored parties as well as parties backed financially by the mining monopolies win the elections and take over power. The coming to power of Lumumba and his party greatly frustrated the Belgian neo-colonial interests.

However, soon after independence another neo-colonial force, in the form of American interest came in (Essack, *ibid*:35). Between 1960 and 1963 American aid to Congo totaled 297,649,290 dollars. The World Bank gave a loan of 21 million dollars. The same period American interests strived to take over control of Congolese economy. The Rockefellers also moved into the Congo and took a controlling share of the Society General, the holding company of Union Miniere, thus controlling the mining industry, and also took control of the Congo Central Bank (Essack, *ibid*:35).

The neo-colonial interests in the Congo did not end with taking over control of the economy. It became also necessary for them to take over control of politics by installing a puppet regime. Patrice Lumumba's

leadership was therefore unwanted by the neo-colonial interests as it was leadership for real independence of Congo with an economic programme for the development of Congo and its people devoid of neo-colonial control. Neo-colonial forces, therefore, worked out the overthrow and assassination of Lumumba, and installed Mobutu who became Congo's puppet actor serving neo-colonial interests for thirty four years.

It has to be noted that neo-colonial interests in the Congo did not end with the overthrow of Mobutu in May 1997. Neo-colonial (forces would certainly like to continue controlling the Congo politically and economically. It has been stated: "... he who controls Congo dominates Africa. Therefore the West if it loses hold over the Congo will sooner or later lose grip over the whole of Africa. Since its independence in 1960, the Congo had little peace" (Essack, *ibid*: 20). This means that besides other factors, the current crisis in the DRC should also be examined in terms of interests of neo-colonial forces.

The example of neo-colonial in the DRC does not mean that such forces have been operating only in that country. It is true with all other countries of the Region and Africa as a whole in different ways. For example the motives behind the assassination of Prince Louis Rwagasore of Burundi in 1961 were not different from those of the assassination of Patrice Lumumba in Congo.

2.3. Nationalist Struggles for Independence:

In discussing origins of conflicts in the GLR the period of struggles for national independence occupies an important position. This period marked the beginning of colonial legacy of ideologies of racism, ethnicity, regionalism and religious antagonism. Most of the nationalist political parties in the various colonial territories were based on these divisive tendencies. Some examples below can help to justify this argument.

In Congo during the 1950s seven nationalist political parties were formed which included PNP, PSA, ABAKO, MNC, Balubakat, Cerea and Conakat (Essack, 1997). They were all united in terms of demanding for national independence from Belgian colonialism, but they were different in their characteristics. Some are said to have been sponsored by the Belgian colonialists and others by mining monopolies so that they would be used for neo-colonial purposes once they came into power. There were also some which were ethnic and regional based. The only party which was national in character with national objectives was the MNC under the leadership of Lumumba (Essack, *ibid*). It was this party which took over power at independence in 1960 but the assassination of Lumumba and the snatching of power from it from 1961 by neocolonial forces created long-term conditions of instability and conflicts in that country.

Typical examples of the formation of ethnic based political parties during the 1950s were in Burundi and Rwanda. In Burundi the PP and PDC parties were ethnic based, but UPRONA which won the elections of 1961 was a national political party which united all the three ethnic groups, that is the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa. However, since, like Lumumba, the uniting national leader of UPRONA,

Prince Louis Rwegasore was assassinated in October 1961, after independence in 1962 UPRONA degenerated into a Tutsi based party (Ndarugagiye, 1995). That created a situation of periodic conflicts in Burundi during the post-independence period.

In Rwanda all the three nationalist political parties formed during the 1950s were ethnic based. RADER was a Tutsi while PARMEHUTU and APROSOMA were Hutu based parties (Newbury, 1998). Although the beginning the parties were said to be moderate with objectives of carrying out national democratic reforms, as power struggles grew ethnic tendencies got consolidated leading into post-independence periodic conflicts.

