AN OVERVIEW OF RECENT TRENDS IN AFRICAN SCHOLARLY WRITING ON PEACEBUILDING

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ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Launched in March 2012, the African Peacebuilding Network (APN) supports independent African research on conflict-affected countries and neighboring regions of the continent, as well as the integration of high-quality African research-based knowledge into global policy communities. In order to advance African debates on peacebuilding and promote African perspectives, the APN offers competitive research grants and fellowships, and it funds other forms of targeted support, including strategy meetings, seminars, grantee workshops, commissioned studies, and the publication and dissemination of research findings. In doing so, the APN also promotes the visibility of African peacebuilding knowledge among global and regional centers of scholarly analysis and practical action and makes it accessible to key policymakers at the United Nations and other multilateral, regional, and national policymaking institutions.

ABOUT THE SERIES

“African solutions to African problems” is a favorite mantra of the African Union, but since the 2002 establishment of the African Peace and Security Architecture, the continent has continued to face political, material, and knowledge-related challenges to building sustainable peace. Peacebuilding in Africa has sometimes been characterized by interventions by international actors who lack the local knowledge and lived experience needed to fully address complex conflict-related issues on the continent. And researchers living and working in Africa need additional resources and platforms to shape global debates on peacebuilding as well as influence regional and international policy and practitioner audiences. The APN Working Papers series seeks to address these knowledge gaps and needs by publishing independent research that provides critical overviews and reflections on the state of the field, stimulates new thinking on overlooked or emerging areas of African peacebuilding, and engages scholarly and policy communities with a vested interest in building peace on the continent.
Since the Agenda for Peace report in 1992 and subsequent reports, including the 2000 “Brahimi Report” and the 2004 report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, the meaning of the term “peacebuilding” has expanded significantly. From Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s original definition, “actions to identify and support structures which strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict,” peacebuilding is today understood to encompass the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict situations toward more sustainable peaceful relationships, and development before and after conflicts. The expansion of the term has been accompanied by a growing body of literature from diverse geographic, disciplinary, and intellectual backgrounds and traditions that have attempted to make sense of peacebuilding activities and their consequences. Ismail Rashid points out that in Africa, the proliferation of conflicts has made researching and writing on peacebuilding a necessity. Ever since the term peacebuilding rose to prominence in 1992, various African institutions, practitioners, and scholars from different disciplines, such as political science; history; anthropology; sociology; international
relations; development studies; and peace, conflict, and security studies, have written on different facets of peacebuilding from diverse perspectives and contexts. African scholarship has grown over the years in parallel with the expansion in peacebuilding activities and the proliferation of institutions at the global, regional, and national levels tasked with peacebuilding work.4

But what have been the key trends, themes, and debates in the African peacebuilding literature? How has African peacebuilding literature contributed to the current global discourse, policy development, new knowledge, and practice? And to what extent has African thinking shaped the global peacebuilding agenda, especially in Africa? These questions are particularly critical due to the popular impression that peacebuilding in Africa is determined in Western capitals and in the corridors of the UN, which neglects how local ideas shape the global policy debates and practices.5 As David J. Francis rightly puts it, the field of peace studies has been crafted in Euro-American institutions, largely by scholars from Europe and North America, neglecting the fact that Africa had well-developed and tested indigenous approaches and methods of conflict management and peacebuilding. This universalization of peacebuilding theories and methodologies has led to a particularistic and dominant discursive hegemony of Western explanations of what is considered peace, thereby limiting the “Africanist worldview” of the term peacebuilding.6 Highlighting the diverse ideas and views of African scholars, practitioners, and institutions is therefore imperative to deepen understanding on, in particular, the impacts and limitations of recent peacebuilding interventions in Africa.

Against this backdrop, this paper identifies and reviews some of the major academic writings by African scholars and institutions on peacebuilding since 2007. It begins by tracing the evolution of the growing body of African peacebuilding scholarship and then analyzes the key trends, themes, and debates in the African scholarly writings and their connections or disconnection with global discourses and processes. The next section discusses the strengths and weaknesses of the peacebuilding literature produced by African scholars, including their contributions to the global peacebuilding scholarship. The paper concludes with a set of recommendations aimed at addressing some of the gaps and weaknesses identified in African scholarly writings on peacebuilding.
TRACING THE EVOLUTION OF PEACEBUILDING SCHOLARSHIP

As a field of study, peacebuilding has evolved over the past three decades primarily as a subfield of peace and conflict studies in the social sciences. The intellectual antecedent of the concept can be traced to the peace philosopher and researcher, Johan Galtung, who coined the term in his pioneering *Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding*.\(^7\) It was after this seminal essay and subsequent work by John Paul Lederach that the term began to gain currency in the academic world.\(^8\) However, most of the initial peacebuilding research at the time was dominated by Western scholars from peace research institutions and universities in Europe and North America. The peacebuilding scholarship in Africa during the period had not yet developed, although Erin McCandless and Tony Karbo posit that some elements of the field had developed for decades in the social sciences in Africa. This is because most of the traditional practices to resolve conflict and to promote social harmony in Africa that historians, anthropologists, and sociologists, for example, did research on were not described using the term “peacebuilding.”\(^9\) Equally important is what scholars describe as the state of affairs in the 1960s and 1970s, when most post-colonial government considered peace research a subversive activity; this inhibited the development of local research on the subject.\(^10\) According to Eghosa Osaghae, local and foreign researchers were critiqued for giving intellectual muscle to a supposedly neo-colonial project meant to keep the fragile African states weak and divided.\(^11\)

Nonetheless, the situation began to change in the aftermath of the 1992 landmark report, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peacekeeping*, by then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali which introduced peacebuilding into UN vocabulary more systematically. The report stimulated academic interest and research among African scholars both within and outside the continent on conflict resolution, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding in an attempt to find lasting solutions to the number of intractable conflicts that engulfed the continent. Since then, peacebuilding research has emerged as a recognized domain of rigorous study of peace and conflict in Africa. However, it is important to stress that the evolution of the academic writing on peacebuilding from the 1990s to date has been influenced by certain key developments on the continent.

