The quest for happiness as an underlying motive for violent conflict in Africa

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Abstract

Violent conflicts continue to be a major feature of much of Africa's political landscape. Not only are Africa's conflicts increasing, but they are also interpreted and theorised in varied ways, with irreducible discrepancies. In the dominant literature, ethnicity, religion, resources, territory, poor governance, and the struggle for power, among others, have been identified as the major causes of violent conflict on the continent. This paper, a broad brush that raises more questions than answers, argues that, underlying these apparent causes of violent conflict is the undying desire for happiness. It concludes by paraphrasing Von Clausewitz's dictum that war in Africa is a pursuit of happiness by other means and, therefore, to prevent it, policy should promote popular happiness.

Keywords: happiness/unhappiness, violent conflict, development, democratic governance, ethnic identity, Africa

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Introduction

The enthusiasm and euphoria that surrounded Africa's independence have turned into anguish and rebellion as economic stagnation, poor governance, corruption and brutal repression of dissent continue to frustrate popular dreams of happiness and prosperity. With more and more Africans increasingly unhappy about their lives and the performance of their governments, the continent has steadily slid into a Hobbesian state of nature of 'war of each against all' (Hobbes 2016:7). Furley (1995:1) notes, 'from the 1990s there has been no diminution in the number of violent conflicts [in pursuit of happiness] in Africa'. The consequent deaths, infrastructural destruction and other costs have not only been increasing, but have also been mortgaging the continent's development. As IANSA, Oxfam and Saferworld (2007:1) observe, 'armed conflict in Africa costs around $18bn per year', seriously derailing development. Many are fleeing conflict and migrating to other countries, and in 2016 alone about 5 000 died trying to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe (Al Jazeera 2017). African wars have been deadly, but their motives have been usually misunderstood.

While in the dominant literature conflict has been attributed to ethnicity, religion, resources and territory (Gomes Porto 2002; Collier and Hoeffler 1999; Furley 1995), this paper contends that underlying these apparent causes of violent conflict is the undying desire for happiness. As Epicurus (2014:3), pointed out, 'we all desire happiness as an end in itself, and all other things are desired as a *means* for producing happiness'. Unhappiness, in particular, frustration with the growing gap between people's aspirations for prosperity and happiness and the reality of pauperisation and unhappiness (see table 1), is the main driver of violent conflict in Africa. The apparent causes identified in the literature are thus best seen as 'symptoms' of deeper causes, which are invoked only when convenient. If happy, people from different cultures, ethnicities, nations, races, religions and regions can live together in peace. As the 'Charter for Happiness' (GNHUSA 2016) aptly notes: 'Families, neighborhoods,

businesses, organizations, cities, states, nations and the international community thrive when people are happy'; but when there is unhappiness there is strife and violence. The point is: 'Happiness: everyone wants it, yet relatively few seem to get enough of it' (Haden 2014:3). The fact that 'relatively few seem to get enough of it' is at the heart of the problem of violent conflict in Africa.

Essentially representing relentless efforts to escape from unhappiness, rebellion is both a means for achieving the ultimate goal of happiness, and a consequence of the failure to achieve it. Nzongola-Ntalaja and Lee (1997:9) point to the subtle connection between conflict and unhappiness when they say: 'Instances of revolt against the neo-colonial state constitute the antecedents of the new social movement for democracy, which is basically concerned with fulfilling the failed expectations of independence' of freedom and happiness. This paper hopes to shed some light on this complex subject, if only to invite others to undertake deeper research.

Methodology

Empirically and methodologically, the paper is based on a comparative field opinion survey conducted by the author in 1997 in Cambridge (UK), Cape Town (SA) and Rusape (Zimbabwe). Respondents were asked, among others, to: Define happiness; state whether or not they valued happiness; state whether or not they were happy; and to say whether or not they believed it is possible to create a society in which everyone can be happy. A detailed discussion of the results of the survey is contained in a forthcoming book: 'The Pursuit of Happiness and its Many Consequences'. Here suffice it to mention that 70 per cent of the 300 respondents said they valued happiness, about 40 per cent were unhappy, and 56 per cent were pessimistic about the possibility of creating a society in which everyone can be happy.

The paper also relies on secondary literature, both the print and electronic media. Analytically, the paper adopts a holistic and multidisciplinary

approach that draws from political science, psychology, development economics and peace studies. The discussion stresses the objective political, economic and social conditions under which African people subjectively experience happiness, and violently pursue it. At one level, the paper is a critique of the inequalities of happiness, the dominant ideologies that legitimate them, and the political, economic and social conditions that produce these disturbing and destabilising inequalities. By looking at happiness, unhappiness and conflict from a holistic and multidisciplinary perspective, the paper offers a useful corrective to the shortcomings of the perceptually biased dominant conflict theories and policies frameworks. In short, the paper attempts to put the pursuit of happiness into a political and historical context, as well as to offer a wider frame for considering public policy options for promoting popular happiness.