In Uganda from 1952 to 1961 seven nationalist political parties had been founded. Most of them were either ethnic based or religious based, or both. For instance, the UNC and the PP were both protestant and Buganda based parties (Low, 1962). The Democratic Party (DP) was a predominantly catholic party. The Kabaka Yekka (KY) was basically an ethnic based party as it was a party of the Baganda (Karugire, 1971). It was only the UPC of Obote which was viewed to be of national character though its position was weakened by being strongly anti-Buganda. The nature of political parties during the struggle for independence were a major factor for Uganda's post-independence political instability.

Ethnic or racial tendencies of political parties were also experienced in Zanzibar. The ZNP was seen to be Arab based, the ASP, African based while the ZPPP Pemba, and Shirazi based. However, all these parties tried to assume a national character as they tried to attract membership and support from all racial groups. This was reflected by the nearly equal strength during elections between ASP on one hand and ZNP and ZPPP on the other. After the Revolutions, the ASP and later on CCM as the only party tried to forge national unity.

In Tanganyika with the exception of TANU, the political parties were also racial and religious based. UTP was a predominantly European party, the ANC was an African party that had tendencies of segregating non-African racial groups while the AMNUT was a religious party, predominantly Muslim. TANU, under the leadership of Nyerere, was a mass based national party that united all ethnic, racial and religious groups. The fact that TANU was a strong party that took over power at independence in 1961, Tanganyika and later Tanzania Mainland was

able to avoid post-independence instability and conflicts, thus characterised as an island of peace.

Kenya's strong political parties founded during the 1950s were both national and ethnic based. KANU and KADU were national political parties because they made efforts to mobilize all the people of Kenya into the struggle for national independence regardless of ethnic, racial and religious affiliations (Horowitz, 1985). They had also ethnic tendencies because while KANU based much of its membership on the Kikuyu-Luo alliance, KADU based much of its membership on the Kalenjin, Maasai and coastal ethnic groups (Horowitz, *ibid*).

However, with the growth of *de facto* and *de jure* one party system, KANU degenerated into an ethnic based party. At first it was based on the Kikuyu and later on the Kalenjin under the leaderships of Kenyatta and Moi respectively (Oyugi, 1998). Despite that the early tendencies of national character of KANU facilitated relative postindependence political stability in Kenya for nearly thirty years.

Examples which have been provided in all countries of the GLR in terms of the nature and character of nationalist political parties during the struggle for independence seem to have two implications. One implication is that nearly in all countries two categories of political parties were founded. One was of political parties which were national in character with the objectives of establishing national unity after independence. The other category was of political parties which were ethnic or religious or racial or even regional based. These had high potential of causing disunity and instability after independence.

The second implication which arises out of the first is the fact that depending on the nature of a political party which took over power at independence, the nature of politics that emerged could be non-ethnised national politics or ethnised politics. TANU provides us with a typical example of national mass-based political party that led into the development of non-ethnised national politics, thus resulting into national unity and political stability. In situations where power was taken by ethnic, religious or racial based political parties ethnization of politics became the order of the postindependence period. Rwanda, Burundi and to some extent also Uganda provide us with typical examples of such situations. Lack of national unity and political instability became the order of the day.

2.4. The Project of Nation-Building

After gaining national independence African countries were seriously involved in the process of building their nations. The early years of independence were greatly preoccupied with debates and discussions on how the new nations could be built. These discussions were carried out at national and continental levels.

Among ideas discussed were those that could facilitate liberating the African societies from colonialism and neo-colonialism and building new types of independent societies. Thus the ideas emphasised continental unity, national unity, democracy, socialism and fast socio-economic development.

The idea of continental unity or African unity was greatly debated. During the Pan-African conference of 1958 in Accra, Ghana, the idea was discussed and various views were raised. It was emphasised that the central objective should be that independence of African countries should lead into continental unity. Among the strong proponent of Africa unity was Kwame Nkrumah. Among his early works was "Africa Must Unite", in which he not only advocated for African unity, but also for immediate unity. He emphasized the need to establish the "United State of Africa (Grund, 1968). His ideas were greatly supported by Sekou Toure, another early African Statesman, philosopher and the first President of Mali. Like Nkrumah, Toure viewed African unity as a tool of liberation of the African continent from colonialism and neo-colonialism. Such liberation could also enable Africa avoid being divided along racial, ethnic and geographical lines (Toure, 1960s). Sekou Toure further further pointed out that African unity was necessary in order to achieve common objectives to ensure respect and dignity of the African, to raise consciousness and determination to live together, and to facilitate the formulation of common programmes for development.

