



Political Economy of Regional Peacebuilding and Politics of Funding

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the political economy of regional peacebuilding programmes in the era of diminishing funding. Employing methodology of qualitative text analysis and interpretation the article analyses the politics of funding regional peacebuilding. One of the central problems of peacebuilding in Africa is its dependence on external funding. Donor, bilateral and multilateral actors and agencies fund almost all the peacebuilding processes on the continent. When Western powers divert funding to other part of the world, African peacebuilding faces veritable challenges. This dependence on external financing is increasingly subjected to scathing criticism. Post-Cold War peacebuilding involves two sets of actors: those who provide the finance and those who supply the manpower. However, the informal arrangement where regional economic communities (RECs) provide the troops, while donors and rich countries supply the funding is proving untenable. Some of the questions that the article addresses are: Why is funding for peacebuilding dwindling? Why are some peacebuilding efforts well-funded, while others are not? How is the political economy of funding peacebuilding regulated? How should the AU respond to the diminishing funds? The article argues mobilising own resources could be the way out for Africa in dealing with the convoluted and festering conflicts. It concludes the politics of funding regional peacebuilding is dictated by geostrategic interests and short-term calculations rendering it unpredictable, unsustainable and ineffective.

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of the central problems of peacebuilding in Africa is its dependence on external funding. Almost all of the funding allocated to regional peacebuilding originate from Western or and Middle Eastern countries, whether bilateral or multilateral. Following the establishment of the UN Peace Fund (2005-2015), for the duration of the period, for instance, Africa received US\$498 872 810.00 [1]. Although important in itself, juxtaposed with the collective West's provision of funds to Ukraine, so far, what was spent in Africa in ten years is small potatoes. The huge amount of fund spent to enable Ukraine defeat Russia is certainly divert peacebuilding funds in Africa. Donor, bilateral and multilateral actors and agencies fund almost all the peacebuilding processes on the continent. This dependence on external financing, however, comes in for scathing criticism for a number of reasons, not least the lack of ownership by the subject population. Post-Cold War peacebuilding involves two sets of actors: those who provide the finance and those who supply the manpower. The informal arrangement where regional economic communities (RECs) provide the troops, while donors and rich countries supply the funding is, however, proving untenable [2,3]. Realising this, in 2016 the African Union (AU) passed a resolution to levy a tax of 0.2 per cent on imported goods by member states, in order to swell its coffers [4]. This has been praised as a step in the right direction, yet it remains to be seen whether it will actually work or if it is enough. The step could theoretically enable the AU to fund its own peace operations. Ideally, that would give the AU ownership of – and agency in – setting and framing the agenda, defining the problems, finding the solutions and ensuring the sustainability of those solutions. This would also lend meaning to the mantra of 'African solutions for African problems' [5]. Moreover, it would boost the legitimacy of peace operations and peacebuilding, at the same time boosting the legitimacy of the AU and the RECs as peace providers.

Peacebuilding, however, is not simply a technical and administrative matter. It goes beyond funding and management. It is deeply ideological, philosophical and political, and requires much broader approaches, mechanisms and institutional arrangements. In the wider sense, it is about societal construction: nation-

building and state-building. By their very nature, these are domestic issues that require negotiation, dialogue, discussion, compromise and bargaining among the societal stakeholders, communities, ethnic groups, classes, genders and generations [6]. Moreover, peacebuilding includes conflict prevention and resolution, peace-making, peacekeeping and peace enforcement Khadiagala [7]. In other words, constructing peaceful society. In this encompassing context and sense, peacebuilding is a long-term project that requires more than the goodwill of external actors. Goodwill should offer a helping hand, not replace one's own efforts. In addition, peacebuilding requires an investment of time, effort, knowledge and expertise, institutions building, fostering philosophy and mechanisms of peacefulness, trust and solidarity by the people themselves. These are the guarantees of its success, sustainability and functionality.

This article examines the political economy of financing peacebuilding in Africa – a bottleneck for sustainable peace. Employing methodology of qualitative text analysis and interpretation, it seeks to interrogate the politics of funding. It seeks to contribute to our understanding of the discrepancies in funding peacebuilding missions [8,9]. There is a dearth of literature on the way peacebuilding missions world over are financed and attentions given to them in the academia. By showcasing the Horn of Africa region, the article analyses peacebuilding funding. Some of the questions the article addresses are: Why is funding for peacebuilding dwindling? Why are some peacebuilding efforts well-funded, while others are not? How is the political economy of funding peacebuilding regulated? How should the AU respond to the diminishing funds? The article argues mobilising own resources could be the way out for Africa in dealing with the convoluted and festering conflicts. Lasting peace, security, stability and development is very much a political and domestic undertaking.