To begin with, the increasing number of complex intra-state armed conflicts in the early post-Cold War period and the resultant need to develop
coherent robust responses to promote sustainable peace was one such development. These protracted armed conflicts attracted academic and policy interest on how to build sustainable peace and development to prevent countries from relapsing into conflicts after their initial resolution. Although such interest was more pronounced at the policy level, African academics in and outside the continent began to analyze some of the peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions from theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspectives. Many of the scholars and practitioners focused their research on analyzing the root causes of conflict in countries such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Somalia, Burundi, Guinea Bissau, and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and how to build lasting peace and human development in the post-conflict context. Others also analyzed the interventions of inter-governmental organizations, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization of African Unity (OAU)—now African Union (AU)—and the UN in some of the war-torn countries. Francis, for instance, discussed the experiences of ECOWAS in West Africa, and asserted that regional organizations were the most viable framework for the maintenance of regional peace and security, contrary to the popular notion that they play very limited role. Similarly, using Liberia as a case study, Comfort Ero argued that despite the numerous challenges and setbacks, ECOWAS interventions in West Africa were a major step in the maintenance of regional peace and security. Many other scholars also provided case studies and empirical perspectives on the causes of conflicts and peace processes in Liberia, Rwanda, Sudan, Burundi, and Sierra Leone. Nevertheless, some of this literature was critical of the interventions and state rebuilding processes in post-conflict countries by the UN and other external actors which sometimes resulted in further instability and violence.

Another major development was the growth of peace research centers and institutes across the continent and the introduction of peace and conflict studies programs in some African universities. Even though the education system in Africa was slow to respond to the demands for peace studies in the 1980s, the mid-1990 onwards saw a vast expansion in the number of peace-related professional bodies and research institutes, the proliferation of university courses, and the launch of academic journals on conflict resolution, management, and peacebuilding in Africa. Mccandless and Karbo mention the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) as one of the first major centers in the 1990s for the study of peace and conflict on the continent. According to Isaac O. Albert,
universities in Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Uganda also began offering academic programs in peace studies which treated peacebuilding as a peripheral subject. Some of these universities (with the date the academic programs were established) are: The University of Ibadan (2000) and the University of Ilorin in Nigeria (2008), the University of Cape Coast in Ghana (2007), Makerere University in Uganda, and Kenyatta University in Kenya (2010). A plethora of think tanks, civil society organizations, and research institutions were also established as centers for training and research on conflict resolution, management and peacebuilding. These include the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD, 1992), the Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR, 1994), Institute for Peace and Security Studies at Addis Ababa University (IPSS, 2007), Cairo International Centre for Conflict, Peacekeeping, and Peacebuilding (CCCPA, 1994) and the Institute for Security Studies (ISS, 1991) in South Africa, the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre (2004) and the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP, 1998) in Ghana and the Nairobi Peace Institute (NPI, 1984) in Kenya.

The establishment of such academic programs and research institutions was accompanied by the launch of various peer reviewed journals on peace and security, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding in Africa. Among these were the *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal* (APCJ), launched in 2008 by the University for Peace in Ethiopia; the *African Journal on Conflict Resolution* established by ACCORD in 1999; and the *African Security Review*, established by ISS in 1992. These journals encouraged the publication of high-quality, innovative work by African authors on a wide range of peacebuilding issues in Africa and provided a forum for the exchange of critical thinking emerging from African universities, colleges, and organizations. They also contributed to the development of ideas, writings, and dialogue in the field of conflict management and peacebuilding on the African continent.

Expectedly, the growth of the peacebuilding “industry” coincided with the rapid growth of academic literature written by researchers and analysts straddling the practitioner-scholar divide. Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the evolving field of peacebuilding, many of the African scholars writing in the 1990s came from a variety of disciplines, such as political science, international relations, sociology, development studies, peace and conflict studies, and security and war studies. Researchers from both academic and research institutions across the continent conducted extensive field research, impact assessments, case study analyses, and epidemiological
surveys of the protracted conflicts in Africa. Through different kinds of literature, African scholars and practitioners helped to advance the thinking and practice of building peace in post-conflict countries by contributing to the refinement of the strategies and frameworks adopted at the national and regional levels. The gradual institutionalization of peace studies and peace-related work on the continent had a scholarly impact on the production of policy and practice relevant research on peacebuilding. More significantly, the integration of peacebuilding and conflict programming into the work of most civil society organizations (CSOs) in Africa—due to the funding opportunities that were available for promoting education for peace—also contributed to the growth of the peacebuilding literature.18

Over time, academic interest and research on various aspects of peacebuilding has become widespread on the continent, particularly after the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission in 2005, given that all the countries on the Commission’s agenda are from Africa.19 The development of normative instruments at the regional level also generated interest in the subject, with few studies focusing on how the AU can effectively implement its post-conflict reconstruction framework.

KEY THEMES AND PERSPECTIVES ON PEACEBUILDING

From the existing literature, one can discern a number of clear trends and perspectives in the analysis of peacebuilding in Africa. Some of the key trends and themes that have dominated the literature in the past decade include the concept of peacebuilding; the nexus between statebuilding and peacebuilding; the liberal peace debate; democratization and good governance; the root causes of conflicts; elections; conflict resolution and management; gender and peacebuilding; youth and peacebuilding; peacebuilding and peace operations; security sector reform (SSR); disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR); transitional justice and reconciliation; economic recovery and growth; humanitarian relief; and regional dimensions of peacebuilding. Some of these trends and themes are discussed in detail below.

THE CONCEPT OF PEACEBUILDING

The meaning and scope of peacebuilding has been the subject of intense debate among policymakers, practitioners, and researchers across the globe. Originally conceived in the context of post-conflict recovery efforts, it
is now understood to be part of the collective and sustained efforts to build lasting peace before and after conflicts. As a result, the term peacebuilding has taken on a broader meaning in contemporary times. African scholars and institutions have, through research and practice, contributed to refining the concept of peacebuilding at the global level.

Peacebuilding involves the full range of initiatives, measures, and activities aimed at preventing, reducing, and transforming conflicts and developing institutions, attitudes and relationships that promote sustainable peace and development. Tim Murithi describes it as a process whose goal is to strengthen the capacity of societies to promote a “positive peace.” This involves activities aimed at addressing the root causes of conflict, prevention, and mitigation of all forms of violence, and the promotion of reconciliation and coexistence on the basis of human rights, social, economic, and political justice. Based on the above definitions, peacebuilding can be understood as a set of activities that promote both positive and “negative peace” (absence of violence). This understanding of peacebuilding differs from the initial conceptualization of the term by Boutros-Ghali, in his widely cited report, *An Agenda for Peace*, and the supplement to the document published in 1995. In *An Agenda for Peace*, peacebuilding was defined as “actions to identify and support structures which strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.” Peacebuilding was conceptualized chronologically; preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding were considered separate phases of the peace process. As Cedric de Coning posits, conflict prevention and peacebuilding were “juxtaposed at the opposite ends of the conflict management spectrum, with preventive diplomacy representing the first or opening stage of an intervention.” If unsuccessful, this would be followed by peacemaking; if an agreement is reached between conflict parties, this could result in a peacekeeping mission. Lastly, peacebuilding would ensure that the conflict does not re-occur by addressing the root causes.

