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*Full Length Research Paper*

# **“Mother tongue won’t help you eat”: Language politics in Sierra Leone**

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**This article addresses the question, how does Sierra Leone’s language regime, moderated through formal and informal education, contribute to post-war globalization dynamics? Since Sierra Leonean independence from Britain in 1961, Krio, a type of Creole, has gone from being the mother tongue of a small ethnic minority to the lingua franca, particularly in Freetown, the state capital. English has been Sierra Leone’s elite language since colonial times and remains the only official language of government. Yet many other languages are spoken in Sierra Leone in different communities and contexts. Drawing on interviews and political ethnographic work in Freetown and the districts, the study argues that language and identity shift connected to post-war globalization reflects tensions between upward socio-economic mobility and cultural survival.**

**Key words:** Sierra Leone, language, education, participation, identity, citizenship.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mr. Lamin Kargbo, of The Institute for Sierra Leonean Languages (TISLL) in Sierra Leone’s capital city of Freetown, describes the challenges of promoting mother tongue adult education: “People are looking at it like, if you are literate in mother tongue, what will you eat? Will it get you a job? Are you even considered literate? This is because only people who go through the formal education system are counted as literate” (Kargbo and Jones, 2014). With this assessment, Mr. Kargbo summarizes one of the many contradictions of Sierra Leonean language politics that citizens must navigate as they move through both formal institutions and daily informal speech. This article addresses how Sierra Leone’s language regime, meaning “language practices as well as conceptions of language and language use as

projected through state policies and as acted upon by language users” (Sonntag and Cardinal, 2015: 6) contributes to post-conflict globalization era citizenship.

At the theoretical level, the study argues that language choice in educational sectors informs identity, and that the reality of post-conflict globalization entails language hierarchies that shape people’s language preferences and repertoires. Formal sector education policies are part of the state’s language regime, while informal education practices constitute part of lived language practice. Numerous studies from other countries have confirmed the way in which globalization, migration, and the quest for upward mobility shape language choice at individual as well as institutional levels, including in schools (Coronel-Molina and McCarty, 2016; Faingold, 2018;

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Telles and Sue, 2019). Across these formal and informal education spaces, Sierra Leoneans respond to a shift in economic, social, and political environment unfolding within a volatile post-war and post-Ebola crisis context, where the underlying drivers of conflict, including unequal access to insufficient resources, remain present.

Language in places like Sierra Leone may be seen as not political, since civil conflict has not fallen precisely along linguistic and ethnic lines, and yet the study argues in this and other works that language in both policy and practice is highly political because it forms the identity context in which people navigate all other aspects of their lives, including work, education, and politics. One intervention the researcher offers as a political scientist with an interest in language rights and education is to assert the importance of language policy and practice as political, and something that political scientists ought to pay more attention to in a range of cases. The study does not proscribe language policy for Sierra Leoneans, but rather addresses the complexity involved with trying to maintain cultural identity in the face of desire for upward economic and social mobility in a place that remains one of the most impoverished countries in the world. Since English operates as the high-status language in Sierra Leone, the shift to Krio may produce better language cohesion for people across ethnic groups, but will not allow most people access to the middle and upper class jobs, including politics and international development that continue to require English.

While much attention has been paid to Sierra Leone's transitional justice process, very little international or domestic attention has been directed to its language politics in the post-conflict globalization phase of the twenty-first century. The study contribution is to assert the importance of language politics in Sierra Leone as worthy of political science attention, and to document how institutions and people navigate a language regime operating in the midst of post-conflict globalization. Future researchers may further develop the case study with their own methods and agendas.

### Key concepts and terms

Citizenship is the status of holding territorially affiliated rights within a given state. This article focuses on how language use, derived from formal and informal educational access, maps onto how people imagine or perform their roles as citizens. It defines citizenship performance as the process by which people engage in the social contract, both claiming their rights and carrying out their responsibilities in relation to the state. Participation is generally conceived of as action that results from following through on a choice to do something with others. Indicators of institutional political participation include voting, meeting with elected or selected officials, or serving in those roles oneself, as

well as extra-institutional participation such as protesting or petitioning to influence policy (Gellman, 2017:12-13). Indicators of cultural participation may also be political and could include things like membership and activities in secret societies, facilitating rites of passage ceremonies or religious practices, as well as teaching and learning indigenous languages and associated customs.

The researcher has argued elsewhere that state language regimes in some countries are rooted in colonization practices that seek to homogenize the populace (Gellman, 2019). The researcher has also previously made the case that in Sierra Leone, individuals and groups held memories that influence identity and participation (Gellman, 2015: 151). In line with Trudell (2012) who looks to find ways for people to address both upward mobility through dominant languages while retaining cultural particularity through mother tongues, this article explores the conceptual aspects of schooling in a multilingual context, to better understand the tensions resonant in language practices in daily life, including in participation repertoires.

Language death is not a theoretical possibility in Sierra Leone; it is a process on march. UNESCO cites five Sierra Leonean languages as being in danger of disappearing: Bom, Kim, Mani, Mo-Peng, and Sei, and many more will join this list as the number of speakers drop over the coming years (Kanu undated). The depreciating value of mother tongue use in Sierra Leone is indicative of the continuing rise of English language hegemony around the world (Crystal, 2013; Dor 2004).

While English is a vital skill for economic advancement through employment and study, Trudell has documented that schooling in the colonial language often opens these opportunities for mostly those who come from privileged backgrounds, and that mother tongue instruction could in fact yield stronger schooling outcomes for those most in need of mobility (2012: 369-70). What it means to be Sierra Leonean in a post-conflict globalizing world is at stake in the arena of language choice. The study refers to mother tongue as the language or languages in which one is raised and bypasses debates over terminology (Childs et al., 2014: 169, 180-1). Heritage tongue indicates a language that may no longer be a mother tongue because of shifting language use patterns, but that still connects someone to their ethnic heritage.

### METHODS

This study draws on a range of causal and interpretive research methods (Blatter, 2017:2) to address Sierra Leonean language politics. This includes a year of political ethnographic work (2013-2014) in the Wilburforce neighborhood of Freetown, where the researcher engaged in daily exchanges with Sierra Leoneans in English and Krio. Twenty qualitative interviews with language teachers, policy officials, and non-governmental organization (NGO) workers were also conducted in education and language-related fields, and many informal discussions with linguists, educators, and development workers about research themes, including Sierra

Leonean Masters in Development Studies students at the Forah Bay College, where the researcher taught. It should be noted that this study is replete with limitations.

The author is a white cultural and linguistic outsider in Sierra Leone, and responses to her questions most likely were filtered through the positionality of power that comes with that identity. Nevertheless, her extended time in Sierra Leone compounded by the lack of attention that language politics there has received makes this one small contribution to a larger conversation about cultural and economic survival. The researcher hopes that future researchers, including Sierra Leoneans fluent in Krio, Mende, Temne and other Sierra Leonean languages, will take up these research questions and further investigate them through the lenses of their own positions as well. In this way, a more complete picture of language politics in the country can emerge.

The article proceeds as follows: first, the study reviews the colonial language regime to document how British rule played a major role in setting Sierra Leone on the course for indigenous language loss. Second, the study assesses the contemporary status of languages in Sierra Leone both within and outside of the formal education sector. Third, the study examines Sierra Leone's language regime in relation to the formal education sector, particularly the way languages are incentivized or stigmatized socially in schools. Fourth, the study looks at the role of the formal education sector, represented by the Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) as a significant player in language acquisition and status consignment in the country. The study concludes by considering the tension between language continuity and upward socio-economic mobility in Sierra Leone.

## COLONIAL LEGACIES AND LANGUAGE USE

A language regime refers to state policies and practices of language as well as concepts about languages engaged by language users (Sontag and Cardinal, 2015: 5-6). While some countries may have multilingual language regimes where more than one language is officially recognized, in Sierra Leone, English is the national language and used for state policy and the formal education system in principle, though not at all uniformly in practice. Krio, the contemporary *lingua franca* in Sierra Leone, has gone from being the mother tongue of a small minority of ethnically Krio people, less than two percent of the total population, to the dominant language throughout much of the country. Frequently characterized as the most "neutral" indigenous language, this is probably more a result of Krio's now mainstream use rather than any actual neutrality, particularly as stories abound of ethnic Krios looking down upon non-ethnic Krios who speak the language (Francis and Kamada, 2001:237).

Krio as a language was formed by different groups of people sent to Sierra Leone in the late 1700s and early 1800s. This influx of Black immigrants, termed Settlers, included freed slaves from England, Nova Scotians, who were former American slaves granted their freedom by fighting for the British during the US War of Independence, and Maroons, enslaved people from Jamaica who had fought for their freedom and been exiled to Sierra Leone via Nova Scotia (Fyfe, 1962; Fyfe 1981:45). The final group to facilitate the development of

Krio were liberated Africans, people from all over West Africa who were sold into slavery, but recaptured by British abolitionists on the high seas and rerouted to Britain's colony in Sierra Leone (Fyfe, 1994:46). Out of a need to communicate in the Colony, African syntax fused with English words to develop the Krio language, and descendants of these four groups are today considered ethnic Krios (Fyfe, 1994: 46).

The English language regime in Sierra Leone embodies the country's colonial, racist legacy, where language and cultural practices deemed useful to the British were valued over indigenous ones. This is in line with a wide literature on the effects of colonialism on African states in the realm of political authority and institutions (Beissinger and Crawford, 2002; Clapham, 1996; Herbst, 2000), economics (Van de Walle, 2001), ethnic identity and nationalism (Marx, 1998), and language use (Posner, 2003:127-146; Trudell, 2012). During British colonial rule, access to, and the content of, public education was directly tied to an agenda of control, "in order to prevent the creation of educated elite from among the common people who would naturally be critical of British rule" (Banya, 1993:165). This meant that only Sierra Leoneans who could serve the colonial administration would be educated, but even then, only in ways that would make them more useful to the British (Banya, 1993: 169).

Even as education in colonial times was a functional enterprise to groom those most useful to the colonial system, the post-independence period has fostered only modest reform. The basic underlying principle of formal sector education remains as a utilitarian westernization tool for those with means to access it, rather than education as a means to self-empowerment or self-actualization. However, as Trudell points out, evidence from Francophone West Africa show that formal education in the colonial language rather than mother tongue serves to essentially reinforce social hierarchies rather than act as an equalizer (2012: 369). The result is that an undereducated populace is maintained without the capacity to transcend the inequities that previously manifested into violent civil war.

## LANGUAGE REGIMES AND LANGUAGE SHIFT

Language regimes govern how people present themselves ethnically and in power relationships. Such regimes inform how people operate as citizens who are enmeshed in acutely local but also national discourses and performances. In Sierra Leone, as Fyfe puts it, "a person may be a Vai speaker, before being a Mende speaker, before being a Krio speaker, before being an English speaker, before being a French speaker. What do we do about his or her primary Vai-ness?" (Fyfe 2003:116). In this way Fyfe is pointing to the identity implications multilingualism, as well as language shift across space and time.

Like urbanization, war migration and displacement patterns change local language regimes by altering the usefulness of language as a currency. Massive movement of people looking for safety and economic survival during Sierra Leone's civil war shifted the utility of language from something that reproduced cultural values and systems to something that allowed people to facilitate communication between diverse groups of displaced people and forced migrants. Language shift in Sierra Leone has taken place in part because of human movement patterns during the civil war, including displacement and survival of occupying forces. While Sierra Leone's civil war was not an ethnically driven war, ethnic identity did play a role and its complexity has been compounded by linguistic shift.

In a group interview, a literacy teacher, Mr. Kargbo, related how Krio dominance has increased among youth in rural areas after the war, "I went to conduct a teacher training beyond Kabala in 1991-2. People told me, 'speak in Limba, I don't understand Krio.' But after the war I went back and the children said, 'ask me in Krio, I don't know Limba'" (Kargbo and Jones, 2014). This vignette acknowledges how the civil war changed language dominance. Before the war, in Kabala people lived out their daily lives in Limba, but afterwards, the daily language landscape switched to Krio (Albaugh, 2018:254-267).

### Political party language use

One way that Sierra Leonean tribes have been harnessed is through political parties, although ethnic identity no longer automatically correlates with linguistic identity in current times. Nevertheless, language and ethnicity has been used divisively by parties and politicians to such an extent (Christensen and Mats, 2008:518-9; Zack-Williams, 1999:146, 153) that fear of being labeled tribalist has kept many indigenous community leaders from advocating for linguistic rights (Kargbo and Jones, 2014). In the period after independence, ethnic divisions crystalized into the Mende-led Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) and the Temne-led All People's Congress (APC) (Lumeh, 2009:22-29).

In political party usage, language and ethnic identities are discussed interchangeably, even though Krio is used as a platform to recruit members to both parties as well as to publicize platforms. As Francis and Kamanda point out, ethnically driven political divisions permeated the media as well, with newspapers serving as "the mouthpieces of the different ethno- regional-based parties, such as the APC's *We Yone* newspaper and SLPP's *Skpndh*" (Francis and Kamada, 2001: 234). However, it is worth noting that both publications were written in Krio rather than Mende or Temne. This may be due to low literacy in Mende and Temne, and also influenced by the nod towards national unity that the use

of post-war Krio implies. Publishing political material in a language other than English or Krio could run afoul of tribalist claims. Such caution dampens language activism, and this is understandable in a place where ethnic identity became entrenched in both politics and the media that publicized it.

Ethnicity continues to be a prime characteristic used to assess someone's potential for upward social mobility or access to positions of power (Francis and Kamada, 2001: 234). Francis and Kamanda (2001: 234) note that elites across ethnic groups, including Krio, Mende, Themne, and later Limba, have harnessed ethnic identity as a tool to obtain their own agendas in both pre- and post-colonial times. While command of English will facilitate access to increased economic and educational opportunities in Sierra Leone and abroad, ethnic identification, including linguistic identification of co-ethnics, was and is used as a tool of political organizing that has real consequences for how citizenship is performed. On the one hand, the SLPP and APC retain control of their constituencies by rallying tribal loyalties, but this is not a foolproof method. In informal conversations during ethnography (broadly including regular daily interactions) with working class Sierra Leonean mothers who spent the war period in Freetown, they commented that though they were Mende or Krio, they voted for the APC instead of SLPP because they could not stomach supporting SLPP based on what they perceived as the party's role in the war and therefore in the tragedies that befell their families (Anonymous, 2014c).

It is the connection between political party mobilization of ethnic cleavages and indigenous languages as tools of those cleavages that has made people shy away from mobilizing around language rights as a cultural right in Freetown. Mr. Kargbo of TISLL reflected on how, though some members of the Limba Development Association wanted to mobilize a promotion of the Limba language, others halted the conversation by reminding people that they could be accused of tribalism, thus language promotion efforts were not pursued on that premise (Kargbo and Jones, 2014). Therefore, the tribalist organization of party politics has tainted the potential for ethnic mobilization in the cultural realm, where people do not want to mobilize around language promotion because they fear tribal stigma. Similarly, ethnic identification in formal education has also been tainted as tribalist, rather than diversity-promoting, because of preferential treatment through the handing out of educational scholarships based on ethnicity rather than merit (Francis and Kamada, 2001:234-5).

### LANGUAGE STATUS AND IDENTITY

In the past, the homogenization of language was seen as an inevitable part of the modernization and democratization process, though in recent years this has been complicated as language diversity issues have

surfaced in the Global North (Sontag and Cardinal, 2015: 10). In the West African context, Ghana, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire have all piloted bilingual education programs with some success. These countries may consider themselves to be multilingual, the general term for multiple languages being employed by the same group of speakers. However, diglossia, defined as a kind of societal multilingualism where two different languages of divergent status are used within one community of speakers (Fishman, 2006:69), more accurately describes the language use and performance happening in Sierra Leone.

Diglossia is common in Creole-speaking parts of the world, with the former colonial language being considered high status and the local Creole low status (Sengova, 2006: 184). Creoles are separate languages that operate with distinct status differentials. Scholar Abdul Bangura labels the linguistic situation in Sierra Leone as one type of polyglossia, or what he terms "double overlapping diglossia" (Bangura, 2006:160). In double overlapping diglossia, English serves as the high status language in relation to lower status Krio, which in turn is used as the high status language in relation to other lower status indigenous languages (Bangura, 2006: 160). Bangura notes that like Krio, Mende and Temne are also both considered low status in relation to English but serve as high status languages in relation to other indigenous languages, hence the double overlapping characteristic of diglossia in Sierra Leone (Bangura, 2006: 161). The status categories derive in part from the contexts in which different languages are supposed to be used; for example, English in classrooms and Krio, Mende, or Temne in commerce across ethnic groups, depending on the region. Krio is the dominant economic language in Freetown; Temne is concentrated in the north of the country; and Mende in the south and parts of the east, though migration patterns have made these traditional language zones more fluid.

Beyond these ascribed language functions are perceptions of language utility. English is associated with functions of the state, essentially operating at the national level; while indigenous languages, particularly in rural areas, continue their function maintaining ethnically based nationalism (Bangura, 2006:158). Bypassing debate about whether English should be considered an "indigenous" African language or an "Africanized" language (Chisanga, 1997; Crystal, 2013; Kachru, 1994), the study focuses instead on the unmistakable reality that English is the high status language in Sierra Leone in relation to all other languages.

Bangura's observation above highlights the power dynamics inherent within double overlapping diglossia, and distinguishes Sierra Leone's language landscape from bilingualism, where two languages may be used by the same population of speakers without an implicit status differentiation. In fact, the historical reality of British colonialism that paved the way for English's supposed

neutrality, in addition to its obvious association with globalization and the potential economic benefits that its use may bring, has also undermined the status of local languages in ways that leave many Sierra Leoneans lacking "cultural self-confidence" (Bangura, 2006:159).