Conflict and happiness in the literature and in history

Although the relationship between the pursuit of happiness and conflict is a critical issue in need of further exploration, the substantial bodies of literature on conflict and happiness suggest no direct connections between the two, and each anyway says very little about the other. Consequently, we know a lot of each, but not enough together, and too little about the intrinsic and complex relation of unhappiness to conflict. For instance, the dominant discourses on violent conflict tend to focus on its surface manifestations, generally eschewing the underlying powerful psychological desire to be happy. Pervasive violence is generally explained by reference to its apparent manifestations, such as ethnic, religious, ideological tensions and the struggle for power.

Singer (cited in Gomes Porto 2002:6), stresses that 'territory, ideology, dynastic legitimacy, religion, language, ethnicity, self-determination, resources, markets, dominance, equality and revenge' are the main causes of violent conflict in Africa. Wehr (1979), in a more illuminating analysis, identifies seven competing approaches to understanding the causes of conflict and, by implication, of unhappiness: conflict is innate

in social animals; it is generated by the nature of societies and the way they are structured; it is dysfunctional in social systems and symptom of pathological strain; it is functional in social systems and necessary for social development; it is an inevitable feature of competing state interests in conditions of international anarchy; it is a result of misperception, miscalculation and poor communication; it is a natural process common to all societies. In contradistinction, this paper stresses unhappiness as the fundamental underlying cause of violent conflict in Africa.

Unhappiness breeds hatred of the perceived causer of the unhappiness, the enemy. According to Galtung (2012:8), 'hatred is a psychological preparation for violence …. I have to hurt somebody in order not to be harmed myself'. Hatred and unhappiness become the basis for 'fight', just as 'fright' becomes a basis for 'flight' (Galtung 2012:8). In short, hatred is a 'necessary condition for war' (Galtung 2012:8), and once war has erupted, killing the 'enemy', euphemised as victory, becomes a source of happiness. If many are ready to die or kill for happiness, what really is it?

What is happiness?

Aristotle (2014) considered happiness to be the 'meaning and purpose of life, the whole aim and end of existence', whose quest for motivates and justifies action (Aristotle 2014:1). In the same vein, Epicurus (2014:3) declared: 'Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting point of every choice and every aversion, and to it we always come back'. For Bentham (1907:1), 'happiness is the greatest good', and therefore government should aim for the greatest happiness of the greatest majority. Similarly, rational choice theorists posit that rational agents are always supposed 'to maximize … happiness' (Lehrer 2009:100). Gilbert (2014:19) goes further and asserts: 'Happiness – You fight for it, strive for it, insist upon it, and sometimes even travel around the world looking for it'. As the violence in Africa suggests, in the pursuit of happiness, self-interest often looms large, and with catastrophic consequences. In short, many people value and pursue happiness, and depending on circumstances, they pursue it either peacefully or violently.

There are two competing views on the sources of happiness or unhappiness. On the one hand, scholars like Strack and others (1991:1) believe that 'happiness depends on ourselves', that it comes from the 'inside', and that it is a personal choice, an individual responsibility, and the consequence of personal effort. For Freud (cited in Rose 1993:89), unhappiness or misery is 'privatized, internalized angst', which 'belongs to the individual in her or his relation to herself or himself'. Freud, as noted by Rose (1993:93) also blamed the miseries on the inadequacies of our systems for regulating relationships at family, community, national and global levels.

On the other hand, materialists consider happiness and unhappiness as a product of the external environment, a result of material economic and political conditions and power relations. For Reich (cited in Rose 1993:89) the dynamic of manufacturing unhappiness and misery is 'not internal to the subject, but passes between the subject and the outside that has direct effects upon psychic processes…'. Misery and unhappiness come from society, and are therefore a public phenomenon, which occur 'out there where the people were… where it is really happening' (Reich, cited in Rose 1993:89). Clear from these debates, and from the opinion survey conducted by the author, people from different ideological standpoints, classes, cultures, races, sexes and ages answer differently the question: 'What is happiness?' As one of the respondents aptly remarked: 'There are perhaps as many definitions of happiness as there are people in the world'. Our views depend, to a large extent, on who we are.

Though it means different things to different people, broadly happiness is a subjective feeling which is mediated by external forces. The external environment offers either opportunities or constraints to one's pursuit of happiness. For instance, one cannot be happy on an empty stomach or in a war situation where death is an ever present threat. Essentially, happiness is a result of a constellation of conditions, which include biological/ genetic traits, psychological predispositions, beliefs, spirituality, as well as social, economic and political conditions. On a 'broad systemic level', happiness 'means peace, economic and environmental justice, equality,

and wellbeing so that all people, animals, and the planet can thrive' (GNHUSA 2016).