Ideas of African unity were also developed by the Late Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere. Unlike Nkrumah and Toure, Mwalimu advocated a gradual approach to continental unity. He was of the view that the first step should be regional organizations which, when grown strong, could later be united into continental unity (Odhiambo, 1994). Nyerere further argued that since independence was achieved through a process, unity should also be established through a process. The two ideas, one of immediate continental unity and the other of using a gradual approach became the centre of the debate during that time. During the first OAU summit in Cairo in 1964 in became a hot debate, dividing Heads of State into two camps. However, the ideas of immediate continental unity could not materialize. As many African countries achieved independence it was realized that ideological differences grew. Even Nkrumah later realized that ideological differences was a big obstacle to continental unity, particularly African states with puppet ideologies.

As a means of achieving peace and socio-economic development ideas of democracy and socialism were greatly advanced by the early post-independence intellectuals. In his book, "The United States of Africa" Sekou Toure advanced the view that development of African societies was a process that must ensure first and foremost the democratization of social relations (the interest and affairs of the whole community).

Though not referring directly on democracy, Fanon's emphasis on social freedom of the individual in society had also implications on

democracy. He was in favour of multiparty democracy as he criticised the one party system as an instrument of exploitation of the people (Hansen, 1976).

Both Nyerere and Nkrumah developed ideas on democracy. Both were of the view that the appropriate form of democracy during the immediate post - independence era was one party democracy (Odhiambo, 1994 Grundy, 1968). In essence they were not opposed to multiparty, democracy, but they were of the view that multiparty democracy could come later. One party democracy was seen as appropriate at that time because newly independent African nations needed unity, peace and fast socio-economic development in order to fight against ignorance, poverty and disease. Nyerere went further by pointing out that such democracy should be based on the traditional African way of life (Nyerere, 1963).

Ideas on socialism also emphasised development based on equality, justice and independent economies. Nkrumah argued that socialism was an important means to achieve economic independence and a key to human progress. He also saw socialism as the shortest route to democracy. Toure also emphasised the fact that socialism was necessary for independent development of African people.

Nyerere's ideas on socialism were based on the concept of African familyhood. This is what he came to regard as "Ujamaa". Like his ideas on democracy, socialism was to be based on the traditional African way of life (Pratt, 1978). Nyerere differed with Nkrumah in the sense that the latter believed in scientific socialism though also based on the traditional African way of life. He said there was not such a thing as African socialism. Nyerere believed in African socialism (Ujamaa) and was opposed to scientific socialism. He saw scientific socialism as an ideology that propagated the conflict between man and man. But both Nkrumah and Nyerere were opposed to capitalism which they viewed as a system based on the exploitation of man by man. Socialism was, therefore, necessary to ensure equality and justice in the new African nations.

As far as ideas on democracy and socialism are concerned some countries of the GLR were highly involved. In fact besides applying ideas generated at the continental level, the Region itself was part of the sources of those ideas. We have already noted above how Nyerere was one of the African political intellectuals who developed ideas on unity, democracy and socialism. In Tanganyika his ideas on African democracy and African socialism facilitated the establishment of one party system in 1965 and Ujamaa socialist policy in 1967 respectively.