In the past two decades, African researchers and institutions, like their counterparts elsewhere across the globe, have through research and practice demonstrated that the transition from war to peace rarely follows a linear path as suggested by Boutros-Ghali’s report. Siphamandla Zondi notes that the AU’s Post-Conflict Reconstruction Policy (PCRD) framework maintains that there is no need to place these activities in a sequence because it does not accept the logic that one element must be fully in place before the next phase kicks in. Consequently, in the 2015 review of the UN peacebuilding
architecture, the concept of “sustaining peace” was introduced to liberate peacebuilding from being strictly limited to post-conflict contexts. Activities to build peace are now understood to take place before conflict and not only limited to the post-conflict context. That is, peace and war may exist simultaneously in different parts of the same country as in the case of Sudan, where conflict escalated in Darfur even after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) formally ended the conflict between the North and South in 2005. Another typical case is Uganda which although often described as a “peaceful” country had a long-lasting conflict with the Lord’s Resistance Army in the north. Rather than a chronological step in a linear conflict management continuum, peacebuilding and the other elements of the peace process should be understood as interconnected, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing.25 Albert summarizes this sentiment by indicating that the term “peacebuilding” has gone through such a profound transformation that it today encapsulates all the other peace terms promoted in the Agenda for Peace report.26

THE LIBERAL PEACE PARADIGM

The liberal peace paradigm, which is linked to the wider debate on democratic peace theory, has been a major premise of internationally-supported peacebuilding efforts in Africa since the early post-Cold War era. As a paradigm derived from a long tradition of Western liberal theory and practice, liberal peace is about building peace within states on the basis of liberal democracy and market economics.27 Though the main components of the liberal peace thesis vary, it usually includes the promotion of multiparty electoral democracy, constitutionalism, rule of law, good governance, human rights, security sector reform, civil society promotion, gender equality, economic reforms, and privatization.28 These political and economic liberalization programs, previously regarded as effective antidotes to violent conflicts in war-torn societies, have been deeply questioned. Questions about whether the promotion of multiparty electoral democracy and institution building, legal reforms, and market-based economic reforms actually lead to sustainable peace, or whether they undermine the consolidation of peace in post-conflict societies abound in the literature.29 While some African researchers have written extensively on different variants of the liberal peace thesis, others have challenged or critiqued the liberal premise of contemporary peacebuilding interventions.

One of the important issues that has generated a lot of debate in the
literature concerns the appropriateness of the top-down approach (state-centric) of liberal strategies in dealing with the needs of post-conflict countries. Contributing to this debate, Coning argues that for a peace process to become sustainable, “resilient social institutions need to emerge from within, i.e. informed by the local culture, history, and socio-economic context,” instead of the liberal top-down problem-solving approaches aimed at resolving conflict. International actors, he noted, can assist and facilitate that process, but once they interfere too much they will undermine the “self-organizing processes necessary to generate and sustain resilient social institutions.”

In the same way, Funmi Olonisakin and Alfred Muteru in their article, “Reframing Narratives of Peacebuilding and Statebuilding in Africa,” questioned the current top-down approach to peace that is based on the assumption that a certain type of state (democratic) would lead to peace and stability. To them, the top-down approach often ignores local contexts, informal actors, and initiatives, which if brought on board could lead to longer-term, sustainable, context specific programs that produce better outcomes. Citing some practical cases to support this point, Josaphat Musamba Bussy and Carol Jean Gallo locate the cause of the failures of the UN and World Bank peacebuilding interventions in Eastern DRC within the liberal governance framework. According to them, these interventions failed because they were based on the false premise that the absence of a strong liberal state is the primary reason conflict persists in the DRC, leading to the implementation of programs of a primarily top-down fashion, despite discourse on the importance of local ownership.

Indeed, the focus on the local context in peacebuilding interventions is seen by most African researchers as a critical factor in efforts to build peace, as one-size-fits-all solutions do not work in all post-conflict situations. However, internationally-supported peacebuilding interventions in Africa often overlook the local community’s conception of peace, justice, and order, which is rooted in their local culture and traditions. The top-down approach to peacebuilding not only downplays the contributions that African traditional systems make toward ensuring peace, but sometimes perpetuates conflict situations. These concerns have led some African researchers and practitioners to view liberal peacebuilding as simply a hegemonic enterprise forced on post-conflict societies in Africa to promote the economic and political interests of the Western world. As Albert rightly puts it, “it is an external imposition that is not embedded in African culture and experiences.” However, there are authors like Abu Bakarr Bah who although doubtful of the feasibility of the liberal approach advance the
notion of people-centered liberalism as an approach that can lead to stable, democratic, and economically successful post-conflict states. The notion of people-centered liberalism taps into the neoliberal value of freedom and the principles of economic and social wellbeing implicit in the developmental state. His proposal is premised on the fact that experimentation with unorthodox variants of liberalism in Africa since independence has yielded limited results, hence, the need for a people-centered liberalism. Other scholars have also suggested an approach based on resilience, human security, and hybridization processes as a way to capture the complexity of the interactions between internal and external actors in peacebuilding contexts. It is instructive, however, to note that "liberal peace" is the overarching idea that has influenced the dominant themes discussed in the subsequent sections of this working paper, which include statebuilding, women in peacebuilding, youth and peacebuilding, economic recovery and growth, security sector reform, and transitional justice and reconciliation.

SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PEACEBUILDING

Conflicts in Africa have often led to the destruction of economies, the social fabric of societies, infrastructure, and educational and health services in the affected countries. Promoting socioeconomic development in the aftermath of conflict is therefore necessary, not only to ensure economic growth, trade, investments, and human development but also for the consolidation of peace. In this regard, the AU stresses the need for socioeconomic development to improve the living conditions of people by meeting their basic needs, such as health, education, and food, and by reducing poverty and inequality through the creation of wealth, livelihoods, and promoting equal access to resources. Given the challenges and particularities of post-conflict settings in Africa, the literature provides different perspectives about which models and approaches should inform socioeconomic development, how economic recovery efforts should be funded to secure peace, and the role of socioeconomic factors in creating or exacerbating conflicts.