A subjective feeling of satisfaction based on a finely tuned blend of both feeling and reason, and influenced by the environment, expectations, power and knowledge, happiness is achieved when most physical, mental, spiritual and aesthetic needs are met. According to Maslow (cited in McLeod 2014:1), these basic human needs include physiological needs (air, shelter, water, food), safety and security, social needs (friends and family), esteem (self-esteem, confidence and achievement), and self-actualisation (authenticity, credibility and spirituality). In both its hedonic and eudaemonic senses, 'happiness is the degree to which an individual judges the overall quality of his life-as-a-whole favourably ... [it] is about satisfying needs and wants and being satisfied by that satisfaction' (Veenhoven 1984:22). As Nzongola-Ntalaja and Lee (1997:11) observe, and as the experience of war-torn Africa suggests, 'these needs can become a necessity, or even a political demand for a new social project, when [people's] situation deteriorates or when they are in a period of crisis'. In other words, when most basic needs and wants are not met, as in much of Africa, unhappiness increases, and this in turn forces many potentially peaceful people to pursue happiness violently.

The pursuit of happiness in history

Historically, 'the happiness of the human species has always been at the focus of attention of the humanities ...' and social sciences (Strack et al. 1991:1). Political ideologies, revolutions and religions are all based on promises of happiness – on earth or in heaven. The state's long, contested and convoluted history, about its nature and limits, centred on how best to structure it to promote stability and individual happiness. Similarly, commerce and capitalism flourish because of their promises of happiness, through the provision of desired goods and services.

Underscoring the importance of happiness, the United States (US) Declaration of Independence, for example, stresses the pursuit of

happiness, together with liberty and private property, as a fundamental human right. Building on that tradition, today the Gross National Happiness USA (GNHUSA 2016) movement is campaigning for the signing of the Charter for Happiness, which obliges government to create conditions for happiness. In 2012, the United Nations (UN) Network for Sustainable Development published the first *World Happiness Report* and in 2013 the UN General Assembly, to its credit, endorsed the value of happiness as an important development goal by declaring 20 March the International Happiness Day. To avert violent conflict, Africa must follow suit in endorsing happiness as the ultimate goal of development and society itself.

The quest for happiness in Africa

In Africa, the centrality of happiness to the lives of many people is expressed in folklore, literature, songs, names of people and places. For example, among the Shona of Zimbabwe, common names include *farai* (be happy), *farisai* (be very happy), *tichafara* (we shall be happy), and *rufaro* (happiness – the name of a stadium in Harare). Similarly, in siSwati of Swaziland, common names include *jabulani* (be happy) and *jabulisa* (make happy). In fact, at the heart of the independence struggles in Africa was the quest for freedom, which is a fundamental condition for happiness. As Chingaira (1980) sang at Zimbabwe's first independence celebration, Africans 'want to be very happy'. This demand for happiness and a 'better life seems to be common to all world philosophies and religions: it is the search for the *Kingdom of God on Earth*' (Nzongola-Ntalaja and Lee 1997:11).

Far from being happy, the sad reality is that far too many Africans are increasingly becoming unhappy. As shown in table 1 below, on a Cantril ladder question asking respondents to value their lives on a 0 to 10 scale, with the worst possible life as 0 and the best possible life as 10, Africa has the lowest mean of subjective well-being and happiness in the world (Helliwell et al. 2016:7).

Table 1

Population-weighted averages of perceived happiness, 2012–2015

Region	Mean
North America, Australia and New Zealand	7.125
Latin America and Caribbean	6.578
Western Europe	6.575
Central and Eastern Europe	5.554
Commonwealth of Independent states	5.502
Southeast Asia	5.363
East Asia	5.288
Middle East and North Africa	4.999
South Asia	4.589
Sub-Saharan Africa	4.370

Source: Helliwell et al. 2016:7.

According to these figures, Africa is the world's unhappiest continent. Happiness levels within the continent vary considerably. For example, as the opinion survey shows, South Africans are happier than Zimbabweans: the massive migration of Zimbabweans into SA is essentially in search of happiness. Even though it is the unhappiest continent, there is also happiness amidst hard times, and indeed not every unhappy African is pursuing happiness violently.

The political, economic and social conditions on the continent do not support popular happiness. Authoritarianism and brutal suppression of dissent has meant that freedom is reserved only for the lucky and happiness for the few. Economic stagnation and rising unemployment are forcing youth into crime, piracy, migration, violent extremism and rebellion. As Mkandawire (2002:102) notes, much of post-independent Africa has witnessed a sharp decline in income per capita, growth and development: 'the number of the poor as measured by various indicators has increased both in absolute terms and relative to the size of the population'. There has been an 'increase in social inequality in virtually every country, and the persistence of … egregious disparities' (Mkandawire 2002:102). Rising inequalities in happiness have forced many to 'fight for happiness'.

