

HOW I WILL ENSURE PEACE AND SECURITY IN AFRICA AS A LEADER

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Decades after independence, many African states are still unable to guarantee stability, peace, and security for the bulk of their citizens. Although the worst decades of instability in Africa have passed, there are still remnants of war legacies and fault lines in many countries that continue to threaten peace and security. More importantly, the absence of peace and security does not allow governments to focus on meeting pressing development needs which continue to leave Africa poor in many respects. The IMF¹ in a 2017 report suggests that all ten of the world's poorest countries are in Africa.² Africa's problems have led to notions that the continent is a crucible of conflict, peril, and underdevelopment. In this essay, I discuss government reform, citizen participation, strengthening regional cooperation within Africa and building strong partnerships outside it to help tackle its peace and security challenges. I present these strategies as solutions to four major problems that makes African countries conflict-prone namely; Fractionalization, Social Exclusion, Climate Change, and Terrorism.

An unmistakable fact about Africa is the incredible amount of diversity within it. There are about three thousand distinct ethnic groups with two thousand languages³ spread across the fifty-four states of Africa. Rightly so, many African societies are replete with proverbs echoing strength in unity and diversity. Yet, ethnic diversity has stymied the progress of many states where the allocation of resources has not been sensitive to the perceptions, nuances, and demands of various groups. Notions of exclusion based on whichever metric, real or imagined, leads to fractionalization⁴—the harbinger of social contestations that ultimately undermines peace and security within any state. This was the case in the Ivoirian Civil War 2002-2004 where the Muslim northerners rebelled against the southern Christian government they felt was excluding them.⁵ Social exclusion is a governance problem and can be dealt with by reforming African governments in a way that puts substantial power and resources in local authorities to address needs that may be unique to specific social groups. Too much centralization within African governments has led to a lot of helplessness on the part of ordinary citizens. In places where there is a monopoly of power, impoverished groups deem others who are better off than they are as responsible for their status. The resentment that emanates from this development is bottled up and break through at elections and other attempts by impoverished groups to take power or redistribute resources. To resolve this, I will enact government reforms that will decentralize government and give localities greater say in their local affairs, this will calm tensions because when people feel they are in control of their lives they are not very likely to blame or hate others for their problems.

Further, accountability structures within states must change to enable governments to be more responsive. In many African countries, power is distributed in a pyramidal manner where it is accessed on the basis of close proximity to the head of state and the party in power. Thus, the lower a group is on the pyramid, the lesser their influence and capacity to hold those above them accountable. The governance reform I will pursue will change the accountability structure and give power to 'the many' to hold 'the few' in power to account. This will not just happen at elections, but also in between elections, by guaranteeing; media and citizens' right to information within government, constant opportunities for citizens to make inputs into policy as well as giving citizens the opportunity for citizens to acquire the skills necessary to be functional members of a participatory governance system. In doing this, I will insist that public officials do their work in the light of day and recognize people's right to information and the fact that as officials they are accountable to the people. This is the only way decision making within any state will be inclusive and predictable and laws will apply to everyone and also ensure equity as an Akan proverb in Ghana says "if your hand is in the pot you cannot be left out of the eating".

In Africa today, no matter how well governed any state is, it would still be vulnerable to the spillover of conflict issues from neighboring countries within its sub-region such as the influx of refugees or the resettlement of dissidents into its territory who may pose a threat to its security. Peculiarly, the life of everyday Africans in border towns blurs the border lines drawn by colonial masters. As a result, border disputes easily come up especially when valuable resources are involved. Thus, inasmuch as I will pursue Good Governance and economic growth, I will also pay close attention to my sub-region in particular and the continent as a whole. Regional Integration, the harmonization of national policies to forge collective development holds an inestimable potential to prevent conflict between states in the first place and if they do occur present a cooperative framework within which such conflicts could be managed or resolved. I will urge support for Institutions such as the West African Court of Justice for ECOWAS⁶ and the African Court of Justice for the whole of Africa as well as the African Peace and Security Architecture. I will work to ensure they are strengthened and resourced and recognized the number primary means of resolving interstate disputes within Africa.