Thus the ideals of building independent African nations within the context of unity, democracy, socialism, peace, justice and self-reliant socio-economic development were positive with good objectives. However, those ideals were faced by considerable contradictions in the

process of nation building. An obvious contradiction arose out of the fact that most of the intellectuals who generated those ideas were themselves the early statemen of independent African nations. This had two different implications. One was that their ideas were against the interest of neo-colonial forces. Thus neo-colonial manipulations resulted into assassinations and overthrow of some of the intellectual political leaders. The overthrow of Kwame Nkurumah of Ghana in 1966 provides of typical example. Within the GLR we note the assassinations of Patrice Lumumba in Congo (Essack, Opct) and Prince Rwegasore of Burundi in 1961 (Ndarugagiye, 1995), and the overthrow of Milton Obote, due to his Common Man's Charter, in Uganda in 1971. Although Julius Nyerere survived, his Government also experienced a number of unsuccessful coup attempts.

The second implication was that political power interests of the leaders often led into the growth of authoritarian and dictatorial regimes. Such regimes were established in the very processes of trying to carry out democratic and socialist policies. For instance in trying to implement ideas of African democracy and socialism one party states were established which in turn became authoritarian. In Ghana and Guinea, for example, Nkurumah and Sekou Toure established authoritarian states. In the GLR authoritarian one party governments and dictatorial military regimes were also established during the 1960s. Yet another contradiction was the emergence and growth of ethnised politics as we have already noted.

The result of all the above contractions was the growth of political conflicts. Neo-colonial manipulations, authoritarian and dictatorial regimes and ethnised politics have been important sources of conflicts in most African countries during the post-independence period. While conflicts have been taking place in many African countries, the situation has been worse in the GLR. Intensity of conflicts has been experienced in Burundi, Rwanda, the DRC and Uganda. In Kenya and Tanzania conflicts have been few and those have mainly began from the 1990s due to multiparty politics and multiparty elections.

3. Peace Building in the GLR

3.1. Introductory Remarks

Having discussed origins of conflicts in the GLR at length it is pertinent that we now discuss peace building processes in the Region. Our assumption is that a deeper understanding of origins can facilitate the development of realistic and workable strategies of peace building. In discussing peace building processes we shall mainly be concerned with aspects of conflict resolution, socioeconomic development, democratization and regional integration.

3.2. Conflict Resolution

One of important measures in ensuring peace-building is conflict resolution. Conflict resolution presupposes that the state of conflicts is already in place and it has, therefore, to be resolved. In other words the conflict has to be brought to an end and peace has to be restored in the society. Conflict resolution measures usually constitute peace negotiations, the signing of peace agreements and implementation of such agreements.

In the GLR a number of conflict resolution measures have and continue to be carried out. For instance in 1993 peace negotiations were carried out in Arusha between the Government of Habyarimana and the RPF rebels in order to end the civil war in Rwanda that began in 1990 (Khan, 1998). The negotiations were mediated by the Tanzania Government through Ambassador A. Mpungwe. A peace agreement was signed in August 1993. However, implementation of the agreement had been difficult resulting into the Rwanda genocide of 1994.

In order to end the civil war in Burundi, peace negotiations also began in Mwanza in 1966. The OAU and the international community had requested the Late Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere to be the Facilitator of the negotiations. After two sessions the negotiations failed for various reasons including a coup d'etat in which the then conventional government of Burundi was overthrown and Pierre Buyoya was once more installed as President of the military government (Hyera, 2003).

The negotiations were resumed again in June 1998 in Arusha, again under the Late Mwalimu Nyerere as Facilitator. The Former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela became the Facilitator from January 2000 after the death of Mwalimu in October 1999. The negotiations culminated into the signing of the Peace Agreement on 28th August, 2000. A three year period of implementing the Agreement began in November 2001. The implementation is expected to end up with a democratic election.

Yet, another example of the process of peace negotiations began in 1998 on the DRC soon after the breaking up of the second wave of the war between the Governments of Laurence Kabila and rebel groups in August 1998. The SADC countries began to convene a number of meetings to plan peace negotiations. During the War the Government of Kabila came to be supported by Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, while two rebel groups each came to be supported by the Governments of Uganda and Rwanda. The peace negotiations had, therefore, to involve all these parties in the war.