The article comprises five sections. The following section discusses the diminishing financing for peacebuilding, donor fatigue and the alternatives. It discusses the reasons that underpin external financing, the politics (and politicking) of financing. Then there is a discussion of the inadequate funding of RECs and the ramifications of this. I argue that financing RECs means financing peacebuilding, because the RECs are strategically located to address

regional peacebuilding. The following section analyses the choices facing the African Union in dealing with the increasing funding constraints. It looks at the alternatives for financing peacebuilding and at the advantages for the AU of financing the continent's peacebuilding. The final section provides some concluding thoughts.

2. DIMINISHING FINANCING, DONOR FATIGUE, ALTERNATIVE SOURCES

Here peacebuilding is conceptualised in its broader sense. As generic concept, peacebuilding embodies a number of processes and measures such as conflict prevention, peace mediation, peacekeeping, peace-making and peace operations [7,10]. Above all, however, peacebuilding *prima facie* is about societal construction. In its technical parlance, nation and state formation [6]. In this sense state formation and nation formation concerns evolvement of peaceful society. Two aspects are of vital importance in the project of state and nation formation, pacification of society and emancipation of state [11,12]. All this renders state and nation formation domestic and political as well as a protracted process. The protracted nature of the process could disqualify donors from being at the centre of peacebuilding and continuously funding it.

Another dimension of funding regional peacebuilding is the very fact that it concerns regional level. Regional peacebuilding presupposes regional integration and institutions. A number of theories aids us to understand what and how regional integration occurs. Such theories of regional integration and peacebuilding include peace and conflict theory, organisational theory, subsidiarity theory, development theory, peacebuilding and state building theories, integration theory, etc. [13,14,15,16].

Geopolitics is another reality that influence donors' peacebuilding funding behaviours. Geostrategic location, availability of strategic natural resources, prevalence of alliances or lack thereof are some of factors that influence donor funding of peacebuilding.

The political economy of funding does not involve a selfless, altruistic act by the funders. It is profoundly embedded in ideology, philosophy, interests, geostrategic considerations, mechanisms and dynamics. Indeed, it is embedded in the practicalities and intricacies of geopolitics. The scope, scale and momentum of

financing peacebuilding is therefore dictated by these variables. The behaviour of funders could, therefore, be described by two theoretical concepts: the politics of funding and the 'economy of politicking'. The explanatory power of the concepts lies in the discrepancy in the motivations of the funders', rather than duration and size of the funding that affects agency and ownership. The politics of funding is usually characterised by selectivity: some peacebuilding missions are well funded; others suffer from lack of funds. This discrepancy could well be demonstrated, for instance, in the cases of the conflicts in Somalia and the civil war in South Sudan that irrupted in 2013. While the former was relatively well funded, the latter was virtually ignored.

The rationality behind this discrepancy lies in the significance of the countries to geostrategically driven power relations and interest calculations. We also observe the discrepancy in the Western allocation of resources in conflicts in Africa and Europe. An incontrovertible illustration is the amount of resources the West is pouring in the Ukraine war. The priority given to making war instead of investing in making peace and peacebuilding is mind boggling. To date, hundreds of billion US dollars have been spent in the war. One source notes, 'Since the war began, the Biden administration and the U.S. Congress have directed more than \$75 billion in assistance to Ukraine, which includes humanitarian, financial, and military support' [17]. According to Ukraine Support Tracker, 'As of February 29 [2024] European donors and the EU have allocated a total of 89.9 billion euros...The US has allocated 67 billion euros' [18]. If a fraction of this has been spent in peacebuilding in Africa, it would have a profound result. What possible rationale could explain this discrepancy? Why are some peacebuilding projects well-funded and others not?

The leitmotiv of financing peacebuilding was established in the first lines of this section. Financing is not a bottomless pool that can be tapped endlessly – particularly if the funding is external. It then becomes understandable why some undertakings are well funded, while others are less well (or never) funded. Perhaps a legitimate question is why external actors should spend their wealth extinguishing a fire that is engulfing another person's house. One compelling argument would be because the various sources, actors, producers, beneficiaries and instigators of the fire may have little or

nothing to do with the owner of the house. Moreover, the consequences of the raging fire are not limited to national boundaries: in a connected world, they spread very easily and quickly. In any case, the bottleneck of funding could derail a peacebuilding process. It is important to underscore again and again that, in addition to resources being limited, several factors are at play in the political economy of the funding of peacebuilding processes. As mentioned earlier, one reason for the variability in funding lies in geostrategic interests: the geostrategic and geopolitical interests of powerful and affluent states can dictate the availability of funds. The region of conflict may be located in a strategically important and sensitive area, or it may possess natural resources that are of great economic significance to the powerful states – oil, water, uranium, gold, etc. Such natural resources are of strategic importance for the continuous economic growth of big powers – and for their domination of the world. Accordingly, they form part of the strategic calculations of economic domination and rivalry: whoever commands these resources also dominates world politics. Usually, these goods are described by the big powers as central elements in their overall existential security situation. Therefore, they are willing to do all they can to ensure the flow of those strategic natural resources.