As with the central character in Tolstoy's epic, *War and Peace* (1988:33), who declared: 'I am going to war because I am not happy with the life I am living', many in Africa are apparently going to war because they are not happy. In pursuit of happiness some are fighting for control of the state, access to economic resources and for democracy as means to achieving happiness. Others are mobilising around ethnic and religious identity while still others are resisting globalisation.

The apparent causes of violent conflict and their links to unhappiness and conflict

Different scholars have identified different variables as the main causes of violent conflict in Africa. As shown below, these apparent causes are outward manifestations of the undying desire to be happy. This seems to be the case because, when happy, people from different economic, ethnic, religious and national groups can live together in peace, but when unhappy they quarrel and fight.

Poor governance

The state as the ultimate embodiment of power can be the most powerful weapon in the violent struggle for happiness, but may also be the most vital means for guaranteeing present and future security and happiness. Its legal monopoly of power allows those who control it to decide 'who gets what, why and how' of the scarce resources as well as what constitutes 'legal' and 'illegal' happiness – abortion, sexuality, religion, and drugs. It is not surprising therefore, that in order to guarantee their present and future security and happiness, different economic, ethnic and religious groups in Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and Sudan, among others, are engaged in vicious struggles to capture and control the state. Almost invariably, and as typical examples of poor governance, Africa's ruling elite has tried to use state power to promote its own happiness at the expense of the masses, who then expressed their dissent and resorted to rebellion.

Poor governance, typically manifested in the failure to provide security to citizens, deliver quality essential goods and services, solve economic

problems, and promote popular happiness, 'is the most important single cause of violent conflict in Africa' (Hutchful and Aning 2004:143). More specifically, poor governance has led to increased unhappiness, a loss of the 'incredibly stabilizing faith in the state' (Wallerstein 1999:57), and has dented the state's legitimacy in the eyes of the ruled. As Gramsci (1971:23) warned, when this happens, 'violent solutions can occur, and the traditional means of using the state to maintain dominant-class hegemony deteriorates'. Indeed in Africa, as hegemonic discourses disintegrate due to poor governance, corruption, cronyism, oppression, ethnic and religious marginalisation, attempts at 'violent solutions' are occurring at an alarming rate.

With some of the poorly governed, and unhappy, ready to fight for happiness, 'poorly governed countries will remain the primary locale of present and future wars' (Gomes Porto 2002:6). On the other hand, good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in preventing violent conflict and promoting development and happiness. In a nutshell, poor governance has compounded the state's legitimacy crisis, which in turn has catalysed the degeneration of politics into warfare, and has led to increased calls for good governance and democratisation.

Destabilising democracy

Democracy, as 'rule by the people and for the people', is for many 'the political vehicle for decent livelihood, equal rights, a reasonable income, access to education and health' (Wallerstein 1999:88). As a means towards majority happiness, calls for democratisation are calls for more happiness, which are triggered by rising poverty and unhappiness on the continent.

In theory, democracy should promote popular happiness, its legitimate end. However, in reality, far from increasing popular happiness, struggles for democratisation have brought more violence and unhappiness in Africa. Part of the problem is that democratisation is seen by some African leaders as a threat to their power, oft ill-gotten wealth and happiness. To defend

their privileges, they often suppress democratic forces through political violence, generating counter-violence and increasing unhappiness.

In Burundi, the Central African Republic, Kenya and Gambia, for example, calls for democratisation have been destabilising, and indeed have led to the death of many. Even more disturbing, in Moslem Africa, and partly reflecting what Huntington (2011:1) calls 'the clash of civilizations', attempts at democratisation, which is deemed anti-Islam by Islamic Jihadists, have led to increased political instability and anti-west militancy. As Wallerstein (1999:18) rightly notes:

> Everyone speaks of it …. But democratization will not diminish, but add to, the great disorder.

Democracy, by allowing many ideas about happiness and the good society to flourish, has led to increased political contestation, violence and unhappiness in Africa. The point is, as Obama, the former US president (Al Jazeera 2016b) reasoned: 'Democracy is simple when everyone has similar tastes, beliefs and values. It is more complex when people have different backgrounds' and different ideas about happiness and the good society. The inherent challenges of pursuing happiness through democratisation in Africa have also been compounded by globalisation.

Unwelcome globalisation

Globalisation, characterised by simultaneous economic integration and disintegration, convergence and clashes of cultures and civilizations, has led to a fascinating redefinition of the unhappiness-conflict dialectic in Africa. While the increasing integration of Africa into the global economy offers numerous opportunities for increasing happiness levels, through, for instance, easy access to quality goods and services, it also generates anxiety and tensions. Those disaffected by the impact of globalisation have depicted and violently resisted it as new forms of colonialism, westernisation and imperialism, by which the West seeks to impose supposed universal truths and notions about happiness, human rights, good governance and democracy on the continent. As Wallerstein (1999:155) points out,

western truths and ideas of happiness, which are being spread through globalisation, 'are not universal truths and if there exist universal truths, they are complex, contradictory and plural'.