From November 1998 to June 1999 the efforts of the SADC as an organization came to be supplemented by the initiatives of President Muamar Gaddafi of Libya. Gaddafi had been holding talks at different

times with Presidents Kabila of the DRC, Museveni of Uganda and Kagame of Rwanda. Gadaffi insisted that fighting parties should agree on a ceasefire to be followed by withdrawal of foreign troops from the DRC (Mpangala, 2000, op.cit). Then international peace keeping forces should be deployed. However, the culmination of all peace initiatives was the signing of a peace pact by all warring parties in Lusaka on the 10th July, 1999. From that time to the present (2004) various efforts have continued to be made to ensure implementation of the peace pact by various initiatives such as the SADC, the government of South Africa, the UN and the international community at large. There are indications that peace will eventually be restored and democratic elections carried out.

3.3. Socio-Economic Development:

In recent year it has widely been recognised that socio-economic development is an important tool for peace building processes. Talking to journalist in 1997 Mwalimu Julius K. Nyerere explained clearly how economic backwardness and competition for scarce resources in Burundi and Rwanda exacerbated political conflicts. He was of the view that had socio-economic development in the two countries reached the level of Singapore, ethnic conflicts could have come to an end (Daily News, June 9, 1997). Assefa (1998) also emphasised the fact that poverty and underdevelopment were among leading causes of violence, conflicts and rebellion, with the rising population in the Horn of Africa.

The realization of the importance of socio-economic development for peace building was clearly revealed during the Burundi Peace Negotiations in Arusha. Among the five committees which were to deal with various issues of the negotiations, one committee was to deal with economic and social reconstruction and development. This was Committee IV which in its report it made substantial recommendations. Among the recommendations included reconstruction of property, social and economic infrastructure destroyed during the civil war, ensuring sustainable and rapid economic growth, equitable development of health and education services and repatriation and resettlement of refugees. Thus, social and economic reconstruction and development were viewed as very essential for conflict resolution and peace building in post-conflict Burundi.

During the international symposium in Kampala in 2002 on the Great Lakes Region organised by the Mwalimu Nyerere Foundation with the support of the Government of Uganda, the need for socioeconomic development as a means of solving the problem of conflicts and building peace was greatly discussed. It was acknowledged that in all six countries of the Region the economy was characterised by low level of development though with some slight differences. One of the indicators was that shares of agriculture in total output was still dominant in all the countries. With the exception of Kenya where agriculture accounted for only 19.9 percent of GDP, in all the other five

countries agriculture accounted for between 40 and 54 percent (Wangwe, 2002). Other indicators include low level of industrialization and infrastructure, particularly in the context of transport and communication (Nasasira 2002).

It was also noted that the Region was characterised by high potentiality of fast socio-economic development. First the Region is very rich in economic natural resources. It is rich in mineral wealth, agricultural resources, forests and water. As its name indicates it has the largest lakes in the continent and big rivers. It has not only the highest mountain in Africa but also the largest river basin (the Congo river basin) in the World. The DRC has some of the richest minerals deposits in the world (Essack, 1997:20). It was, therefore, suggested that the first priority should be development of social and economic infrastructure in order to lay the foundations for the exploitation of the resources for fast socio-economic development.

3.4. Democratization

In the African continent and elsewhere in the world the period from the late 1980s through the 1990s to the present has been referred to as a period of democratization. Some people have regarded it as the second wind of change (Sithole, 1993) or the second African liberation or revolution (Essack, 1997). The concept of second implies that the process of nationalist struggles for independence during the 1950s and 60s was the first wind of change and the first African Liberation and revolution.

The democratization process has been characterized by a number of changes which include the adoption of multi-party politics, conducting multiparty elections, growth and expansion of the civil society organizations, the opening up for greater freedoms of the press and speech and demands for greater observance of human rights. In the GLR not countries have adopted the multiparty system. Uganda has been carrying out the democratization process within the context of the non-party movement system. However, recent developments seen to indicate that the country is also moving towards the adoption of the multi-party system of building democracy.

The democratization process has been viewed as one of important aspects in peace building and conflict resolution (Nnoli, 1998). The process is expected to do away or eradicate all or most negative aspects associated with origins of conflicts. This means that aspects such as authoritarian and dictatorial tendencies, ethnization of politics and practices of social injustice, marginalization and oppression are fought against.

