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CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

WAR AND PEACE IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION

Cape Town, South Africa

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Introduction

The Centre for Conflict Resolution (CCR), Cape Town, South Africa, hosted a two-day policy research seminar in Cape Town, from 19 to 20 March 2016, on the theme “War and Peace in the Great Lakes Region”.

The meeting brought together about 30 prominent African and Western policymakers, scholars, and civil society activists to assess the major obstacles to peace and security in the Great Lakes, and considered seven broad themes: Security and Governance in the Great Lakes Region; the cases of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC); Burundi; Rwanda; and Uganda; as well as the role of the United Nations; and that of the European Union, in the Great Lakes.

1. Security and Governance in the Great Lakes Region

The complexity of the regional conflicts that have engulfed the Great Lakes region have resulted in over three million civilian deaths in the DRC; about 800,000 during Rwanda’s 1994 genocide; an estimated 200,000 in Burundi between 1993 and 2005; and involved eight regional states and assorted militias. The intricate nature of the conflicts in the Great Lakes is related to issues concerning ethnicity, citizenship, the ambiguous roles played by regional and external actors, mineral and economic exploitation, and youth unemployment. The continued governance and security challenges in the region are also compounded by strong synergies between national and regional conflict dynamics, while governance remains at the heart of the political crises and insecurities in the Great Lakes. The dynamics of regional politics have traditionally been driven mainly by the desire to take control of state power as a means of gaining access to economic opportunities and resources. Thus, the values and principles of sound democratic governance have not been embraced by the region’s political elite. This is mainly because principles of constitutionalism and multi-party democracy on which transitional frameworks were founded were also not adapted to the political traditions of the region.

“The complexity of the regional conflicts that have engulfed the Great Lakes region have resulted in over three million civilian deaths in the DRC; about 800,000 during Rwanda’s 1994 genocide; and an estimated 200,000 in Burundi between 1993 and 2005.”



DELEGATES AT THE PEACE EDUCATION AFRICAN GREAT LAKES REGION REGIONAL SUMMIT, ORGANISED BY THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION (ICGLR), INTERPEACE, AND UNESCO, IN MARCH 2016.

Image source - Interpeace
<http://www.interpeace.org/2016/03/regional-summit-on-formal-peace-education-in-the-african-great-lakes-held-in-airobi/>

The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) was supposed to serve as a forum for promoting shared values and norms on democratic governance and security in the region, but has no legal binding powers and close ties with the African Union (AU) system, and is also not recognised as one of Africa’s major regional economic communities (RECs). Although RECs are mandated to develop norms and principles that provide a platform for more participatory and improved governance, the membership of regional organisations such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) in the case of the DRC, or the East African Community (EAC) in the cases of Uganda, Rwanda and Burundi, has not had the expected effect of catalysing democratic governance – mainly due to the absence of shared political values. In January 2016, three countries in the Great Lakes – Burundi, Uganda, and Rwanda – were elected

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‘ The United Nations has spent \$4 billion on the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) since 2006, and \$17 billion in peacekeeping operations between 1960 and 2016. ’



SPECIAL INTERVENTION BRIGADE FORCES FROM TANZANIA, PART OF THE UN PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, ON DUTY IN SAKA, NORTH KIVU, IN JULY 2013.

Image source - UN News Centre
Photo - MONUSCO/Sylvain Liechti
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45727#V-OvKYW-Q18>

as new members of the 15-member AU Peace and Security Council (PSC). This could negatively affect any meaningful efforts at resolving conflicts in the Great Lakes within the AU. The ICGLR also remains weak, and has very limited internal capacity for undertaking conflict resolution activities in the region. Few resources have gone towards the actual implementation of quick-impact peacebuilding projects such as disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR); security sector reform (SSR); and rebuilding states in the region. The donor community must also learn to adopt a less selective approach to responding to the governance deficiencies of the countries in the Great Lakes. While they have acted swiftly in criticising the government in Burundi, some have been reluctant to speak out against governance abuses in Uganda and Rwanda.

2. The Democratic Republic of the Congo

At the core of the Democratic Republic of the Congo's current political crisis, is a country that is troubled by a regime that reinforces a predatory political and economic system. The DRC's 70 million citizens have, since 1965, starting with the Western-backed Mobutu Sese Seko, been governed by discriminatory practices and the manipulation of group identities for political purposes, amid widespread corruption and fraudulent electoral processes. The insecurity in the DRC that began during the period 1996 to 2003 has seen the persistence of gross human rights violations committed by both militia groups and government soldiers. The conflict in the country has been driven by two intertwined factors: weak state legitimacy, and interference by neighbours, particularly Rwanda and Uganda. While, Rwanda supported the Banyamulenge ethnic group in South Kivu in the Congo, and fought the *Interahamwe* insurgents and ex-FAR (Armed Forces of Rwanda) group in eastern Congo, Uganda has battled rebel Allied Democratic Forces/National Army for the Liberation of Uganda (ADF/NALU) elements in the DRC. Both countries have, however, also been accused of looting the Congo's mineral resources.