As elsewhere in the world, rural communities in Sierra Leone are better able to retain and pass on community languages through generations, albeit without literacy skills, as children and grandchildren learn from parents and grandparents in everyday home and community life. In many Sierra Leonean villages, it is common to have no English speakers whatsoever, with more prosperous locals speaking a mix of the local language and Krio. For example, when the researcher asked a British NGO worker in a small village in eastern Sierra Leone in 2014 what languages he usually uses in his work with locals on community development, he responded "Kri-ende," meaning a mixture of Krio and Mende (Anonymous, 2014b). Such language mixture is typical of villages that rely on community-funded schools, rather than government-supported ones, as teachers at community schools come directly from the villages themselves and have less exposure to English than their government teachers counter-parts. While this situation allows for increased mother tongue use, it invariably poses problems for students who seek continued study beyond the primary level. Such students usually have to leave their home villages and attend school in a larger town where they are dropped into English immersion at older ages, and where the subject matter is considerably more sophisticated than in grades one through three. Though English skills are prized above all others, Krio, one of nearly twenty indigenous languages in Sierra Leone, has become the next best thing, and its standardized orthography was developed in 1984 by the Ministry of Education (Kamarah, 1994: 135). Increasing urbanization means that the prioritization of some indigenous languages over others is a national-scale phenomenon, while the devaluation of other indigenous languages is more pronounced in the capital city of Freetown, as well as in regional trade hub cities such as Bo and Makeni. In 2020, 1.2 million Sierra Leoneans, out of a total population of 6.6 million, live in Freetown, with 42% of the total population living in urban areas (CIA, 2020). Urbanization continues at a steady pace (Government of Sierra Leone, 2013: 1) and will continue to impact the language landscape of the country.

## **EDUCATION AS HIERARCHY-ENFORCER**

Education is a human right explicitly articulated in Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that elementary education should be free and available to all, and that its purpose is "full development of the human personality" (UN, 1948).

Though there are tremendous challenges to educational

access and quality in Sierra Leone, particularly for rural, poor, female school-age children, government commitment to education as a human right and its understanding of education as vital for socioeconomic advancement was reiterated as part of formal policy in 2013, supported by a range of United Nations agencies and other international actors (UNESCO 2017; Government of Sierra Leone, 2013: xiii).

According to the late Sierra Leonean scholar and linguist Clifford Fyle, there is no monolingual country in Africa, and it is the multilingual nature of African states that makes their education policies so challenging (Fyle, 2003:115). Multilingualism includes both individual and group multilingualism, but in this paper focuses on group, or societal multilingualism, which acknowledges the impact of speaker communities on language use, rather than solely individual language ability (Baker, 2011:66). Societal multilingualism indicates that speakers may use different languages in different circumstances, making the implications for formal education language policy and practice more challenging. Social conditioning resulting from colonial era educational has resulted in a local population that values English as a high status language, over other languages deemed lower-status (Sengova, 1987: 528). These language status stigmas permeate social interactions, with non-English speakers cast as less capable of engaging with the institutions that define citizenship such as government offices and schools.

Language status hierarchies play out in schools in a variety of ways. One of these is through punishment by teachers of students who use non-target languages, a practice that reinforces notions of shame regarding linguistic minority identity. The researcher has previously documented the connections between emotions like shame or anger in quieting or amplifying demands, respectively, for cultural rights like the right to mother tongue education (Gellman 2017). As in many countries, punishment by teachers for minority language use by students has been a common practice for generations (Faingold, 2018:72; McCarty et al., 2014). This was the case in Sierra Leone throughout the post-colonial period until very recently (Bangura, 2006: 162).

When Fyle (1976:50) was documenting language use in Sierra Leone in the 1970s, he noted how even when children were able to counter teachers' punishment-enforced insistence on using English at school, all this did was push students' local language use into the private sphere, where youth were more likely to confuse mother tongue and English language. Such a scenario sets schoolchildren up for weak command of both languages. Fyle (1976: 50) comments that: The child, in spite of his teacher, who knows that this supposedly inferior language is his only true linguistic possession, begins to see himself as an inferior human being despising the native language which he cannot throw away and striving to achieve a superiority in the use of a foreign tongue that, unless he is exceptional, he can never attain.

In this way, over time, punishment for mother tongue use undermines a child's sense of self as unique and worthy of validation in their ethnic community. The shame that accompanies punishment often develops into a loathing or disregard for anything connected to an ethnic heritage (Olthuis et al., 2013:32-33; Thiong'o, 1986).

During ethnographic work, in dozens of informal conversations with Sierra Leonean mothers in Freetown, Bo and Makeni from 2013-2014, contemporary language stigmatization was evident, with parents expressing desire to educate their children in English, with Krio as the default language, and avoid minority languages in both education and at home. This is in part because of language shame, but also directly connected with desire for economic mobility, which parents see as linked to English capacity (Anonymous, 2014e). Thus, language shift writ broadly includes cognitive and emotional dissonance as people transition from using mother tongue to an official language. It also points to a rational approach by parents, namely, to inculcate children with the most economically advantageous linguistic skill set. Status is not the only issue with utilizing English over other languages in Sierra Leonean schools. In a group interview with four staff members at the Milton Margai College of Education and Technology, the staff reflected on the fact that the reality of teacher quality in Sierra Leone is such that many teachers themselves do not speak English well, if at all, particularly in rural areas (Anonymous, 2014a). An NGO worker in the city of Kenema commented that such capacity limitations in English mean that many schools, especially community-supported schools located too remotely for the state to run them, tend to operate in the local language plus Krio (Anonymous, 2014b). Families who pay to make the school operate generally support teachers from the community itself and therefore the language of instruction is more likely to be the dominant mother tongue (Anonymous, 2014b). The Milton Margai staff observed that community schools are funded by community members themselves rather than MEST and so constitute a formal schooling space that is maintained by the will of its members (Anonymous, 2014a).

A graduate student at Freetown's Foray Bay College who is also a parent of school-age children and works for a development NGO noted, "in state-run schools, Krio tends to be used as the common language when students of multiple ethnicities attend a school, or when teachers want to offer a more "universal" language beyond the local community language "(Anonymous, 2014d). This interviewee also remarked that aspiring upwardly mobile parents will try to speak to their children in English if they know how, or Krio if they do not; even if the parents' own mother tongue is something else, out of interest in equipping their children for as many opportunities as possible (Anonymous, 2014d). This shows that indigenous languages besides English and Krio are therefore not perceived as offering opportunities

that parents would want to provide, and therefore home life, like school, is preferred in the highest-status language possible.

The status of language speakers has much to do with which languages are retained and which ones fall out of use (May, 2012:155). As Sierra Leone ranks nearly last on major development indicators worldwide, the impetus for parents to encourage skills that will help their children gain lucrative jobs is not out of place. Yet even in families with means to upwardly mobilize, the practice is frequently one of hybridization. The multilingual student and mother commented, the reality may be more of “Kringlish,” a constant switching between Krio and English akin to Spanish-English “Spanglish” in the US, which reveals language aspiration in the context of local language reality (Anonymous, 2014d).

Nigerian linguist Ayo Bamgbose documents that teachers, in their own sensitivity to students’ progress with the learning material, “often switch between the official medium and the mother tongue in order to make their teaching meaningful; hence, an official medium in higher primary classes is often a myth for the consumption of inspectors of schools and visitors” (2004: 5). Such practice was evident during this study’s ethnographic observations and in conversations with parents and local community workers throughout the country in 2013-2014.

In Sierra Leone, the civil war dominated the international spotlight throughout the 1990s and 2000s, so linguistic diversity was, and has not become, a priority for donors except in addressing illiteracy. The emphasis on English as the language of instruction remains in place in MEST’s most recent education policy report (Government of Sierra Leone, 2018: 47-64), despite research that shows the advantages for literacy retention in promoting mother tongue learning (Albaugh, 2014: 84-5; May, 2003:144-6). Both the 1995 and 2018 Education Policy reports developed by MEST have reinforced English-medium policy (Government of Sierra Leone, 1995:34; Government of Sierra Leone, 2018:1), with minimal mention of other languages in the 2018 report. English continues to be the goal, but without a means to attain it.

## SCHOOLING IN SIERRA LEONE

Sierra Leone’s language regime is best described as a set of lightly institutionalized or ad hoc practices that gear people towards English-language learning and use. The language regime concept captures how state policies and notions of language use are embedded institutionally through formal education (Sontag and Cardinal, 2015: 4-5). Particularly in rural areas, soft education policies allow the first three years of schooling to take place in the dominant community language, meaning a language that the majority of students at a given school and their families speak. Officially, indigenous languages are

supposed to be “promoted,” but there are no details on how that promotion is supposed to happen in the Constitution, legislation, or MEST reports (Government of Sierra Leone, 1991: 9, Government of Sierra Leone, 2018).

All schools in the country are theoretically conducted in English, with other languages introduced as electives (Government of Sierra Leone, 1991: 4). Since 2013, Sierra Leone has followed a 6-3-4-4 education structure,<sup>1</sup> meaning six years of study to complete primary school, three years for junior secondary school, four years of lower-level senior secondary school (SS1) and four years of upper-level senior secondary school (SS2). However, there is only an academic incentive to study one of the four nationally recognized indigenous languages: Mende, Temne, Limba, or Krio, through junior secondary school, when students can elect to take a language as one of their Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE)<sup>2</sup> subjects, but in practice very few students choose to do so (Nelson and Horacio, 2014). Indigenous languages are not included as subjects on the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE), the exam that students take after completing SS2 as they either try to gain college or trade school admission, so there is no institutional incentive to study indigenous languages beyond the BECE. Even so, students’ results on the English portion of the WASSCE have been dismal, with the vast majority of all students scoring the lowest levels of the English exam portion (Government of Sierra Leone, 2018: 53). Table 1 summarizes language theory by schooling stage.

The reality of language use in classrooms differs significantly from the theoretical, and there have been MEST policy modifications in attempt to align the two. In its 2010 Education Policy draft, MEST acknowledged that many teachers in rural schools use the dominant local indigenous language, sometimes referred to as the community language, as the medium of instruction during the first several years of schooling. However, MEST’s report in 2018 omits this (Government of Sierra Leone, 2018).

In his earlier work, referring to the 1961-1979 period, Fyle describes the Sierra Leonean government’s English-only program in primary and secondary schools as an “anti-literacy campaign” (Fyle, 1976: 59). In this context, English-only programming refers to the immersion model, where children from many backgrounds may enter the formal education system with minimal or no working knowledge of English, but are immediately placed in English-only classrooms with the ideal of rapidly developing English fluency. Fyle’s claim that such

<sup>1</sup> Prior to 2013 it was a 6-3-3-4 structure.

<sup>2</sup> The BECE exam often determines students’ maximum education level, as only those who pass are considered prepared enough to continue on to SS1. Many poor and working class children without the means to pay for an extra year of study to prepare them to retake the test drop out and try to join the workforce.



**Table 1.** Official language use policy during students' 6-3-4-4 education.

Stage of schooling	Years 1-3 primary	Years 4-6 primary	3 years of JSS	4 years of SS1	4 years of SS2
Language use in theory	Dominant community language may be used under 2008 Education Policy	English is the only allowed language	English only, but Mende, Temne, Limba, or Krio can be taken as electives and BECE subjects	English only	English only, without option to take indigenous languages as WASSCE subject

programs undermine literacy is backed up by Trudell's most recent work on Francophone countries that shows how educational submersion in the official language does not better prepare students in language fluency, grasp of subject matter, nor in developing their sense of self (Olthuis et al., 2013:174-5; Trudell, 2005: 239-51; Trudell, 2012). In fact, students in bilingual language programs (mother tongue plus dominant language) have higher learning outcomes and greater chances to transcend poverty than those in dominant language-only programs, and this has held true across a range of countries (California Department of Education, 2000; Coşkun et al., 2011; Skutnabb-Kangas and Dunbar, 2010: 71).

Studies show that rather than corrupting students' ability to learn English, literacy in mother tongue languages promotes the kind of complex and symbolic thinking necessary for language learning in general and is compatible with learning multiple languages as well (Hovens, 2002; Trudell 2005: 242-6). Erica Albaugh (2014: 182) demonstrates that in West Africa, education in a foreign language increases people's identification with the nation, rather than their ethnic group, while people who are educated in a mother tongue appear to maintain equal attachments to their ethnic group and the nation. One implication of this finding is that language shift may entail changing patterns of participation through the mechanism of identity formation.

## RESULTS OF POLITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY ON LANGUAGE SHIFT

Joachim Blatter, in his discussion of political science methodologies and methods ranging from truth-seeking (positivists) to meaning-making (interpretivists) states that the job of the sense-maker is "to locate an explanatory endeavor within the general discourse about these basic entities of social reality...[in order] to provide orientation" (2017: 9). As a researcher who engages both truth-seeking and sense-making as legitimate approaches, this particular article falls into the interpretivist camp and therefore the results are, as Blatter says, an orientation to the discourse of language shift. Sierra Leone's educational challenges are no doubt profound. Though literacy has increased steadily from the end of the war,

from 29.3% literacy for those fifteen years and older in 2003 to 38.1% by 2007, still, in 2018, only 43% of all Sierra Leoneans over the age of 15 are considered literate, with gender disparity evident, as 52% of men are literate and only 40% of women (UNDP, 2009: 4; CIA, 2020). These statistics are a sobering reminder that formal sector education continues to fail Sierra Leoneans in many ways, and that language hierarchy is just one of many issues that needs to be addressed.

At the same time, there is no evidence that speaking a dominant language needs to come at the expense of speaking other languages (Gbakima and Kamarah, 2014). Education policy in Sierra Leone and elsewhere is capable of multilingual design, but language status hierarchies, as one of many factors, play a role in determining policies and practices of language in schooling. This is evident in the group interview conversations with staff members at Milton Margai College of Education and Technology. One person articulated the assumption pervading teachers' perceptions that "learning English is superior to learning mother tongue," and the other staff members nodded vigorously in agreement (Anonymous, 2014a). Such thinking evolved from colonialism's racist social hierarchy, but has been adopted by communities and supported by proof of upward economic mobility connected to language use (Anonymous, 2014a; Fyle, 1976: 50).

In part, this scenario is based on a misconception by teachers that using mother tongue will harm student's English-learning ability (Anonymous, 2014a; Fyle, 1976:50; Gbakima and Kamarah, 2014). In effect, as previously documented by the author (2015) and as the Milton Margai interviewees emphasized in the meeting, it is the quality of teachers, both their own performances and the training they receive, as well as the curricula and materials they use in the classroom, that remain central issues in Sierra Leone's language learning challenges (Anonymous, 2014a).

Such challenges are not merely to be cast off as educational or cultural issues. The main result of this study, drawn from a synthesis of qualitative interviews and political ethnography, is that language shift has major effects on citizen identity, but the impact of that shift is only beginning to be articulated. Many Sierra Leoneans,

as well as outside researchers and aid workers, remain focused on the rightfully vital immediate needs of people to basic human rights for survival. Spaces like formal education are often overlooked and details such as language of instruction may little garner attention. Yet schooling is a doorway that directly links people to individual and collective identities that can be mobilized politically.

What is known from other cases is that while the first generation to lose fluency in their parents' mother tongue may be able to maintain a sense of ethnic identity, ethnic connections become harder to nurture without language for subsequent generations. This may be because participation in village culture will be strained for the generation serving as translators, and also because as families linguistically move towards English and Krio, cultural priorities may shift as well (Anonymous, 2014d). This study has documented that Sierra Leone's language shift continues at full throttle, and asserts its importance as a subject worthy of further research to address the implications of what such shift will have on politics.

## CONCLUSION

Hegemony of a particular language implies that while people may willingly use the language and even seek out learning it, language acquisition choices happen within coercive social circumstances, including within the education sector and socio-economic systems, where there is pressure or incentive to prize a particular language over others. Language hegemony operates in any country where dominant language use is tied to migration patterns, economic mobility or cultural hegemony, which is recognized as social mobility through assimilation.

Language hegemony also points to a broader problem about ethnic identity and how citizens are able to access their rights as culturally bound beings. Importantly, this is not purely a schism between traditional languages and the colonial legacy of English, but includes Krio as the lingua franca. Though children are capable of learning multiple languages simultaneously, in an attempt to ensure their children's future, many Sierra Leonean parents insist on English-only schooling and speak only English or Krio to their children at home. Elites operate as trendsetters, creating norms that other families, as well as schools and social networks, follow when they are able, searching for a linguistic boost on the socio-economic ladder. The long-term effects of these socio-economic linguistic patterns are yet to be well-documented and call out for further research.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interest.

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*Review*

# **China's engagement in the promotion of peace and security in the Horn of Africa: An interplay of big power responsibility and geopolitical interest**

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The Horn of Africa is a term given to the geographic map in the North East part of the African continent. The region connects Africa to the outside world like the Middle East, Europe and Asia that indicates its geopolitical significance. Despite its geopolitical significance, the region remains one of the most unstable, underdeveloped and security wise volatile than any other region of Africa. These multiple challenges and interlinkages affect not only the region but also the international community in a variety of its forms; like the increased rate of piracy, terrorism, transfer of arms and light weapons, black marketing, and influx of refugee crises are few cases to mention. This calls for the involvement of responsible big powers. Currently, various powers are engaged in the promotion of peace and security in the region, of which China is one. In lieu of this, then, the objective of the paper is to identify and describe the areas where China is contributing its part in addressing regional disruption. Hence, the study has identified China's contribution as plausible in the fight against piracy in the coastal areas of Somalia, peace keeping mission and post conflict peace building in Somalia, and mediating peace process in Sudan and South Sudan. Yet its predicament is found to be its inability to help pressure groups and civil society organization in their effort for same effect. Hence, it is recommended that China need to device ways in how manner best to work with nongovernmental institutions in ameliorating regional disruption.