A good example is the current crisis in Niger. The deadlock that availed itself between the coup leaders and France is perceived to stem from the natural resources, chiefly, uranium which France has been siphoning from Niger over the years. The military leaders of Niger are eager to alter the rule of the game when it comes relationship with France. The alteration will include resetting economic ties with the former colonial and neo-colonial power. France, on the other hand, is doggedly fighting back to perpetuate its privileged and exploitative position.

Let us further look at a significance of geostrategic location of a region, using the Horn of Africa as a prism. It encompasses an important waterway that is used in international trade from the Americas and Europe to Asia and vice versa. The Bab-el-Mandeb Straits are known as a pinch point that could easily close off this important and strategic international trade route [19]. It is therefore easy to understand why rich countries are ready to pour huge amounts of money into the region – especially into Somalia – given that the phenomenon of piracy and

terrorism constituted an enormous threat to international trade passing through the straits. Currently, several international military forces are active in the Horn of Africa [3,20].

Other regions that are important for different strategic reasons are the Chad Basin and the Great Lakes Region. These are of great interest to powerful countries due to the rich mineral resources. That is why, when the threat of piracy in the Horn of Africa receded, the EU shifted the 20 per cent reduction in its contribution to the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) funding to the Chad Basin region, where the threat of terrorism was beginning to pose a challenge to the West's access to strategic resources. This fuelled speculation that the big powers are interested in regional peacebuilding and are willing to finance it, so long as it is in line with their strategic interests. The Francophone countries in these regions are of great strategic importance to France culturally, economically and politically [21,22]. France played a leading role with huge financial support from the EU and USA logistics support in the so-called fight against Islamic terrorism in this region [3]. Nevertheless, just because vast quantities of money are poured into a region, that does not necessarily mean peace will prevail: peace in Mali is nowhere to be seen, despite France's heavy-handed involvement in the region. The lesson we can draw from Somalia or Mali is that money alone is not enough. While financing is certainly important for functional and sustainable peacebuilding to prevail, other dimensions are of much greater importance for durable peace (as will be discussed below). The massive French intervention in West Africa rationalised by fight against terrorism failed to bring the intended outcome. This failure in turn spurred strong anti-French feeling leading to several military coups in Guinea, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon [23].

Another issue of great significance in the political economy of funding is the 'economy of politicking'. The economy of politicking teaches us how economic power is systematically and purposely converted into political and diplomatic power by countries getting involved in, and contributing to, peacebuilding efforts in troubled regions. Certain rich countries try to translate their economic power into political and diplomatic power. Some call this economic statecraft. 'Economic statecraft is using economic means to achieve foreign policy ends. It is economic policy deliberately formulated to promote the foreign

policy goals of the state' [24]. These countries are not known for their military prowess or political leverage – in fact, they themselves might be under the sway of much more powerful states, particularly in military terms. An example of this is how rich Gulf States are trying to translate their economic power into political and diplomatic power, particularly in the Horn of Africa. As Hugh Roberts [25] notes, however, the Gulf States are themselves clients of Western powers. The Gulf States of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar and Bahrain have poured billions of dollars into the Horn of Africa, and particularly into peacebuilding in Somalia. For many years, the Qatari government has financed Sudan and has been involved in peace efforts in the country, mediating and financing the conflicts in Darfur and eastern Sudan, in particular, albeit without any tangible results. Moreover, following the demise of the Omar el-Bashir regime in 2019, to the chagrin of the civilian population who hope the military will hand over power to a civilian government, announced billions of dollars spurring the military to stick to power, 'Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates said on Sunday they had agreed to send Sudan \$3 billion worth of aid, throwing a lifeline to the country's new military leaders after protests led to the ousting of president Omar al-Bahir' (Abdelaziz 2019: 1).

The downside of Gulf involvement in Somalia, however, has further complicated peacebuilding in the country: the support given by the different Gulf states for different groups has exacerbated the conflict. The division within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the subsequent emergence of two blocs – one led by Saudi Arabia and the other consisting of Qatar and Turkey – have had a spill-over effect in the Horn of Africa. The GCC's support for different factions in Somalia and Sudan and its funding of AMISOM provide a clear indication of the economy of politicking: the GCC is trying to translate the economic power of its members into political and diplomatic power, and to buy global influence [26].

