



Illegal Peace in Africa

An Inquiry into the
Legality of Power Sharing with
Warlords, Rebels, and Junta

Jeremy I. Levitt

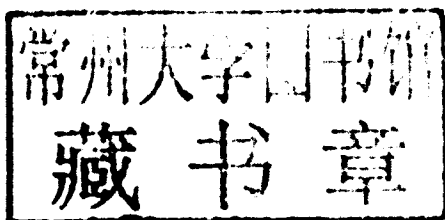
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CAMBRIDGE
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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press

32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521888684

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First published 2012

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication data

Levitt, Jeremy I., 1970–

Illegal peace in Africa : An Inquiry into the Legality of Power Sharing with
Warlords, Rebels, and Junta / Jeremy I. Levitt.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-88868-4 (hardback)

1. Africa – Politics and government. 2. Conflict management – Africa.

3. Peace – Africa. I. Title.

JQ1875.L49 2012

320.966–dc23 2011033948

ISBN 978-0-521-88868-4 Hardback

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ILLEGAL PEACE IN AFRICA

An Inquiry into the Legality of Power Sharing with Warlords, Rebels, and Junta

African states have become testing grounds for Western conflict-resolution experiments, particularly power-sharing agreements, supposedly intended to end deadly conflict, secure peace, and build democracy in divided societies. This volume examines the legal and political efficacy of transitional political power sharing between democratically constituted governments and the African warlords, rebels, or junta that seek to violently unseat them. What role does law indicate for itself to play in informing, shaping, and regulating peace agreements? This book addresses this question and others through the prism of three West African case studies: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau. It applies the neo-Kadeshean model of analysis and offers a framework for a law on power sharing. In a field dominated by political scientists, and drawing from ancient and contemporary international law, this book represents the first substantive legal critique of the law, practice, and politics of power sharing.

Professor Jeremy I. Levitt is Distinguished Professor of International Law, Associate Dean for International Programs, and Director of the Center for International Law and Justice at Florida A&M University College of Law in Orlando. He is an international lawyer and political scientist with extensive experience working with governments, international institutions, and non-governmental organizations in fragile states and conflict zones. In 2008–2009, Professor Levitt served as the Head of the International Technical Advisory Committee for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia. He has authored two books and edited four and has published numerous articles and book chapters in periodicals and books from varied disciplines. In 2009, he coedited a highly regarded text with Matthew C. Whitaker titled *Hurricane Katrina: America's Unnatural Disaster*, and in 2008, he edited a groundbreaking volume titled *Africa: Mapping New Boundaries in International Law*. The last book he authored is titled *The Evolution of Deadly Conflict in Liberia: From "Paternalitarianism" to State Collapse* (2005). He earned his doctorate of philosophy in politics and international studies from the University of Cambridge, his Juris Doctor from the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and his bachelor of arts degree from Arizona State University.

The price of apathy towards public affairs is to be ruled by evil men.

—Plato

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The life of the human rights jurist can be akin to that of a nomad – sometimes unrestricted and other times tumultuous – where significant time is spent crossing oceans to face adversity in foreign terrain. Time spent in these vital pursuits is not possible without collateral consequence. I humbly thank my wife and children for their adoring love and support and for sharing me with my pursuits.

I dedicate this book to them and to the tens of millions of victims of unlawful power sharing in Africa and beyond – souls forced not only to endure the indignities of deadly conflict but also to live under the rule of evil charlatans, warlords, rebels, and military junta responsible for committing atrocities against them.

The seeds for the book were planted while I served as a legal aide to the Constitutional Assembly of the Republic of South Africa during the country's constitution-making process. I was in many ways enamored by the complex issues engendered by coalition government, reconciliation, and amnesty. These seeds germinated while I was a doctoral student in politics and international studies at Cambridge University and blossomed while I served as special assistant to Mamphela Ramphele, managing director for human and social development at the World Bank Group. This book is the product of several years of research, advocacy, and lawyering in zones of peace and war in Africa. I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the many war victims who opened their hearts and homes to me along the way. Their inspirational fortitude in the wake of gross neglect and injustice inspired me to author this polemical book, hoping that it would illuminate the manifold ways in which unlawful political power sharing tortures the souls and law subject to it.

I am indebted to John Berger of Cambridge University Press for his friendship, commitment to the project, and enthusiastic support for scholarship on Africa and the developing world generally. His willingness to think outside the box and support research that challenges conventional orthodoxy has greatly contributed to the development of discourse in international law.