Climate Change is one area that African governments could leverage strong regional cooperation. Impacts of Climate Change have the capacity to destabilize Africa, by destroying livelihoods and reducing the capacity of the environment to support human existence in many parts of Africa. Climate Change impact projections for Africa are stark. Projections of sea level rise are higher for Africa than other regions, in addition to this are shrinking water levels and low rainfall around southern Africa owing to high evapotranspiration caused by high temperatures.⁷ Agricultural production is projected to drop between 27%-32% for staple foods such as maize and sorghum.⁸ These threats are immense and dire for the continent, but through a collective effort, forged through Regional Integration frameworks the threat can be met by African governments adopting uniform policies aimed to reduce environmental degradation and ending human activities that harm the environment and more importantly reach agreements on the use of common resources such as rivers, farmlands, oil and mineral reserves that can lead to conflict through boundary contestations borne out of the need for states and people to survive.

Beyond the governance issues that have been the source of conflict within and between African countries, there is a rise in terror activities on the continent in recent times.⁹ Although some of the factors accounting for Terrorism in Africa are political, they are mostly framed with the language of religion and fueled by radical religious/extremist ideologies and persons.¹⁰ The aspects of Terrorism that are political in nature will be largely curtailed by the government reforms I have discussed. Remaining to be dealt with is the challenge of destructive religious doctrine. In dealing with this, I will reach out to deprived communities and address some of their grievances (usually bordering on exclusion and lack of opportunity) which terror purveyors use as fodder to spread hate towards the state and others within it. The outreach will also underscore the need for all citizens to live in harmony and respect for the diversity of religious beliefs and practices. Next, I will work to forge a multilateral effort to intercept terror financing and other educational and logistical support that may be given to actors on the continent from actors outside the continent.

In conclusion, the conflicts of Rwanda, Sudan, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, DR Congo, Nigeria and the CAR¹¹ that have devastated Africa to a very large degree result from the struggle to determine, what Harold Laswell describes as “who gets what, when and how?”¹² Issues of identity, ethnicity, and religion and notions of exclusion that lead to conflict are in essence, demands to resolve issues of resource allocation in any state. Therefore, reforming government and strengthening regional cooperation gives states greater capacity to manage these contestations. Also, Climate Change and Terrorism which have broad impact on all states will require a collective effort. I believe that purposefully pursuing these ideas will bring lasting peace and security to the people and states of Africa.

References and Endnotes

¹ The IMF refers to the International Monetary Fund

² Jonathan Gregson (2017). The Poorest Countries in the World. At <https://www.gfmag.com/global-data/economic-data/the-poorest-countries-in-the-world>. Retrieved on 2/7/17 at 11:40pm.

³ PEOPLE OF AFRICA - The Diversity of African People | African Race Retrieved from: <http://www.africanholocaust.net/peopleofafrica.htm>. on 6/22/17 at 12:09AM.

⁴ The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (2000) *Can Africa Claim the Twenty First Century? / The World Bank 1818 H Street, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20433, U.S.A.*

⁵ Vaisse, J. The Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire. U.S.-FRANCE ANALYSIS SERIES. The Brookings Institution March 2003. Pp 2-5.

⁶ ECOWAS refers to the Economic Community of West African States formed in 1975 to promote West African Integration.

⁷ Serdeczny, O. Adams, S. Baarsch, F. et.al (2015) *Climate Change Impacts in Sub-Saharan Africa: From Physical Changes to their Social Repercussions*. Regional Environmental Change. Vol 15 No. 8

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Juliet Elu and Gregory Price. (2015). *The Causes and Consequences of Terrorism in Africa*. The Oxford Handbook of Africa and Economics: Volume 1: Context and Concepts at <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199687114.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199687114-e-16>

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ CAR stands for the Central African Republic located in Central Africa.

¹² Harold Lasswell. (1935). *Who Gets What, When and How?* Retrieved from www.policysciences.org/classics/politics.pdf at 6/23/17 at 3:00pm.