**Key words:** Peace and security, big power responsibility, peacekeeping, pirates.

## **INTRODUCTION**

There is no agreement among academics on the exact definition of the Horn of Africa region. Different scholars have suggested what the Horn includes and excludes based on various considerations: some wider and some narrower in scope and implication based on divergent geopolitical considerations. The following are some

instances of the delineation of the Horn of Africa made by academics based on major parameters. From the perspective of the US foreign policy scholars, like Peter Woodward (2002), the term 'Horn of Africa' is not an indigenous one; rather it is a name that springs from a glance at a map rather than any perception of inhabitants

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of that area of north-east Africa. Indeed, among this category of scholars, there is no agreement on precisely what it is. Besides, the states conventionally accepted as part of the Horn region such as Ethiopia, Somalia, and Djibouti consider the concept of the Horn as an extension and outgrowth of concerns around the nature of inter-state relations. In particular, 'from an early concern about Somalia's relations with Ethiopia, and take in all of the latter's problems, and then increasingly to include Sudan as well. Another consideration is history that defined the convergence and divergence of states and peoples of the region.

Though in Africa, the Horn is not always of Africa: its history is as much linked to Arabia as to Africa, including the influence of Islam. Thus the broad context for Middle East policy, including the Arab-Israeli dispute, may be as relevant for understanding US policy towards the region. Thus, 'the Horn' is defined as comprising Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia (including what is now known as Somaliland), Sudan and Eritrea since its independence from Ethiopia in 1993 (ibid). Others defined the Horn of Africa sub region in terms of shared opportunities and challenges as comprising Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Sudan, but other analysts have included Kenya in the sub-region, while some others have excluded Sudan from it (Lyons, 1992; Bereket, 1980). One also sometimes encounters the term "Greater Horn of Africa", defined as comprising the Horn itself as well as Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. In-between the two is the delimitation of the sub-regional organization IGAD (Intergovernmental Authority on Development), to which Kenya and Uganda, but not Tanzania, belong as members (Juma, 2003; BJØRN, 2007). In this sense, therefore, the Horn of Africa is equivalent to the Greater Horn of Africa minus Tanzania.

Scholars concerned with geostrategic reasons add recent issues, like terrorism, integrating the Horn with the Greater Horn. Accordingly, in an era of terror, Yemen belongs naturally to this greater Horn of Africa region, adding another 20 million people, virtually all Muslims, although not necessarily cohesive physically. Despite the unifying Rift Valley theme (from the Sudan and Djibouti south through Ethiopia and into Kenya), in the global battles for freedom and democracy and against terrorism these seven nation-states (Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, the Sudan, and Yemen) astride the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Indian Ocean share a common enemy. They also roughly share a paucity of resources and unfulfilled desires for rapid economic advancement (Robert, 2005).

Given this as might so be imperative in the understanding of states of the region in the Horn of Africa, many scholars prefer to define the Horn of Africa using a very conventionally accepted key states as comprising of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia and Djibouti, although it embraces geopolitically the adjoining states of Uganda, Sudan, South Sudan, and Kenya (Danfulani,

1999; Farer, 1979). This is equivalent or equals to the IGAD region, where many scholars define the region in terms of membership to the sub-regional organization, IGAD to which the African Union and the United Nations gave their political support and legal recognition. Hence, conceptualizing the Horn of Africa throughout the whole paper need be understood in terms of a region that comprises aforementioned eight states, which are all members of the IGAD regional framework for peace and security.

The region is known for its volatile security landscape and continuous political instability, in which conflicts of all sorts' amess the region for a long period of its history. The dominant number of states of the region is fragile, weak, and incapable of maintaining effective control of their respective boundaries. At worst internal disagreements and conflicts are seen to have a grave consequence in initiating inter-state conflicts. The same is also true for inter-state conflicts to have an impact in both initiating or aggravating internal divisions and conflicts. Underdevelopment and poverty define the scope of the regional economic debacle. It seems aggravated due to poor governance and resource diversion from peacetime use into military preparedness, thereby to cover costs of military armaments and equipment. All these challenges put states and peoples of the region in the same boat. Hence, addressing security challenges and promoting peace in the region is the utmost agenda of the region of Horn of Africa.

Given the challenges in the Horn of Africa; various major powers are contributing their fair share. For a very long period, the US is there playing the role of peacemaking efforts like in the case of Somalia, conflict resolution in the North-South Sudanese civil war and trying to deter the proliferation of terrorism in the Red Sea and Somalian coastal areas. And very recently some big powers are playing their part in the promotion of peace and security in the region either in collaboration with states of the region or via the multilateral organization of Universal, Regional and Sub-regional. *Inter-allia*, the coming of China to the regional scenario is a case in point. Driven by its geopolitical, politico-economic interests and/or to discharge its major power responsibility, China is engaged in the security matters of the region. Notwithstanding its economic interest in the region, it is playing a pivotal role in the addressing conflicts in the region and in post conflict peace building endeavors.

China, as a new global actor, is playing a praiseworthy task in the promotion of peace and security in the region. China's role in the mediation efforts of the ongoing civil war in South Sudan and Sudan (the Darfur issue) and its fight against pirates in the Coastal areas of Somali are cases in point. Besides, the One Belt One Road initiative that is assumed to connect Africa via this region has further forced China to reinvigorate its efforts in the same task, which demands academic and research

engagement. In light of this, therefore, the paper will look into the empirical evidences where China is engaged in the promotion of peace and security in the region of the Horn of Africa. In doing this, the paper will first look into the geopolitical settings of the region and then it will provide some theoretical frameworks pertaining to the major power responsibility and some basic concepts in the area of conflict, conflict resolution, peace, and security promotion strategies to be followed by the practical engagement of China in the area of concern.

### **The objective of the study**

- (1) To identify and describe the main areas where China is contributing its part in addressing violence and insecurity in the region.
- (2) To examine and describe the rationale behind China's security interest in the Horn of Africa region.

### **Research questions**

- (1) Why China is interested in the promotion of peace and security in the Horn of Africa?
- (2) What are its contributions so far? What are its achievements and drawbacks?

### **METHODOLOGY**

To address the aforementioned research questions and arrive at the research objectives identified earlier, the research is methodologically guided in the following manner. From the start, the researcher accepts that great powers have the responsibility to help address poor countries security predicament. However, there is a propensity where great power responsibility can be used as a cover-up for their national interests. And if they are driven from the mere pursuit of narrow national interest, their contribution to regional peace might not be feasible as there will be an obvious bias of action. On the other hand, the researcher believes that if national interest and great power responsibility have a delicate balance and both of them are the driving forces behind their contribution to regional peace and security, the possibility of successful contribution will increase.

### **PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTION AND RESEARCH DESIGN**

The study is informed by social constructivist paradigm and takes note of the assumptions pertaining to epistemological, ontological and methodological approaches. The study is, thus, prescriptive of the social constructivist epistemological claim that knowledge is socially and culturally constructed. In the same vein it accepts the ontological assumption of reality as relativism that subscribes the existence of multiple realities psychologically, culturally and socially situated.

Ontologically, on the question of reality, social

constructivists believe that "realities are apprehendable in the form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature (although elements are often shared among many individuals and even across cultures), and dependent for their form and content on the individual persons or groups holding the constructions" (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 110 cited in Toma, 2000). Epistemologically, social constructivists believe that "the investigator and the object of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked so that the findings are literally created as the investigation proceeds" (ibid). Within this general viewpoint, the study is a desktop research that uses multiple sources that are analyzed systematically. Hence, various official statements, books, journals of both printed and online/soft copy, newspapers and media dispatches, institutional publications and reports were utilized as main sources of data.

### **GEOPOLITICAL SETTINGS AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE HORN OF AFRICA REGION**

The Horn is located in the most paradoxical part of the world filled with contradictory and complex overlap of multiple features. Located at the crossroads to the strategic oil field in the Middle East, the vast market of Asia, the pass way to Europe-the street of Bab el Mandeb, proximity to the Gulf of Aden, the Persian Gulf and close social, historical and cultural attachment to the home of the three Abrahamic religions make the Horn ample geostrategic significance. Historically, the region has been center of attraction for big powers from the time of ancient empires, through the US vs USSR rivalry of the Cold War; to the Post-Cold War multipolar world of our era. The fact of new emergent powers like China and India coming to the region is a reiteration of the continued politico-economic and military strategic significance of the Horn for whosoever power that be. Despite the brief declining significance in the early 1990s with the end of the Cold War, the interest of old and new big powers have reinvigorated with the rise of Political Islam and the threat of global terror and the imperative for the global war against it.

States and peoples of the region are interconnected by multiple interdependent needs, and strategic resources like the Nile that kept them linked to the states and peoples of the Great Lakes region, and Egypt. A view from Ethiopia exhibits same interconnectedness and convergence of countries through rivers and infrastructures: except with Djibouti and Somali land via the lifeline to the coast, Mereb with Eritrea, Turkana with Kenya, Tekeze, Baro and Abay with Sudan and South Sudan, Wabishebele or Jebel with Somalia. The shared identity and social infrastructures along the state borders and borderlands are additional potentials for cooperative engagement against hunger, war and the multiple

vagaries of overall insecurity that happened to define the regional scenario.

Unfortunately, these multifaceted potentials and strategic significances have continued to be a source of many woes than peace and development for the states and peoples of the region. The grim picture notwithstanding, both the challenges and opportunities are blessing in disguise for constructive transformation of the region into sustainable peace and prosperity, however. Having this general picture in mind, now let's examine the geopolitical significance of the region taking major reference points in the 'Greater Horn' and the proximate neighborhood of the Middle East that more or less provide a clear image of the geopolitical setting and its significance. Among others, the Red Sea is one important factor that makes the region strategically very significant.

The Red Sea coast line 2,234 km, Red Sea Coastline of the State of Eritrea and the coastal lines of Egypt starting from the mouth of the Suez Canal through Sudan and Djibouti cover more than 4000 km. The Somali coastline of the Indian Ocean is 3025 km long having multiple ports of vital regional and international importance. The ports along the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean are strategic spots that continued to be points of attraction to regional and international actors. These include Port Sudan, Massawa and Assab in Eritrea, Djibouti port, Bossaso in Punt land, Berbera and Mogadishu in Somalia, Mombassa in Kenya, on the other side of the Red sea, and Gulf of Aden Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, and Aden and Ash Shihir in Yemen (Congressional Research Service, 2009). The Horn Coastline of the Red Sea joined the Mediterranean world via the Suez Canal to the South through the strait of Babel Mandeb to Gulf of Aden, to the Arabian Sea, and the wide world of Indian Ocean on the one hand. The shipping line from the Persian Gulf via Gulf of Oman crossing the Arabian Sea to the Indian ocean on the other meeting at Mombasa (Kenya) parallel leading to the Cape of Good Hope, and the Atlantic ocean, which is the key strategic shipment line that joins Africa, the Middle East, the Indian Sub-continent, and Europe. State of affairs on this part of the world constitutes global concern. For long control over this international shipment-line has determined the power of regional and international actors. Also, it determines the state of war and peace, conflict and cooperation, peace and security, in the Horn regional setup.

The post September 11 period has refreshed and reinvigorated the interest of big powers with composition of emergent factors; at the forefront are radical Islam, terrorism, and the coming of China to Africa. This has dual expressions rooted in the effect of globalization that made events in any part of the world to be a concern for all; more so does in terms of any form of security; one is the growing concern and eventual declaration of Global War on Terror. The level of concern is seen in the US sharing the French base in Djibouti, the formation of East

African standby brigade and aids to Djibouti and Ethiopia as part of an alliance of the willing in the fight against terrorism (Combined Joint Force, 2008)<sup>1</sup>. The second is economic concern to curb the influence of China; last but not least, the rise of piracy on the Indian ocean coastal lines of Somalia has become combining factor not only for states of the Horn but also for rival big powers, to which both the US and China take measures unilaterally in different time frames. Owing to this geopolitical significance of the region, the newly invigorated China's engagement with African states in general, and the Horn of African states in particular, China is playing a central role in the promotion of security in the coastal areas of the region as well as in the peacemaking efforts of the most troubled states of the region. It is in lieu of this imperatives and sine qua non, that China's engagement in the region should be seen. This is elaborated in details following the theoretical aspect of the discussion.

## THEORETICAL BASELINE

### Great powers responsibility in the maintenance of peace and security

Power is central concept in the realist tradition of International Relations. Power often defined in terms of material capability is identified as the ultimate enabling mechanism or instrument of a state to secure its national interest, at the core of which is survival (Jervis, 1999). From this realist understanding of power, we can deduce that great power entails the military capability of a state relative to the military capability of others. According to Mearsheimer (2001) a given state can be named as a great power when it achieves a stage capable of waging conventional war, not necessarily win, against an existing power preponderant. Great powers, while fear each other, continually compete for power with the ultimate objective of becoming a hegemon (ibid). So from realist point of view, great power responsibility emanates from this fact of military strength.

Another explanation is given from the English School. This School of International Relations, define great power status and great power responsibility in terms of both material capability and its intersubjective social role. In essence, it claims that not only military power that defines great power and its concomitant responsibility. Hence, the school "engineers an important shift from realism by introducing a social element into conceptualisations of great power responsibility" by complementing the concept of social role. Conceptualization of great power and its status is attributed to its power and contribution in

<sup>1</sup> Combined Joint Force (2008) Bulletin, 3. Combined Joint Force is part of US 'war-on terror' in-Horn of Africa comprises Ethiopia, Djibouti, Kenya and Yemen as its members, and has been expanding its coverage since 2002 to encompass Eritrea; conducts operations and training within the Combined Joint Operations Area (CJOA) to assist Host Nations to combat terrorism in order to establish a secure environment and enable regional stability.

the maintenance of international peace and order as deemed legitimate and accepted by other members of the international community (Bull, 1977). The concept of responsibility is a social constructionist idea attached with the moral and legal obligation of an entity, in our case the state. For instance, owing to their power, big powers have secured veto status in the Security Council and hence have the legal responsibility to act rationally in the maintenance of international peace and security. Besides, big powers have irreplaceable role in determining the nature of the international system. And hence, they have the moral responsibility to help address social evils across the globe.

In the context of prevalent international law and international relations, states are presumed equal yet they are different in terms of the distribution of capabilities like military, economic wellbeing, technological knowhow and international reputation. With such taken for granted differences, great powers have a special responsibility to mediate the idea of sovereign equality and the unequal distribution of capabilities. Great powers are responsible for determining issues that affect the peace and security of the international system as a whole, and have a duty to shape and adjust their foreign policies with those desirable international conditions. Thus, they can't escape the critics for failing to respond accordingly.

In general, in contemporary International politics and Relations, the major powers are assumed to play their part in redressing the social and political evils engulfing countries of the poor. This might encompass many aspects, among others, supporting peace initiatives and helping promote security endeavors of poor states are few to mention. It is also imperative to take into account that States engagement in the peace making effort is not solely driven from their global responsibility. Notwithstanding their big power responsibility, they have the obvious reason for active involvement in the peace making and security promotion endeavors in general. This is typically defined as states national interest. This interest is at the core of their foreign policy objectives, for its attainment they pursue all instruments, called instruments of foreign policy that includes from peaceful to violent mechanisms.

In terms of their approach, either unilateral or multilateral, or a mix of both ways is possible in so far as it confirms the basic underlying assumptions of International law and International Organizations. Here contextual matters might have ample explanatory power in the choice of approaches, for instance big powers might think that their unilateral action is more doable to address a certain challenge, or a multilateral approach via international, regional and sub-regional organizations. In some cases, some contexts might demand a mix of both approaches and under such instance big powers might convince themselves to involve and contribute their fair share via both mechanisms in different capacity. It is in lieu of this theoretical underpinning that Chinese engagement in the promotion of peace and security in the

region of the Horn of Africa will be meticulously discussed.

### **Conflict and conflict resolution and transformation**

Scholars of conflict studies define the essence of conflict in various ways. For instance, Musalaha (2017: 3) defined conflict as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals." Jeong (2008: 18) also defined it as "persistent and pervasive nature of inter-group and international competition among disparate interests and values that underlies power dynamics". Others also defined it as a struggle or contest between people/groups or states with contradictory needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals (Azar, 1986; Burton, 1990). Deducing from earlier definitions, the phrase "disagreement over something" is elemental factor in understanding the concept conflict. Besides, most conflict scholars believe that conflict among individuals or actors is natural phenomenon in any society, yet what matters most is how we handle them before going violent. Because, conflict in its violent form claims the lives of many people, destroys economic resources, infrastructures and diverts resources like human and financial away from the development needs of the public (Azar, 1986).

In view of this, instruments or efforts to handle conflict are vital. Among others conflict prevention is one of the mechanisms via which we can handle conflicts before going unabated. Conflict prevention entails a constant monitoring of potential flashpoints and a very immediate action to remove the conditions that might facilitate to the outbreak of a violent conflict. Here its minimalist objective is to block a certain crisis from spilling into an open violent conflict (Jeong, 2008). In case this approach fails, the situation calls for conflict management and resolution mechanisms. The first is aimed at containing the damages and limiting the scale of the conflict, while the second is aimed at helping parties to the conflict address conflicts altogether in a win-win situation. Conflict resolution processes might include a number of approaches like negotiation, mediation and arbitration. For a successful Conflict resolution, efforts need to extend beyond resolution to include peace efforts like post conflict peace building and reconstruction.