I graciously thank friends and colleagues in civil society, universities, and regional institutions in Africa for their enthusiastic support of the project. While writing the book, I also benefited from frequent invitations to lecture on war and peace, rule of law, political power sharing, and human rights issues in Africa, and I especially thank the faculties, staff, students, and participants at or associated with the following universities and institutions for their valuable insight and critiques: Africa Legal Aid; American Society of International Law; American Association of Law Schools; Arizona State University; Institute for African Development, Cornell University; Lauterpacht Center for Research in International Law, University of Cambridge; Jack D. Gordon Institute, Florida International University; African Studies Center, University of Florida; Institute for Legal Studies, University of Wisconsin–Madison; Human Rights, Research, and Education Center, University of Ottawa; and Valparaiso University School of Law.

Long ago, my intellectual curiosity, confidence, and inclination to take on this study were influenced by the excellent training that I received in international law and political science from four professors at four universities in two countries: James Mayall at the University of Cambridge, Sir Christopher Greenwood at the London School of Economics and Political Science, Richard Bilder at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, and Michael Mitchell at Arizona State University. I am indebted to them for their artful and constructive instruction. I am also grateful to Ernest J. Wilson III for his support and mentorship over the years and for providing me with an illuminating doctoral fellowship in the late 1990s at the University of Maryland–College Park Center for International Development and Conflict Management.

Over the years, I have benefited from the hard work and dedication of research assistants, library staff, and translators from three universities where I have served as a professor and administrator. Their

diligence and vibrant interest in the research project were vital to completing the book. I thank John Jensen for his excellent translation of primary documentation. In addition, I graciously acknowledge the valuable support of three former research assistants – Rebecca Gardiner, Neil Fishman, and Jordan Dollar – as well as the support of the unsung but dedicated librarians who provided me with invaluable assistance, especially Marisol Floren-Romero and Linda Barrette. I am also enormously appreciative of the vital “fourth-quarter” assistance provided to me by Amy Li, my trusted administrative assistant.

Finally, I am grateful to Kwesi Aning, Chaloka Beyani, Richard Bilder, Colin Bruce, James Crawford, Valerie Epps, Linda Greene, Craig Jackson, Dino Kritsiotis, Makau Mutua Henry J. Richardson III, Matthew Whitaker, and Crawford Young for allowing me to benefit from their intellectual gifts at various times during the preparation of the manuscript, which was completed in June 2011. I am especially appreciative of the support and encouragement that I received from LeRoy Pernel, dean of the Florida A&M University College of Law.

Parts of this book have been informed and mined from previously published works, albeit in different form: *Illegal peace? An inquiry into the legality of power-sharing with warlords and rebels in Africa*, Michigan Journal of International Law 27 (2006); THE EVOLUTION OF DEADLY CONFLICT IN LIBERIA: FROM “PATERNALTARIANISM” TO STATE COLLAPSE (2005); *The Peace and Security Council of the African Union*, Journal of Transnational Law and Contemporary Problems 13 (2003); *Conflict prevention, management and resolution in Africa – regional strategy for the prevention of displacement and protection of displaced persons: The cases of the OAU, ECOWAS, SADC and IGAD*, Duke Journal of Comparative and International Law 11 (2001); *African interventionist states and international law*, in Oliver Furley & Roy May (eds.) AFRICAN INTERVENTIONIST STATES (2001); and *Humanitarian intervention by regional actors in internal conflicts: The case of ECOWAS in Liberia and Sierra Leone*, Temple International and Comparative Law Journal 12 (1998).

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1 INTRODUCTION

Since the end of the Cold War, Africa has become the testing ground for Western conflict-resolution experiments intended to forestall deadly conflict, secure peace, and build democracy in stratified societies. Power-sharing agreements have been the preferred conflict-resolution device, and no other model has been tested more than transitional political power sharing.¹ Yet, until recently, few scholars and policy makers have authentically scrutinized the effectiveness of such arrangements; this is remarkable given that contemporary studies reveal momentous faults in the practice of power sharing, as evidenced by their orderly failure. This book represents the first substantive legal study to augment and complement this nascent intellectual heritage.

This volume contemplates the role of law in informing, shaping, and regulating peace agreements, with a specific focus on transitional political power sharing intended to end violent intrastate conflict or coups d'état when democratically constituted governments (DCGs) are forced to share power with African warlords, rebels, or junta.² In

¹ The terms *power sharing*, *political power sharing*, *transitional political power sharing*, and *power-sharing arrangements* are used interchangeably. For purposes of this volume, *power sharing* is broadly defined to mean transitional political power sharing between contesting groups (warlords, rebels, and junta) and democratically constituted governments for a fixed and impermanent period of time, until elections take place. Power-sharing accords provisions seek to outline and codify into law decision-making mandates that apportion political power and authority. Although military and economic power sharing are important, this study will primarily focus on political power sharing birthed during violent armed conflict, not on those forms of power sharing that have been solely written into legislation or constitutions during peacetime.