The United Nations has spent \$4 billion on the UN Organisation Stabilisation Mission in the DRC (MONUSCO) since 2006, and \$17 billion in peacekeeping operations between 1960 and 2016. The world body has, however, been unable to resolve the Congo's crisis. Although parliamentary and presidential elections are scheduled for November 2016, the government in Kinshasa has noted that it does not have the estimated \$500 million that would be required to organise the polls. In June 2015, president Joseph Kabila, proposed a national dialogue among the ruling majority coalition, the political opposition, and civil society to discuss the electoral calendar, voter registration, and the financing of the elections. In addition, anyone who did not register for the 2011 elections was said by the government to be ineligible to vote in the 2016 elections, effectively disenfranchising between seven to eight million Congolese. Some see these moves as a ploy by Kabila to extend his presidential tenure. By September 2016, anti-government demonstrations were being harshly crushed, with dozens of fatalities.

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“ In December 2015, the country’s national electoral commission announced that 98.3 per cent of Rwandans had voted in favour of the amendment to the constitution allowing president Paul Kagame to run in presidential polls in August 2017 for another seven-year term. ”



RWANDA'S PRESIDENT, PAUL KAGAME, WAVES TO THE CROWD IN KINIGI, NORTHERN RWANDA, IN SEPTEMBER 2015.

Image source - Mail Online
Photo - AP Photo/Ben Curtis
<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-3352532/Rwanda-sets-date-referendum-presidential-term-limits.html>

3. Burundi

At the time of the implementation of the Arusha peace accord by 2005, Burundi – with a population of 11.2 million – was widely seen as a peacebuilding success story in Africa. Between 2004 and 2007, the country integrated its old army with members of former armed groups into a national army. However, while the army was fairly well integrated, the police and intelligence services were not. This partial security reform process has resulted in Burundi’s security sector services being involved in human rights abuses and widespread violence committed with impunity. President Pierre Nkurunziza’s decision to run for an unconstitutional third term in the July 2015 polls, which he won, triggered continued violence in the country. This resulted in over 240,000 Burundian refugees fleeing across the border to neighbouring Uganda, Rwanda, and the DRC, and the death of more than 400 people.

Although the AU’s Peace and Security Council approved the deployment of 5,000 peacekeepers to Burundi to restore peace in December 2015, Nkurunziza rejected the proposal, as well as an invitation to take part in negotiations with the opposition, which the government accused of fuelling violence in the country. In April 2016, the UN Security Council also approved a resolution for a UN police force to be deployed to Burundi after reports of horrific scenes of violence against women being gang-raped by Burundian government security forces in their homes and the unearthing of secret graves in the countryside. In furtherance of a regional intervention approach, Tanzanian foreign minister, Augustine Mahiga, urged South Africa to contribute to mediation efforts in Burundi, given Tshwane’s (Pretoria) previous engagement in mediation efforts between 1999 and 2005.

4. Rwanda

Despite progress in the area of socio-economic development, civil society in Rwanda continues to be silenced through government intimidation which has led to nearly all the leading human rights activists leaving the country. Western donors as well as African states such as South Africa thus need to speak out clearly in support of the basic rights of Rwanda’s 12 million citizens. In December 2015, the country’s national electoral commission announced that 98.3 per cent of Rwandans had voted in favour of the amendment to the constitution allowing president Paul Kagame to run in presidential polls in August 2017 for another seven-year term (as well as two five-year terms from 2024). He could thus stay in power until 2034. Rwanda should, however, not need to choose between economic and democratic rights. The repression of opposition leaders and human rights activists has continued, and the media has also been muzzled.

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President Yoweri Museveni has used anti-terrorism rhetoric and policies at home to deflect attention from his domestic failings, and clamped down harshly on dissent, particularly through harassing sections of the media.



A SUPPORTER OF UGANDAN PRESIDENT YOWERI MUSEVENI HOLDS UP A CAMPAIGN POSTER AT A RALLY IN KAMPALA IN 2016.

Image source - International Business Times
Photo - REUTERS/Edward Echwalu
<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/uganda-votes-president-museveni-seeks-fifth-term-1544547>

5. Uganda

President Yoweri Museveni's 30-year rule in Uganda, with a population of 39 million, has seen Kampala play a major role in the Great Lakes region. Museveni has also used anti-terrorism rhetoric and policies at home to deflect attention from his domestic failings, and clamped down harshly on dissent, particularly through harassing sections of the media. This militaristic tendency has not only shaped the domestic identity of his regime, but also informed Uganda's role in the Great Lakes.

Museveni has thus never fully been trusted by members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Sudan – which also have their own parochial agendas in South Sudan – to play a neutral role in the search for peace in the country following the outbreak of civil war in December 2013. Although, the Ugandan leader has also chaired and hosted talks on behalf of the EAC and sought to mediate the political crisis in Burundi, many critics pointed to Museveni's own governance deficiencies as denying him the credibility to lead this process. In addition to the militarisation of society and the police, as well as continuing government corruption, Museveni's rule has also stoked divisions among Uganda's diverse ethnic groups and regions. Kampala's continued role in the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) further reflects the dominance of the military in the country's politics.