Another modality of addressing conflicts is conflict transformation. As a theory, conflict transformation is aimed at ending the very underlining causes of conflicts and arriving at a sustainable peace. Thus, it seeks to go beyond conflict management and resolution efforts and aspires the development of a healthy relationships among communities or states. As a theory or an approach, conflict transformation recognizes any sort of social conflict as a continuous and dynamic behaviour in human relationship. And hence, it is much more concerned with social conflicts. According to Lederach (2003) the theory



of conflict transformation underscores that social conflict is evolving from and producing change in the personal, relational, structural and cultural dimensions of human experience.

### **CHINA'S ENGAGEMENT IN THE PROMOTION OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN THE REGION**

The history of China's engagement with the African continent can be traced back to the 15<sup>th</sup> C during which Chinese traders visited East African region. In its modern parlance, however, China-African relation was built around 1950's (Schiere, and Alex, 2011). This was the period that involves two imperatives in building the foundations of China-African relations. One is that significant number of African states were under colonial rule, hence most of them demand external support in their fight against colonialism and postcolonial politico-economic reconstruction. The second is that following the formal establishment of the Chinese People's Republic in 1949, China was in need of international political support and recognition for its one China policy, and concomitant support to join the UN. This mutually demanded cooperative trend was officially invigorated with the declaration of the Bandung summit of 1955, in which about 29 high level politicians from across Africa and Asia were participants<sup>2</sup>. During the summit, they agreed up on five principles<sup>3</sup> to be instrumental in their aspiration for South-South cooperation. This has laid the bases for the China-Africa relations. This general image in the making of China-Africa relations has its importance in the explanation of Chinese engagement in the Horn of Africa. Given this, as it may, the current Chinese engagement in the region might need further explanations related to geopolitics, economic, political and security matters.

The geopolitical position of the Horn of Africa region and associated politico-economic and security interest of China is one explanation in this regard. While highlighting the geopolitical significance of the region, Buys (2018: 10) states that "East Africa's coastal countries are important not just in their own right, but also through their role as transport nodes linking Indian Ocean trade routes with the African interior". Following the formation of the Forum on China-Africa (in 2000), China has significantly involved in economic relations, manifested in trade and investment, with almost all East African countries. Since the first Forum on China-Africa, observers believe that the United States has shared the region with China, splitting interests between America's military-industrial security sphere and China's economic and trade relations.

<sup>2</sup> Bandung summit held in Indonesia from April 18-24, 1955. This was known to be one of the first important conferences in the initiation and promotion of a new south-south cooperation.

<sup>3</sup> The principles are outlined in the final communique of the summit. These are, political self-determination, mutual respect for sovereignty, Equality, non-aggression and non-interference in the internal affairs of another.

Besides, the "Maritime Silk Road" initiative planned to connect China, Europe and Africa is a must to stretch via the Horn region so as to reach the regions and states of the African continent. This is another geopolitical explanation in the relations of China with the Horn of Africa. In this regard, countries like Djibouti, Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya are of particular strategic significance to the Maritime Silk Road (Breuer, 2017). Chinese demand for natural resources and market in the East African Region are another explanation for the Chinese engagement in the region. On the part of the states in the Horn region, they have relatively easy access to the financial support, basically in the form of grants and concessional loans from the Chinese government. This creates a leeway for the states of the Horn of Africa from the complex political economic prerequisite of western countries and their financial institutions. All stated points, at least indicate the mutual interest of China and the states of the Horn of Africa region for mutual benefit. To assure this, thus, China's contribution in the maintenance of peace, stability and promotion of security in the region has become a vital issue of concern. Within this general conception, Chinese engagement in the promotion of peace and security in the Horn of Africa region can be seen in the following manner.

#### ***China's military base in Djibouti and its fight against pirates in the region***

Since the fall of the authoritarian military regime, Somalia has become an anarchic state where clan leaders fought each other for power and resource control. The absence of central government in Somalia has created a safe zone for groups engaged in banditry, terrorism, human trafficking, transfer of small arms and light weapons, black marketing etc. Besides, pirates were operating in the coastal areas of Somalia all along the Gulf of Aden that affect the longest trade route of the Red Sea, connecting the Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean. Several times failed naval missions were conducted by the fragile Somalian Government in collaboration with neighboring states. This had amplified supporting hands from the international community. Since 2008, when the security situation has become worsened, China has conducted 26 escorts mission not only to Chinese but also non-Chinese commercial ships in the coastal areas of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden (CGTN, August, 2017). Furthermore, in 2017, for the first time, China sent a special force of navy's groups called Dragon Commando so as to rescue a merchant ship in the Gulf of Aden that resulted the capture of three pirates and able to free 16 Filipino crew members (June, 2018). Since then, China has showed great interest in the fight against pirates in the region. Side by side, owing to the strategic significance of the region, various powers, like France, Britain, USA and Japan have established their overseas military base in Djibouti. Djibouti, located in the eastern

most tip of the Horn region, is also a linchpin to the Chinese one belt one road initiative, it is via which to intrude the African continent. Hence, China has established its first overseas military base in Djibouti on 1st August 2017 with a total cost of 590 million US Dollars. The military base is operated by Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy/中国人民解放军驻吉布提保障基地/Zhinggou renmin jiefangjun haijun/According to the CGTN (CGTN, August, 2017), the military base of China will help it to fulfil china's international obligation like peacekeeping mission and humanitarian aid operations in the region. Currently, China is actively superintending the area from pirates. Parallel to the establishment of the military base, China has built a port and a free trade zone in Djibouti, which makes it totally different from previously established powers in the country.

Hence, it is lucid to depict that China has made Djibouti as its safe gateway to the African continent. With such interest in Djibouti and similar politico-economic interest in the region, it seems laudable that China will significantly contribute to the peace and security need of the Horn of Africa region.

### ***China's participation in peacekeeping mission***

For a very long time, China preferred to engage in matters of peace and security individually than via multilateral arrangements. However, since the last ten years, it has accepted to participate in peacekeeping efforts under the umbrella of the United Nations. Currently, China is one of the top contributors of military personnel among the five permanent members of the UN. Viewed from this angle, Chinese contribution to the promotion of peace and security in the Horn of Africa is praiseworthy. In addition to its state to state approach, it is playing significant role in terms of both financing peace operations and sending military personnel. For instance, in 2009 China has donated about 300,000 US Dollars to the African Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), in 2010 China financed about 1.32 million to the African Union (AU), out of which some portions are allocated to the mission in Somalia, and in 2016 it has donated 1.8million Dollars to the African Union mission in Sudan (Safeworld, 2011). In terms of human resources contribution, China has contributed about 231 troops to the AU-UN mission in Darfur.

Similarly, it has contributed 1042 troops and 15 civilian police to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (Etyang, 2016).

### ***Post conflict reconstruction and peace building in Somalia***

Besides, to the struggle against pirates in the horn region

and its contribution in the peacemaking efforts in Sudan, China is playing a significant role in the post conflict peace building and reconstruction of Somalia. Currently, notwithstanding all odds, Somalia seems in a relative peace, yet its central government is weak to address the security and economic needs of the people. Especially, as a war torn country, massively devastated by civil war, Somalia demands organizational or state level support in its post conflict peace building and reconstruction aspiration. In this regard, among others, China is playing this part. For instance, sources indicate that China has built more than 80 infrastructure projects like roads, stadium, hospitals, and schools in the last 30 years (CGTN, 31st August 2018). In the same period, since 1991, to date, it has dispatched a group of medical experts having more than 400 members within 13 batches, indicating Chinese huge engagement in the reconstruction process. Besides, China has provided about 1.5 million US dollars for humanitarian purposes in May 2018. On the other hand, since 2018, Somalia officially joined the Chinese One belt one road initiative. And recently Somalia has issued fishing license for about 30 Chinese companies to operate in its coastline. These will surely reinvigorate Chinese contribution in the promotion of peace and security in the region, not only from the vintage point of big power responsibility but also from its own angle of promoting its national interest.

### ***Mediating the peace process in South Sudan and Sudan***

China is engaged in South Sudanese peace talks, in which both parties of the conflict has welcomed its effort (Xinhua, 27th May, 2018). Previous mediating efforts by other third parties were unsuccessful mainly due to lack of mutual acceptance and suspicion to the partiality or impartiality of the actors involved in the mediating process. But unlike others, Chinese mediating effort is recognized as impartial by all sides of the conflict, which is a good move towards a peaceful solution in South Sudan. Besides, similar undertakings are undergoing in the conflict between south Sudan and the Republic of Sudan. Like the case in the peace talks in South Sudanese civil war, Chinese mediating role is also accepted by both parties in the interstate conflict of South Sudan and the Sudan.

Hence, Currently, Chinese Mediating effort in the civil war of South Sudan and the Border conflict of North-South Sudan seems plausible.

### **Conclusion**

The Horn of Africa encompassing eight sovereign states has a unique political feature that more or less determines the nature of regional peace and security agenda. The geopolitical position of the region has also made it liable

for external intervention, where big power intervention has both negative and positive influence to the regional peace and security agenda. Various big power's intervention had proved this from historical antiquity to date.

The geopolitical significance of the region has also its own impact in determining the peace and security agenda of the region, as it attract major powers to the region and the regional issue. For good or bad, the geopolitical significance of the region has witnessed a swapped weight across time and history. It has a marked significance in the high days of colonialism and the Cold War period. However, declined with demise of the Soviet Union and American power preponderance in the immediate days of post-Cold War politics. Yet, very recently, the geopolitical significance of the region has come to a point of its pick where great powers are increasing their petition for the region. This can be seen in terms of US interest in the fight against terrorism and political Islam and the reinvigorated economic engagement of China in Africa, and its quest for the one belt one road initiative. On the other hand, the regional absence of peace and incredible instability and insecurity has attracted global powers to play their role in ameliorating the debacle.

The heightened frequency of pirate attacks, terrorist assaults, interstate and intrastate conflicts (like in Somalia and Sudan) and their concomitant effect has come to be on the agenda of the great powers, without which they can't realize their aspiration, what so ever it constitutes, in the region and Africa in general. Thus, responsible global powers are contributing their fair share in this regard. Here, China is a case in point that has long involved in fighting against piracy in the coastal areas of Somalia, Red sea and the Gulf of Aden. Besides, it is actively engaged in the peacekeeping efforts of the UN in South Sudan, in conflict resolution and mediation process in Sudan and South Sudan. Besides to its contribution in different capacity to the post conflict peace building in Somalia, it is also participating in helping the peace efforts of regional (African Union) and sub-regional (IGAD) frameworks. Yet its contribution is limited only to intergovernmental organizations and government institution, hence massively criticized from the advocates of peace and security via the involvement of civil society organizations, pressure groups and human right activists that Chinese failure to help non-governmental institutions is one of the main predicaments of its contribution. And hence it is recommended that China needs to rethink of its peace and security approach thereby to encourage the contribution of nongovernmental section of the wider people.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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*Full Length Research Paper*

# **Democratic illiteracy: A threat to sustainable democracy and peace in Ghana**

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**Following the political instabilities that have characterised Ghana few years after independence from British colonialists, many were those who thought multiparty democratic governance was the surest way to good governance and sustainable human development. The paper argues that citizens' uncooperative attitude in governance issues, and leaders' unpreparedness to be accountable to the citizenry result from lack of democratic acculturation. The way forward to achieving and ensuring good governance and peace in Ghana therefore is an elaborate and sustained democratic education geared toward making democracy a way of life for Ghanaians. The paper is an empirical study founded on current affairs and democratic politics in Ghana. It combines historical and sociological approaches in the interpretation of textual data and empirical observations in the formulation of its reflections. In so doing, it examines what democracy is not, on one hand, and what it is, on the other. Informed-knowledge of these two realities will lead to democratic literacy urgently required for good governance, socio-economic and political development in Ghana.**

**Key words:** Democracy, governance, illiteracy, authoritarianism, dictatorship, responsiveness.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Following the return to constitutional democratic governance 1993, Ghana has become a good reference for many international development partners as a democratic success in West Africa, and for that matter Africa, a continent noted for military and civilian dictatorship. After twenty-two (22) years of democratic experience (1993 - 2015), many are those who are wondering what have been the benefits of democracy for majority of Ghanaians, in the face of numerous socio-economic and political challenges and the dwindling faith in political leadership. This observation is as a result of the inability of the state, state-actors, political actors and the entire citizenry, who led the struggle to return the country to constitutional governance, to bring to fruition

the many socio-economic and political prospects chanted in the advent of democratic governance, following eleven years (11) of military rule under the PNDC administration. This failure is largely due to lack of understanding and knowledge about constitutional democratic governance as codified in the Constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992, or purposeful ignorance of same for selfish political pursuits. This is what this paper calls 'democratic illiteracy' and considers inimical to the sustainability of democratic governance and peace in Ghana. Democratic illiteracy in this paper therefore refers to the absence of knowledge-based behaviour or the display of purposeful ignorance of same, for the effective workings of constitutional democratic institutions.

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The study traces the root of democratic illiteracy in Ghana's democratic governance to some historical and social realities, among which are the fact that: Multiparty democratic governance is alien to Ghanaian culture and realities; the introduction of Western-baked model of multiparty democracy has not been a natural process evolving from the people's desire for such a system at the point of its introduction. It was the fruit of series of agitations led by a section of the Ghanaian middle-class and political elites whose interests do not coincide with that of the ordinary citizens; there had not been any effective political socialization or acculturation of the Ghanaian populace prior to or after the introduction of democratic governance; as a result, majority of the citizens, regardless of their level of formal education, lack clear understanding and knowledge about constitutional democratic governance as codified in the constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992, or are purposeful ignorant of same for selfish and parochial political pursuits. Democratic governance in Ghana is therefore characterized by a high level of democratic illiteracy, to the extent that hardly will two Ghanaians drawn at random give a common definition of what "democracy" really is.

Stemming from the root causes of democratic illiteracy, the study will be guided by the following questions: What are the manifestations of democratic illiteracy in Ghana's democratic governance? What impact does democratic illiteracy have on sustainable democratic governance, peace and human development in Ghana? What is democracy not and should not be? What really is democracy and what should it be? How can democratic literacy be attained in order to sustain democratic governance, peace and human development in Ghana?

The study aims at bringing to the fore the issue of democratic illiteracy and highlighting its nature and manifestations so as to draw attention to its nefarious impact on democratic governance and peace in Ghana. It also proffers possible measures towards addressing it, while generating further public discourse on it, in view of finding common grounds for checking its cancerous impact from the democratic dispensation of Ghana in order to give real meaning to democratic governance.

The paper is an empirical study founded on current affairs and observations of democratic politics in Ghana. The study combines historical and social-conflict approaches in the interpretation of textual data and empirical observations in the formulation of its reflections. Whereas the historical approach enables the study to establish general facts and principles on the phenomenon of democratic illiteracy through attention to chronology and to its evolution or historical course, the social-conflict approach helps to reflect on the social inequalities that serve as leitmotiv for it in its various conflict and changes. Taking cognizance of the fact that the cost of every conflict-driven change in human societies is heavier than its benefits, the threats inherent to democracy are a great source of worry.

Democratic illiteracy in this paper therefore refers to the absence of knowledge-based behaviour or the display of purposeful ignorance of same, for the effective workings of constitutional democratic institutions. Considering the fact that according to Marx (1964) *in* Farley (1990: 65), "if people correctly understand their self-interests, their values will reflect this understanding", it is important to establish whether democratic illiteracy resulting from purposeful ignorance is not a reflection of the values of the self-interests of the people vis-à-vis democratic governance. Dalton and Shin (2011), Verba and Almond (1963) and Teorell (2002) argue that the citizens of firm democracies, such as those of Great Britain and the United States of America have formidable 'civic culture', with citizens that are more competent and have a higher level of citizen participation at the local level politically than people in areas with young and fragile democratic systems such as those of Germany, Mexico and Italy. Chen and Rulska (*ibid.*) intimate that Almond and Verba (1963) provide the first comprehensive explanation for understanding the correlation between citizen orientations and democracy. This is what defines what they call "Political Culture", as reiterated in the words of Adatuu (2017), which is synonymous to democratic literacy in this paper. The absence of this culture creates democratic illiteracy at the heart of this paper.

The study identifies and examines behavioural patterns of democratic illiteracy and their nefarious impact on contemporary democratic governance in Ghana. Besides, it highlights what democracy is not and should not be, on one hand; and what democracy is and should be, on the other hand. Furthermore, the study recommends measures towards attaining democratic literacy so as to ensure the sustainability of Ghana's democratic governance, peace, socio-economic and political development. In this pursuit, the fundamental question which requires consideration at this stage of the study is: "what are the manifestations of democratic illiteracy in the Ghanaian society?"

