РЕЦЕНЗИИ

BOOK REVIEWS

Book Review:
Charbonneau, B., & Ricard, M. (Eds.). (2022).
Routledge Handbook of African Peacebuilding. Routledge, 308 p.

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Рецензия на книгу:
Routledge Handbook of African Peacebuilding /
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Africa is arguably the laboratory for UN activities as it is the perfect description of the UN Secretary-General Guterres 'Peace continuum' that replaced 'crisis continuum' "which he defines in institutional terms as the product of a comprehensive, modern and effective operational peace architecture, encompassing prevention, conflict resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and long-term development" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 22).

The reality, however, is that the current rule-based international system treats Africa like global second-class citizens, constantly marginalised even on its own internal issues such as its peace and security. The result is that despite Africa being at the centre of peace intervention practices over the past three decades, it is arguably the western imagination of Africa that has had a governing influence on the politics, policy and practices of Africa's peacebuilding efforts.

Consequently, having fully realised this discrepancy, since the beginning of the 21st century, Africa has been attempting to reconfigure this international system by establishing its own institutions (*the African Union* (AU), regional economic communities, RECs), developing its own structures (*African Peace and Security Architecture*, APSA) and even coining its own theoretical frameworks/ideologies (George Ayittey's African Solutions to African Problems) underpinning the central role that Africans and Africa should play on peace and security in international relations.

However, the increasing institutional cooperation of the AU as well as the African RECs with other external international actors such as the UN and/or the EU, German development cooperation agency (GIZ), and the UK Department for International Development (DFID) has led to the adoption of Western structures and the implementation of external approaches to peacebuilding coupled with heavy dependence on external funding, resulting in these external actors routinely seeking to intervene on their own terms in African conflicts.

As a result, Africa has constructed a particular version of peacebuilding, within a "colonial/neocolonial" framework instead of Ali Mazrui's vision and ambition "for a Pax Africana that was 'to be assured by the exertions of Africans themselves' " (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 2) to enhance their voices in international relations and thereby the international system. Because if African institutions are highly dependent on external funding, they are also duplicating Western/Eurocentric structures as well as developing joint institutional frameworks, the outcome is that they are implementing external approaches to peacebuilding, *then whose/what peace/building are the African structures and institutions executing?*

It is within this context that this contributed *Routledge Handbook on African Peacebuilding* edited by Bruno Charbonneau and Maxime Ricard, divided into three parts, tries to answer this question page by page; by unveiling to readers the critical differences in how African peacebuilders have conceptualized and operationalized peacebuilding in the ways

international politics position Africa as an object and subject of international intervention.

The first part with four chapters deals with the institutions that directly handle African peacebuilding; the UN and some of its agencies (*the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, UNHCR) and the AU and its RECs, i.e., *Economic Community of West African States* (ECOWAS), by mainly examining their structural engagements and impediments in their quest for African peacebuilding. The authors begin to unravel to readers the peacebuilding puzzle with the startling revelation that African institutions have adopted Eurocentric structures. For example, Chapter 3 specifically addresses the issue of peacebuilding via security sector reform and governance (SSR/G) — *a Western-based security structure specifically established by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe*. The question emerging then is how can African RECs such as ECOWAS adopt such a structure as a basis for African peacebuilding? It is no wonder that the authors point out the several challenges that the SSR/G is encountering in West Africa, especially that it has remained too state focused, ignoring the African community-based security cultures and thereby weakening traditional conflict management structures.

Second, the state is regarded as the critical institutional actor in peacebuilding. In fact, the author in Chapter 1 states that one of the main UN principles and guidelines for peacekeeping operations is "restoring the state's ability to provide security and maintain public order" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 23), while "AU's approach to peacebuilding requires the existence of a legitimate government, a functional society and domestic parties for dialogue to begin" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 3) leading to the argument that "in Africa peacebuilding initiatives are limited by the conditions of the post-colonial African state" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 3).

Therefore, if peacebuilding involves "addressing the deep-rooted, structural causes of violent conflict in a comprehensive manner… and puts institution building at the center of its action by supporting the restoration and extension of state authority" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022,

p. 18), which state are they restoring during peacebuilding and does it truly address the deep-rooted causes of violent conflicts? Hence, the debate that African peacebuilding initiatives are limited by the conditions of the postcolonial African state but it still does not answer the question; whose peace?

The question continues in part two of the book that consists of 7 chapters on themes and debates questioning whether the AU framework and its underfunded peace operations that have led to high dependency on external financing are indeed an African version of peacebuilding or are engulfed by the external actors' characteristics.

