

War Torn Syria, Mali and DRC: Is Peace Possible?

Venue

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Introduction

Lord Curzon, the viceroy of India wrote in 1898

“Countries are pieces on a chessboard upon which is being played out a great game for the domination of the world.”

Not much has changed. The shopping mall massacre in Nairobi was a bloody facade behind which a full-scale invasion of Africa and a war in Asia are the great game.

In my short talk today, I will explore the ongoing conflicts in Syria, Mali and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), how they are linked to extraction of resources, land grabs and hegemonic gains and examine if peace possible in these war torn regions.

History of three countries, Syria, Mali and DRC is marked in various forms with violence, killings and massacres due to ethnic rivalries, religious conflicts, struggles against dictatorships and major powers’ intervention often linked to control of vital resources. The US and European “Anti-Terrorism” agenda often cloaking hegemonist aims further heightens the global threats.

More than 2 million refugees are forced to flee their homes due to the conflict in Syria and 120,000 lives have been lost in the continuing fight between the government troops and the rebels.

France intervention in Mali against Islamist insurgents is for the resource control of uranium in the region.

DRC troops are fighting against M-23 rebels in a conflict which is continuing and the death toll is over 5 million since 1970’s and it is not to do with terrorism, but the agenda which is dominated for controlling the resources such as copper, coltan and diamonds.

For centuries, Britain, France and other European countries through gun boat diplomacy has exported injustice, poverty and corruption to the developing world, and keeping them in perpetual poverty.

Conflicts in Syria, Mali and DRC: Hegemony and Resource Plunder

- Today’s wars are about gaining control of resources and influence. Global militarism in cahoots with Western Governments is destroying the raw – material – rich but impoverished countries of the underdeveloped world.
- The corrupt practices by rich nations of extraction of resources like diamond, copper, coltan, oil etc. on unequal basis from poor countries leaves them impoverished without any wealth to kick start the reconstruction and development of their countries.
- Militarism is the key driver of economics of underdevelopment. Puppet governments in poorest countries are given arms by the rich countries to oppress and control its people in return for unfettered access to natural resources such as oil, gas and minerals, which keeps developing countries in never-ending poverty, widening the gap between the rich and the poor to an all time high.

Violence in the war torn DRC is driven by demand for coltan. This ore is used to make mobile telephones and other electronic devices. Coltan mines in the eastern DRC are fought over by rival militias seeking control over the revenue stream. The rare ore, which can be mined by hand, sells for hundreds of dollars per kilogram is one of the exotic minerals implicated in the violence.

- This evil scenario worldwide leads to extreme poverty which is the cause of over two billion people subsisting on less than \$2 a day. Every 3.6 seconds, a person dies of starvation. Every 30 seconds, a child dies of malaria. Every minute a woman dies in childbirth, a genocide of neglect and abandonment. One is reminded of the quotation of Former US President Dwight Eisenhower who said and I quote, “Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in a final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed”

One of the best documented examples of this kind of abusive relationship is in the Niger Delta, where international energy companies have made a fortune extracting and importing oil. The Delta’s oil represents a huge proportion of Nigeria’s economy, yielding wealth of \$600 billion since the 1960s. Rather than enriching the local population, however, the effects for the people of the Delta have been catastrophic. Frequent oil spills blight their lives and their livelihoods. The majority of the 31 million inhabitants do not have access to clean water or healthcare. According to Amnesty International, which sent a field-research team to the Delta in 2008, ‘at night often the only light visible for miles is from flares burning unwanted gas’.

The astonishing and kleptocratic relationship between rich, oil-consuming nations and their local overseers in the Nigerian government has not gone unnoticed among the Delta’s inhabitants. A profusion of armed groups has emerged with various goals: some to protest at the exploitation and damage being done to the Delta, others simply to extract a share of the wealth through kidnappings and pipeline-taps. Inevitably, to protect their own ill-gotten wealth, Nigeria’s elite has turned to Western arms suppliers for equipment to fight the gangs. Between 2000 and 2005, British arms sales to Nigeria rose tenfold, including armoured vehicles and heavy artillery.

False Flag of War on Terror and Consequences

The war on terror keeps expanding, the new front is Africa, where the US military is involved in 49 of 54 countries. Scramble for Africa which started in the 18th Century, when countries were carved up for the benefit of European powers is being repeated all over again.