One issue that has generated discussion among African scholars is the question of economic liberalization, which emerged from the liberal peace paradigm. In general terms, the liberal peace approach is often criticized for its inability to adequately address the specific socioeconomic difficulties of post-conflict societies, thereby exacerbating social and economic inequalities through marginalization and increased vulnerability to poverty. Critics, such as Mohamed A. Salih, argue that the liberal peace paradigm
has largely failed to deliver tangible development or economic benefits to the majority of the African poor. He attributes this failure to the dominant political economy of the liberal peace framework which has proven unable to address major developmental problems such as poverty, exclusion, social justice deficits, and inadequate access to basic human needs. In countries such as Angola, Liberia, and Cote d’Ivoire, Devon Curtis and Gwinyayi A. Dzinesa suggest that rapid liberalization strategies, efforts to hold quick multiparty elections, and rushed economic reforms have had destabilizing results instead of creating the conditions for stable and lasting peace.

In Liberia for example, Cyril Obi, along with Thomas Jaye and Tobias von Gienanth, maintains that Charles Taylor, who won the post-conflict election in 1997 after “successful” peacebuilding efforts, dismantled the democratic elements of the state and repressed his political opponents, triggering a relapse into conflict in 2003. Furthermore, in Angola, Eritrea, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and South Africa, it has been argued that the outcome of the transition from conflict to peace and development was not motivated by the uncritical superimposition of liberal peace but rather the political economy of peace. In this respect, Peter Kagwanja was probably right when he claimed that liberal peacebuilding is “better in ending wars” than in fixing democracies.

STATEBUILDING AND PEACEBUILDING

The relationship between statebuilding and peacebuilding in Africa is another issue that has attracted both academic and policy attention. While some scholars conceive peacebuilding as a subset of statebuilding activities, others consider statebuilding to be part of the peacebuilding process. The latter view is shared by many African researchers and institutions. Karbo, for example, states that statebuilding is vital to peacebuilding because both concepts seek to address the root causes and effects of conflict by restoring broken relationships between the state and society, building state institutions, and undertaking political reforms. Moreover, both concepts have the mutually reinforcing goals of promoting peace in fragile and conflict-affected states and strengthening state-society relations to promote inclusive political systems. Statebuilding and peacebuilding have become very important for Africa’s stability and development because since independence, most African countries have been characterized by intra-state conflicts, political instability, separatist rebellions, and underdevelopment. Despite remarkable progress during the past decade, Africa continues to face serious challenges that sometimes threaten the very foundations
of states. Dele Olowu and Paulos Chanie assert that the fragility of the African state can be traced to colonial history; most states created after 1950 from the ashes of colonial empires were weak and unable to fulfill the basic functions of the state in a Weberian sense. According to Murithi, this externally imposed problem of the nation-state in Africa is exacerbated by internal factors, such as bad leadership, corruption, and adversarial politics, leading to violent conflicts situations on the African continent. This has created situations of fragile social peace and led to the destruction of basic elements of political order that promote structural stability and resilience. Consequently, there is a mismatch between the demands of the citizens and the capacity of the state to adequately fulfill those demands, resulting in state fragility.

In this context, statebuilding is constructed as a prerequisite to restoring and rebuilding the institutions and apparatus of fragile states for effective service delivery in order to consolidate peace and contribute to long-term stability. Without undertaking a comprehensive statebuilding process—especially in the fields of political governance, security sector reform, economic reforms, and social justice—Kwesi Aning and Naila Salihu, contend that there is a greater risk the country concerned will revert to conflict. However, the international statebuilding practices in Africa face some limitations. Some scholars have questioned the liberal approach underlying statebuilding processes on the basis that building or reconstructing the state does not necessarily constitute the clearest pathway to peace. While the idea of supporting post-conflict societies to pursue their statebuilding efforts seems logical, the liberal peace assumption underpinning it that one template will suit all conflict situations, is faulty at best. According to these scholars, the one-size-fits-all approach to post-conflict states transitioning from war to peace based on itemized pillars and timelines only leads to negative peace and not positive peace. Likewise, others have argued that the externally driven statebuilding processes in Sierra Leone were not designed to support stable peace. To them, the institutional statebuilding approach, with its emphasis on institutional efficiency, technocratic support, macroeconomic stability, and consolidation of state authority, ignored the historical and sociological process in the country’s state formation processes.

Similarly, Christopher Zambakari, blames the failure of statebuilding efforts in South Sudan to sustain peace on what he describes as the misguided liberal program implemented shortly after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). This failure, he maintains, stems from the prioritization
of statebuilding by the donor community at the expense of nation-building activities which, according to Mahmood Mamdani, could have fostered social cohesion within and between communities and dealt with the legacies of war. This brings to light the quandary of whether peacebuilding, as it is currently practiced in most post-conflict countries, is capable of providing a basis for statebuilding and inclusive political systems in Africa. Instead of imposing what have been described as flawed assumptions, external actors must exercise great caution, sensitivity, and flexibility to ensure that they do no harm through their interventions.⁴⁸

SECURITY SECTOR REFORM (SSR)

Security Sector Reform (SSR) has become central to conflict prevention, stabilization, peacebuilding, and development agendas across Africa. The concept emerged in the 1990s as part of an international agenda to promote sustainable peace and development in societies transitioning from conflict or long-term authoritarian rule. It generally covers those institutions entrusted with the protection of the state and its citizens, such as the military, paramilitary forces, and intelligence services; civil authorities that provide oversight of the security sector, such as parliament and the ministries of defense, finance, and interior; and the justice and law enforcement institutions, such as the judiciary, police, penal services, and traditional justice systems.⁴⁹

The literature points to multiple reasons why the implementation of SSR in post-conflict contexts in Africa is of strategic importance. Some scholars claim that most security agencies in Africa after independence were solely established for the purpose of regime security rather than providing security for citizens.⁵⁰ As a result, these institutions have become instruments for the repression of political opposition elements, objects of fear, and are often implicated in the perpetration of atrocities and human rights abuses. This particular historical trajectory accounts for some of the present weaknesses in the security sector, making reform necessary. Within this context, it is clear why scholars have put great emphasis on defining African security within the human security paradigm with the goal of placing individuals, rather than the state, at the heart of security considerations. Some emphasize the importance of other SSR priorities including, the problem of factionalism and fragmentation within the security sector after armed conflicts, the blurring of roles and responsibilities between the various elements of the sector, and bringing the security sector under the regulation of democratic
institutions.