During the Burundi Peace Negotiations in Arusha, one of the five Committees was on democracy and good governance. This was out of the realization that ending conflicts in Burundi demanded establishing a

strong base of democracy and good governance. Among many things the Committee recommended drastic constitutional changes, transformation of politics from ethnised into non-ethnised political parties, observance of human rights and facilitating the growth of vibrant civil society organizations (Mwansasu 2003). It was further recommended that the three years transition period for the implementation of the Peace Accord should end with democratic multiparty elections.

It has to be noted, however, that for the democratization process in the GLR to be able to facilitate or contribute to peace building important principles need to be observed. One principle should be taking various steps including the step of strengthening and consolidating the multiparty system. This calls for the necessity to establish new constitutions which can ensure democratic functioning of the multiparty system. This should entail transformation towards free and fair elections. During this period of democratization new conflicts have emerge in some countries due to multiparty elections which were not free and fair.

Another necessary step to be taken should be the establishment of people centred democracy. Such democracy calls for transformation of the stage from "bureaucracy centred" and "marked centred" state into a society centred state (Mushi, 2002). It has been observed that although the civil society has substantially grown in terms of numbers of civil society organizations, it has not been able to transform the state into society centred state. At best it is still at the level of a market centred state. Just as the state is still weak, so is the civil society. It is less autonomous and has not been empowered in order to play the role of ensuring real empowerment of the people (Ndebesa, 2002). Thus people centred democracy entails autonomy and empowerment of the civil society, empowerment of the people at large through the civil society and hence transformation of the state into a society centred state.

Another step towards democracy for conflict resolution is the type of democracy that can facilitate people centred development. People centred development requires policies and strategies of socio-economic development which enable the people to participate and be empowered in all stages of the development process. Such a model of development will ensure equal distribution of resources, socio-economic equality, social justice and poverty eradication. It is only through people centred development that the war against the three traditional enemies, that is ignorance, disease and poverty can be waged successfully. The type of democracy that facilitates people centred development should lead into the establishment and consolidation of democratic developmental societies (Mkandawire, 1995). In such societies democracy and development are two sides of the same coin.

Furthermore, democracy towards conflict resolution should also be based on African traditional reconciliatory structures. Among the aspects have been the establishment of the democratic model on the basis of traditional African values (Mpangala, op.cit:128-130). Some intellectuals have opposed the idea. Sithole (1994:9) for instance has argued that incorporating traditional African values in the democratization process is sheer mystification. It entails looking for exotic experiments which cannot work.

However, we are of the view that we cannot totally ignore incorporating traditional African values in the democratization process. There are certain values, which are important, particularly in terms of establishing democracy that can facilitate conflict resolution. Mugambi (1996:34-40) has pointed out that modern African Governments have mainly been state governments while traditional African governments were community governments. In our democratization process, therefore, there is need to merge traditional community governments and modern state governments in order to establish community based states that can ensure new types of of democracy.

Assefa (1996:52-59) has seen in traditional African societies "politics of reconciliation". He argues that since multi-party politics in Africa have potentially negative consequences due to deeply divided African societies, politics of reconciliation are necessary in order to avert the negative consequences of competitive multi-party politics. Politics of reconciliation in traditional African societies are characterised by cooperation and sharing. They are politics which put due emphasis on the community rather than on individualism and competition. Such politics cultivate community spirit among the people and between different parties. Politics of reconciliation should, therefore, be accommodated in the modern multiparty system, and should be part and parcel of the democratization process to avoid political conflicts.

Another important step or principle the democratization process is the question of creating democratic leadership. The his of Africa since independence has been characterised by a mixture of good leaders with vision, commitment and democratic tendencies on one hand; and leaders whose main preoccupation has been oppressing and exploiting the people and looting their countries in order to enrich themselves. Nyerere (1997) was optimistic that the new era of democratization had brought about progressive leadership without corrupt tendencies.