Democracy as a system of government is not a destination; neither is it an event. It is a journey in search of qualitative socio-economic and political life for the attainment of greater prosperity required for sustainable human development, peace and security for the greater number of people in every human society. According to Phillips Shively (2007: 176) "A democracy is a state in which all fully qualified citizens vote at regular intervals to choose, from among alternative candidates, the people who will be in charge of setting the state's policies". This choice should be knowledge-based in order to generate expected benefits for the electorate. Oquaye (2004) stipulates that the term 'democracy' has become a prescriptive phenomenon. It stretches from the boundaries of a goal, a reality to an illusion. Its illusory perspective though intangible has often been invoked as direct government of the masses in whatever forms it is viewed. (p.58). He further intimates that the word democracy

has not been insulated from the conceptual problems surrounding the expression. In contemporary Ghana therefore, one can speak of “grassroots democracy,” “participatory democracy,” “people’s democracy,” “the national democratic revolution” and “economic democracy.” Starr (1992) and Marshall (1997) also argue in line with Oquaye (Ibid.) that the concept of democracy has changed over time and that there are significant differences in the aspects of democracy stressed by different authors. Similarly, Galligan and Clavero (2008) also contend that “democracy is a concept that is highly contested, and therefore, a concept that is not easy to define.” (p. 5). They explain that although there have been endless disputes over its meaning, democracy assessments tend to define the concept in procedural terms, that is, as a political system characterized by the presence of a set of rules and institutional arrangements for arriving at collective decisions. They add that procedural definitions of democracy can be traced back to the influence of Schumpeter’s seminal work, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, in which democracy has been defined as “an institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by men as of a competitive struggle for the people’s vote.” Expanding on that definition, Rakner, Menocal and Fritz (2007) present Dahl’s (1973) seven key criteria that are essential for democracy: control over governmental decisions about policy constitutionally vested in elected officials; relatively frequent, fair and free elections; universal adult suffrage; the right to run for public office; freedom of expression; access to alternative sources of information that are not monopolised by either the government or any other single group; and freedom of association (that is, the right to form and join autonomous associations such as political parties and interest groups). Kabagambe (2006) however, states that the number of variables put forward by Dahl (1973) is eight (8) although he falls short of enumerating and elucidating on them. Dahl’s definition of formal democracy includes the basic civil liberties that should, in principle, guarantee that the democratic process is inclusive, free of repression and enables citizens to participate in an informed and autonomous manner. Mazrui (2002), on his part, states that the most fundamental of the goals of democracy are probably four. Firstly, to make rulers accountable and answerable for their actions and policies; secondly, to make citizens effective participants in choosing rulers and in regulating their actions; thirdly, to make society as open and the economy as transparent as possible; and fourthly, to make the social order fundamentally just and equitable to the greatest number possible. For others like Walby (2008) and Onuoha (n.d), democracy, which is predicated on the principle of majority rule, offers a window of opportunity for marginalized groups to participate in shaping policies and decisions that affect their lives. Onuoha (2009) states that embedded in this understanding

is the belief that democratic governance should aim at providing equal opportunities and improving the socio-economic conditions of the people irrespective of ethnicity, religion, age, sex or gender. From the aforementioned analysis, scholars, authors, or even politicians remain in a conceptual quicksand about exactly what the word democracy denotes. Some go as far as possible to argue that democracy is merely accepting democratic norms, while others are of the opinion that having electoral freedom is democracy. Dahl (1971) even argues that democracy has not yet been reached by any society, and that the closest we can see at present is a ‘polyarchy’, a system that exhibits many of the features of democracy, but has not quite reached full democratization. In all these instances, what is to be emphasized is that democracy requires a certain level of political culture which provides a solid knowledge-based choice of rulers for its effectiveness and efficiency. This knowledge-based choice defines the essence of democratic literacy. This, however, is not the case in many developing democracies, including Ghana, where majority of the citizenry are democratically illiterate, irrespective of the level of their formal education or socialization.

In Ghana, because democracy is not the fruit of the citizens’ natural desire for greater participation into the governance process of their country as responsible citizens, but that of a struggle for access and control of state resources and political power by an ideologically alienated, estranged and self-serving middle-class and political elites, democratic values have failed to be rooted to shape the character and destiny of the people so as to become a way of life required for the evolvement of strong institutions, rather than strong men, to ensure sustainable democratic development and peace. Political socialisation whose principal emphasis, according to Johari (2009: 211), “is on the transmission of political values from one generation to another” has not taken place in Ghana with the introduction Western-type of political organisation and governance. As Jahari (ibid.) vividly puts it:

The stability of a social or political system depends on the political socialization of its members on account of the fact that a well-functioning citizen is one who accepts (internalises) society’s political norms and who will then transmit them to future generations.

As an example, Jahari further writes:

“the members of a stable democratic system as operating in Britain are trained and made habitual of adopting constitutional means to affect changes rather than resorting to the techniques of taking the matters to the streets or creating conditions of violent upheaval.”

Obviously this has not been and is still not the case with

democratic experience in Ghana. It appears to be operating on the principle of “trial and error”, hence the numerous misconceptions and misconducts characterizing its evolvement. Just as, in the words of Kourouma (1981: 14), “After the suns of politics, Independence fell upon Africa like a swarm of grasshoppers”, so has democracy fallen on Ghana after the numerous agitations against the Provisional National Defence Council PNDC military cum civilian regime led by the then Flight lieutenant Jerry John Rawlings, following the coming into force of the fourth republican constitution on the 7th January 1993. As a result, there had not been time and space for any meaningful political or democratic socialisation “to so train or develop individuals that they become well-functioning members of the political society” (Sigel, 1965: 2).

The entire concept of democracy has been bastardized and narrowly pinned down to one of its cardinal principles or tenets: “Freedom of speech”. This is a clear manifestation of democratic illiteracy. The Ghanaian media, civil society, academia, state-actors and political actors alike, have all consciously or inadvertently contributed in many ways to the entrenchment of this nefarious phenomenon called “democratic illiteracy” in the Ghanaian democratic body-politic through the tacit acceptance of the erroneous definition of the concept of democracy for that matter, democratic governance, narrowed down to “freedom of speech”.

The principle of “Freedom of speech” has been defined as “*ka be ma men ka be*” in Akan. This translation can be loosely translated as “Say it. Let me say it” or “say something, let me say something” in English. The import of this translation is that, democracy is about the primacy of “verbal exchange”. The emphasis is not on the quality of the exchange but rather on just the freedom to vent one’s thoughts, damned the consequences; hence, the verbal abuses that characterise media discussions and even parliamentary deliberations under the current democratic dispensation in the country. For many Ghanaians, therefore, democracy, far from being a way of life, is a means to an end. Belonging to a political party or being sympathetic to its cause is enough a credential for one to be above the law. This appears to be a license for lawlessness and unfettered access to state resources for selfish gains when one’s party is in power. This stand is amply demonstrated in the activities of foot-soldiers following the leadership changes which occurred after the 2000 and 2008 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana. Considering the tacit public support given to the so-called party faithful or “foot-soldiers” in their nefarious activities by the media and opposition elements on public platforms, the practice becomes entrenched.

These are clear manifestations of democratic illiteracy. At this point, the study examines its impact as a threat to sustainable democratic governance and peace in Ghana.

Lack of adequate knowledge on democratic principles and conscious adherence to same in Ghana’s democratic

dispensation are at the heart of the potential threats to its sustainability. Unsustainable democratic governance resulting from the ills of democratic illiteracy has serious implications for human development, peace and national security. Many are therefore the nefarious impact of democratic illiteracy on the constitutional democratic governance system of Ghana, which if not checked in time could inevitably derail the socio-economic and political gains of the country following the coming into force of the 1992 constitution on January 7, 1993. Key among these are: patronage, nepotism, cronyism and corruption; political blackmail and manipulation; irrational partisanship fuelled by parochial self and unionised-group interest at the expense of the general/public/national interest; balkanization of the state [polarisation along ethnic, religious, regional and political party lines]; lack of national cohesion and consensus building required for effective implementation of national development programme [parliament divided against itself; Majority vs. Minority; Legislature vs. Executive; Executive vs. Judiciary; Media divided along political parties and actively involved in the manipulation, misinformation and distortion of information along political lines]; media terrorism [defamation of political figures through publication of concocted libellous stories and radio and television discussions in the name of freedom of speech]. This is largely the result of the over-liberalization of the airwaves and the proliferation of private media houses, mostly owned by political actors whose agenda are clearly defined and vigorously pursued by their assigns in the name of democratic freedom. Reflecting the role of Corporate TV’s threat to democracy, Mazzocco (1994: 8) writes:

*Anonymous (and largely unaccountable) corporate media insiders survive only through the single-minded pursuit of power and profit. Their success has little to do with empowering citizens to remove political, economic, or social injustices and imbalances. Democracy remains an illusion for many in the United States and throughout the world. Control of the media must be returned to the average people for genuine democracy to thrive.*

This statement, though relating to the United States, is as relevant to the Ghanaian context as the Gospel. Depending on which political party is in power and who owns the radio or television stations, the news contents, discussions, the nature of panel members at any given time are determined in the pursuit of a single motive or agendum: to dwindle or enhance the fortunes of government (in this case the President and his/her ministers) and the ruling party. In this “single-minded pursuit of power and profit”, purposeful ignorance becomes the driving force and the people’s mandate is sacrificed on the altar of political expedience and parochial selfish interest of the few.

This situation invariably has created intense media



subjectivity in the name of 'agenda setting'. Fortunately or unfortunately, the politically bias 'agenda setting' project of the politically bias Ghanaian media appears unattractive to Ghanaian voters, judging from the results of all the presidential and parliamentary elections run in the country since the inception of the Fourth Republic in 1992. It further leads to the absence of qualitative dialogue and discussions required for consensus building toward sustainable democratic governance; peace and human development.

Democratic illiteracy has also led to the upsurge of paternalistic dependency. The State is projected as the sole provider of all the needs of every citizen. The president, the ministers and every person heading any public institution are presented, in the media and public discussions especially, as having unfettered right over the resources of the State which they can dissipate at will without recourse to lay-down procedure and regulation in the running of the country. These people invariably end up seeing the citizens as their children who have no right and brain to feign for themselves. Thus, the prevalence of phrases such "Father of the nation", "Father for all"; "Y[ papa Rawlings"; "Y[ papa Kufuor"; "Y[ papa Atta Mills"; "Y[ papa John Mahama"; "Your Excellence X" and "Honourable Y" in reference to past and present presidents of the Republic, ambassadors, members of parliament and local assemblies, respectively. As "fathers" indeed, they consequently decide what should be the needs of their children, just as biological fathers do for their progenies]. Sadly, in most cases those who call such public figures "father" are by far older than them. Citizens eventually lose moral authority to check elected-officers having sold their constitutional rights to do so by accepting monetary or material inducement in exchange for their votes to those they end up worshipping and deifying. This situation creates room for unaccountable governance and misrule. Resulting from this state of affairs are defective and deficient democratic governance institutions. This is also a fertile ground for systemic institutional corruption leading to the absolute desecration and defamation of the state.

Democratic illiteracy has created the ground for running political rather than ethical economics. Policies and programmes are formulated and implemented just to enhance one's prospect of winning elections or maintaining political power. These are done without regards to cost benefit analysis and due diligence. Besides, there is no state control over the pricing of goods and services for political reasons, liberalization and free-market. This situation has led to high cost of living, uncontrollable inflation, and general economic malaise over the years.

Democratic illiteracy has equally given way to an upsurge of partisan civil society organisations, pressure groups and think-tanks; and trading of insults; accusations and counter-accusations of corruption, drug trafficking; money laundry; etc., among political figures and their cohorts,

"serial callers", social commentators, etc., in the media on daily basis. In all this cacophonous situation, what is obvious is that the various actors are either ill-informed about the issues at stake or they are purposefully ignorant, hence their selfish and parochial posturing.

Considering the derailing socio-economic and political consequences of the aforementioned nefarious impact of democratic illiteracy on Ghana's democratic governance and peace, it is significant to critically reflect on what democracy is not and should not be.

## WHAT DEMOCRACY IS NOT AND SHOULD NOT BE!

According to Buah (2005: 17-18),

*There have been, in many countries, evil practices which denied individuals or groups of people of their rights to equal treatment with their fellows, one of the cardinal requirements of true democracy. These practices included racism, ethnic favouritism, nepotism, undue leader-worship, and the tyranny of the majority over minorities in a community.*

Buah names these evils of democratic practices "anti-democratic practices" (p. 17). Almost all these practices and many others have been identified in this paper as nefarious impact of democratic illiteracy on Ghana's democratic governance and sustainable socio-economic and human development. It is therefore expedient to highlight at this stage of the study what democracy defined by Abraham Lincoln (1862) as "government of the people, by the people, for the people".

Democracy is not and should not be misconstrued for lawlessness in the name of freedom of speech and human rights. The essence of human rights as captured in the United Nations Universal Declarations on Human Rights is to ensure greater and active participation of every human being in all the processes which effect and define his or her welfare and well-being.

Democracy is not and should not be synonymous to media terrorism, supremacy of civil society and pressure groups over the State. Neither is it and should be an institutionalization of nepotism, capital cronyism and political patronage, as tacitly promoted by political parties for their survival in the public sphere.

Democracy is not and should not be a centralization of power or state authority on or around elected or appointed officials, or an executive president whose functions are clearly defined in Schedules 57 (1 - 6), 58 (1 - 5) and 59 of the constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992, respectively. Besides, the constitution prescribes decentralisation and local government system of governance for Ghana under Schedule 240 (1). It states: "Ghana shall have a system of local government and administration which shall, as far as practicable, be decentralized". The Article 240 (2) (a - e) specifies the

features of the system of decentralized local government and the responsibilities of each arm of government and the people in ensuring accountability and effective citizen participation in their governance. Schedules 241 - 256 provide further details on the workings of the system of decentralized local governance. However, a cursory observation of events in the public sphere does not give credence to the fact that citizens are aware of these constitutional provisions. Writing about corporate governance many years ago, Robert Brand (1946) as quoted in Chomsky (1996: 71) states:

*Within the corporation, all policies emanate from the aforementioned control. In the union of this power to determine policy with the execution thereof, all authority necessarily proceeds from the top to the bottom and all responsibility from the bottom to the top. This is, of course, the inverse of "democratic" control; it follows the structural conditions of dictatorial power.*

Those words of Brand forcefully bring to the fore the potency of decentralization to democratic governance.

Constitutional separation of powers (Executive, Legislature and Judiciary) for the attainment of greater efficiency and accountability is not and should not be misconstrued for segregation of powers resulting in unhealthy rivalry among the main arms of government leading to institutional paralysis and dysfunction.

Democratic governance is not theocracy. Government or public officials are not God's elect or God's chosen-ones to be worshiped and glorified, as they are expected to perform miracles in addressing all the needs of the electorate. They are mere servants of the people who elect them or on whose behalf the executive president appoints them. The democratically elected president and his appointees are indeed employees' of the people to whom they must be accountable through the effective provision of general goods and welfare in their daily activities.

Democracy as a system of socio-political engineering towards the realisation of greater prosperity for the greater majority of the citizens is not and should not be defined as mere organisation of periodic elections of an executive president and parliamentarians for the country's legislature. It is a serious undertaking and a covenant with the electorate which calls for commitment to service, dedication, greater transparency and accountability from both public officials and the sovereign people on whose behalf executive power is exercised.

Democracy is not and should not be about the supremacy of the will of the individual but rather that of the collective – the people. Indeed, the choice of constitutional democratic governance over all other forms of governance systems is not and should not be for the triumph of the rule of man. On this position, Aristotle, according to Joseph Maingot and Dehler (2010: 4), "held that absolute monarchy or the arbitrary rule of sovereign

is contrary to nature and that the rule of law is preferable to that of an individual". They therefore conclude that "Aristotle's contrast between the rule of law as reason and the "rule of man" as passion has endured through the ages".

Under a democratic dispensation, the idea of providential State is null and void, if corruption is to be eschewed. Considering the nefarious impact of democratic illiteracy and in the light of what democracy is not and should not be, it is natural to consider what democracy is and should be.

## **WHAT DEMOCRACY IS AND SHOULD BE!**

Democracy is and should be at variance with the phenomenon of "whom you know" – favouritism – in the allocation of public resources by public official. It is at variance with selective application of the laws of the State. Democracy is and should be about citizens' responsibilities in ensuring the attainment of greater happiness for all. It is and should be about citizens demanding knowledge-based accountability from elected and appointed public officials and all the other arms of government, and also from themselves in their daily dealings, both in private and in public.

Democracy is and should be about the supremacy of the law across board. Indeed, it is the legal system that defines the democratic way of life for the citizens. This is spelt out in the constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992. Under a democratic dispensation, the law is no respecter of persons. The principle of "equality before the law" must be upheld and enforced at all times to ensure law and order which lead to justice and sustainable peace and development. Democracy entails practical actions jointly thought through and executed by the democratically literate citizens and their elected representatives. It empowers the people to be assertive and responsive in their quest for the creation and efficient management of resources and provision of services to ensure qualitative living standard for all.

Democracy is and should be about respect for law and order. It abhors lawlessness and disorder which are associated with autocratic and anarchical States. It calls for mutual respect, tolerance, accommodation and collaboration. It goes beyond mere freedom of speech. Democracy calls for responsible speech, geared towards the promotion of the general good, social cohesion, peace and sustainable human development. Democratic freedom is actually a regulated freedom, in that it is defined by the supreme law of the land – the constitution of the Republic of Ghana. For this reason, a citizen can seek legal remedy in the event of this legally defined right being violated by the State or any other citizen or group of citizens.

Democracy is and should be the surest way to achieving greater participation of the people in their own

affairs. For the people to meaningfully and effectively participate in the provision of the general good, they must be knowledgeable in democratic principles, rights and responsibilities, and then be committed to putting same into effective practice.

Democracy is and should be about building strong institutions which guarantee the sustainability of the State beyond individuals, political parties and regimes. At the heart of democratic governance is and should be the sense of collective responsibility where leaders are just first among equals and not demigods to be worshipped and glorified as monarchs. It eschews blame games which are marks of irresponsibility and unaccountability on the part of citizens and public officials.

Democracy is and should be a process of social engineering towards the attainment of qualitative and sustainable development. It is therefore not a perfect situation or an end in itself. It is dynamic in its manifestation as it provides an elastic framework for shaping opinions and characters as well as mobilizing and harmonizing the best human resources for greater productivity and development.

Having stated what democracy is and should be, the study now reflects on the way forward to ensure democratic literacy for sustainable democratic governance and peace in Ghana in the subsequent paragraphs of the paper.

