

Beyond Western Paradigms: Adapting Peacebuilding for Africa's Realities

Thursday, 6 June 2024 10:45 (1h 30m)

In our globalized world, Western peacebuilding approaches have gained widespread adoption by international institutions and INGOs for conflict resolution. These models often fall short when applied in diverse local contexts, particularly within the complex framework of Africa. The African continent's rich cultural diversity, complex history, and multifaceted conflicts make the application of Western peacebuilding paradigms a challenging endeavour. While these approaches promise stability, democracy, and development, they often grapple futilely with the complex dynamics in Africa. This discussion aims to examine the strengths and limitations of Western peacebuilding models within the African context, aligning with the theme of the BISA Conference 2024 Peacebuilding work group theme, "Everyday Peacebuilding and Lingering Violence." This narrative emphasizes the importance of this discussion within the conference's thematic framework.

Africa, historically influenced by colonization and external ideologies, has shown adaptability and resilience. Western peacebuilding models, when introduced, can be perceived as imposing and presuppose local insufficiency. However, the issue is not incompetence but a matter of context. Understanding the unique historical, political, and socio-cultural backgrounds of each African nation is essential for successful peacebuilding.

Our objective in assessing Western peacebuilding models' strengths and weaknesses is to evaluate what has worked and highlight what is not working, and the need to adapt to what may work. There is a need to adopt tailor-made peacebuilding strategies to fit the African environment. This discussion underscores the importance of incorporating non-Western peacebuilding approaches, leveraging indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms, local knowledge, and traditional practices into the broader peacebuilding framework. African realities are distinct, and peace is not a one-size-fits-all pursuit. This exploration challenges the notion of universality in peacebuilding, recognizing that genuine, enduring peace is deeply connected to local contexts and community-driven solutions.

Guided by this narrative, we invite participants to explore the intricate landscape of peacebuilding. This journey begins with acknowledging the limitations of historical practices, embracing indigenous wisdom, and moving beyond Western paradigms to foster a future marked by lasting and authentic peace for Africa's diverse nations.

The relevance of the proposed panel discussion lies in its potential to contribute to more effective peacebuilding efforts in Africa and beyond. By critically assessing the strengths and weaknesses of liberal peacebuilding in African contexts, the discussion can shed light on the shortcomings of a one-size-fits-all approach to peace interventions. This evaluation paves the way for advocating the incorporation of non-Western models that are more in tune with the local realities and that prioritize the agency of the affected communities.

In essence, this panel discussion can offer a platform for constructive dialogue and critical reflection on the current dominant approach to peacebuilding. It provides an opportunity to challenge established norms, improve the relevance of peace interventions, and ultimately contribute to more sustainable and locally adapted strategies for achieving peace and stability in African regions.

Several countries in the Global South, particularly in Africa, have encountered challenges and limitations with the application of Western liberal peacebuilding models from 2000 to 2023. These failures can be attributed to several reasons, including cultural differences, historical legacies, and external interventions. Proposed solutions often revolve around adapting peacebuilding strategies to better align with local contexts.

Panel Session Structure (1-2 Hours) Introduction (5 minutes)

Welcome and opening remarks by the session chair or moderator.

Brief introduction of the panel topic, its relevance, and its connection to the conference theme.

Panelist Presentations (30-45 minutes)

Allocate each panelist to a specific time slot for their presentation.

Panelists provide insights, research findings, and experiences related to the topic. Encourage them to focus on the strengths and weaknesses of Liberal Peacebuilding in Africa.

Moderated Discussion (15-30 minutes)

The moderator will pose questions to the panelists, encouraging a deeper exploration of the topic.

Panelists respond to each other's presentations, fostering dialogue and debate.

Audience Q&A (10 - 20 minutes)

Open the floor for questions from the audience. This allows for engagement and diverse perspectives.

Encourage participants to ask questions related to the panel topic and its relevance to everyday peacebuilding and lingering violence.

Key Takeaways and Recommendations (10-15 minutes)

Summary of the main points discussed during the panel session.

Highlight key takeaways and recommendations for addressing the challenges and strengths of Liberal Peacebuilding in Africa.

Closing Remarks (5 minutes)

The session chair or moderator offers closing remarks and a vote of thanks to the panelists and the audience for their participation.

Encourage continued discussions and engagement on the topic beyond the conference.

Networking and Informal Discussion (Optional)

If time permits, allow participants to network, and engage in informal discussions about the topic.

Panelists:

1. MartinLuther Nwaneri, Aston University, Birmingham. Department of Politics and International Relations
Rethinking Impact: INGOs Strategies and Peacebuilding in Africa

2. Clyde Collins, Aston University Birmingham, Department of International Relations, and Global Governance.

Revisiting Peacebuilding Strategies in South Sudan and the Central African Republic: Beyond Western Paradigms

3. Joan McDappa. PhD researcher at Kingston University, London, specializing in terrorism, counterterrorism, politics, and governance in Africa.

Navigating Postcolonial Realities: Decolonial Peacebuilding in African States

4. Shahzad Sher. Aston University, Birmingham and National Defence University, Islamabad.

Challenges of peacebuilding on the Western model in the African context.

5. Asma Malik. Dept of International Relations and Global Governance. Aston University, Birmingham

Beyond Western Model: Rethinking Peace Paradigms for Local Realities with the Reference of Africa and Asia.

Chair/Moderator:

Jelena Obradovic – Wochnik. Senior Lecturer in Politics and International Relations, Aston University

Track Classification: Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Working Group