

enough

The project to end genocide and crimes against humanity



AP Photo/Ricardo Mazalan

Rwanda 20 and Darfur 10

New Responses to Africa's Mass Atrocities

By John Prendergast April 2014



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COVER PHOTO

A young Rwandan girl walks through Nyaza cemetery outside Kigali, Rwanda on Monday November 25, 1996. Thousands of victims of the 1994 genocide are buried there. AP/RICARDO MAZALAN

* This Enough Project report expands on an earlier argument advanced in a *Foreign Affairs* article entitled "The New Face of African Conflict: In Search of a Way Forward," by John Prendergast, published March 12, 2014.

Introduction

As commemorations unfold honoring the 20th anniversary of the onset of Rwanda's genocide and the 10th year after Darfur's genocide was recognized, the rhetoric of commitment to the prevention of mass atrocities has never been stronger. Actions, unsurprisingly, have not matched that rhetoric. But the conventional diagnosis of this chasm between words and deeds – a lack of political will – only explains part of the action deficit. More deeply, international crisis response strategies in Africa have hardly evolved in the years since the Rwandan genocide erupted. Until there is a fuller recognition of the core drivers of African conflict, their cross-border nature, and the need for more nuanced and comprehensive responses, the likelihood will remain high that more and more anniversaries of mass atrocity events will have to be commemorated by future generations.

Conflict drivers need to be much better understood in order to devise more relevant responses. The band of crisis and conflict spanning the Horn of Africa, East Africa, and Central Africa is ground zero for mass atrocity events globally. The conflagration in the Central African Republic (CAR), the world's deadliest war in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), ongoing instability in Burundi, persistent violence in Somalia and across its borders, intensifying conflict in Sudan's periphery, persistent attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in three of Uganda's neighbors, and the rapid-onset war in South Sudan, all demonstrate that it is increasingly foolhardy to deal with Africa's conflicts in isolation from each other, confined to their sovereign borders. Without addressing the complicated transnational core drivers of violence, without being much more inclusive, without dealing decisively with spoilers, and without integrating broader regional actors, today's peace processes have no chance of producing sustainable peace.

Integrated Conflict Systems

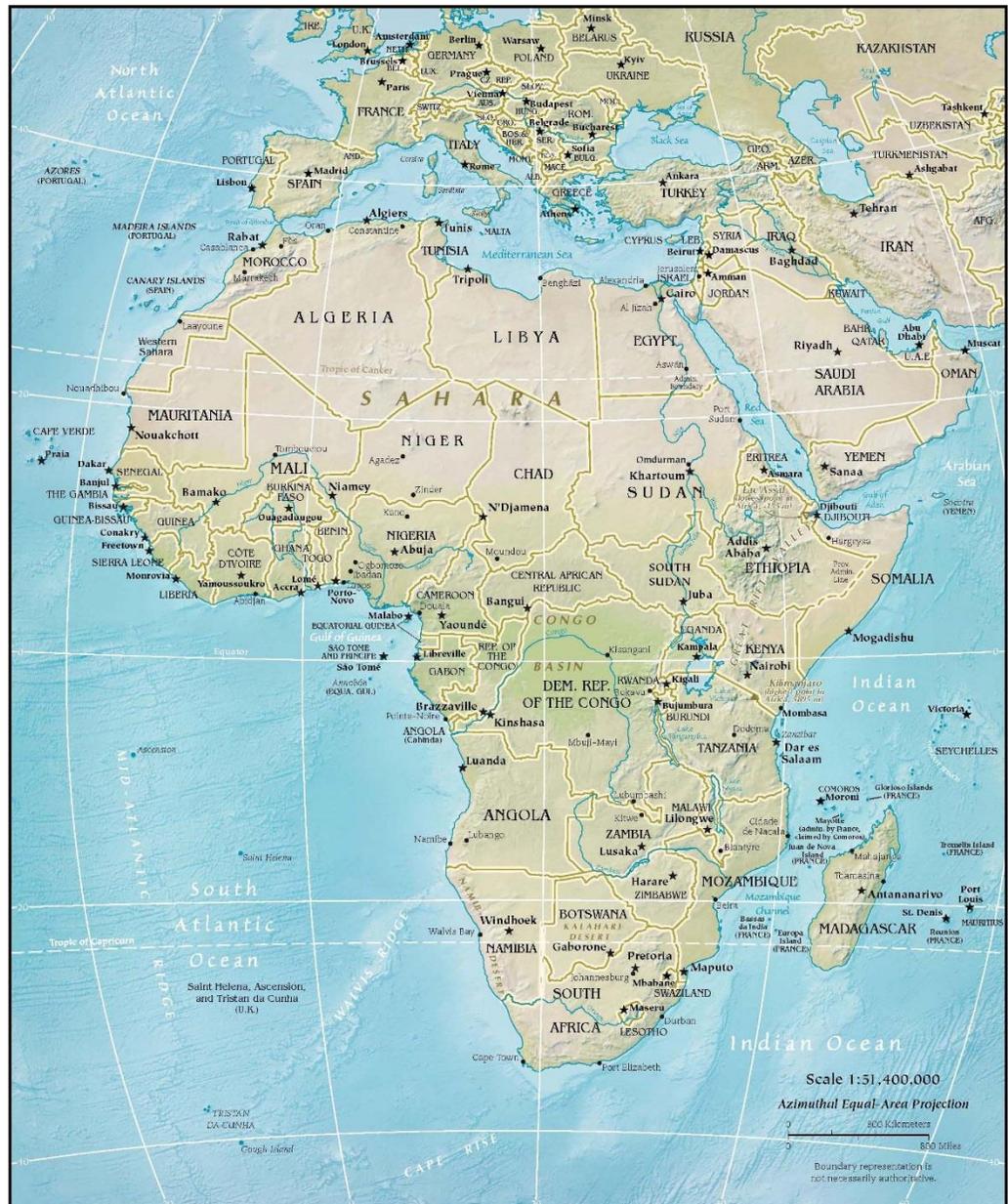
Rather than freestanding, contained conflicts within borders, Africa's wars are increasingly marked by integrated conflict systems that barely recognize borders and involve a dizzying array of armed groups. Today we see that in a widening band of integrated conflict systems that flow from the Horn through East and Central Africa. Current interlinked systems include the following:

- The cold war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, and its impact on Somalia, and Somalia's impacts on northeastern Kenya, where the terrorist network al-Shabaab profits by regularly smuggling poached elephant tusks and charcoal to finance its activities;
- Lingering animosities between Sudan and South Sudan, and their support for cross-border insurgencies in each other's back yards, in addition to the full-scale wars each are facing internally;

- The deep links between conflicts and armed groups in Darfur, eastern Chad, and CAR, where militias have shifting alliances and often work for the highest bidder;
- The persistent phenomenon of the LRA, which has metastasized from northern Uganda into the DRC, CAR, South Sudan, and the Sudan-South Sudan border area;
- And the deadliest single conflict of all of these, the ongoing violence in the DRC, driven in part by animosities and alliances between state and non-state actors in Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi.

West and North Africa are not immune to these deadly patterns. At the turn of this century in West Africa, violence in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Ivory Coast was deeply intertwined. Transnational criminal networks have been instrumental in the emergence of at least one narco-state in West Africa, Guinea-Bissau. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) thrives on drug trafficking, human trafficking, and hostage-taking. Such groups were on the verge of taking over the state in Mali. The Tuareg rebellion and takeover of northern Mali recruited heavily from armed groups in Libya, Chad, Niger, and even Darfur.

Failing to fully heed transnational drivers of conflict in Africa endangers U.S. and European national security. The drugs trafficked by Latin American cartels through the weak states of West Africa are



Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook

flooding Europe, and so are vulnerable victims of human trafficking in West and East Africa. It is clear that the response to Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups from the Sahel to Boko Haram in Nigeria cannot be confined to the current militarized approach.

Non-state criminal networks hold as much potential for mass atrocity crimes as government armies and conventional rebel forces. Some of these unconventional actors have vaguely political agendas, but others utilize violence for economic, territorial, self-defense, or retaliatory ends. The names jockeying in these integrated conflict systems are becoming more and more familiar: the LRA, the Janjaweed, Seleka, anti-balaka, al Shabaab, the White Army, the M23, the ADF, the FDLR, Congolese Mai Mai militias, etc. Some of them are transnational in their movements and funding sources, while others are purely local. Their motives and alliances need to be understood as much as those of state actors, but even where they are better understood, there is a massive gap in strategy to deal with them. These groups rarely sit at negotiating tables, their patrons are often unrecognized, and their financing is largely left unaddressed. These entities sometimes refuse to join processes, sometimes can't get their act together to join or be effective, and sometimes are excluded for good reason. Almost always they serve as spoilers. As long as comprehensive strategies aren't devised to neutralize their spoiler capacities, there will continue to be blood.