² The terms *African warlords*, *rebels*, and *junta*; *pirates de la loi*; and *bandits of the law* are used interchangeably. Africa has the highest incidence of coup attempts in the world – 169 coups between 1950 and 2010 – nearly 52% of which were successful, amounting to approximately 37% of the world total during this period. Jonathan M. Powell & Clayton L. Thyne, *Global instances of coups from 1950 to 2010: A new dataset*, 48 *Journal of Peace Research* 255 (2011).

Africa, subregional, regional, and international law purports to regulate and mitigate deadly conflict and protect the rule of law, human rights, and democracy. Despite Africa's diverse legal landscape, domestic law systems purport to conserve law and order by protecting civil liberties and representative government through civil and criminal justice mechanisms backed by the coercive authority of the state. Taken together, all four tiers of law – domestic, subregional, regional, and international – are intended to create predictability and order peace prescriptions.

While the role of law in shaping and regulating transitional political power-sharing arrangements is the book's primary focus, it is less concerned with the debatably perfunctory, speculative, and circular question of whether or how law plays a role in creating peace out of internal conflict. This is largely because law must already exist and occupy the field of peacemaking to assess whether and how it may play a role in establishing peace. Hence this study aims to answer the more germane question, what role does law indicate for itself to play in informing, shaping, and regulating transitional political power-sharing agreements?

This book addresses this question through the prism of three West African case studies: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau. In all three cases, DCGs were forced to share power formally with warlords, rebels, or junta seeking violently to unseat them. The book challenges traditional conflict-resolution orthodoxy by examining the legality and sociopolitical efficacy of transitional political power sharing between DCGs and so-called bandits of the law, particularly those responsible for directing and/or committing human atrocities. In this regard, it assesses the human rights dimensions of power sharing and their future implications. It postulates that domestic, regional, and international law, doctrine, norms, and jurisprudence in Africa have generated an identifiable *law of power sharing* that apprises and orders peacemaking and contemporaneously instructs the emergence of any *lex pacificatoria*.³ Only after examining those rules that law has already prescribed for peacemaking can any law of power sharing emerge to confront and answer pressing questions prompted by power sharing. When warlords, rebels, and junta use violence to coerce democratically

³ Christine Bell, ON THE LAW OF PEACE: PEACE AGREEMENTS AND THE LE PACIFICATORIA 5 (2008).

constituted governments to share power, does power sharing become a euphemism for “guns for jobs”? Which legal rules, if any, govern peace agreements in internal conflicts?⁴ Specifically, which rules regulate power sharing? Are the aims of peace, justice, rule by law, and democracy attainable,⁵ let alone compatible, with coerced political transitions in which *pirates de la loi* coerce DCGs or legitimate governments to share power?⁶

Consider this scenario: a rebel group,⁷ through brutal force, coerces a democratically constituted government into a power-sharing arrangement that not only refashions the constitution of order but confers on

⁴ The terms *rule*, *rules*, *rule of law*, *law*, and *laws* are used interchangeably.

⁵ Law comprises a multitude of rules, norms, doctrine, and jurisprudence often referred to as the *rule of law* in international law discourse.

⁶ Although the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT) is not binding on the peace agreements under review in this study, the definition of coercion in the VCLT is instructive, given that there is not a generally recognized definition of the term in the laws of Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau – core subjects of this inquiry – nor in the laws that govern internal conflicts. According to the VCLT, the word *coerced* is derived from the word *coercion*, which is defined as the threat or use of force or other pressure to gain control over another against his or her will or interest. Under the VCLT, treaties may be voided if their acceptance was gained by coercion against a state that wished to void the treaty. See Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, May 22, 1969, arts. 51–52, U.N. Doc. A/CONF.39/27 (1969), 1155 U.N.T.S. 331, repr. in 8 I.L.M. 679 (1969) [hereinafter VCLT]. Although treaties cannot, per se, be concluded with rebel groups and junta, the governing principles of those arrangements inform the forgoing analysis, given the scope of the international community's involvement in helping to broker the Accra, Lomé, and Abuja peace agreements in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau, respectively. See *infra* note 15.