At the heart of the SSR debate are the questions of what should constitute security sector reform and which institutions should be involved in the process. For example, should reform encompass both state-level institutions and non-state actors or only the former? While most donor agencies and development partners focus on state-level actors, many African researchers argue for the inclusion of both state and non-state actors in the SSR process. The African perspective is premised on the fact that in many African contexts the state never holds a monopoly on the legitimate means of coercive violence, unlike in Max Weber’s conceptualization.\(^{51}\)

Across the continent, the state is increasingly being challenged by non-state actors such as armed militias, private security companies, vigilante groups, terrorist groups, and multinational corporations. This calls for a paradigm shift away from the Westphalian, state-centric notion of SSR to a more holistic understanding of the security sector to ensure that interventions respond to the dynamics of the relevant environments. Related to this argument is the issue of how SSR should be conceived, either narrowly defined focusing on reform in specific sectors (defense and police reform) as in the case of Liberia or comprehensive, covering all the key institutions of state as implemented in Sierra Leone. Many scholars argue for a comprehensive approach that encompasses not only the military and police institutions but also intelligence agencies and the criminal justice system. The narrow focus of SSR on the military and the police, as was the case in Liberia, is often criticized by those who claim it weakens other elements of the security sector.\(^{52}\)

Another interesting debate centers on whether the overarching goal of SSR should be reform or transformation of the security sector. African institutions like the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) argue for security sector transformation rather than reform. Two main arguments are advanced in the literature in support of this strategy. The first is that transformation will often improve the strained relations between government, civil society, and the security establishment. The second is that it leads to a complete overhaul of the structures and institutional cultures of security organizations, and their relations with civil authorities, toward alignment with democratic governance principles.\(^{53}\) This sharply contrasts with reform processes which gradually promote democratic civil-military relations without addressing the underlying institutional flaws that entrench
patterns of abuse and insecurity in Africa.

In the past decade, the critical question of what kind of SSR should be adopted to ensure its successful implementation has occupied the writings of African researchers. The main contention has been the over the kinds of policies that should be pursued to ensure its successful implementation. An essential dimension of this debate is ensuring local ownership of the SSR process. Although the term “local ownership” finds space in Western conceptualizations of the SSR process, it is yet to be reflected in practice. The record of peacebuilding on the continent in countries like Burundi, CAR, Guinea Bissau, Sudan, South Sudan, and the DRC shows that despite its broad rhetorical acceptance, local ownership has proven difficult to operationalize. Critics argue that local values, traditions, and institutions tend to be dismissed in post-conflict settings because they are often seen by Western interveners as causes of conflict that need to be eliminated rather than as a potential resource for peacebuilding. Drawing lessons from SSR initiatives in Sierra Leone, Osman Gbla insists that SSR processes must always be spearheaded and owned by locals to be sustainable. His assertion is further reinforced by Adedeji Ebo who argues that the external anchorage of SSR needs to be supplemented by more local ownership and inclusion at various levels of SSR conceptualization, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation to bridge the gap between policy and practice. Nevertheless, some donor agencies and Western authors have questioned the practicability of local ownership in fragile post-conflict environments where formal and informal institutions are weak, local capacities are limited, and representative government is absent. Critical questions posed include: Whether we should adopt a “minimalist” approach to local ownership that focuses only on national-level political elites or a more inclusive maximalist approach involving CSOs and citizens as key stakeholders? How can consensus be achieved among local actors who often have differing interests and needs? Clearly, these issues require further interrogation and clarification within the African literature on SSR as the concept itself continues to evolve.  

**TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION**

Questions of how to respond to the legacies of past and current injustices and abuses have been at the center of contemporary policy and academic debates on peacebuilding in Africa. Since the 1990s, African legal scholars, human right activists, and security experts have focused their attention on
analyzing transitional justice and reconciliation systems and their utility in dealing with past legacies of injustice, human rights violations, and violence in post-conflict societies. Tendaiwo P. Maregere indicates that this focus is due to the understanding within the transitional justice debate that after mass atrocities have occurred, justice has to be given to those who were denied it during periods of volatility. According to the AU, the purpose of transitional justice frameworks is to address the legacies of large-scale past abuses to ensure accountability, promote justice and achieve peace and reconciliation. A review of the literature shows the implementation of a wide range of transitional justice approaches ranging from judicial mechanisms, including international criminal tribunals, hybrid courts, and domestic courts to non-judicial mechanisms like truth commissions, reparations, and tradition-based processes. Many of these studies focused on the processes, mechanisms, and limitations of the transitional justice frameworks. The relevant examples often cited in the empirical studies reviewed include retributive and restorative justice mechanisms such as the Gacaca courts in Rwanda; the Palava Hut in Liberia; Amnesty; Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa, Liberia, Mali, and Kenya; and the international criminal tribunals established in Rwanda and Sierra Leone, in addition to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

Recent cases that have received considerable attention in academic and policy circles are the prosecution and trial of African leaders like Charles Taylor of Liberia and Laurent Gbagbo of Ivory Coast by the ICC as well as the charges of alleged crimes against humanity during the 2007-2008 post-election violence in Kenya against William Ruto and Uhuru Kenyatta, which were later terminated. The charges and trials against these leaders, according to a 2013 report by the African Union Panel of the Wise, have led to increasing dissent in Africa due to the perception of threats to state sovereignty, the intrusiveness of international legal institutions toward weak states, and the concerns about the selective application of justice.

Generally, the key issue that has occupied most of the studies is the relative efficacy of the different transitional justice models and how they contribute toward the restoration of peace, social harmony, and reconciliation in post-conflict societies. While some scholars think that transitional justice should be pursued through punitive or retributive justice models such as the international criminal tribunals and the ICC, others have proposed a range of restorative justice and reparation models such as truth commissions and customary justice systems. Advocates of the retributive justice model
claim that it contributes toward reconciliation, reaffirms the rule of law, makes amends to victims by holding perpetrators accountable for past wrongdoings, and serves as a deterrent to future abuses by signalling the boundaries of socially acceptable behavior. Critics of this approach doubt that peace can be consolidated in divided societies through the criminal justice system. They question whether this legalistic approach leads to sustainable peace, especially in situations where ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable for crimes have to be compromised for the sake of securing peace through amnesty, bargains, or political immunity. This is because in some African countries perpetrators often enter into negotiations and demand immunity as a guarantee before they sign peace agreements. In such instances, it is often asked how peace can be achieved without compromising efforts to ensure accountability for past wrongs. This peace and justice dichotomy has been a subject of intense controversy among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers due to the moral, legal, and political choices involved in ending conflict.

In contrast, proponents of the restorative justice models emphasize the need to repair, rebuild, and restore damaged social relationships and socio-economic welfare as an essential element in fostering sustainable peace. The examples of the truth and reconciliation commissions in South Africa, Liberia, and Ghana; the Gacaca courts in Rwanda and Palava Hut in Liberia; and the granting of blanket amnesty in Mozambique in 1992 after the civil war provide compelling insights into how such restorative models have been deployed to pursue justice. Nonetheless, some have questioned the value and efficacy of truth commissions, especially whether they are able to meet the expectations of their presumed beneficiaries. In more specific terms, skeptics argue that reconciliation processes do not necessarily lead to forgiveness and healing. Other critics have raised questions about the retributive elements of some of the customary justice systems in which perpetrators are punished after being found guilty. The widespread use of amnesty has also received some criticism in the literature as it is said to deny victims the right to redress for past wrongs.