6. The United Nations

The United Nations has had a significant presence in the Great Lakes region over the last decade. However, the world body's peacekeeping presence has been challenged by governments in Burundi (which ensured the withdrawal of UN peacekeepers by 2006) and the DRC. At the request of the government in Bujumbura, the world body also closed the UN Office in Burundi (BNUB) in December 2014, and the UN Electoral Observation Mission in Burundi (MENUB) drew to a close in December 2015. Similarly, the DRC government challenged the UN's peacekeeping presence in the country, with president Kabila asking the UN to withdraw its peacekeepers in 2010. In March 2015, Kabila again requested an immediate reduction of 6,000 UN troops (out of 22,000 personnel), though the UN Security Council had approved a troop cut of only 2,000 troops. It is therefore imperative for the world body to scale up the role of its Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region, Algeria's Said Djinnit, and to strengthen the engagement of his office in the region. The UN should also work more closely with regional organisations such as the EAC, IGAD, SADC, and the AU to push for the full implementation of the Peace, Security, and Cooperation (PSC) Framework of 2013 for the DRC and the wider Great Lakes region.

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“The four Great Lakes countries – Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC – have received the most European development assistance over the last two decades.”



A VIEW OF THE EUROPEAN UNION PARLIAMENT IN BRUSSELS, BELGIUM.

Social Economy Europe
<http://www.socialeconomy.eu/>

7. The European Union

The four Great Lakes countries – Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC – have received the most European development assistance in Africa over the last two decades. With regard to funding socio-economic programmes, the European Union supports a variety of development, governance, humanitarian, and security projects in the region. The Congo was among the EU's top recipients of aid between 2008 and 2013, amounting to €584 million. Furthermore, Brussels plans to increase assistance to the region through the European Development Fund (EDF) in 2014–2020. Assistance to the DRC is planned to increase from €584 million in 2008–2013 to €620 million; to Rwanda from €379 million to €460 million; to Burundi from €188 million to €432 million; and to Uganda from €465 million to €587 million.

Since January 2016, donors have either committed or contributed over \$323.8 million to the DRC. A 2013 report by the European Court of Auditors, however, found that while the EU's projects in the DRC were generally targeting relevant issues of electoral processes, security sector reform, and the rule of law, fewer than half of them could be counted as a success, and even fewer were likely to be sustainable in the long term. It is therefore imperative that future international engagement in the region should be considered by the AU and regional organisations, with the EU, the UN, and other players – including continental powers such as South Africa and Nigeria – playing more supportive roles.

Policy recommendations

The following 10 key policy recommendations emerged from the policy research seminar:

1. Since post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts in the Great Lakes have become stalled due to the unresolved issues in the region's political economy, it is imperative that governments urgently address the major issue of youth unemployment – more than 30 percent of the region's population are aged between 10 and 24.
2. The international community must adopt a less selective approach to responding to the governance deficiencies of the countries in the region, acting swiftly to criticise the government in Burundi but being reluctant to condemn governments in Uganda and Rwanda due to strategic interests in both countries.
3. Addressing sexual violence in the DRC must become a key priority. Making progress in security sector reform which has been largely

There is an urgent need for governments in the Great Lakes region to recommit to peace accords and tackling regional insecurity related to issues of identity and citizenship.



HEADS OF STATE DURING THE SIXTH ORDINARY SUMMIT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE GREAT LAKES REGION IN LUANDA, ANGOLA, IN JUNE 2016.

Image source - Hivisasa
Photo - PSCU
<http://www.hivisasa.com/kiambu/news/147961>

uncoordinated by external actors amid a lack of political will on the part of the government of Joseph Kabila, would also be critical to efforts to tackling gender-based violence.

4. Burundi needs effective leadership and a government that is accountable to its own people. A mass movement must therefore be fostered to promote an inclusive negotiation process. Beyond Burundi, mass advocacy movements should also be built among the 127 million citizens of the Great Lakes.
5. Carefully targeted international sanctions against the Rwandan government for its actions in the DRC have had some effect in changing its behaviour. Such sanctions should also be applied to Rwanda's domestic human rights situation.
6. There is an urgent need for governments in the Great Lakes region to recommit to peace accords and tackling regional insecurity related to issues of identity and citizenship.
7. There is also an urgent need for political parties and conflict actors in the Great Lakes to revisit peace accords that were signed more than a decade and a half ago with a view to adapting as well as implementing principles of constitutionalism and multi-party democracy which were enshrined in these accords.
8. Though some have suggested that UN peacekeepers should withdraw from the DRC to create room for endogenous solutions to the country's long-running conflict, other voices have cautioned against a premature withdrawal of the UN, citing the example of Burundi in 2006 where such a withdrawal removed the international community's capacity for tackling instability.
9. It is time to rethink the role of the UN in the DRC in the areas of peacekeeping and peacebuilding. Its bureaucracy has become dysfunctional which has negatively affected the efficiency of UN peacekeeping missions. The UN Security Council must therefore do more to align mandates, roles, and resources closer to the realities on the ground.
10. The EU and other international actors need to undertake more outreach to Tanzania, South Africa, the EAC and other regional actors in their peacebuilding efforts in the Great Lakes.