This question is addressed by all authors but most substantively in Chapter 5 as the author rightly asks how African are the mediations. For instance, "In 2014 international partners covered as much as 96% of the budget for the operationalization of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), which covers the AU and the RECs… In 2016, the AU expressed concern that external partners funded over 95% of its preventive diplomacy and mediation activities" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 74).

With *the African Union Mission to Somalia* (AMISOM) established in 2007 and its funding primarily provided by the EU, it is not surprising then that "Donors often play a problematic role in pressing mediators to move hastily to produce a peace agreement before the conflict parties have achieved the consensus and reconciliation needed to make the agreement sustainable" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 74). Hence the same question arises again — whose peace are we talking about?

Apart from mediation there are also debates on justice, knowledge production, local agency, gender, development, democracy and climate security but most importantly, criticism of the rule-based international system and thus the liberal model of peacebuilding that does not solve African underlying causes of conflicts. In Chapter 8, the authors provide a case study of how a local peacebuilding programme in Côte d'Ivoire was initially established to strengthen traditional decision-making systems but due to external funding specifically the German development cooperation agency (GIZ) (2007—2009), it resulted in the introduction of new methods and thereby weakening of the traditional conflict management structures. For example, the county and sub-prefectural committees, by their hierarchical positioning due to the salary payment system, "overturned decisions of the village chief, who was considered biased. This then contributed to the weakening of the village chiefdom, further undermining the traditional conflict management authority" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 117).

The authors however present two case studies that demonstrate how local engagement of structural issues has led to successful examples of local peacebuilding. The first village ensured that all land transactions were under the control of the village chief, while the second established a management committee that led to the creation of a sub-prefect office for the registration and redistribution of land to returnees. As a result, there have been no reported cases of violence between civilian populations since the local engagements.

Part three introduces seven case studies that present an in-depth empirical analysis on power relations and the impact of peacebuilding in the Sahel, Mali and Somalia, the Gambia, South Sudan, Guinea-Bissau, and Côte d'Ivoire exposing the current shortcomings in African peacebuilding. For example, the peacebuilding approaches used in Guinea-Bissau and Côte d'Ivoire do not address the root causes of the conflicts because the forms of peace established do not touch underlying issues such as inequality, injustice and poverty. Thus, the authors present an alternative to international peacebuilding approaches by proposing "a hybrid model based on African perspectives and indigenous approaches to peacebuilding to consolidate peace" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 11).

Cyril Obi's conclusion not only gives an overview of the chapters but also serves as a critique because it challenges African peacebuilders to confront the hard truths they have dealt with so far by burying their heads in the sand with hopes that eventually it will go away. He argues that despite the progress made by Africans in ownership of the peacebuilding agenda, he acknowledges the gaps that have resulted in limited success and outright failure in addressing conflicts in the continent. He also

acknowledges that the nature of the contestations between the various actors, both local and international will continue to drive the structure and processes of peace interventions in Africa for some time to come.

In conclusion, it might seem that the authors are critical of the liberal peacebuilding approaches in Africa; however, one can objectively note that the rule based international system is facing challenges and the book is a result of the continuous search by Africans to reclaim the peacebuilding agenda in their continent on their own terms. Nevertheless, despite all their efforts the authors were not able to answer the whose peace question but rather, they were unanimous in acknowledging that Africans are not in control of the structures nor the institutions for peacebuilding on the continent. The editors quite rightly conclude that "Even the AU, as the supposed champion of Pax Africana, cannot function without external funding" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 286). As a result, the local peacebuilding programmes were weakening rather than being strengthened so "it is not clear what claims to African ownership really amount to" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 276).

Therefore, there is an urgent need for Africans to reclaim the peacebuilding agenda in their own terms because "to seek an answer to the rhetorical question of whose peacebuilding in the coming decades will require going back to the 'original sins' of colonialism to the non-transformative neo-colonialism that followed, which in turn undergirds the question, 'Peacebuilding for what?'" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 279). However, "African Solutions to African Problems" cannot be the only ideology being advanced by African agency, additional effort still needs to be made to develop more African theories for African peacebuilding.

Nevertheless, this book holds the attention of readers while posing the right questions to African peacebuilders, serving as a good critique of African peacebuilding efforts. The book concludes by noting the emergence of an alternative, signalling a turning point in Africa when Cyril Obi points out that "Already there are signs that the continent is experiencing episodic outbursts of demands for an alternate, next-generation peacebuilding in which young people in various countries are demanding change: social emancipation, protection of the rights of minorities, an end to authoritarianism by corrupt and self-serving leadership, and the depredations of international extractivism and neo-colonialism(s)" (Charbonneau & Ricard, 2022, p. 280).

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