## **TOWARDS DEMOCRATIC LITERACY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND PEACE**

Considering the destructive nature of illiteracy in general, and that of democratic illiteracy in particular, there is an urgent need for the deployment of concerted efforts and deployment of resources towards a democratic literacy programme for the Ghanaian populace. Taking cognizance of the political bastardization of the work of the National Commission on Civic Education (NCCE) over the years by self-seeking politicians and their followers disguised as social commentators, it is obvious that its effectiveness has been compromised. As a result, it would be prudent to design a democratic educational curriculum to be used in schools, colleges and universities. In the case of the universities, this can be made one of the university-wide courses taken by all students in the first and second years.

The various constitutional and professional bodies associated with media practices should be called upon to live up to their mandate by calling miscreants in the media profession to order or by designing effective ways of purging the profession of such “undesirable” elements before they plunge the nation into chaos.

Radio and television hosts should themselves get foreknowledge about issues they table for discussion on their shows in order to prevent discussants from unduly misinforming the listening and viewing public. Well

informed and un-bias citizens should be empanelled on such programmes so that issues can be qualitatively discussed and useful suggestions made to aid public policy formulation and implementation for sustainable democratic growth.

Political parties should be made to understand that they are not bona fides owners of the corporate Ghana. They are citizens first and foremost. Having been offered the privilege to congregate themselves in political parties for electioneering purposes does not make of them first class citizens and a law unto themselves. They are not sovereign entities, but subservient to the constitution of the Republic of Ghana which vest sovereignty in the people of Ghana and not in political parties, as they want Ghanaians to believe.

In the words of Phillips (2007: 176):

Democracy requires an implicit agreement by conflicting groups in a state to accept the possibility that they will lose out in the making of policy. In effect, it requires an agreement among labor unions, corporations, farm groups, environmentalists, vegetarians, motorcycle enthusiasts, and all other groups to take their chances on the outcome of process of policy making in which the population as a whole gets the deciding voice. Each group accepts that it must abide by the end result and hopes that it will be able to get enough of what it wants out of the process. This is the “democratic bargain”. The reality of the “democratic bargain” appears alien in Ghana’s democratic dispensation, although the constitution of the Republic of Ghana (1992) implicitly points to this in its preamble in the following words:

*In the name of the Almighty God*

*We the people of Ghana*

*In exercise of our natural and inalienable right to establish a framework of government which shall secure for ourselves and posterity the blessings of liberty, equality of opportunity and prosperity;*

*In the spirit of friendship and peace with all peoples of the world;*

*And in solemn declaration and affirmation of our commitment to Freedom, Justice, Probity, and Accountability;*

*The principle that all powers of Government spring from the Sovereign Will of the People;*

*The principle of Universal Adult Suffrage;*

*The rule of Law;*

*The protection and preservation of Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms, Unity and Stability for our Nation;*  
*Do hereby Adopt, Enact and Give to Ourselves this Constitution.*

Besides, Article 35 (1) stipulates that: “Ghana shall be a democratic state dedicated to the realization of freedom and justice; and accordingly, sovereignty resides in the people of Ghana from whom government derives all powers and authority through this constitution”. Going by the contents of these quotations, it is obvious that the

competition involved in the democratic processes calls for dialogues, compromises and concessions among various political actors and with the electorate. These are indeed the indices of “democratic bargain” Phillips (2007) referred to. The appreciation and application of democratic bargain in the Ghanaian democratic dispensation can be achieved only through democratic literacy programmes devoid of partisan considerations and political party colouring. The driving force behind this democratic literacy programme can be found in the building of strong democratic institutions, as suggested by President Barack Obama during his visit to Ghana in 2009.

Strong democratic institutions serve as a melting-pot for harmonized divergent views and ideas harnessed from qualitative constructive public debates and expert discussions across the nation. They are not products of chance but that of conscious and concerted efforts guided by an unflinching desire to build a nation rather than self. This unflinching desire is undoubtedly the fruit of painstaking processes of socialization which include democratic literacy. In the absence of this, however, democratic governance in Ghana will not inure to the benefit of the citizenry.

The disappointment of people in their socio-economic and political aspirations in such circumstances, if not properly managed, can lead to social strife and anarchy. The fixation on the President and Ministers of State [The Executive arm of Government] as the sole providers of the public goods is a fallacious posturing alien to multiparty democratic governance and the very spirit and letter of the constitution of the Republic of Ghana, 1992 which unambiguously spells out the rights and responsibilities of the three main arms of government namely: the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. They are to work separately but complementarily in the provision of the public goods to ensure the welfare and happiness of all the citizenry. In doing so, members of the first two arms, The Executive and the Legislature, albeit members of divergent political parties, must see themselves first and foremost as privileged Ghanaians in the service of the people rather than that of their respective political parties. Collaboration and cooperation beyond partisan interests should therefore be the watch word in this symbiotic relationship for the strengthening and sustainability of the institutions of State. After all, no political party pays the salaries and benefits of its members in parliament, whether in majority or in minority. The state does. It is therefore an affront to democratic governance practice for any of such persons to be seen as purposefully working against the interest of the State, for that matter that of the citizenry, in an attempt to unduly project and protect partisan interests.

## CONCLUSION

When the concept of democracy is understood as a means to an end and not an end in itself, democratic

actors would see the need to respect its principles and tenets. It is only then that the pursuit of the public goods would be prioritized over that of selfish individual interests, which are inimical to the course of democracy, peace and sustainable human development in Ghana.

Democratic rights go hand-in-hand with democratic responsibilities. Strictly speaking, the enjoyment of democratic rights emanates from responsible democratic living which in turn requires democratic education, acculturation and knowledge. The essence of freedom of speech is to foster qualitative dialogue and exchange of ideas which would result into qualitative decisions based on consensus building for qualitative national development. This is missing from the Ghanaian body-politic as a result of the misinformation inherent to the bastardized definition of democracy as “freedom of speech”.

In summary, it is imperative for every serious-minded every African who really cares about the present and future of the African continent as a democratic entity to pause for a while and to ask himself or herself the following questions: What is democratic governance? What is in for me? What are my rights and responsibilities? Do I really understand them? And if I do, how am I effectively giving meaning to them for the realization of the common good? If these questions are objectively thought through and knowledgeably answered by every individual, he or she would have obtained democratic literacy and begun to do things in a different way to make democracy meaningful and fruitful. Failure to do so, democracy becomes a mere institutionalisation of blatant human exploitation and slavery by a presumed ‘majority’ in the name of the rule of law and constitutionalism. This situation poses a great threat to sustainable democracy and peace, not only in Ghana, but across all African countries aspiring to be democratic. Democratic illiteracy, wherever it is allowed to thrive, is a grave menace to the growth of democratic culture, good democratic governance, peace and sustainable human development. It must therefore be fought through concerted efforts deployed by citizens who, in most cases, are victims of its ills. This is because it is in the best interest of political actors and their cohorts to keep the people illiterate, hence vulnerable for effective exploitation.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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*Full Length Research Paper*

# **The role of regional parliaments in conflict resolution: The case of the Pan-African Parliament (2004-2011)**

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**How do regional Parliaments contribute to conflict resolution? At what point in time do they intervene and with what impact? These are the key questions pursued in this paper. The ultimate purpose is to stimulate further discussion on the subject. The methodology employed is qualitative, historical and discourse analysis based on desk reviews. The study was conducted in 2011 and 12 with a focus on the experiences of the Pan-African Parliament (PAP) in four countries (Cote d'Ivoire, Sudan, Libya, and Somalia). The findings of the study reveal that regional parliaments play important roles in resolving violent conflicts. The study also confirms that in most cases, regional parliaments begin to intervene when conflict starts to escalate and stay involved until the situation stabilizes. In the process, regional parliamentarians use a range of tools: internal debates, fact-finding missions, providing fora for different actors, organizing meetings with diplomatic representations, and issuing periodic communications. These instruments target not only parties to conflicts but also other stakeholders with direct and indirect effects on conflict settings. Moreover, the study highlights that the positions of regional parliaments on a given conflict change depend on changing circumstances on the ground and parliamentarians' understanding of the situation. The paper concludes that though the power of PAP is limited to consultative and advisory roles, it plays considerable roles in trying to settle conflicts in different parts of the continent.**

**Key words:** Conflict resolution, African Union, regional parliaments, Pan African parliament, diplomacy.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Over the last six decades, conflict resolution has attracted considerable scholarly attention. The discipline is still growing in scope and complexity (Wallenstein 2007; Bercovitch and Richard, 2009; Ramsbotham et al., 2011). The end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Communist Bloc, followed by a resurgence of ethnic

conflicts, civil wars, and interstate clashes in Eastern and Central Europe, Africa, and Asia have necessitated a continuous search for solutions and a renewed emphasis on conflict resolution (Ryan, 2007). "Conflicts are dynamic, as they escalate and de-escalate; they are constituted by a complex interplay of attitudes and

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behaviors that can assume a reality of their own” (Ramsbotham et al., 2011: 8). Therefore, they call for multidisciplinary efforts to understand their causes, consequences, and remedies. Accordingly, conflict resolution remains an important field of research and practice for decades (Kriesberg, 2011; Lederach, 2010; Alger, 1999; Miall, 2004; Väyrynen, 1991).

Though the roles of state and non-state actors have been recognized in settling and transforming conflicts, this paper argues that the role of emerging actors such as PAP remains largely unexplored. As such, there is a noticeable gap in existing debates and theorizing in the IR and peace or conflict literature. At the same time, the paper emphasizes that under circumstances of violent conflicts, resolving such conflicts is one of the immediate preoccupations of non-partisan third party actors, notably regional parliaments, which employ a range of options.

The most common strategies in resolving conflicts include negotiation, mediation, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and post-conflict reconciliation (Galtung, 1996; 2007; Wallensteen, 2007). Kornprobst (2002) observes that “Most of the literature emphasizes the causal relationship between conflict resolution techniques ... and the success or failure of war to peace transition”. However, the approach excludes the category of actors who are not necessarily involved in negotiations, mediation, peace-keeping or peace-building, but use other, equally important, power tools, such as, decisions, resolutions, declarations, recommendations, and diplomatic channels, all of which contribute to, facilitate, even prompt, and support commonly used interventions. In conflict-prone settings, like Africa, any effort towards settling them deserves serious consideration. As Lederach (2010: 8) rightly argues, “Not one process, level, organization, or a state actor is capable of birthing and sustaining the movement from violence to constructive change on its own”. Consequently, Lederach advocates for a multi-dimensional and multi-stakeholder approach if conflict resolution and transformation is to be effective.

### **Objectives of the study**

The overall purpose of the study is to understand the role of regional parliaments, using the experiences of the PAP in conflict resolutions and the tools at their disposal. The specific objectives are:

- (i) To describe the overall short- and long-term mandates and functions of the PAP vis-à-vis conflict prevention, resolution and peace-building in Africa;
- (ii) To identify the mechanisms and types of intervention employed by PAP in conflict resolution, and
- (iii) To forward policy recommendations to further strengthen the role of the PAP for effective intervention in conflict resolution and transformation.

### **PERSPECTIVES ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Given the ubiquity of conflicts, scholars make different attempts to explain the ‘appropriateness’ of interventions. Each theoretical tradition has its strengths and limitations when critically assessed by insiders and outsiders to that tradition. For example, critics of the realist school argue that it emphasizes much on power-politics and sees the end of conflicts in terms of material capabilities to protect and promote the national interests of actors. Conteh-Morgan (2005: 2) states that “Current peacebuilding efforts whether in Africa, Asia, or Europe are largely characterized by a language of power, exclusion or defense of international order.” Transformation theorists like Ramsbotham et al., (2011) contend that realists often consider “conflict resolution as soft-headed and unrealistic since in their view international politics is a struggle between antagonistic and irreconcilable groups, in which power and coercion was the only ultimate currency.” According to this view, realists miss the point that military capabilities are not the only effective sources of power in preventing or resolving conflicts. Though slightly differently, neorealists consider power and national interest as important elements in settling conflicts. According to Jackson et al. (2006: 173) “[N]eo-realists argue that the anarchical nature of the state system precludes the possibility of genuine conflict resolution or transformation”. Some conflict resolution scholars often complain that although conflict is at the heart of international relations, realists and neorealists tend to downplay conflict resolution as an appropriate field of investigation. For example, Hauss (2001) observes that “Indeed the best brief book on the subject (Nye, 2000) focuses on the causes of major international disputes and does not even have an entry into its index for ‘resolution’.” He further points out that both realists and pluralists, including liberal institutionalists, have difficulty in accepting the relevance of “win-win conflict resolution, reconciliation, and stable peace” (Hauss, 2001). Similarly, Gaddis (1986) holds that if there was any peaceful option for the realists, it was ‘great power peace’ or deterrence which prevented the Cold War super-powers from confrontation through global conflict proliferated as these powers had to fight proxy wars in, Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

The democratic peace and liberal internationalism perspectives hold that societies with liberal political culture tend to avoid confrontations or resolve differences peacefully. According to these approaches, which trace their roots in the Kantian perspective of ‘perpetual peace’, the conditions for peace such as shared values, strong institutions, and economic interdependence, constrain states from seeking solutions through conflicts. The costs of war outweigh their gains (Doyle, 2004). Consequently, the democratic peace theory focuses more attention on why there is no conflict between democratic states than on how conflicts between states could be resolved (Maoz

and Russett, 1993). Nevertheless, proponents of this approach do recognize that democracies fight non-democracies, often at the instigation or transgression of the latter.

Liberal institutionalists, on the other hand, argue that even if there is no world government to prevent anarchy, resolve conflicts, or maintain peace; states could be constrained by the rules and norms of various international organizations such as the UN and the AU. They believe that such institutions play considerable roles in preventing or mitigating conflicts through the “flow of information and opportunities to negotiate, the ability of governments to monitor others’ compliance and to implement their commitments ... and prevailing expectations about the solidity of international agreements” (Keohane cited by Rennger, 2000:130). Consequently, Liberal institutionalism offers an important insight into how states interpret their actions concerning that of others and behave according to the norms of supranational institutions.

The debate among peace and conflict resolution researchers is that though realism, neo-realism, liberalism, and liberal institutionalism have their own respective merits in certain areas, most of these approaches fall short of providing a process-based explanation to conflict resolution on the one hand, and recognizing the role of non-conventional actors, such as regional parliaments, on the other. More specifically, neorealists and neoliberalists are unable to adjust to the changing ‘realities’ as well as the changing sources and notions of power. Katzenstein (1996) observes that “The main analytical perspectives on international relations, neorealism, and neoliberalism, share with all their critics their inability to foreshadow, let alone foresee, these momentous international changes ... Disagreement is widespread on what are the most important questions, let alone what might constitute plausible answers to these questions”, particularly to the question of conflict resolution.

Within the conflict resolution tradition, perhaps one of the most frequently cited approaches has been the *triangular model* developed by Galtung (1996). Galtung identifies three elements of conflict: *contradictions* characterized by mutually incompatible goals, *attitudes* of parties to a conflict, often fueled by perceptions or misperceptions of a situation as inherently conflictual, and *behaviors* which may include ‘cooperation’ or ‘coercion’ (Wallensteen, 2007). Galtung advocates for conflict resolution through peaceful means by addressing its root “causes, conditions and contexts” (Griffiths, 1999). He was also the first to make an analytical distinction between three tasks in response to conflicts: “peacekeeping, peacemaking and peace building” (CCR, 2000). However, critics argue that Galtung’s ideas on conflict resolution remain broad, unfocused, and often controversial (Lawler, 2007). The triangular approach, though best for analysis of underlying causes, consequences, and possible remedies, does not explain

how emerging actors, such as regional parliaments, can contribute to the process of de-escalation and transformation of violent conflicts.

The regional security systems approach emphasizes the experience of countries and regions emerging out of conflict. It capitalizes on the “importance of the distribution of power within particular regions” (Wallensteen, 2007). Wallensteen identified two types of framework within the context of regional conflict resolution mechanisms: (a) *Tailor-made frameworks* – involving meetings, fora, or other arrangements that play significant roles in proposing solutions to regional conflicts, often having their origins in regional initiatives aimed at bridging the divide in an existing conflict and providing venues for discussion and dialogue; (b) *Need-based frameworks* – which take as their point of departure shared interests, including economic cooperation. Wallensteen (2007) referred to the experiences of EU, ECOWAS, SADC, IGAD, SEAN, and others which were primarily created to address economic needs but evolved into security actors. Wallensteen also recognizes the limitations of both tailor-made and need-based frameworks since conflict resolution is not a one-time transaction rather a continuous process that goes beyond the cessation of hostilities.

## METHODOLOGY

As an exploratory study, the research used the case study approach with special emphasis on the process-tracking method in which, according to George and Bennett (2005: 6), “... the researcher examines histories, archival documents, interview transcripts, and other sources to see whether the causal process a theory hypothesizes or implies in a case is evident in the sequence and values of the intervening variables in that case”. The process-tracking method provides a historical glance on social conflicts and generates valuable data for analysis. The analysis of texts and contexts helps to construct meaning on the thinking underlying the intervention of actors in conflict resolution.

The subject of this study is a regional, intergovernmental, organization. The primary level of analysis is regional with cases from selected conflict-affected member states of the AU. Data are derived from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include relevant treaties, protocols, resolutions, declarations, decisions, and reports of fact-finding missions or communiqués of the Pan-African Parliament as well as other relevant organs of the AU.