These violent contests are often to some degree for political power, because control of the semi-authoritarian states across this region of Africa automatically translates into access to resources and patronage networks that are the Holy Grail in what are some of the poorest countries in the world. The discovery of mass reserves of oil throughout this region is already increasing those stakes for the coming decade. But these conflict systems also circumvent the state in a greed-fueled quest to control sources of wealth and financing outside of state control. Mass atrocities against civilian populations occur in the context of poaching, smuggling, looting, exploiting minerals, illegal taxing, extortion, and other criminal enterprises and manifestations of warlordism.

In these quests for power and/or wealth, the most common form of mobilization of force is to appeal to base identities: race, religion, region, and ethnicity. This has a devastating effect on civilian populations and deepens preexisting cleavages, alters demographics through ethnic cleansing campaigns, gender-based violence, and other mass atrocities, and this makes it much harder for peace processes to address the multiple layers of division that are left in the wake of these conflict systems.

Among the groups competing for wealth and power, there is a well-founded perception that national political systems in this region are all-or-nothing scenarios, in which those in office are the winners and everyone else loses in terms of access to resources, tax revenues, and patronage networks. The perception is that unlike in some other parts of Africa, peaceful paths to power are blocked, so violence becomes

the only viable way to gain office and all its benefits; in some places it is perceived to be the only viable way to ensure survival of the identity group, especially where identity groups have been targeted for discrimination, displacement, or in some extreme cases, elimination.

As one Somali refugee told me once in Mogadishu: “The gun talks louder than the voice.”

Broken System for Countering Mass Atrocities

Given the cross-border and economically-rooted nature of these integrated conflict systems, conventional peace processes and peacekeeping operations have largely failed to get their hands around the complexity of modern African conflict and the mass atrocities that feature so prominently. The African Union and the United Nations continue to pursue an approach that is too limited to succeed in most conflicts. In Sudan, multiple sub-national peace processes have stove-piped conflicts in Darfur, the Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile, and eastern Sudan, while ignoring Abyei. The result is, predictably, deepening war. In South Sudan, diplomats never addressed widening inter-communal and intra-party rifts that lingered beyond the 2011 independence referendum, most dramatically illustrated by an unreformed army that splintered at the slightest alarm in Juba and led to civil war overnight. In DRC, backroom deal after deal has integrated warlords into the national army, and the government has been slow to address any of the core drivers of escalating violence, in particular the illegal extraction of and competition over Congo’s vast natural resource wealth. The list goes on.

The international community – from the United Nations to the African Union, African sub-regional organizations, and external actors with deep interest such as the U.S., France, China and others – needs a response regime that fits the problem.

There is no point in continuing with peace processes that are stove-piped within borders, don’t address core drivers, and don’t involve wider constituencies for peace in a conflicted society. It is of no use scheduling elections if there is no transformative political reform that precedes the poll. It is useless to pass sanctions if the money supply for the violence is left intact. It is counter-productive cutting deals that integrate human rights abusers into national armies but fail to reform those armies and demobilize combatants. It is no use deploying expensive U.N. peacekeeping missions that don’t address cross-border or economic drivers of violence.

Yet this is the norm in conflict resolution today in Africa. That is what the U.N. and A.U. prioritize in current peace efforts, as do interested powers such as the U.S., France, China, the U.K., and others. Africa is reaping what has been sown in these failed peace efforts. The international crisis response system is broken, and nowhere else in the world is the damage more evident.

There is a rational explanation for this structural failure. The world we live in is still one in which the dominant actor is the nation-state, so peace processes end up being centered around states. Because state actors wrap themselves in sovereignty, it is often difficult to address some of the core systemic drivers of violence. The U.N. Security Council and other international bodies are usually hopelessly divided when debates unfold regarding potential intervention to protect civilian populations, mostly because of the sovereignty barrier, which for China and Russia is usually a brick wall. Finally, the international system is learning valuable lessons on how to cut the sources of support for terrorists, but it rarely applies those lessons to countering the money sources for non-terrorist groups that are committing human rights atrocities and prolonging conflict.