Power, elite, rulers control, dominate and legitimise violence by creating fear in the masses like the war on terror, which gives the military a reason for increasing its military spending.

Islamist terrorism is provoked by the West’s wars, a reason which is rarely discussed. Al Qaeda is the manifestation of the anger and humiliation of people living under puppet regimes. Irony is MIC trained Al Qaeda operatives, Iraqi insurgents and Mujahidin’s in unconventional warfare (guerrilla warfare) at Fort Bragg, the US Army John F Kennedy Warfare Centre, North Carolina, USA.

The constant propaganda about threats to national security is what every regime throughout history has used to control the masses.

"War on Terror" is a propaganda tool used by the United States and European countries to provide justification for external and internal decisions to achieve total subjugation of the people while pursuing a policy of World Hegemony. The US "Full Spectrum Dominance" is military concept whereby a joint military structure achieves control over all elements of the battlespace using land, air, maritime, space, and even cyber based technology.

The main western intelligence agencies are instruments of global dominance, whose role in the rest of the world has a direct impact on their own citizens. It's not the revelations that threaten our security, but the agencies and their political masters who keep on a continuous path of military interventions under the pretext of false flag of terror.

Can Dialogue and Diplomacy Bring and End to Conflicts and Kick-start a Sustainable Growth?

In all the three countries, Syria, Mali and DRC, one-shoe-fits-all strategy is not going to work as the reality on the ground is different in each country.

The bottom-line is, there will never be a military solution, now or ever. Iraq and Afghanistan are powerful reminders that US and Western countries relying on force without a workable peace or a political plan is a recipe for deep and prolonged trouble. To promote a process of dialogue, negotiation, diplomacy and reconciliation will lead to a political solution which is the only viable solution to conflicts in these countries.

We all remember the fear, panic and lies spun by the British and American governments, and others that there were weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, and it was not true. Let us learn the lesson of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya where so many millions have been killed in invasions and war, and many continue to die in violence. Violence is not the answer, let's end this "war on terror" and give nonviolence and peace a chance.

Even when countries are fighting at the end of the day they will still come on the dialogue table to resolve. Conflicts can hardly be solved through the barrel of a gun, even if you had the most sophisticated weapon to fight, they will still come to negotiate otherwise you can never live in peace.

UN and African Union (AU) need to take proactive role to solve the crisis in these countries with the aim of promoting peace. There cannot be economic development without peace. To develop economically there must be peace and political stability. So the leadership of African Union have a duty to intervene and sort out the mess.

Conclusion

Regarding peace in Syria, there are some positive signs. Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has destroyed the equipment used to make chemical weapons and also have placed all the existing stocks under seal, impossible to break which is a remarkable progress. Moreover, a conference of all the parties to the Syrian conflict including Government and the oppositions, UN, Russia, US and others is being planned to be held in Geneva which is being called Geneva 2. It is hoped that it can result in a to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The main task is to rebuild not only the political system and infrastructure but also the lives of Syrians including its refugees who have fled their country in fear and terror. It is time for

Syrians and outsiders to cooperate and end this crisis. If the peace talk fails in Syria, there is a danger of it becoming a failed state like Somalia.

However, counter-terrorism from external powers is not obviously consistent with peacebuilding - and, for Mali to recover from the current crisis, solutions must be rooted in peacebuilding, taking into account the historic, political, socioeconomic reality of the country. Peacebuilding efforts in Mali should be Malian-led, should build on the Malian tradition for negotiations, and should look beyond quick elections and the completion of a democratic roadmap. A peacebuilding approach would also comprise the delicate task of finding incentives to bring leaders, jihadists and salafists into a peacebuilding and statebuilding process.

DRC has the largest UN peacekeeping mission in any country and still violence continues. In 2002, African and Western diplomats, along with U.N. officials, actively supervised negotiations to end the war. They brokered a peace deal, and in 2006 they organised the first democratic elections in Congo's history. To this day, the peacekeeping mission they set up is the only force capable of protecting the population from the ongoing violence.

UN special envoy, Mary Robinson has convened a head of state meeting of heads of state from DRC, South Sudan, Rwanda, Tanzania. It is hoped when the peace talks resumes after the summit, progress can be made between the government and M-23 rebels for a peaceful resolution in DRC.