The EU is the biggest funder of peace operations in Africa, under the flagship of the African Peace Facility (APF) [27]. The EU, one of the main funders of AMISOM, announced in 2015 that it would reduce its contribution by 20 per cent from January 2016. The EU then proposed that that 20 per cent cut should be made up by AU and troop-contributing countries. The reduction was not well received by the troop-contributing

countries, and led to the announcement that they were pulling their troops out of Somalia. The reduction in EU funding meant a cut in the pay of the soldiers, which affected their morale and willingness to fight Al-Shabaab. It also affected the money governments got for administrative expenses. The troop-contributing countries from the region made their contribution contingent on external funding. It appears that contributing troops to peacebuilding has grown into a profitable business: for instance, each soldier in AMISOM gets \$828, after their respective government deducts \$200 administrative expenses per soldier; thus, the EU contribution per soldier was \$1,028. In the 10 years following AMISOM's establishment in 2007, the EU paid \$1.3 billion [27]. The money is therefore an important incentive for both individual soldiers and governments to participate in peacekeeping operations. The attitude of the troop-contributing governments is: if we get money we contribute; if not we don't. That became obvious in the wake of the EU's cut in its contribution to AMISOM. This lends currency to the perception that there is no altruistic commitment in contributing troops to a noble cause. As a reaction to the EU reduction, the Kenyan government threatened to pull out its forces from Somalia if the international community does not fully cover the peacekeeping costs. According to a local media *Daily Nation*, at a meeting with the UN Security Council on May 19, 2016, President Uhuru Kenyatta said that AMISOM was not getting the resources and equipment it needed to carry out its mandate. He said it wasn't his government's responsibility to fill the funding gap. [28].

Moreover, governments have used their troop contributions as a political shield to deflect criticism of human rights and democratisation. For instance, whenever Western powers invoke issues of human rights and democracy in Uganda, the president would respond by threatening to withdraw his troops from Somalia [29]. This attitude towards peacebuilding affects negatively the strategy of regional solutions for regional problems. In other words, the RECs fail to take full responsibility unless externally funded. If the RECs do not take full responsibility, they cannot own the peacebuilding process. Owning the process implies setting the agenda, framing the scope and parameters, designing strategies, and ensuring the functionality and sustainability of peace and peacebuilding [7]. As will be discussed in a later section, assuming responsibility is directly related to formalised and institutionalised arrangements, where failure of

fulfilling responsibility could lead to accountability and sanctions. The Somalis themselves have never been given the opportunity to define what their problem is: it is external actors who invariably frame the problem as international terrorism, al-Qaeda intervention, clan politics, etc. If the people of Somalia are not able to define and identify the problem, they cannot find a solution to it [30].

More importantly, the reason why the Somali predicament has not been resolved – even after all the international financial, technical, military and training support – is that the most fundamental issue has not been properly addressed: reconstruction of the state. Unless the support is used to rebuild the Somali state, no functional or sustainable peace can be achieved. No matter how much money is poured into the Somali black hole, it could not be a replacement to a domestic peacebuilding and state-building process. Research indicates that state-building is a prerequisite for peacebuilding [14,31]. Research also clearly indicates that state-building is, by its very nature, domestic and political [6]. The EU engagement in Somalia focused on symptoms, and when the symptoms began to recede, it was decided to use the money in other hotspots – which is why the EU redirected the 20 per cent reduction to West Africa, the Sahel region and the Chad Basin, where the heat of terror was believed to have begun smouldering. Nevertheless, the root problem of Somalia continues to be unaddressed, with devastating consequences for the country and the region [30].

In the overall gloomy state of funding of peacebuilding a bright has begun to shine. In December 2023, ‘the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution that creates a framework for the global body to fund peace operations led by the African Union’ [32]. However, it requires explicit UNSC authorisation, which means the AU PSC is the authorising entity. Moreover, operation conducted by the RECs need to be covered by the framework. Although the UNSC decision is one step forward, still African institutions are not empowered [7]. This opens door for coalition of the willing and private military companies.

3. FINANCING THE RECS TO FINANCE PEACEBUILDING

The new emerging order in the relationship between the RECs and the AU is increasingly