In colonial and post-colonial Africa, the supposed western universal truths may actually constitute a form of violence against the 'other', and therefore a source of resistance and counter-violence. In Mali, Nigeria and Somalia, for example, the Islamist insurgents are violently rejecting 'western truths' and values of happiness, democracy and gender equality, which they deem anti-Islamic, and they seek instead to establish their own Islamic value systems based on Sharia Law.

As Wallerstein (1999:155) notes, 'humanity's greatest self-imposed limitation', and indeed a pernicious source of violence and unhappiness in Africa, is the West's dismissal of African indigenous knowledge systems, which are different ways of knowing based on different cosmologies, epistemologies and ontologies, as 'primitive' and 'superstitious'. In short, globalisation, by introducing new values about happiness which challenge old ones, has been an invidious source of violent conflict in Africa, violence which has been amplified by the intense competition for economic resources.

Resource control

Economic resources, such as oil, minerals, gas, water, timber, productive pastures and farming land, which could be a vital means towards attaining the ultimate goal of happiness, are now 'the main drivers of conflict' which are 'central to the origins and continuance of many civil wars' (Collier and Hoeffler 1999:3). As Gomes Porto (2002:2) notes, resources, 'both scarce and abundant, together with other variables, now play an important role in the onset and escalation of violent conflicts'. In countries with abundant but inequitably distributed resources, such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Nigeria, many are resorting to violence in order to have their share of 'the national cake', and be happy. In the unending conflict in the DRC, for example, extreme economic inequality, in a country with

abundant diamond and other precious minerals, created unhappiness and hence conditions for violent conflict. Similarly, in Nigeria oil has sparked localised rebellion, while in Sudan control of oil and ecological resources fuelled the civil war.

As the fortune of one becomes another's misfortune, resources, such as oil and minerals in the Sahal region, have attracted the US, France and China, leading to competition and militarisation of the region (Al Jazeera 2016a). The 'war on terror', which has seen the US Africa Command (AFRICOM) set up bases in the region, train local armies and introduce drones, is masking a far greater struggle for shrinking resources that are needed to oil the US military industrial complex (Al Jazeera 2016a). In Libya the US, France and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) intervened to depose Gaddafi primarily to access Africa's largest oil reserves (Al Jazeera 2016a) – as captured in a people's mural in Johannesburg, entitled 'Multinationals are murderers' (mural photographed by author, 1997). The point is, as Hobbes (2016:3) said, 'hasty acquisition and aggression begets antagonism'.

Clearly, notes Gomes Porto (2002:14), a 'new geography of conflict, a reconfigured cartography in which resource flows rather than political and ideological divisions constitute the major fault lines' has emerged. Whether motivated by grievances or greed, struggles to access and control ecological resources as a means to achieving happiness, remain a major cause of conflicts in Africa (Gomes Porto 2002:2). As a violent expression of a distributional conflict, resource wars are about the perennial political questions of 'who gets what, why and how' of the resources necessary to achieve happiness – questions whose urgency have been amplified by stagnating development.

Insufficient and/or unwanted development

Development, depending on context and situation, can promote or undermine happiness, while lack of development invariably causes unhappiness and conflict. According to Epicurus (2014:3), the first

theoretician of pleasure, the ethical and legitimate end of science and development is happiness. This 'belief in promoting happiness through development is an old one, and is indeed a recurrent theme in the history of moral philosophy' (Veenhoven 1984:1). Development improves the quantity and quality of goods and services, raises the standards of living, and thus contributes to the ultimate goal of happiness. Development also capacitates individuals, communities and nations in their pursuit of happiness, and through science and technology, it makes production more efficient and cost effective. From this standpoint, development is therefore a necessary condition for happiness.

Yet, paradoxically, and as a manifestation of the fundamental ambivalence of civilization, development has simultaneously undermined certain traditional forms of happiness while creating new 'western' ones. In particular, development and modernisation have brought new values of happiness which have led to conflict between traditionalists and modernists, rural dwellers and urbanites, the older and the younger generations, and feminists and patriarchs. For instance, issues like children's, women's, and gay and lesbian rights are dividing society: in the name of 'culture' and community happiness these vulnerable groups have been subjected to violence. Escobar (1995), critiquing western development discourses and practices, argues that development has increased unhappiness and entrenched post-colonial dependency on countries of North America and Europe. For Escobar (1995:back-cover blurb), development policies are nothing more than 'mechanisms of control that were just as pervasive and effective as their colonial counterparts', and 'the struggle against developmentalism is nothing less than a struggle for reclaiming the dignity of cultures that have been turned into a set of experimental subjects, waiting to be sacrificed at the end of a defined set of operations…'. In a nutshell, by denigrating local cultures, beliefs and practices, western forms of development have contributed to unhappiness in Africa, and to that extent, constitute a form of violence, which in turn has led to counter-violence in the form of wars of self-determination and militant calls for Islamic states.