Despite the vigorous debates, there is a strong and growing consensus that retributive justice models should operate alongside or compliment restorative justice models to address different levels and dimensions of truth and justice, and to spread a broader awareness and understanding of the nature of past atrocities. Given their limits, a holistic approach that combines both retributive and restorative justice models is seen as the best
approach to transitional justice. However, limited literature exists on the impact of these transitional justice models on the societies in question, although anecdotal evidence suggests a modicum of stability in some contexts, such as South Africa, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. Moreover, applying a “gender lens” to these two models is becoming increasingly common in the literature due to the impact of war on women in conflict situations.

GENDER AND PEACEBUILDING

Women and girls play critical roles during and after conflicts as perpetrators, victims, survivors, heads of household, community leaders, and peacebuilders. However, women’s roles and voices as critical stakeholders in peacebuilding have been underutilized. The exclusion of women from decision-making processes in Africa has been attributed to patriarchy, traditions, culture, and religion, which often place less value on women’s roles than those of men. Recognizing the disproportionate ways in which conflict impacts women, UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 was passed in 2000 to promote the role of women in achieving lasting peace after conflict. To realize and promote the recommendations of UNSCR 1325, a number of other resolutions, declarations, policies and initiatives have been adopted at the level of the UN, AU, African Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and individual countries, to address gender and women’s specific issues in the field of conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The 2009 AU gender policy which focuses on closing the equality gap between men and women and addressing gender inequalities in all spheres—which result in women’s disempowerment and the feminization of poverty—is worth mentioning here.

Over the past decade, the inclusion of women in peacebuilding processes in the fields of SSR, DDR, elections, gender mainstreaming, economic recovery, mediation, reconciliation, and communal dialogue has gained momentum in both policy and academic discussions. Much of the literature treats gender as a cross-cutting issue that must be mainstreamed in all activities. There has been considerable research and several policy papers on gender-sensitive approaches to peace and stability in post-conflict contexts in Africa. Some of the literature has documented the important contributions of women in transforming conflict-affected societies, achieving sustainable peace, peacemaking, conflict prevention, and post-conflict reconstruction at the local and national levels. Much attention has also been given to the obstacles that continue to frustrate the effective participation of women in
decision-making and peace processes. For example, a 2012 book by the West African Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) emphatically states that women continue to be viewed as helpless victims of violent conflicts instead of being seen as change agents whose potential can be tapped into during peace processes. Furthermore, women are often relegated to inactive roles and their impacts on the reconstruction of peace, rehabilitation of the community, and national reconciliation are often ignored. It is generally agreed that gender equality and empowerment cannot be achieved without the equal, full, and effective participation of women at all levels of decision-making.

Other literature has analyzed the processes and challenges of implementing and domesticating the various UN Security Council resolutions, especially 1325, although little has been written about the implementation of the various regional gender polices and frameworks of the AU and the RECs. Perhaps this is because not much has been achieved with respect to the implementation of the gender policies. Babatunde Omotosho notes that although over seventy percent of AU member states have ratified the organization’s gender policies, evidence available regarding implementation in member states, in practical terms, is still not encouraging.

A large number of women in African countries continue to be marginalized based on religious and cultural factors. The participation of women in leadership capacities is also significantly low although some progress has been made in a number of African countries. The violation of women’s right in the form of violence against women, child marriage, gender-based discrimination, and exploitative widow rites is still widespread across the continent. Ashwanee Budoo maintains that the reasons for these challenges are culture, tradition, ignorance, lack of education, patriarchy, and weak systems to monitor and evaluate the implementation of gender policies. More recently, the instrumental use of women and girls to perpetuate violence by violent extremist groups in Africa, such as Boko Haram, has also received attention in the literature. Nonetheless, the gendered rationale for instrumentalizing women within the framework of violent extremist ideologies and the role of women in countering violent extremism remain under-researched areas.

YOUTH AND PEACEBUILDING

The UN refers to the youth as those in the 15-24 age group, while many
African countries and institutions (including the African Union Youth Charter) stretch the definition to include people aged 15-35. Despite the differences, the concept of youth can be seen as a social construct and a pathway to adulthood, or the period between childhood and adulthood defined by biological, psychological, and social markers. The UN estimates that there were 1.2 billion youth aged 15-24 globally in 2015, and 226 million (19 percent) of them lived in Africa. By 2030, it is projected that the number of youth in Africa will increase by 42 percent and perhaps double from current levels by 2055. Similarly, the AU estimates that about 65 percent of Africa’s total population is below the age of 35, and over 35 percent are between the ages of 15 and 35, making Africa the most youthful continent. In Africa, apart from the negative impacts of the destruction of social infrastructure and services on the human development of the youth during and after conflicts, there are also specific needs around the disarmament and reintegration of young combatants into their communities. This makes it essential for peacebuilding programs to target the youth in the early stages of interventions. However, a large number of them remain unemployed and continue to face exclusion from political and socioeconomic processes despite constituting the majority of the population. Due to this, youth are usually framed as a potential “risk to others,” instead of “being at risk,” by scholars who have attempted to draw a correlation between unemployment and instability.

Citing the case of Sierra Leone, Ibrahim Bangura notes that the continuous neglect and marginalization of the youth has impacted negatively on the country’s peacebuilding process. He argues that the challenges faced by the youth and the government’s inability to meet their needs has created “energetic but disillusioned, violence-tested, and frustrated youth” who are willing to resort to any means for survival. Similarly, referring to the situation in Zimbabwe, Hillary J. Musarurwa, contends that being shut out of the political and socio-economic space has made the youth susceptible to exploitation by the political elites. In his article, “Why Do Youth Join Boko Haram?” Freedom Onuoha posits that young men have been radicalized to join Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria as a result of issues such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, and weak family structures. In contrast, Martha Mutisi discusses several cases in Liberia where youth energies have been positively utilized in political and socio-economic processes to dilute the youth crisis thesis which tends to vilify the youth in Africa. Nestor Nkurunziza also highlights some of the youth-targeted projects in post-conflict Burundi that have increased the involvement of young people in peacebuilding.
Generally, African scholars and institutions agree on the need to address the underlying social, economic, and political grievances that often drive the youth toward violence and extremism so they can play a more positive role in stabilizing their countries and promoting peace.76

**CONNECTIONS AND DISCONNECTS TO GLOBAL DISCOURSES ON PEACEBUILDING**

In terms of distinctive scholarly content on peacebuilding, African scholars have not offered anything qualitatively different from their counterparts elsewhere in the world. The various ideas and perspectives of African scholars discussed in the preceding sections are not too different from the main themes in the global peacebuilding debate. Arguably, part of the reason is that most of the African scholars are trained by Western scholars and depend on Western literature for their research. Hence, there is no substantial disconnect between African and non-African literature on peacebuilding. Rather, a significant level of convergence exists between African research and global discourses on a number of peacebuilding issues.