moving towards the former assuming an implementing agency with regard to peacebuilding. Under the aegis of the AU – particularly its Peace and Security Council (PSC) – and guided by the PSC Protocol, and RECs and Regional Mechanism for peace and security (RMs) are constantly propelled to assume the responsibility of peacebuilding [33]. The AU considers RECs as component elements [34]. This means that financing the RECs is essentially financing peacebuilding in the regions. The five RECs – the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) – would therefore in principle deal with the conflicts ravaging their respective regions. The strength and efficacy of the RECs in peacebuilding differ considerably: some are highly advanced, while others exist only in name [35]. ECOWAS is perhaps the most successful REC in dealing with mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding [36]. Since its establishment in 1975, ECOWAS [37] has – more or less successfully – intervened in 8 out of 15 conflict-ravaged member states: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d’Ivoire, Guinea Bissau, Burkina Faso, Benin, Mali and Gambia [38]. In the last couple of years, several military coups rocked the ECOWAS region. Guinea (2021), Burkina Faso (2022), Mali (2021), Niger (2023) were the latest countries to fall victims for military takeover of power [23]. In spite of ECOWAS harsh measures that include economic sanctions, severing diplomatic relations, membership suspensions spate of coups have hit West Africa with damaging implications, ‘one of the far-reaching implications of the resurgence of military coups in West Africa for ECOWAS is the constant challenge that the regional body faces on its credibility in maintaining peace, security and stability in the region’ [39]. Particularly, the coup in Niger where ECOWAS came hard through its tantrum of threat of military actions against the coup leaders has seriously damaged the credibility of the organisation [23].

Perhaps the next most active would be IGAD, with its involvement in Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan [2,40]. IGAD’s performance in peacebuilding is arguably better than in other areas of its mandates. Its dependency on external funding yet impeded its full capacity [41]. The increasingly diminishing funds for and politics of peacebuilding imposes demands on

IGAD not only to generate its own resources but also design and implement values and norms of peacebuilding the region is endowed with. The emerging political economy of peacebuilding entrusts the RECs mostly afflicted by conflicts and insecurities with great responsibility.

SADC's performance is less than adequate in terms of peacebuilding in the region. Its involvement in the Lesotho crisis was shrouded with controversies – indeed, it was South Africa (with the support of Botswana) that stepped in militarily to stabilise the situation [42]. In the same way as IGAD endorsed Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in 2007, SADC endorsed South Africa's intervention in Lesotho retroactively [27]. The retroactive endorsement by the RECs of unilateral interference by a stronger member in the internal affairs of a weaker member – however justifiable the reasons – does not bode well for regional integration. Collective decision-making and action are preferable by far to unilateralism. South Africa's intervention in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2013 ended in catastrophe, compelling it to withdraw its troops [43]. SADC's involvement (or non-involvement) in Zimbabwe has been heavily criticised. These examples demonstrate that SADC's performance and engagement are still less than satisfactory, compared to ECOWAS and IGAD. On the other hand, SADC finds itself well to the fore in terms of institutions and bodies that facilitate conflict prevention, resolution and management, peace mediation and early warning – for example, the Panel of Elders, the Troika (chairperson, incoming chairperson and outgoing chairperson), the Mediation Reference Group (MRG) and the SADC Electoral Advisory Council (SEAC) [44,45]. One other important thing from a comparative vantage point is the level of dependence on external financing. The indications of the narrative coming from functionaries of the RECs (particularly, ECOWAS, IGAD and SADC) is that both ECOWAS and SADC are less dependent on external financing. This would mean the dwindling funding could have less effect on peacebuilding and could boost domestic capacities and initiatives.

Formally, the relationship between the RECs and the AU is framed within the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and the RECs 'are the first to respond to conflicts in their member countries given their proximity to the sources of conflicts, and given the stronger interests of their member states in preventing violence from

spilling across borders' (Vanheukelom and Desmidt 2019: 9) [26]. If RECs are to function as agents of first response in dealing with conflicts in their respective regions and in engaging in peacebuilding, then they need to resolve the problem of financing. Since they cannot generate their own resources, and since the AU is not capable of raising the funds required for peacebuilding, the only reasonable alternative is to get the money from external donors, affluent societies and Western states with vested interests. This dependence on external financiers brings the risk of losing regional ownership of peacebuilding [46]. This is not, of course, due to lack of ambition. SADC, for instance asserts:

The activities of the Organ will, as a matter of principle, be funded through assessed contribution from Member States. They may also be catered for by other contributions such as special funds, endowment funds and other external sources as the Summit may decide [47].

The RECs, as mid-level organisational structures located between national states and the AU, should in future play a decisive role in peacebuilding in their respective regions. The conflicts – particularly the inter-state ones – are too big for nation states to deal with, and too distant for the AU. Although some may appear to be domestic, most of the conflicts – both intra-state and inter-state – are embedded in regional webs and complexities. This nature of the conflicts certainly demands regional mechanisms, dynamics and approaches to make it conducive for the RECs to handle [48].