While certain forms of development may generate unhappiness, lack of development or underdevelopment causes even greater unhappiness and violent conflict. As Gurr (cited in Gomes Porto 2002:14) notes, 'for the last half century at least, societies at low levels of development have suffered much more from societal warfare than prosperous societies'. In a similar vein, Collier and Hoeffler (1999:7) observe: 'Civil war is overwhelmingly a phenomenon of low income countries… [and] the higher the per capita income on an internationally comparable measure, the lower is the risk of civil war'. They add, 'higher income per capita reduces the duration of civil war and the probability of its occurrence' (Collier and Hoeffler 1999:7). As Azar (1990:155) concludes: 'Reducing overt conflict requires reduction in levels of underdevelopment'. In short, the lack of development and the deteriorating economic conditions have contributed to increasing unhappiness and violent conflict.

To recapitulate, the 'creative destruction' of 'Janus-faced' and 'something of a Faustian bargain' development in Africa has 'brought forth both the positive and darker sides of a disruptive process...' (Mkandawire 2002:102). A socio-economic process of transformation and a cultural discourse development entails the 'creative destruction' of the 'old order' and the replacing of it with a new one. Such a process also involves multiple actors whose diverse interests, priorities and ideas about happiness render development a contested process, characterised by conflict between its beneficiaries and losers, the happy and the unhappy. This complex relationship between development and happiness has been further complicated by the exponential population growth.

Population explosion

With sex as one of the most easily accessible sources of happiness, especially to the poor, the African population is growing exponentially. As Bish (2016:1) notes, 'while population growth slows in the rest of the world', 'it continues to rise in Africa' – in spite of the HIV/AIDS pandemic – and its growth rates have far outstripped development rates. The problem is, while the population is growing, the resources necessary to guarantee

its happiness are dwindling and governments' capacities to deliver goods and services are overwhelmed. In other words, population explosion puts pressure on limited resources, and results in violent competition for declining economic resources. The sooner the continent adopts stringent population control policies, the better and happier it should become, for 'involvement of governments in fertility management has positive influences in promoting peace, security and development' (Kirk 1996:383). In a word, population explosion, in a context of dwindling resources and limited development, has intensified violent competition for resources, and reflecting the power of dominant ideologies, the competition has taken ethnic and religious forms.

Ethnic mobilisation

Ethnic identity, as a biological fact and/or social construct, provides the frameworks within which happiness is defined, experienced and pursued. It influences happiness by providing a sense of belonging, giving cultural and moral guidance, defining power relationships, and articulating beliefs about common ancestry and destiny. Because of the distinct ethnic dialects, traditions, and body markings or ear piercing, ethnicity is easily used as a potent political tool for effectively mobilising groups in violent pursuit of collective and individual happiness, and as a weapon for denying some groups access to resources essential to achieve happiness. As Gomes Porto (2002:8) observes, ethnicity is 'most likely to provide the basis for political mobilisation and conflict when it provides the basis for invidious distinctions among peoples … that are deliberately maintained through public policy and social practice'.

Ethnically based conflicts have erupted in Burundi, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, South Sudan, and in Mozambique, where in pursuit of happiness, ethnicity was 'created or de-emphasized by power seeking political elites in historically determined economic and social arrangements' (Sisk 1996:12). In conditions of economic inequities and injustices, as in these countries, ethnic – and religious – loyalties are exaggerated and hatred of strangers

amplified, consequently making ethnicity a major source of violent conflict and unhappiness in Africa.

Religious fanaticism

Religion, having 'played a particular role in the formation of the European modern nation-state system itself is at once special and dangerous' (Lee 2014:1). It is an important force which determines one's identity and happiness, as well as readies one to sacrifice or to kill. To believers, religion provides a moral and ethical guideline on how to live happily, on earth and in heaven. Some religions, like Islamic fundamentalism, also punish offenders and non-adherents by, for instance, stoning to death women who commit adultery and executing those accused of apostasy or infidelity in some Muslim communities. In the name of religion, and to promote certain religious doctrines about happiness and the 'good society', many are ready to kill in cold blood.

Unhappy with their lives, many in Africa have 'discovered' God as their source of eternal happiness and salvation. Remarkably, as political, economic and social conditions continue to deteriorate, and many become unhappier, there has been a tantalising religious resurgence of considerable proportions on the continent. Men of the cloth, clerics, pastors, preachers and prophets are vying for influence and competing for 'clients' to offer their 'holy' recipe for a happy and prosperous life. In Egypt, Libya, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan where Jihad, a new militant religious ideology that seeks to establish Islamist states that promote Islamic conceptions of happiness, has emerged. In Somalia al-Shabab, an Islamist insurgent group which emerged from the ruins of the country's civil war, and is linked to al-Qaeda, is waging a brutal insurgency against the African Union supported weak state. Similarly, in Nigeria, Boko Haram, which means, 'western education is forbidden', is engaged in a bloody war against the central government and is trying to form its own state in northern Nigeria under strict interpretation of Islamic law. Boko Haram draws its 'support from uneducated, unemployed and socio-economically disadvantaged Nigerian Northerners who are fed up with corruption,

heavy-handed state security forces and neglect of the north' (De Villiers 2015:3). By promising happiness and martyrdom to its adherents, Jihad has attracted youth who are 'deeply discontented with their governments' (Khouri, cited in Weekend Argus 2015).