Four case countries, namely, Cote d’Ivoire, Darfur/Sudan, Libya, and Somalia are selected. The evidence so far suggests that PAP has been actively engaged in six major conflict hotspots (CAR, Cote d’Ivoire, Darfur/Sudan, DRC, Libya, and Somalia) since its establishment in 2004. Therefore, the four cases represent close to 70% of the total and a good deal of information is already available on PAP’s involvement. What is not available, however, is a critical analysis and interpretation of its interventions in these conflicts. It is hoped therefore that the present study would survey as a starting point.

The analysis involved simple descriptive, narrative, and content analysis and interpretation techniques. “In case study research several sources of data, such as documents, observations, and interviews are used to get a deep understanding of the case. The typical data analysis methods are pattern matching, content analysis, and finding complementary cases” (Suhonen, 2009).



## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Pan African Parliament (PAP)

PAP is part of the construction of a new African identity at the “dawn of the 21st century” (AU, 2004). It is one of the nine (9) principal organs of the AU, and the 3rd in the institutional hierarchy, following the General Assembly and the Executive Council (Constitutive Act of the AU, 2000). PAP was formally inaugurated in 2004 and is located in Midrand, South Africa.

The 1991 OAU Treaty establishing the African Economic Community provides that PAP will be composed of elected “members by continental universal suffrages,” in order to ensure that the people of Africa are fully involved in the economic development and integration of the Continent. “However, the Protocol establishing PAP states that “During the interim period, Member States shall be represented in the Pan-African Parliament by an equal number Parliamentarians”. Each member state of the AU is represented by five representatives who come from national parliaments.

### The legal basis of pap for conflict resolution

One of the existing functions of PAP is to “*promote peace, security and stability*” in Africa. To achieve this objective, PAP has established a Committee on “Co-operation, International Relations and *Conflict Resolutions*” (CCIRCR) to “assist the Parliament in its efforts of conflict prevention and resolution” (AU 2000; PAP 2007). Its mandates on conflict resolution are contained in different sources: the Abuja Treaty, the Constitutive Act of the AU, the Protocol establishing PAP, and the Protocol establishing the AU Peace and Security Commission (PSC). Very interestingly, the latter gives PAP a relatively strong mandate stated in strictly legally-binding terms. Article 18 of the PSC Protocol provides that:

- (i) The [Peace and Security] Mechanism *shall* maintain close working relations with the Pan-African Parliament in furtherance of peace, security, and stability in Africa.
- (ii) The Peace and Security Council *shall* ... submit ... reports to the Pan-African Parliament, to facilitate the discharge by the latter of its responsibilities.
- (iii) The Chairperson of the Commission *shall* present to the Pan-African Parliament an annual report on the state of peace and security ... [emphasis added].

In this regard, the Pan-African Parliament has double responsibilities concerning conflicts. First, conflict resolution forms an integral part of its mandates. Second, it has the ‘right’ to receive reports from the PSC and the Commission of the AU.

These direct and indirect prerogatives mean that PAP could exert, at least in principle, considerable influences on conflict resolution in Africa. It can intervene itself, and

debate the effectiveness of interventions by other organs of the AU. Therefore, even if PAP has no strong legislative power at present, it still uses the available instruments to contribute to regional and international efforts towards resolving conflicts. Moreover, as the selected country cases will demonstrate, PAP does not function from a purely legislative mandate alone. It also draws lessons from experience, shared values, and collective concerns; and uses them to evolve its responses to existing and emerging conflicts. Accordingly, PAP’s position on certain conflicts in Africa shifts depending on its perception of the actual or potential implications of these conflicts for the countries concerned or for the continent as a whole. Consequently, unlike national parliaments that could be stuck into local politics or a national interest box, regional parliaments, like PAP, have the opportunity to think outside that box and to adjust their approaches to a given conflict as circumstances unfold on the ground. Looking into this flexibility in approaches will contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics shaping actors’ responses to conflicts and the positions they take, which in no way is static. Let’s now turn to the analysis of the specific cases.

### The cases of PAP’s involvement in conflict resolution

As pointed out elsewhere, the preponderance of conflicts in Africa has necessitated the creation of regional mechanisms to respond to these developmental and existential threats. AP is one such institution actively engaged in mitigating deadly conflicts in different hotspots. For this study, four hotspots (Cote d’Ivoire, Darfur, Libya, and Somalia) are selected for a closer analysis of PAP’s roles, impacts, challenges, and the way forward. A major part of PAP’s conflict resolution efforts involves parliamentary diplomacy, fact-finding missions, and debates in either specialized committees or plenary sessions on issues surrounding the conflict and its short and long-term solutions. The following subsections discuss each of the four cases in detail.

#### Cote d’Ivoire

From independence in 1960 till the early 1990s, Cote d’Ivoire was a stable and thriving country. During this time the country was ruled by Felix Houphouet-Boigny who took careful steps to avoid ethnic divisions and conflicts. He could establish rapport with opposition parties and friendly relations with France. Houphouet-Boigny died in 1993; and in 1995 Henri Bédié became the second president of Cote d’Ivoire. Bédié introduced a divisive identity politics called “Ivoirite” designed to prevent politicians with non-Ivorian descent from aspiring high political offices, especially the presidency. This led to dissatisfaction and the eventual overthrow of Bédié by

a military coup, led by General Robert Guei, in 1999. The latter, too, made unsuccessful attempts to rig elections and stay in power. However, he was defeated by Gbagbo in the 2000 election but had to be removed by Gbagbo's supporters in a street protest ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivory\\_Coast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivory_Coast)).

Between 2002 and 2005, several discontented factions launched offensives against Gbagbo's rule. In 2003, a UN peacekeeping Mission, MUNICI, was deployed "to help enforce a fragile ceasefire [after] eight-month of civil war" (Ohaegbulam, 2004: 21). In 2005, the AU appointed President Thabo Mbeki to mediate who facilitated the "Pretoria Agreement, signed April 6, 2005 [which ...] formally ended the country's state of war and addressed issues such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration, the return of New Forces Ministers to government, and the reorganization of the Independent Electoral Commission" (USA-Cote d'Ivoire, 2011). However, the conflict was far from over despite repeated efforts by the AU, the UN Security Council, and other stakeholders to normalize the country. Elections were to be held in 2007 but continued to be postponed for years.

When the election was finally held in October/November 2010, it was followed by bitter confrontations between Gbagbo and his rival, Alassane Ouattara. Both claimed victory in the second-round election of 28 November 2010; and, strangely enough, each was sworn-in as president. This led to renewed clashes; and after considerable bloodshed, massive displacement, and intense bombardment of the positions of the incumbent, the Ouattara camp prevailed, with the support of French forces and UN peacekeeping mission.

### **PAP's efforts to resolve the conflict**

PAP's involvement in the Ivorian conflict goes back to 2005, just a year after its official launching, by 'deciding' to send a Fact-finding Mission. Speaking to AFP about PAP's decision, one official states that: "we know the history of Cote d'Ivoire. There have been peace deals before and all have floundered. Our members will go there and see that pledges are being implemented. We are very serious about Africa taking charge of its destiny" (PAP, 2005). However, the Mission went there in May 2007 and reported that "Over the last few months there have been some dramatic, and largely unexpected, changes in the course of Côte d'Ivoire's protracted political conflicts" (PAP, 2007). Therefore, the CCIRCR recommended to PAP to "support the renewed political will and rapprochement shown by parties to the Ivorian conflict and urge them to press ahead with their disarmament and reintegration agreements ... call upon the government ... to further broaden the political space ...; and ... to work towards the hosting of free and fair elections to ultimately constitute a government that reflects the will and aspirations of the Ivorian people. Accordingly, PAP did all it could to appeal to all parties to

end the conflict by peaceful means.

Despite PAP's repeated calls and recommendations, the situation in that country remained unresolved. Eventually, it slid into election-related violence. Then, in July 2011, PAP sent another Fact-finding Mission, this time after the conflict ended. The Mission reported back to the Parliament that though the post-conflict "situation had greatly improved ... the country was facing serious security challenges manifested through cases of armed robbery, rape, murder, and the proliferation of weapons". As a solution, the Mission emphasized "the need for the reorganization of the Ivorian army and the establishment of a level playing field for the Parliamentary Elections to be held by the end of the year [2011]." Based on this, PAP called on the new Government of Alassane Ouattara to speed-up reconciliation, build durable peace, promote justice, broaden the democratic space, and ensure the participation of all parties to the conflict. It also suggested the creation of an inclusive security structure, sustainable economic development, employment opportunities, and good governance.

In light of the foregoing, it is clear that PAP was actively involved in transforming the Ivorian crisis. In most of its communications, PAP expressed concern about the impact of the conflict on the civilian populations. PAP also shares and reinforces the AU's position on the conflict. Furthermore, in addition to calling for the peaceful and timely resolution of the crisis, PAP also emphasized the need for addressing the root causes of the conflict through dialogue, sustainable development, and democratic transformation. However, it is worth noting that PAP was slow to act, at least, concerning the 2010-11 election-triggered crises. While the conflict escalated between February and April 2011, PAP decided to send the Fact-Finding Mission in May 2011. The Mission went to Cote d'Ivoire in July 2011; and its report was ready only in October 2011, almost a year after the crisis began and half a year after it ended. By the time PAP passed its final resolution (recommendation), the country was already in a state of normalcy though not in perfect peace. This type of anachronism raises fundamental questions about the timing, relevance, and effectiveness of third party interventions as demonstrated by PAP's actions.

### **Darfur**

The Darfur conflict began in early 2003; and, as Heather (2009) observes, the immediate trigger was the formation of insurgent organizations that had the motives, means, and opportunity to engage in armed resistance against the government ... For Heather, "The key ingredient was the oppressive nature of the longstanding relationship between the dominant core of Khartoum and Sudan's marginalized peripheral zones". The main elements of this oppressive relationship, he further argues, include the military and the ruling elites; the turbulent nature of the Sudanese state; ethnic tensions between the Arabs

and Africans in Darfur; religion; and regional conflict complexes (geopolitical) factors. In short, the Darfur conflict is fueled by identity politics constructed through a history of divide between the Africans and Arab Sudanese. The concept of the “other” (Fenton 2003) is deeply ingrained in societies where multiple identities exist and follow divergent goals. These divisions become complicated when one or more of the groups feel that they are excluded or oppressed based on their identities. Therefore, “Behind the tragic events in Darfur lies a complex history of deeply entrenched social inequalities, environmental crisis, and competition over natural resources, conflicting notions of identity, the militarization of rural societies, and, above all, a chronic problem of bad governance that has plagued Sudan since its independence from British colonial rule in 1956” (Sikainga 2009). In the Darfur case, identity conflict is constructed by actors since actual differences are not so sharp. Sikainga argues that “In reality, there are no visible racial or religious differences between the warring parties in Darfur. All parties involved in the conflict—whether they are referred to as ‘Arab’ or ‘African’—are equally indigenous, equally black, and equally Muslim”.

He indicates that the ongoing crisis dates back to the 1980s when “Mu`mar Gaddafi of Libya [started ...] an ambitious project in the region, which involved the creation of what he called an ‘Arab Belt’ across Sahelian Africa. His goal was to ensure Libya’s hegemony in the region”. According to this account, “Some of the ... Janjawid, who are currently committing many of the atrocities in Darfur” (Sikainga 2009) had their roots in the Libyan initiative to create Islamic domination in the neighboring countries at the expense of non-Arab populations. The role of the South Sudanese People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) in the Darfur conflict is also significant (Dagne, 2011). It tried to mobilize the support of all marginalized groups, especially the non-Arabic speaking communities in different parts of the country in Darfur, Nuba, and Blue Nile states. These groups realized that despite the differences between them, they share the experience of oppression and marginalization. Their main ambitious goal was to unmake the Sudanese state and to establish, as Sikainga put it, a “... secular, plural, and unified Sudan, in which there would be no distinction on the bases of religion, ethnicity, language, gender, and the region”.

Whatever its origin and ultimate drive, the Darfur conflict has inflicted heavy damage on the civilian population. The number of casualties and displaced people is still unknown. According to “The UN estimates up to 300,000 people died and about 2.7 million were internally displaced ... Sudan’s government says about 10,000 people died and about 70,000 were displaced” (The Guardian 20, April 2011). The resulting damages on the fragile environment, economic and socio-cultural infrastructures could only be guessed as it is difficult to measure the actual extent of destruction caused by the

conflict.

### **PAP’s role in resolving the Darfur conflict**

The strong commitment of PAP to address the Darfur crisis started “[b]arely seven months after its birth” (Sallah, 2007: 18) with a Fact-Finding Mission whose was adopted by the Parliament in its October 2004 session. Reflecting on the early efforts of PAP in conflict transformation, Balch (2007:7) stated that “The most promising new development in African interparliamentary relations is the establishment of the PAP ... which initiated a program of peacebuilding missions with its first delegation to Darfur in 2004. The PAP intends to monitor and advise on all AU peacekeeping operations if resources allow.” Despite limited resources, PAP continues to send similar missions to Sudan. In May 2007, CCIRCR “called on the House to consider dispatching another mission to that country, to gather information relating to the implementation of the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement to help it have a first-hand report on progress made so far as well as learn about the challenges that lay ahead.” However, the second mission took place only in October 2009. Even then, the importance attached to PAP during this mission was demonstrated by the delegation’s meeting with senior government ministers and advisors to the President, representatives of the AU-UN, and national parliamentarians. In all its reports and recommendations, PAP underlines the need for revitalization of previous agreements between the warring factions; democratic transformation in Sudan and bringing on board all the parties to the conflict. These measures, according to PAP, were vital for the transformation of the country from conflict to peace, recovery, and reconstruction.

The Darfur case put PAP dilemma: between defending the people and maintaining a political balance. That is, PAP has to deal with a situation where an arrest warrant is issued from ICC against the Sudanese President for ‘alleged, war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. This situation has complicated the peace process and PAP’s difficulty can be seen from the ambiguous position of CCIRCR/PAP after the above-mentioned fact-finding mission, which reads: “Amongst the observations made by the Committee on Sudan was the issue regarding the warrant of arrest issued against the Sudanese President Omar-El Bashir, where the Committee felt the issue should be accorded all the respect it deserves from all parties.” In more explicit terms, PAP, at its sixth regular session, in January 2012, decided not to cooperate with the ICC regarding Al Bashir’s arrest warrant reasoning that ICC “was serving only western nations.” This is where the constructivist approach of PAP lies. When it felt that the State had the duty to protect its citizens, respect the rights of individuals and minority groups in Darfur, it called on the government to address people’s grievances and to resolve the crisis

peacefully. In this respect, the fact-finding mission: ... recommended that the military observers' mandates be transformed into a robust protection force to provide security for the inhabitants of Darfur. The mission further observed that since the armed opposition wants a new Sudan while the government is also amenable to the sharing of decision-making powers and resources, negotiation for a political settlement of the conflict should be accelerated to inspire hope among the combatants and to deter them from resuming hostilities. The mission cautioned that if the negotiations for a political settlement were not time-bound, insecurity would gain primacy through repeated cease-fire violations (Sallah, 2007:7).

In the strongest sense "The PAP Mission concluded that when the vast majority of people in a region or state are alienated and traumatized, the sovereignty and legitimacy of a government becomes the casualty" (Sallah *ibid*). This reflects the views of a maturing, self-asserting parliament, which voices the concerns of people and the viability of the state. According to the foregoing, PAP believes that the legitimacy and sovereignty of the state should be based on the rule of law. Regardless of whether or not national governments heed to such strong appeals of PAP, the latter is playing the roles expected of it both in Sudan and in other countries.

However, PAP's rejection of the ICC arrest warrant reveals another dimension of the constructivist it follows. As indicated elsewhere, PAP is composed of members from national parliaments. That means, even if PAP as a body is expected to stand for the rights and security of people, it also feels that it must protect the continent and governments of member states from perceived or actual threats and interference. Therefore, like the umbrella Organization, the AU, which refused to cooperate with the ICC concerning the charges against the sitting President of one of its member states, PAP had to do the same. In as much as PAP wants to resolve the Darfur crisis by expressing concerns about the rights and security of people, it did not want to go against the 'general will' of the continent's leaders.

From the foregoing, it can be concluded that just a few months after its establishment, PAP started to address the Darfur conflict; it dispatched its first-ever mission there as part of its parliamentary investigation. Subsequent missions and contacts with relevant actors have enabled PAP to understand the complex environment surrounding the conflict. Its recommendations and declarations were informed by this understanding and by lessons from relevant organs of the AU. Although PAP has tried to put greater emphasis on the protection of civilians and on addressing the underlying causes of the conflict, as time goes on, it has also taken sides with the state when circumstances necessitated such a position. As argued elsewhere, its interpretation of the changing local, regional, and international 'realities' have shaped its positions. Here, a very clear identity line has emerged

between "they" (the ICC) and "we" (Africans). This distinction moves the issue from individual accountability to geopolitical vulnerability; and race, levels of development, history, and power inequalities serve as potent tools for the blame game. Therefore, PAP seems to be trapped in this dynamic state of identity politics constructed through the "we-they" discourse. It had to make a painful choice, to stand by the side of the "accused" because this is expected of it. After all, it has not stood on its legislative ground yet; thus it had to tread carefully and read between the lines both the written words and implicit norms of the real world. This dilemma is even more apparent in the Libyan case which is the subject of the next section.