Building a New Peacemaking Model

One hopeful sign is the emerging peace efforts in DRC, the deadliest war globally since World War II. After years of inept and ineffectual peacekeeping, the United Nations, African regional organizations, and the broader international community have collectively begun to expand their approach, deploying an added force to help a slowly reforming Congolese army defeat one of the most pernicious armed groups in the region, the M23, near the end of 2013. This military effort was accompanied by strong international pressure on neighboring Rwanda to end its support to the M23. Importantly, these policies followed a series of actions designed to dry up the international market for “conflict minerals” which help fund the armed groups in the DRC. These efforts were driven by a consumer campaign led by NGOs and U.S. congressional legislation focused on transparency in supply chains sourcing from Congo. Private sector action from companies like Intel, Apple, Motorola Solutions, and HP have also been important, as they have taken significant steps to cut off dirty, untraceable minerals from their supply chains and create conflict-free supply chains from Congo for their electronics products.

Now, a new peace initiative involving the deeply complicit regional states is being constructed, driven by Angola and closely supported by U.N. envoy Mary Robinson and her deputy Modibo Touré as well as U.S. envoy Russ Feingold. And accountability has been at the center of recent efforts, with M23 leader Bosco “the Terminator” Ntaganda awaiting trial at the International Criminal Court on the heels of the conviction of Congolese warlord Germain Katanga for war crimes, trials – though flawed – for some of the perpetrators of sexual violence, and broad support for a mixed court that would combine Congolese and international jurists to prosecute high-level architects of the worst atrocities that have been committed as part of the war.

If this more comprehensive strategy demonstrates tangible progress in DRC, responses to other African conflicts suffering from terminal peace processes could be revitalized by this new integrated model of crisis response. The U.S. could help

accelerate this learning curve by creating a crisis response cell in Addis Ababa to which American diplomats and issue experts could deploy to support the widening of current peace efforts throughout the region and to deal with unaddressed elements of the conflicts.

Building on the lessons from the Congo approach, a more effective response to genocide and other mass atrocity crimes would:

- Utilize multi-layered negotiations inclusive of all stakeholders, including civil society;
- More closely involve and/or neutralize regional actors and interests, including pressuring neighboring states that act as spoilers;
- Craft strategies to more effectively cut off revenues to armed groups that build on the lessons from countering terrorist financing and conflict minerals trade, utilizing the impressive array of financial tools developed since 9/11;
- Engage the private sector in helping to cut off supply chains for armed groups and to invest responsibly in the right places;
- Authorize U.N. peacekeeping missions to have much deeper cross-border cooperation to address conflict drivers, not just in the usual information sharing but also the cross-posting of liaison officers and the ability to undertake joint missions where cross-border dynamics undermine stability, such as in the peacekeeping triangle of CAR, Darfur, and South Sudan;
- Undertake steps to freeze conflicts to enable peace processes to unfold;
- Create accountability and reconciliation mechanisms to deal with justice and inter-communal divisions that not only punish perpetrators but also engender lasting justice sector development and counter systemic domestic impunity; and
- Focus on transformative political reforms to seek fully inclusive and transparent governing systems that don't leave all the spoils to the victor.

Rwanda's 20th anniversary and Darfur's 10th will have little meaning without major changes. Twenty-first century violence in Africa – marked by increasingly damaging mass atrocities and deepening conflicts resistant to traditional responses – requires new approaches to peacemaking and civilian protection that can make a real difference in the lives of the people of this conflict-torn region. The days of backroom deals with the guys with the biggest guns must be ended. Much more inclusive peace processes that address the core drivers of violence in all their complexity are the only hope for long-term stability from the Horn to Central Africa, where human suffering has no parallel globally.

Enough is a project of the Center for American Progress to end genocide and crimes against humanity. Founded in 2007, Enough focuses on the crises in Sudan, South Sudan, eastern Congo, and areas affected by the Lord's Resistance Army. Enough conducts intensive field research, develops practical policies to address these crises, and shares sensible tools to empower citizens and groups working for change. To learn more about Enough and what you can do to help, go to www.enoughproject.org.