First, there is some level of convergence about certain key principles of building peace, such as national and local ownership. National ownership is seen as a vital element of the success and sustainability of peacebuilding activities, as it ensures that processes are nationally driven. This is an issue that is often emphasized in the mainstream literature on peacebuilding and, more significantly, in the policy documents of national governments, African regional organizations, the UN, and external actors. The report of the 2015 review of the United Nations peacebuilding architecture, for instance, argued for “inclusive national ownership” in peacebuilding, which implies participation by national governments, community groups, women representatives, youth, labor organizations, political parties, the private sector, CSOs, and minority groups.

Second, another connection between African peacebuilding research and global discourses is the strong emphasis placed on gender, women, peace, and security. Over the past decade, African researchers, policy-makers, multilateral organizations, and external partners have emphasized the goal of gender equality and women’s empowerment in Africa to address key challenges such as poverty, inequality, violence against women and girls, and the under-representation of women in politics, leadership,
and management level positions in the public and private sectors. These discussions have led to gender being treated as a cross-cutting issue to be mainstreamed in all activities. Illustrating of the importance of this issue, the fifth Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) specifically targets achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030.

Third, criticism of current liberal peacebuilding approaches that emphasize political liberalization (democracy building) and economic liberalization (market economics) as the surest foundations for peace is another similarity between African peacebuilding research and global discourses. In recent times, there has been increasing skepticism among African and Western scholars of whether the pursuit of liberal peace contributes to sustainable peace in post-conflict societies due to the experiences of African countries such as Liberia, Burundi, and Cote d’Ivoire, which relapsed into conflict. The global practices of peacebuilding are gradually shifting away from market-oriented policies, top-down reforms, and liberal democratization to focus more on locally based approaches that lead to context specific programs and better outcomes. For example, in the area of SSR the notion of “hybridity” which stresses the relationships between the various formal and informal systems, actors, and beneficiaries involved in the security sector is increasingly gaining currency among donor partners and international organizations. With respect to transitional justice, most international actors are placing greater emphasis on African cultures and customary practices, although there appears to be some difficulty in determining how these can be fused into the institutional norms, designs, structures, and process that drive the formal transitional justice systems.

STRENGTHS OF THE AFRICAN PEACEBUILDING LITERATURE

While acknowledging that research informs policy incrementally and over time, it can be argued that African peacebuilding scholarship has contributed to the formulation and rethinking of national, regional, and global policies and practices of peacebuilding. African academics, policymakers, and practitioners, for example, provided substantial input into all the three major peace and security reviews conducted in 2015 by the UN on peace operations, peacebuilding, and UNSCR 1325. This influence is reflected in some of the recommendations put forward by the reports. For example, one of the important issues advocated by a number of African researchers and institutions like the AU is local ownership of peacebuilding processes. Thankfully, among the overarching recommendations in the report of the
advisory group of experts for the 2015 review of the UN peacebuilding architecture was the need to foster “inclusive national ownership” through a common understanding between the state and all sectors of civil society to ensure that peace becomes sustainable.\textsuperscript{80} Today, many of the UN, regional, and other external interventions in Africa put major emphasis on local ownership, although this is yet to be fully put into practice. It is therefore appropriate to give some credit to African scholars and practitioners who have over the years advocated in their writings and policy engagement for local content and ownership of peacebuilding processes.

Additionally, the literature produced by African academics, practitioners, and institutions on different aspects of peacebuilding, such as democratic elections, good governance, SSR, market reforms, transitional justice, and reconciliation has provided a valuable resource and reservoir of knowledge for policymakers and practitioners on key issues and lessons learned about peacebuilding in Africa. Another significant strength is that the analysis provided in the literature is often based on firsthand experience and knowledge, and local realities due to their geographical proximity. In some cases, the researchers even live in the communities where the research is being carried out. This gives them a comparative advantage in terms of access to the empirical data. Nonetheless, it is important to note that despite the fact that peace is largely built at the grassroots level, some of the African publications are produced by scholars with little or no touch with the communities where peace is built. Hence, their conclusions and recommendations are often not in tune with the real needs of African people.

**WEAKNESSES OF THE AFRICAN PEACEBUILDING LITERATURE**

A review of the literature reveals some apparent limitations. To begin with, most of the critical and analytical perspectives that inform global peacebuilding policies and practices have largely been dominated by Western academics and institutions. Thus, there is a paucity of conceptual and theoretical research on African approaches to peacebuilding that can inform regional and international peacebuilding agendas. Consequently, African scholars engage in intellectual debates originating from the dominant peacebuilding discourses from the West. Despite criticizing Western peacebuilding policy prescriptions, scholarship, and practices, African researchers have not been able to clearly articulate strong countervailing normative frameworks. This lacuna contributes to the reinforcement of Western prejudices toward contemporary peacebuilding scholarship in Africa.\textsuperscript{81}
Another key weakness is that, with a few exceptions, the literature does not benefit from the most recent data on peacebuilding at the policy level due to accessibility challenges. Many are unable to engage multilateral institutions where global peacebuilding policies are debated and developed, such as the UN headquarters in New York where the UN Peacebuilding Commission is located. Moreover, in terms of research focus, the regional impacts of national peacebuilding efforts have not gained much traction in the existing literature. With increasing regional security complexities, a comprehensive analysis of how regional conflict dynamics affect the consolidation of peace at the national level is not only relevant but crucial to understanding how transnational issues undermine the sustainability of peace in post-conflict environments. A typical example is Mali, where the achievement of lasting peace in the country also depends on the conflict dynamics within the Sahel region. Issues such as radicalization, violent extremism, terrorism, climate change, and conflict have an especially transnational character, which suggests that an intervention exclusively focused on the national level may have limited impact.