## Libya

In Libya, the overthrow of the British-supported monarchy in 1969 by Gaddafi was followed by the establishment of an Arab socialist republic inclined to embrace the identity of pan-Arabism. "Despite the closure of American as well as British military bases which followed his seizure of power, Qadhafi was initially supported by the United States in the face of some internal resistance ... Later he turned to the Soviet Union for assistance" (Gutteridge, 1984: 3). But Gaddafi was regarded "in some quarters of 'Africa unguided missile'" (Gutteridge, 1984: 4). He had a grandiose idea of creating a federation of Libya, Egypt, and Sudan which did not materialize; and had tried the same with Syria, Mauritania, and Tunisia but in vain. In the early years of his rule, "Al-Qaddafi influence with national leaders in Africa has been small or counter-productive due to the widespread refusal to respond to his chairmanship of the Organization of African Unity has demonstrated" (Gutteridge, 1984: 4). He is considered an eccentric and controversial figure, often criticized for his illiberal and autocratic stance informed by a political philosophy outlined in his *Green Book*. In it, Gaddafi expressed his abhorrence to electoral democracy, party politics, constitution, the free press, and parliamentary representation. For him, "Political struggle that results in the victory of a candidate with, for example, 51 percent of the votes leads to a dictatorial governing body in the guise of a false democracy, since 49 percent of the electorate is ruled by an instrument of government they did not vote for..." He also believes that "Parliaments ... have become a means of plundering and usurping the authority of the people" since "The most tyrannical dictatorships the world has known have existed under the aegis of parliaments." Instead, he advocates for a system of "Popular Conferences and People's Committees" as the best forms of government and ultimate solution to "people's struggle for democracy" (Al-Qaddafi, ND). At the center of all this is Qadhafi, who exploited every possible means to stay in power. He ruled Libya for over forty years during which time he had exerted, a considerable

influence on the continent, as indeed in many parts of the world. In addition to supporting freedom fighters in South Africa, Namibia, Zimbabwe, and other countries outside Africa, he had contributed to several conflicts, one way or another, in many countries.

The Arab Springs that began in December 2010 in Tunisia and in January 2011 in Egypt reached Libya in February that year. Perhaps, Al-Qaddafi was not prepared to believe that Libyans would rise against him. They did; and his response was not only quick but also violent. His son, Saif Al Islam, went public, in a desperate attempt to scare people and warned: "Libya is at a crossroads. If we do not agree today on reforms we will not be mourning 84 people but thousands of deaths and rivers of blood will run through Libya" (Al Arabia, 21 February 2011). His father joined him in fighting back. He called the protestors as "rats" and "cockroaches." These words were not new in Africa, as they were used in Rwanda nearly two decades ago where the worst ever genocide occurred at the close of the 20th century. And the world was greatly concerned that the same could happen in Libya; hence the need for early prevention though already hundreds were reported dead by the time the UN/SC adopted resolutions 1970 and 1973 (2011). In March 2011, internal rebellion and harsh government response to it triggered NATO bombardment to reinforce these resolutions and weaken Al-Qaddafi's killing machines. However, this external intervention, coupled with reports about increasing civilian casualties, has attracted strong reactions in Africa, particularly from the AU, PAP, and the PSC.

### **PAP's response to the Libyan conflict**

PAP began to follow up on the situation in Libya early on; and when the conflict escalated, it began to intervene in the best possible way it could. The first official response of PAP began in May 2011, and since then, the Parliament continued to be seized by the events there. PAP's concerns and positions are expressed on different occasions from the time the conflict began in February 2011 to the time it subsided in October 2011. As in the Sudan case, PAP adopted a dual approach to the crisis which is demonstrated in its shifting positions following changes in the course of events. When the conflict began in February 2011, PAP took a position of protector of the lives and rights of the people. It expressed its grave concerns about the impending danger, appeals for maintenance of law and order, and a political settlement to the conflict. For example, in a strongly worded statement issued on 22 February, PAP: "... condemns all forms of violence and the resulting loss of many innocent lives ... believes in the right of the Libyan people to express themselves in a free and peaceful manner ... calls upon all parties to immediately end all forms of violence ... and to resort to peaceful dialogue to

overcome the current crisis". In the beginning, it also supported the UNSC resolutions which, it thought were, driven by the duty to protect civilians. It did this because this was the reason for its existence.

As the conflict escalated and the NATO attacks intensified, however, PAP began to take a different course, that of protecting the state. Its shift follows as well as pre-empts the steps taken by the AU. Their combined response largely stems from the perception of the situation as an external intervention, regime change, and, perhaps, a *possible* occupation of Libya by Africa's former colonial powers – Britain, France, and Italy, plus the U.S. Therefore following a debating on the "Security Situation in Libya" at its Fourth Ordinary Session (09-20 May 2011) PAP issued a more revealing resolution which:

- (i) Condemns the military aggression of NATO forces in the bombing of public facilities, infrastructure, and residential sites and the targeted assassination of national leaders;
- (ii) Requests [...] the international community to stop this aggression immediately ...
- (iii) Calls for solidarity with Libya in the face of the abuses by the forces of NATO of the UN Security Council resolutions ...
- (iv) Appreciates the African Initiative in seeking a peaceful solution to the crisis [and] endorses the African solution to the problem of Libya;
- (v) Condemns the disinformation and calls on all media organs ... to play their part in the transfer of the true reality of the events in Libya (PAP, 2011);

To have a fuller picture of the situation on the ground, PAP also "Decides to dispatch a fact-finding mission which visited Libya in June 2011, at the peak of the conflict in the country. One of the Members of the Mission later reported that "What is happening now in Libya is what happened in Iraq and Afghanistan. Where there is foreign intervention, there is a disaster. In Tunisia and Egypt, the people rose and stood up themselves. They did not need foreign intervention" (PAP, 2011).

In the above-mentioned resolution, PAP also supported the AU's proposal to convene a special session of the Assembly in May 2011 and calls for a similar session of the UN General Assembly to look into the operations of NATO and its impact on Libyan. At least, the AU Assembly held a Special Session on 25 May 2011 which, among others, "... expressed Africa's surprise and disappointment at the attempts to marginalize the continent in the management of the Libyan conflict..." The Assembly echoed PAP's concerns on the conflict, demanded an immediate cessation of hostilities, and urged all parties to "fully comply with the letter and spirit of" UN resolutions ... Like PAP, the Assembly requested the African Group in New York and the African members

of the United Nations Security Council, to take the initiative of the early convening of a meeting of the Security Council, as well as the General Assembly, to assess the implementation of resolutions 1970 (2011) and 1973 (2011)" (AU 2011). The changing scenarios in Libya and PAP's reading of the situation have influenced its responses to the conflict and its sympathy to the Gaddafi regime, considering the latter as a victim of external aggression and conspiracy. Underlying this perception could be Libya's oil resources, Gaddafi's thorny relations with the West, his strong though erratic emphasis on pan-Africanism, and his support to the AU and some of its member states. Moreover, PAP's concerns have been reinforced by the lessons learned from external interventions in other countries, notably Iraq and Afghanistan, and the long-term implications of this for regional stability in Africa.

Despite Africa's efforts to find an African solution to a *supposedly* African problem in Libya, the conflict continued and all indications suggest that the end of the Gaddafi era was approaching. And it did. The conflict reached a climax with the fall of Tripoli in August 2011. On 20 October 2011, Gaddafi was captured and killed; and with him, one big chapter of Libyan, African, Middle Eastern, and, perhaps, world, history came to a close. Although still too early to predict the consequences of the Libyan revolution for that country, the effect on the neighboring regions is being felt. Mali has become the first victim of the post-Libyan conflict where Taureg rebels and al Qaeda elements waged fierce separatist/'Islamist' battles and took control of most parts of northern Mali, where they declared independence.

How did PAP respond to the post-crisis situation in Libya? After the change of circumstances which saw the overthrow and eventual demise of Gaddafi, the PAP, in October 2011, assessed the post-conflict scenarios, took note of the "volatile situation in the country", and stressed that the "best solution for Libya is to fulfill the legitimate aspirations of the Libyan people to Democracy, Good Governance and Respect for Human Rights, Achieve Sustainable Peace and Preserve Unity and Territorial Integrity of the Country" and the "Sovereignty" of Libya. PAP, therefore, calls for "immediate cessation of war in conformity with the AU roadmap"; and "urgent need for national reconciliation." Moreover, PAP advised that "the African Union should encourage Libya to be a Member of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights." These recommendations are directed to the Transitional National Council (TNC) which toppled the Gaddafi regime (PAP, 211). Thus, despite its previous rejection of regime change and external intervention, PAP had now to deal with a different 'reality' and a *de facto* regime; hence its renewed emphasis on the protection of the civilian population from further violence. PAP's call for a new Libya to accede to and recognize the authority of the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights is to remind the new regime of its obligations to ensure law and order and to take responsibility for actual or potential human

rights violations.

The Libyan case presents an interesting aspect of the constructivist approach to conflict transformation. It demonstrates that there is no single perspective, one best approach to conflict resolution, or a fixed position of third party actors. As indicated elsewhere, approaches and positions change as conflicts move from one state to another. In an address to the "Second African Union High-Level Retreat on the Promotion of Peace, Security and Stability in Africa" (4 September 2011, the Chairperson of the AU Commission intimated that about the North African crisis, the "AU has reacted creatively. In other words, our Union was able to *exhibit the necessary flexibility. It based its action not on a literal and dogmatic interpretation of the existing texts, but rather on the need to contribute to the attainment of the overall objective sought by the African Union, namely the consolidation of the ongoing democratization processes in the continent*" [emphasis added]. This is what exactly PAP did. PAP understood that the people of Libya were targeted by their government and deserved protection. It, therefore, expressed its dismay and reminded the government of its responsibility to protect and to avoid indiscriminate killings. Latter, it realized that an AU member state and its leadership have been at the receiving end of external attacks. Theretofore, PAP condemns the 'aggression' in the strongest terms possible, as a regional parliament representing all the member states.

In conclusion, the Libyan conflict has recast the concept of sovereignty from nation-state sovereignty to *regional sovereignty*. That is, any externally-assisted attempt to topple a regime in any member state for whatever reason, has been construed as re-occupying the continent and violating its *collective sovereignty*. Therefore, it is not surprising to see PAP's shift of emphasis from the protection of people to the prevention of the war on Libya as part of its attempts to resolve the conflict. However, when the situation went beyond its control and what was feared happened, it had to soften its stance accepting the 'facts' on the ground.

## Somalia

Until its independence in 1960, Somalia was partitioned into British, French, and Italian Somaliland. Besides, a considerable segment of the Somali population was under the jurisdiction of Ethiopia and Kenya (Ohaegbulam, 2004). From 1960 to 1969, Somalia had a stable democracy in Africa. Its first President, Aden Abdullah Osman, was the first in post-colonial Africa to accept electoral defeat and transfer power to his successor, Abdirashid Ali Shermarke, in 1967, peacefully. In 1969, General Siad Barre overthrew Shermarke and ruled the country until 1991.

Somalia had irredentist ambitions to unite all the territories occupied by the Somalis in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti. In 1977, Barre launched a large-scale

offensive against Ethiopia; and soon the Ethio-Somali conflict took a Cold War posture: the US was supporting Somalia whereas the Soviet Union assisted Ethiopia. The latter won the war in 1978; and Somalia was severely weakened. Consequently, “Barre was discredited in the eyes of the Somalis because of the loss to Ethiopia ... This fall in public esteem added to the discrimination and violence by his regime against clans and communities other than his own fueled three main insurgencies. However, external support, mainly from the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Libya, convinced Siad Bare that he could defeat his opponents by force ...” (Ohaegbulam, 2004:103). But external support gradually declined; and Barre finally fled the country in January 1991. Since 1991, therefore, Somalia remains a “problem child of Africa” (Wolde-Mariam, 1977). In the early years of the conflict, the UN and US undertook peacekeeping and humanitarian activities but faced myriads of challenges and left the country in 1995. Similarly, subsequent efforts to resolve the crisis through negotiations, mediations, and conciliation led to the establishment of a Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in 2004. Though Somalia is a homogenous society, identity politics based on clan and regional divisions have complicated the conflict transformation process. Somalia serves as a classic example of the role primordial ties, social networks, and shared values perpetuate endless conflicts where there seems no end in sight. As Heather (2009:193) sums it up, “With a divided nation, competing clan groups, internally displaced persons and the threat of terrorism and international reprisal, it may take some considerable time before Somalia settles into normal governance.”

### **PAP’s efforts in resolving the Somali conflict**

Like in the other three cases discussed above, PAP takes up Somalia’s crisis quite early. Given the protracted nature of the conflict, it is very difficult to find a peak there, but the PAP uses some of the disturbing events that receive wider publicity and deals with the situation accordingly. For example, when reports suggest that the presence of Ethiopian troops in Somalia was fueling nationalist fervor, on 10 May 2007 the CCIRCR asks PAP to call upon the Ethiopian government to withdraw its troops from Somalia; and the international community to focus all diplomatic efforts on a ceasefire in Mogadishu to facilitate national dialogue among the people of Somalia. CCIRCR’s recommendation was based on a thorough assessment of the complex situation in the country: escalating skirmishes between the clan-based warlords, the impact of Al Qaeda, and external interventions by Eritrea, Ethiopia, and the US. Introducing a motion on Somalia, on 17 April 2010, a member of PAP reminded his colleagues that “Somalia has experienced almost two decades of severe instability, lack of security, and countless human sacrifices. The blood of many women,

children and the most vulnerable of the society has been repeatedly spilled in the country.” Again, in its May 2011 session, PAP condemned the worsening situation in Somalia, particularly the lack of progress in finding a peaceful settlement of the crisis; called on “All parties to the Somalia conflict to work together to restore peace and security in the country”; and to respect “All decisions of the African Union Peace and Security Council” (PAP, 2011).

Unlike in the Libyan or the Sudanese case, PAP has been consistent in its position of protecting the people and ending the conflict in Somalia through the participation of all parties and stakeholders concerned. Unfortunately, the culture of conflict and violence seems to stay around for some time as it has become a business for some actors at the expense of millions of innocent lives both in Somalia and other countries in the region. Moreover, the Somali crisis has also affected global social and economic security because of the fertile ground it created for piracy.

### **IMPACTS OF PAP INTERVENTION IN CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION**

The evidence so far suggests that PAP plays both direct and indirect roles in conflict resolution. The direct role is based on its explicit mandates stated in different legal texts whereas the indirect role refers to the various fora PAP organizes, its missions and the various communiqués it releases. Both of these resources are used by parties to conflicts, civil society organizations, other AU organs, member states not parties to conflicts, and the international community. In its present status, the PAP is seen as more of a platform for parliamentary diplomacy, deliberative democracy, and participation in a wide range of actors and interest groups, including the civil society. It is also a repository of empirical information generated through its fact-finding missions. In this regard, PAP’s experiences show increasing recognition given to it by these groups and also approaching it as a legitimate expression of the desires, aspirations, and challenges of people in the region. Nevertheless, the parallel decisions, recommendations, diplomatic contacts, and communiqués PAP issues either in line with the AU Assembly or even prompting the latter’s actions, could influence the decisions of the Assembly and the other AU institutions. More particularly, since the AU Commission and the PSC are required to report their activities to the PAP, the latter could use this mandate to propose decisions and resolutions. The Commission and the PSC are responsible for drafting the various instruments for adoption by the Assembly.

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Pan African Parliament was created to help Africa rid

conflicts by representing the voice of the people and addressing the root causes of conflicts. PAP forms part of the new peace and security architecture of Africa. Organizationally, PAP has created CCIRCR to assist it in monitoring, tracking progress, and proposing appropriate measures towards resolving conflicts. Using PAP's experiences in Cote d'Ivoire, Darfur/Sudan, Libya, and Somalia this study confirmed that PAP has devoted considerable attention to the major conflict hotspots in the continent. The research also confirmed that while regional, supra-national institutions play important catalytic roles in conflict transformation as third-party actors, they are either missing from or inadequately covered in both the international relations and conflict resolution literature. The study further highlights that regional parliamentary institutions operate based on both the written word (acquired legal competences) and the real world (constructed competences). Therefore, PAP's efforts in conflict resolution are not only procedural (rule-determined), but also time and context-specific. Accordingly, PAP demonstrates a noticeable process of adjusting and readjusting positions as situations move from one phase or direction to another in the life-cycle of conflicts. Based on the detailed analysis of the cases studies, it is important to highlight the following key observations:

- (i) First, though still in the formative stage, PAP has embarked on the task of conflict resolution. While trying to contribute its share to the conflict resolution process, PAP also emphasizes the need for addressing the root causes of these conflicts, chief among them being lack of democracy weak institutions, the problem of governance, transparency, and accountability. To this effect, PAP makes repeated calls on member states to (a) grant it law-making powers and (b) ratify the new African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance.
- (ii) Second, PAP uses a range of tools in its effort to resolve conflicts: parliamentary debates, press releases/communiqués, briefing sessions with the diplomatic community, reports and statements to the AU Assemblies, receiving reports from the AU Commission and the PSC, fact-finding missions; and cooperation agreements with international organizations, and the civil society. These direct and indirect tools enable PAP to play supportive roles since the end product of conflict resolution cannot be attributed to one party or another alone.
- (iii) Third, in most cases, PAP assumes the role of protecting the security and rights of people. However, depending on circumstances, its position shifts to the side of the state when the latter seems to be a victim of external threats as in the case of Libya.
- (iv) Fourth, because its regional character, its intervention comes late, after a conflict escalates; and once a conflict subsides not much is heard about PAP's activities on latent conflicts.

Based on the foregoing observations, PAP has become

one of the promising institutions of the AU. The amount of its work, especially in conflict resolution, despite limitations, is impressive. In this regard, it is important to further understand PAP's roles in conflict prevention, management, transformation, and resolution. More specifically, it is important to study further the direct and indirect contributions of PAP's recommendations/decisions on mitigating conflicts before they escalate. Besides, studies are needed on theoretical frameworks relevant to explain the role of regional parliamentary institutions in internal and international conflicts.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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