These manifestly religious wars are driven by the desire to access resources that are essential to satisfying that never ending quest for happiness. As De Villiers (2015:3) aptly observes, these conflicts are triggered by 'local grievances as a result of political and socio-economic marginalisation and the inequitable distribution of resources'. The irresistible attractiveness of religion in times of hardship and desperation subsists in its ability to offer simple answers to complex questions, which are beyond our comprehension. To paraphrase Nietzsche (see Hayman 1997:49), instead of letting rapid change, uncertainty and pauperisation disorient us, we cling on to the faith that stabilises us. Thus, as Marx pointed out, religion is simultaneously 'an expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering … the sign of the oppressed creature, the feeling of a heartless world and the soul of soulless circumstances … the opium of the people' (see Bottomore 1963:41). In a nutshell, the appropriation of religious – and ethnic, nationalist and peasant – ideologies to justify war, is conditioned by obtaining objective material conditions of unhappiness.

To sum up, the quest for happiness has motivated and justified violent political action in Africa. As Epicurus (2014:3) asserted, 'all other things', including war, 'are desired as a means for producing happiness'. However, partly because of the level of political awareness, and the power of dominant discourses, ideologies and propaganda, war, 'as a means for producing happiness' has often taken ethnic, religious, and nationalist forms. Groups competing for economic resources tend to find scapegoats in different ethnic, race and religious groups, who are blamed, stereotyped, vilified, marginalised and attacked as the source of trouble and unhappiness. Hindes (1986:130) explains why this is usually the case: 'If we are concerned with actors' reasons for actions and with what makes it possible for those reasons to be formulated, then it may be more important to concentrate on the discourses available to and employed by them …'. In Africa, with

its complex relationship between structure, knowledge, belief and action, the discourses that most ordinary people are able to employ in assessing conditions and in informing political action are mostly based on religion, ethnicity and traditional culture. In a nutshell, the anatomy of Africa's civil wars is to be found in its peripheral capitalist political economy, which by definition generates conflict through competition, profiteering and individualism.

Towards a holistic theory of conflict and happiness

The persistence of violent conflict in Africa challenges us to 'rethink our world … and to look critically and creatively at many of society's traditional beliefs' (Higgs and Smith 2016:1). There is need for more convincing and holistic explanations of our continued unhappiness and propensity to engage in violent conflict. Specifically, there is need for a holistic theory that delves beneath the surface to expose the underlying motivation for violent political action, and that illuminates different ways forward to happiness, peace and prosperity. Below is an attempt to delineate some of the key elements of such a holistic theory of conflict and happiness.

First and foremost, a holistic theory of conflict and happiness should move beyond the limits of disciplinary 'intellectual silos'. This is necessary precisely because individual psychological traits, feelings, emotions as well as material political, economic and social conditions all influence how happiness is experienced and pursued. The sources of unhappiness and conflict are both internal and external to the individual – and to the continent too. While the real world of happiness/unhappiness is built through ego, individual drive, instinct and reason, that is, biology and psychology, these have to succumb to the constraints offered by the real world of politics, economics, culture and tradition. Therefore, the theory should be located at the intersection of psychology, political science, economics, and conflict/peace studies.

Second, the theory needs to reconsider the dualities of cause/effect, inside/outside, victim/villain, reality/fantasy. This is necessary, because,

in African conflicts, the effects are also the causes, the sources of happiness also the sources of unhappiness, and some victims are also villains. Unhappiness is both cause and effect of conflict, just as economic resources, power, culture, ethnicity, religion and social relationship are sources of happiness and unhappiness. A classic example of a victim/villain is that of a former Lord's Resistance Army (LRA, Uganda) fighter who was kidnapped at age nine on his way to school by the LRA, and who after becoming a commander in the rebel movement engaged in gross human rights violations, and is now being tried by the International Criminal Court for these crimes. Violent rebellion has also triggered a vicious circle of violence and counter-violence, in which cause and effect, and victim and villain become indistinguishable.

Finally, such a comprehensive theory of conflict and happiness should accommodate opposites within a single encompassing perspective, shifting along various axes of the time-space continuum: between western and local notions of happiness; between conflict and happiness at individual and societal, micro and macro levels; and between conflict and happiness as a cause and consequence of a new paradigm of social relations. Such a holistic theory of the psychology, politics, economics and sociology of happiness is urgently needed to inform policy on how best to promote popular happiness and remedy the inadequacies of our political, economic, and social systems.