The authorisation for dealing with security and peacebuilding lies with the AU's PSC and the UN Security Council (UNSC) [33,3]. In principle, then, the organs that take the authorisation decision should also come up with finance. As pointed out earlier, the AU so far does not possess the capacity to entirely finance peacebuilding operations. The UNSC – which has ultimate discretion on whether to authorise an operation – may be able to raise the finance, but it is not unusual for geostrategic considerations among members to play a role. In addition, the UNSC does not have resources to disburse: it depends on member countries' voluntary contributions [3]. When it comes to conflicts, security and peacebuilding, the PSC might be seen as the corresponding body to the UNSC at the AU level. Nevertheless, it is clear that there exists a hierarchical relationship: the UNSC has the discretion to authorise a

peacebuilding mission, and that decision is conveyed to the RECs (Brosig 2015: 80) [3] through the PSC. This hierarchical relationship poses problems of its own, since each member of the UNSC has its own geostrategic interests, and therefore there may be no unanimous decision. This would explain why some peacebuilding missions are better financed than others. Although authorisation by the UNSC may be beneficial (particularly when it comes to financing), it also complicates decision-making processes, implementation and the allocation of funds. Even if consensus in decision-making is reached, the issue of funding could constitute another hurdle, unless Western big powers have a vested geostrategic interest. This colossal divergence in Western funding is evidently manifested in the Ukraine war. Funding the war in Ukraine to defeat and weaken a rival, Russia, falls with the Western geopolitical calculation therefore they are spending hundreds of billions US dollars to keep the war going on [18]. This could be juxtaposed with funding to alleviate hunger-ridden countries such as Yemen, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, etc.

Undoubtedly, there is a growing realisation that RECs could and should play an active role in regional peacebuilding. Nevertheless, the RECs suffer from a number of shortcomings, both internally and externally induced. First, as discussed, there is a marked absence of resources. This includes many things: financial resources, but also material resources, such as weapons, infrastructure, logistics, etc. For instance, ECOWAS began to intervene in the Malian crisis, but it soon came up against financial obstacles [27]. The French intervention replaced ECOWAS intervention attempt, which gained UNSC endorsement and was, consequently well financed [49]. Wouldn't the French funding been better channelled through ECOWAS? It would have boosted ECOWAS's capacity and legitimacy, and would have guaranteed long-term solutions. ECOWAS predicaments are however growing with growing number of military coups. Several military takeovers are confronting ECOWAS, compelling it to resort to threats of military interventions, economic sanctions, and suspensions [50], which are not conducive to peacebuilding in the region.

Secondly, there is a lack of capacity – human, technical, knowledge and know-how. Well-functioning peacebuilding requires adequate

manpower, with adequate knowledge and skills. Many of the RECs suffer from a shortage of skilled professional and bureaucratic staff to run even daily activities in their headquarters – let alone running peacebuilding operations. This then raises the question of how the RECs can shoulder the important task of peacebuilding [48].

Thirdly, internal divisions among member states present a challenge. Many of the RECs are seen as clubs for the heads of state and government. The relationship between heads of state and government therefore affects the performance of the REC: if relations are cordial, the REC performs effectively and productively; if relations are poor, a REC can be paralysed. The case of IGAD is a good example. Relations between the states of the IGAD region have historically been acrimonious, with inter-state conflicts, border disputes and territorial claims, interventions and proxies, and divided ethnic groups. This acrimony frequently renders IGAD something of a lame duck. Because of these bad relations, many inter-state conflicts, which IGAD was supposed to handle were left to fester [51].

Fourthly, lack of a clear mandate affects the performance of RECs in peacebuilding. RECs – as regional implementing organs – need a clear mandate from below (national states) and from above (the AU and UN). This mandate is directly connected with the provision of the resources and instruments needed to achieve peacebuilding. It is also directly connected with accountability and responsibility. Once the RECs are provided with a clear mandate and with the resources and instruments, they need, they can be held accountable and responsible. By extension, they can be given formal responsibility, in which success and failure can lead to accountability and sanctions [52].

Fifthly, the absolute dependence on external funding has generated a disease known as 'dependency syndrome'. The development of this disease has induced paralysis, hinders creativity and commitment and leads to a lack of initiative. As a result, the RECs need to be prodded into action. Many argue that peacebuilding is by its very nature political and as such domestic therefore the dependence on externality does not augur well for peacebuilding [7]. Moreover, external funded and designed peacebuilding fails to be inclusive of all stakeholder in the peacebuilding process.

4. WHAT CAN AFRICA (THE AU) DO TO COMBAT THE INCREASING FINANCIAL CONSTRAINTS?

Lack of peace and security, thus peacebuilding is intimately connected with the fundamental problem of nation formation and state formation [7,6]. Societies suffering from crisis of state formation and identity formation are amenable to all sorts of maladies. The incomplete process of state and nation formation would explain the rampant conflicts in Africa.

Regional integration as foundation of regional peacebuilding is based on functional integration and commonality of values [52,5]. A clear exemplification of this is the current crisis ECOWAS and IGAD are going through [53,23].