There is need to address the other main sources of violence: distinctively local conflicts over land, grassroots power, status and resources. Most of the violence in Congo is not coordinated on a large scale. It is the product of conflicts among fragmented local militias, each trying to advance its own agenda at the village or district level. Those then percolate and expand.

We need strong democratic governments in these countries which can allow power to be shared and encourage openness and accountability for sustainable peace, economic growth and better future for Syria, Mali and DRC.

Peace is when people are able to resolve their differences without violence and can work together to improve the quality of their lives. Peacebuilding helps people achieve this by ensuring they can live in safety, have fair and effective laws, participate in shaping political decisions, make a decent living and secure their wellbeing.

Allow me to remind you all that we all have a role to play to challenge Lord Cruzon's prophecy of a game of domination of the world, by making peace a reality in Syria, Mali and DRC. – Thanks for listening.

Notes:

1. Vijay Mehta, *The Economics of Killing*, (Pluto Press, London 2012).
2. John Pilger, *More than jihadism or Iran, China's role in Africa is Obama's obsession*, (The Guardian, October 2013).
3. Timothy V. Gatto, *The False Flag "War On Terror,"* (Activist Post, June 2013)
4. Seamas Milne, "It's the spies, not the leaks, that threaten our security," (The Guardian, October 2013)
5. Victor Iluyemi, "Jonathan receives 2013 Africa Peace Award, says crises hampering Nigeria's development," (World Stage, October, 2013)
6. Séverine Autesserre, "The Only Way to Help Congo," (The New York Times, June 2012)
7. Katrine Høyer, "Crisis in Mali," (International Alert, March 2013)

The materials and excerpts have been taken from the book *The Economics of Killing*. This speech can be downloaded from www.unitingforpeace.com

Bio – **Vijay Mehta** is a renowned author, international speaker and global activist for peace, development and human rights. He is the chair of Uniting for Peace (www.unitingforpeace.org) and Founding Trustee of Fortune Forum Charity (www.fortuneforum.org).

Working since 1979, Uniting for Peace is a non-profit organisation devoted to creating and promoting a global culture of peace, nonviolence and poverty reduction. The flagship campaign of Uniting for Peace is called 4D for World Peace. It is a campaign to create global frameworks for taking actions on interconnecting global issues of disarming and demilitarising the world and the savings thus achieved to be deployed for development and democracy.

The charity Fortune Forum whose founder is Renu Mehta, daughter of Vijay Mehta, held summits (2005 and 2006) where Former US President Clinton, Former US Vice President Al Gore and Actor Michael Douglas were keynote speakers. The summits raised over a million pounds for charity and attracted a worldwide audience of 1.3 billion people (one fifth of humanity) including print and media coverage.

Vijay Mehta's books include *The Economics of Killing* (2012), *The Fortune Forum Code: For a Sustainable Future* (2006), *Arms No More* (2005) and *The United Nations and its Future in the 21st Century* (2005).

He has appeared in various TV programmes including BBC World, Press TV, Aitak-24 hour Indian news channel, and Think Peace documentary, Canada, among others. The Sunday Times, Independent, Observer and Guardian newspapers, among other journals have written about him. His life is devoted to the service of peace, humanity and our planet.

Vijay Mehta is the recipient of the Global Indian Karmaveer (Action hero) Puraskaar (Award) by iCONGO (International Confederation of NGO's). He is now a noble-laureate 2012 – 2013 of the iCONGO team of advisors and mentors (www.icongo.in). It is an award for outstanding luminaries working for peace and social justice.

He has been appointed a fellow of the New Westminster College, Province of British Columbia, Canada in 2013.

Vijay Mehta's new book "**The Economics of Killing: How the West Fuels Wars and Poverty in the Developing World**" is published by Pluto Press (UK) / Palgrave Macmillan (USA) / Amazon (Worldwide). For reviews and endorsements of the book, please visit: www.theeconomicsofkillling.org

"Vijay...a long standing activist for peace, development, human rights and environment"
The Sunday Times Magazine, London 1st February, 2009

"Vijay Mehta lends intellectual credibility to the project and wrote 'The Fortune Forum Code for a Sustainable Future', a sort of manifesto that will underpin the group's future activities."
The Independent, London 26 September 2006