Policy options

In Africa, the world's unhappiest continent, war is not just 'a continuation of politics by other means'. Instead, as an anti-thesis to happiness, it is also simultaneously a consequence of bad policies, and a continuation of bad policies by other means. Bad policies, poor governance and the relegation to the margins by policy makers of the central notions of happiness have fermented bitterness, unhappiness, and violence. At the heart of violent conflict in Africa is the failure of development policies to satisfy the desires and expectations of a people whose socio-economic, cultural, and political life has been shaped by the quest for happiness. Contrary to

popular beliefs, as captured in commonsensical clichés like 'I choose to be happy', 'happiness starts with you', 'your happiness depends on you', happiness and unhappiness are not solely individual problems. Instead, they are public policy issues, fundamentally because the intended and unintended consequences of individual unhappiness can be costly, and even catastrophic, to society.

Ultimately, the questions of happiness, unhappiness and conflict are bound up with those of the political, economic and social organisation of society, for these can present either opportunities or constraints to individual and collective pursuit of happiness. The fundamental questions thus become:

- What systems of political governance and economic organisation best meet people's aspirations for happiness, the ultimate goal of individual action and final end of development?
- What should be the nature, power and limits of the state?
- How should individual happiness be related to the good of others?
- How can people peacefully pursue happiness and effectively negotiate the multiple hazards of globalisation, cosmopolitanism, climate change, resource depletion and population explosion?

The honest answer to these important questions is that, there are no easy answers to them. All that can be said with some degree of certainty is that happiness, that ever important quest, never ceases to animate and motivate humankind into political action – peaceful or violent, depending on context. If happiness is the motivator of action and, 'the greatest good', then government should aim for the greatest happiness of the greatest majority.

To promote popular happiness and avert violent conflict, Africa needs to adopt a Charter for Happiness based on a holistic policy framework and 'a new economic model – one that makes happiness and wellbeing our new bottom line' –and that supports the political, economic and social conditions of happiness, which include development and 'economic, environmental, political and social justice' (GNHUSA 2016). Development should be inclusive, aim at reducing the inequalities of happiness, and

be measured by the extent to which it promotes individual and collective happiness. Similarly, business needs to a have a purpose beyond profit and to assume its social responsibility of giving back to community – capitalism with a human face? Equally important is sensitivity to local values and practices about happiness, respect for differences and minority rights; since tyranny of the majority is as bad as dictatorship in its consequences. The right to the pursuit of happiness comes with an ethical responsibility to exercise that right 'in ways that honour and respect the richness and diversity of our planet, making it possible for all people to pursue happiness … while personal happiness is a worthy goal in itself, its greater value lies in its capacity to help us all be better citizens of this planet' (GNHUSA 2016). In other words, to prevent violent conflict, policy should seek to promote the happiness of all as the ethical objective of development, the prime goal of good governance, and as a fundamental human right.

Summary and conclusion

There is a complicated relationship between the practical politics of happiness, unhappiness and conflict in Africa. The desire for happiness, often suppressed through political ideology, religious doctrine or economic necessity, is not only one of our 'most basic human desires', but is also the main motivation and justification for violent political action in Africa. As shown, people in Africa value and pursue happiness, and depending on circumstances and context, they pursue it either peacefully or violently. The apparent causes of violent conflict identified in the literature are only a means to the ultimate goal of happiness: ethnicity, religion and ideology provide the broad parameters for defining and pursuing happiness, while territory, resources and markets are essential to achieve happiness. Since when happy, people from different ethnic, religious and national groups can live together in peace and harmony, ethnic and religious tensions should be seen as symptoms, and not causes, of unhappiness and violence. However, these different identities, histories and cultures mean that there are conflicting accounts of how best to organise society and promote popular happiness.

The widespread belief in war as a means for ending Africa's miseries seems unfounded. On the contrary, wars are producing far more unhappiness than happiness, especially for the ordinary people caught up in the cross-fire. Africa's wars have mortgaged the continent's development, for where there is anarchy and war 'there is no industry, navigation, cultivation of the social, building, art, or letters, and the life of man is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' (Hobbes 2016:23). In a vicious circle, rising inequalities in happiness have exacerbated political instability, which in turn has further amplified the inequalities in happiness.

To sum up, war and society itself are a result of actions of individuals searching for happiness. In pursuit of happiness, and as the Hobbesian irrational instincts of self-preservation, loom large, Africans have become both agents and victims of violence. Given the current global political Zeitgeist of rising nationalism, divisions, hatred, xenophobia, and 'multinational colonialism', the pursuit of happiness will remain violent for the foreseeable future. In conclusion, and to paraphrase Von Clausewitz (1982:11) war in Africa is a pursuit of happiness by other means and, therefore, to prevent it policy should aim at improving the happiness of all.

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