It is part of the reality of life that even in an ideal situation, resources are always limited – irrespective of whether their origin is domestic or external. In addition to this reality, peacebuilding in Africa is overwhelmingly financed by external donations, a feature of which is their instability. Moreover, ‘beggars can’t be choosers’: you have to accept whatever is offered. Dependency on external financing for peacebuilding operations has the effect of undermining the AU, because it is not able to ‘own’ its peacebuilding processes and operations [48]. The crucial question is what could or should the AU do, given that its own resources are insufficient and international donations are dwindling? For all that the funding is dwindling, there are several things the AU could do. It needs to devise several strategies – above all, a new strategy of organisation. Organisation is strength and power, because it leads to mobilisation. Mobilisation in turn has many dimensions: mobilisation of resources (human and material); mobilisation of capacity (technical, intellectual, scientific knowledge and skills). In short, organisation is a prerequisite for mobilisation, and mobilisation leads in turn to a beefing up of resources. Owning the resources means that the peacebuilding process can be conducted along lines that are designed, planned and executed according to one’s own desires, capacity and timeframe. Raising one’s own resources increases ownership and strengthens agency. And in the long run, ownership and agency translate into legitimacy. By running its own peacebuilding process, the AU could gain legitimacy vis-à-vis the citizens of the continent.

Secondly, as part of the reorganisation, the AU needs to consolidate the five RECs. The

rationale behind the selection of the five RECs is, first, that they represent the five regions of the continent; and second, they already have programmes and projects of peace and security, peacebuilding, regional integration and development. In addition, they are strategically located to deal with problems of regional peace and security, socio-economic development and regional integration [27]. The very fact that they are located at mid-level – between the national and the continental – gives them a strategic position in dealing with regional conflicts and effecting peacebuilding. This presupposes not only the adoption of a three-tier organisational structure, but also the reconfiguration of the RECs in terms of membership. There is a need for clearly defining and delineating membership.

Thirdly, limiting the number of RECs to five has certain advantages: the presence of more RECs dilutes and diminishes their significance. There can also be an overlap of membership, which leads to divided loyalties and a dispersion of resources and capacity (Bereketeab forthcoming). For instance, membership of both IGAD and the East African Community (EAC) causes a loss of the sense of affiliation; members choose which organisation to align with at a particular time, depending on the agenda and the interests of the day [2]. There is a tendency to bend with the wind, rather than stand firm through thick and thin. There is also the danger of a duplication of programmes and projects; in time, this leads to a dearth of resources, which creates serious challenges (Bereketeab forthcoming). In the long run, it can affect an organisation’s legitimacy, too, since legitimacy is contingent on delivery. In order to earn legitimacy, RECs have to be able to deliver valued goods. The formation of the G5 Sahel and the anti-Boko Haram coalition led by Nigeria in the Sahel is a clear indication of the unnecessary multiplication of RECs – and of the duplication of programmes and projects. Instead of creating new RECs, it would have been more prudent to strengthen the existing RECs – in this case ECOWAS and AMU. The finances, weapons and training that went to the new RECs could have been used to boost the already existing RECs, which would also have enhanced their legitimacy. Moreover, it boosts transparency, predictability, subsidiarity, complementarity and accountability, highly needed for functionality and durability of peacebuilding [3].

Fourthly, common values are necessary for the formation of regional groupings. Regional

groupings are well served and can be functional and sustainable if they are founded on some common values. The inclusion of DRC in SADC simply dilutes the common values, since DRC has nothing in common with the rest of the SADC members.¹ Some of the basic common foundations that sustain and enhance regional groupings could arguably be geographical proximity; basic socio-cultural commonality; historical, political and economic commonalities; similarity in demographic and topographic structures [6]. Such common values would foster cohesive unity, structure, feeling, belonging and the will to perform together – things that promote peacebuilding. In this sense, peacebuilding is not simply the absence of conflict and violence, but the construction of regional identity, commonality, institutions and relations that promote regional integration and development. As Galtung [54] argues, positive peace is inherently correlated with development. Therefore, peacebuilding as domestic undertaking has a direct correlation with societal development, which leads to logical conclusion that less developed societies are less peaceful. It is only through internal mechanisms and efforts that genuine development could be achieved.

Fifthly, the African continent could benefit from a coherent, stringent, formal and institutionalised structure. Here we propose that there could be three tiers: national states, RECs and the AU. The recognition of the RECs by the AU as component elements of the Union is a step to the right direction. However, this needs to be supplemented by formalisation and institutionalisation. The structure needs to be formalised and institutionalised: that would facilitate the delegation of tasks and responsibilities according to the principle of subsidiarity, which would promote accountability and sanctions. Following the principle of subsidiarity, each tier would assume some specific responsibilities [3]. There would also be shared tasks and responsibilities. This type of organisational structure lies between the general, abstract ideology of pan-Africanism and the concrete, pragmatic and achievable idea of a United States of Africa. It would also have the benefit of clustering resources and capacities into a few groupings, enabling things to be done effectively, efficiently, parsimoniously and quickly – but also durably. Compensation of dearth of material resources (funding) with organisational

and mobilisation competences and innovations could go a long way in remedying African chronic deficiencies. All this would promote the process of peacebuilding.