While we support Nyerere's optimism we still need to make efforts to ensure that our countries and societies in the GLR and Africa as a whole produce the desirable democratic leadership. The new type of leadership can only be realized through the establishment of a democratic multiparty system, leading to democratic free and fair multiparty elections. It can also be realized through people-centred democracy and development.

3.5. Regional Integration

Regional integration has been taken as one of important measures in the fight against conflicts and efforts in building peace. It has been observed that regional integration creates conditions of regionalism which are likely to lower the degree of conflicts (Hattne, 1998:8-15). This is because such integration can change conditions of economic stagnation and poverty which are a source of political turbulence, wars and unrest. Furthermore, through regional integration ethnic tensions between groups are likely to disappear (Gakwandi,1996:188-189). Integrations can also create conditions which are not favourable for the survival and operations of warlords and tyrants.

In the GLR the idea of regional integration has been widely discussed in recent years. For example in a book arising out of the 7th Pan - African Congress held in Kampala in 1994, Gakwandi had cited the GLR as one of six regional groupings to establish regional political and economic integrations, with Madagascar as the seventh. The idea was that such integrations would eventually lead into eventual continental unity. The proposed integration in the GLR was to be named as the "Swahili Republic" (Gakwandi, *ibid*). During the Kampala symposium of April 2002 on the Great Lakes Region, further ideas were advanced on the importance of establishing a regional integration in the Region. Two types of views emerged as to how that should be done. One view suggested the expansion of the East African Community (EAC) to incorporate Burundi, the DRC and Rwanda. Currently it is only Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda who are members of the Community. This suggestion had a greater weight given the fact that Burundi and Rwanda had already applied to join the EAC. The second view was that a new organization of the GLR should be established.

4. The Task Ahead

We are all aware of the magnitude of the impact of political conflicts in the GLR. Millions of people, most of who are innocent people, have lost their lives through massacres, genocide, civil wars and resultant famine and diseases. Within a period of four months Rwanda lost nearly a million lives in the genocide of 1994. Since when war began in the DRC in 1996 to date more than three million people have died. Ten years of civil war in Burundi has cost more than three hundred thousand lives. These are just few examples.

Since independence in the 1960s conflicts have destabilized the Region in a number of ways. One of the most serious aspects of distabilization has been the problem of refugees and internally displaced people (IDP). In addition to the economic burden of hosting refugees and IDP these groups have been by themselves a cause of instability as they have often been a source of misunderstandings between neighbouring countries. They have also been a cause of border skirmishes.

Conflicts have also been a source of arms trafficking. Conflicts create big markets for arms industries in developed countries. The sale and circulation of arms has grown considerably through governments and rebel groups. Rebel groups could not sustain civil wars without reliable sources of supply of arms of various types. Arms trafficking has been a matter of great security concern in the Region.

The most serious impact of conflicts has been stagnation or decline of the economies of countries of the GLR. The economy of Uganda for instance, was greatly ruined during the dictatorial regime of Idi Amin from 1971 to 1978. In Burundi the civil war since 1993 and even previous conflicts have resulted into the perpetuation of poverty and economic backwardness. The conflicts in that country have also resulted into destruction of nearly half the schools, dispensaries and hospitals and communication and transport infrastructure. Despite her rich natural resources the DRC is still economically backward due to many decades of dictatorship and contemporary situation of civil war.

Given the level of impact of political conflicts in the Region current efforts and measures of conflict resolution need to be seriously reexamined. Both within the region and at international level the emphasis has mainly been on conflict resolution in terms of ending the existing conflicts and whatever new conflicts that can arise. It is necessary to think of new approaches to conflict resolution. While measures of conflict resolution should continue, emphasis should be shifted more and more towards conflict prevention and peace building measures as discussed in section three above.

As a matter of special significance the question of regional integration should be given special priority. It is necessary to move out of the small states and establish the GRL state within the context of the African Union. This means that process of democratization and socio-economic development carried out within the context of regional integration are likely to prove more successful. The vision in the context of regional integration should be establishing a democratic developmental state with democratic developmental societies in the GLR.

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