Another area that has not received adequate research attention is the role played by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in shaping peacebuilding policies and processes in Africa. Although CSOs have been instrumental in the implementation of peacebuilding projects in Africa, there is a dearth of literature that focuses on how they have shaped peacebuilding approaches on the continent and engaged with broader global policy processes. The role of CSOs needs to be fully unpacked to unlock their potential for building and sustaining peace in Africa. More crucially, African academics, as argued by Olonisakin, have rarely placed the issue of leadership at the core of their analyses of peace and stability. Leadership factors and dynamics in Africa can either lead to conflict or create foundations for peace on the continent. It is also instructive to note that evidence-based research that clearly articulates the contribution of African scholarship to global policy debates on peacebuilding is also lacking. Peacebuilding research is also overwhelmingly focused on the security and political dimensions with little focus on the economic dimension and recovery process.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There has been a remarkable expansion in African scholarly writing on peacebuilding since 1992 when the term was popularized in Boutros-
Ghali’s *Agenda for Peace* report. African scholars from diverse academic disciplines have written on several aspects of peacebuilding from various perspectives and contexts using different methodological approaches. This working paper highlights African perspectives on some of the key trends, themes, and debates within the peacebuilding literature over the past decade and how they relate to and deviate from global discourses and processes. The paper also identified some of the strengths and weaknesses of African peacebuilding literature, as well as its contributions to global peacebuilding literature. Among the key trends and themes identified in literature were issues relating to statebuilding, the liberal peace thesis, SSR, democratization and good governance, gender, peace operations, transitional justice and reconciliation, socio-economic justice, economic recovery, and humanitarian relief. These themes form part of the broader set of peacebuilding initiatives that support the structures and processes aimed at promoting sustainable peace and diminishing the possibility of conflict relapse.

Although diverse perspectives are evident in the foregoing analysis of African peacebuilding literature, the dominant theme is the suitability and sustainability of the liberal governance framework within the Africa context. The liberal peace approach is widely criticized by African scholars for its state-centric, top-down approach to dealing with the needs of post-conflict countries. For some scholars, the top down approach obscures the important contributions that African traditional systems can make toward advancing peace. They argue that the local context and informal actors and initiatives need to be prioritized in the peacebuilding process. Related to this is the issue of local ownership, another recurrent theme in the literature, based on the principle that peacebuilding processes should always be spearheaded and owned by locals in order to be sustainable. However, although local ownership is a key principle in the conceptualization of peacebuilding, many of the African researchers surveyed argue that it is yet to be reflected in practice.

Importantly, although African peacebuilding research has contributed to the formulation and review of national, regional, and global policies and practices on peacebuilding, it also has some limitations. Addressing the identified limitations is vital to enhancing peacebuilding research in Africa. In this regard, the following recommendations are provided to improve African peacebuilding scholarship:
• One of the key gaps identified in the literature was the paucity of theoretical research on African conceptions of peacebuilding. To address this gap, it is important for African scholars to challenge and extend existing knowledge by focusing more on African conceptions of peace based on African realities, culture, and conflict dynamics, instead of the often Western-based ideological conceptualizations. This will help reshape the western dominated philosophical, epistemological, and intellectual agendas that continue to drive peacebuilding, leading to more nuanced knowledge and understanding, and approaches that can provide the basis for more effective interventions.

• To bridge the gap between research and policy, there is a need to strengthen the synergies between African peacebuilding research and policy debates at the national, regional, and global levels. This will involve facilitating knowledge transfers by creating a comprehensive, accessible database that can make African research readily available to policymakers. Moreover, because policymakers sometimes find it difficult to digest research outcomes due to the presentation and language, it is important to organize workshops for scholars on how to craft, present, and communicate their research findings to better contribute to informing policy development and interventions. Additionally, it would be useful to organize forums for networking among African researchers, practitioners, and policymakers.

• Another critical problem identified was the inability of most Africa-based researchers to access recent and valuable data from multilateral organizations like the UN, AU, and African RECs, where regional and global policies are debated. To address this, exchange programs and research fellowships can be developed (or existing ones expanded) to enable scholars from Africa to spend three to twelve months at these multilateral organizations. In such environments, researchers would have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge through access to the most relevant data and interact with policymakers and other key actors. These exchange programs can be extended to other relevant international think thanks, organizations, and universities. The cumulative effect of the exchange programs and fellowships will be the gradual transformation and production of high-quality research and analysis on peacebuilding in Africa.

• External partners, institutions and donors who wish to commission
research projects to advance African peacebuilding research can consider focusing on some of the under-researched areas identified including: (i) how local and regional conflict dynamics impact national peacebuilding efforts, (ii) how African CSOs can influence and shape peacebuilding approaches and engage in broader policy processes, (iii) comparative studies on peacebuilding in different countries and regions in Africa, (iv) Africa-Global partnerships, and (v) leadership in Africa and the prospects for effective peacebuilding.

- Both Africa-based and non-African scholarly journals and book publishers can encourage theoretical research by commissioning and publishing special issues that look at African conceptions and approaches to peacebuilding and the under-researched areas of peacebuilding identified in this working paper. The example of the Institute for Peace and Strategic Studies (IPSS) at the University of Ibadan (UI) in Nigeria is worth noting here. The IPSS has produced several Afrocentric publications for teaching peace studies in the spirit of “African solutions to African problems.” At UI, these publications are used alongside those produced in the West about Africa. In addition, the department has also established the *Ibadan Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* to analyze issues in African peacebuilding. It also occasionally organizes conferences on specific peacebuilding questions facing Africa. All these measures are aimed at transforming knowledge production on peacebuilding to reflect the real needs of Africa. The example of IPSS-UI can be adopted and replicated by other peace studies programs in Africa to ensure that Africa-centric scholarly books and journals actually contribute to peacebuilding efforts on the continent.
NOTES


17. Isaac O. Albert, “Teaching Peacebuilding in African Universities: Bridging the Gap
Between the Field and the Classroom,” SSRC African Peacebuilding Network Working Paper No. 13 [2017].


23. Cedric de Coning, “Clarity, Coherence and Context: Three Priorities for Sustainable Peacebuilding,” Working Papers on the Future of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture no.3 [2010],12: “Preventive diplomacy” is defined as action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur; “peacemaking” is defined as action to bring hostile parties to agreement, essentially through such peaceful means as those foreseen in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations; “peacekeeping “is the deployment of a United Nations presence in the field, hitherto with the consent of all the parties concerned, normally involving United Nations military and/or police personnel and frequently civilians as well; “peacebuilding” is defined as action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.


29. Abu Bakarr Bah, “People-Centered Liberalism: An Alternative Approach to


34. Albert, 2008, 32.


56. For more information see *The African Union (AU) Policy Framework on Transitional Justice in Africa (ATJF)*.


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