To meet the challenges and the diminishing funding for peacebuilding, Africa has to reorganise itself in a way that enhances its capacity and resources, and that liberates it from dependency on external funding. This is the best way to achieve functional and lasting peacebuilding. A lasting peacebuilding, in turn would presuppose a stage of societal formation often described by theoretical-conceptual notions of development, notably state emancipation and societal pacification. Succinctly, state emancipation reference to the developmental stage where the state stands above social groups and it represents and belongs to all. The state should not be perceived as representing interests of specific groups in society. Conversely, societal pacification implies a development where the legitimate monopoly of violence becomes the sole prerogative of the state and subordination of all societal groups to the supremacy of the state. However, ultimate power should rest on society and society should be able to control the state. In other words, there should be a check and balance between state and society [12,11,55,56]. At the end, a balance in the evolution would ensure peace and peacebuilding. It is a manifestation of completion of the process of state and nation formation, where Africa is still suffering from [57].

5. CONCLUSION

This article set out to examine the political economy of regional peacebuilding. It sought to analyse politics of funding peacebuilding. Regional peacebuilding rests on two conditions, notably strengthening regional economic communities (RECs) and consolidation, collaboration and integration between national states, RECs and AU. Shifts in geopolitics and geostrategic interest dictate tendencies of donors towards funding peacebuilding. The emergence of hotspots like the one in Ukraine that have greater value to Western powers who are the main funders of peacebuilding in Africa diverts attention. In such occasions Africans need to mobilise their own resources that include human, material, organisational, ideational and intellectual, and enforce the mantra of African solutions for African problems.

¹ *Interview with Dr Gladys Mokhawa, 16 April 2019, Gaborone, Botswana.*

Peacebuilding is a very expensive business, particularly, if it is appraised in purely economic terms. At times of funding constraints – and if the funding comes from outside – peacebuilding becomes additionally difficult to fulfil. It is also of great significance to stress that peacebuilding is a complex, arduous, protracted and time-consuming undertaking that requires handling with care and diligence. It is under these circumstances that the AU is expected to undertake certain measures that consolidate peacebuilding on the continent. The most important thing that the AU needs to do is organise the continent in a manner that enables it to address the conflicts and foil those hostiles to peacebuilding in an effective and innovative way. One mechanism to deal with the convoluted conflicts would be to enhance the five regional economic communities. And one way of doing that would be to adopt a conducive organisational structure. Here it is proposed that the organisational structure for the continent should consist of three tiers: that would make the AU much more effective and relevant.

This three-tier organisational structure would comprise national states, RECs and the AU. It would need to be formalised and institutionalised to replace the current ad hoc structures and relations. Moreover, the RECs need to undergo profound restructuring, in terms of membership, to reflect their regional origin. A clear regional delineation and sparsity would generate efficacy and potency in fulfilling objectives. The multiplicity of RECs would only undermine and dilute the purpose and objective they are formed for. Throughout the postcolonial period, the discourse of African unity has oscillated between two competing ideas: Pan-Africanism and a United States of Africa. This three-tier structure would steer a middle course. Pan-Africanism as an abstract and general idea is accepted by everyone: but it is only an abstract idea, vision and ideology lacking concrete manifestation; meanwhile a United States of Africa is easily applicable, but many states reject it on the grounds that they would lose sovereignty and authority.

The three-tier structure is a compromise between the ideological, general, abstract idea of Pan-Africanism and the concrete, pragmatic, supra-national, continental United States of Africa. This middle way would strengthen the continent so that it could cope with the pathologies bedeviling it. It would be a transient structure to deal with the festering conflicts and effect peacebuilding.

The RECs – which should play a key role in regional peacebuilding – would benefit from such an innovative structure in times of a dearth of financing for peacebuilding. In a time where Africa is increasingly expected to tackle its problems on its own, the organisational structure it designs becomes decisive. Funding is a bottleneck for Africa, but there is scape.

The advantage of the proposed organisational structure is that it would enable the AU to mobilise its own resources. The mobilisation of its own human, material and intellectual resources would provide agency, ownership and autonomy in conducting peacebuilding activities. A continent rich in natural and human resources should be able to resolve its own problems, if only it can find the right organisational structures and relations to connect its three tiers in a dialectical, heuristic, functional and sustainable way. Accountability, transparency, participatory democracy, self-reliance and independence – these are some of the common goods and values that could push the continent to navigate its way into the twenty-first century and beyond.

DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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