⁷ For purposes of this study, the term *rebels* means irregular persons or military forces operating irregularly who take part in armed rebellion (e.g., insurgency, military coup, or junta) against a constituted authority (i.e., a government). Here the term *warlord*

“refers to the leader of an armed band, possibly numbering up to several thousand fighters, who can hold territory locally and, at the same time, act financially and politically in the international system without interference from the state in which he is based. In crisis zones around the world, where civil war and humanitarian disasters accompany the struggles of societies in transition, the warlord is the key actor. He confronts national governments, plunders their resources, moves and exterminates uncooperative populations, interdicts international relief and development, and derails peace processes. With only a few exceptions, the modern warlord lives successfully beyond the reach and jurisdiction of civil society. His ability to seek refuge in the crisis zone and the lack of international commitment to take effective action together ensure his survival.”

John Mackinlay, *Defining warlords*, in *BUILDING STABILITY IN AFRICA: CHALLENGES IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM* (2000). For more on this issue, see Mark Duffield, *Post-modern conflict, aid policy and humanitarian conditionality*, DFID Discussion Paper (London: Department for International Development, 1997).

rebels' key government positions, unconditional amnesty, and other perks and privileges. Although the incumbent government would like to punish or hold the rebels accountable rather than negotiate with them, it shares power out of political necessity and expediency because it lacks the muscle to defeat the rebels on the battlefield and the status or legitimacy to mobilize international military assistance to impose its politico-military prerogatives. The failure to negotiate a cessation of hostility and to share power may result in prolonged conflict, anarchy, and the eventual toppling of the government. Variations on this scenario have been commonplace in Africa for decades,⁸ and in the significant majority of cases, power sharing has neither ended violent conflict nor produced sustainable peace. In the three cases under review, power sharing prolonged existing conflict and/or exacerbated new conflict. One critical reason for this dilemma is that peace agreements do not seek to address the primary causes of deadly conflict; consequently, power sharing unrealistically seeks to appease the distrust, fears, material whims, and political appetites of charlatans, pundits, and warlords, not to institutionalize the rule of law and democratize decision making among citizenry.

Governments that have been violently and/or successfully challenged from within⁹ but are still recognized as the *de jure* representative of the state are faced with the quandary of how best to negotiate peace, maintain security, survive politically, and manage future uncertainty.¹⁰ They are forced to make strategic choices that often create normative friction between what is legal, on one hand, and what they believe

⁸ See generally Peter Wallensteen & Margareta Sollenberg, *Armed conflicts, conflict termination and peace agreements, 1989–1996*, 34 *Journal of Peace Resolution* 339 (1997). See also A. K. Jarstad & D. Nilsson, *From words to deeds: The implementation of power-sharing pacts in peace accords*, 25 *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 206 (2008); Bumba Mukherjee, *Why political power-sharing agreements lead to enduring peaceful resolutions of some civil wars, but not others?* 50 *International Studies Quarterly* 479 (2006); Barbara F. Walter, *Designing transitions from civil war: Demobilization, democratization, and commitments to peace*, 24 *International Security* 127 (1999).

⁹ The internal challenge may come in the form of, among other things, a civilian-led or military coup or armed insurgency that acquires *de facto* control of a state but stops short of a coup d'état.

¹⁰ This assertion does not take for granted the fact that governments and rebels are often not interested in making peace but rather, politically and economically, thrive on state chaos and violent conflict. See generally Mats Berdal & David M. Malone (eds.) *GREED AND GRIEVANCE: ECONOMIC AGENDAS IN CIVIL WARS* (2000).

is politically necessary and expedient, on the other. To date, political scientists, who serve as the primary proponents of power sharing and ignore the rule and role of law in political transitions, have dominated the debate and discourse on power sharing,¹¹ which, unfortunately, has slipped under the radar of international jurists. For example, in her seminal work on the stability of negotiated settlements to intrastate wars, Caroline Hartzell includes three subsections on the “rules regarding the use of coercive force,” “rules regarding the distribution of political power,” and “rules structuring distributive policy,” but makes no attempt to consider the extent to which law governs peace negotiations and agreements.¹² Timothy Sisk’s influential work on power sharing and international mediation also fails to consider the rule and/or role of law in peace negotiations or peace deals that include power-sharing components.¹³

This book builds on an article I published in 2006¹⁴ and was largely inspired by the persistent and flagrant disregard of law in the scholarly literature on conflict resolution, peacemaking and peace building broadly construed, and particularly by discourse on power sharing. It was also enthused by so-called peace studies and conflict-resolution experts, peace negotiators, peace brokers, and other decision makers who too often discount law’s relevance altogether – especially those individuals, states, and international institutions responsible for negotiating, sanctioning, and/or “guaranteeing” the Accra (Liberia), Lomé (Sierra Leone), and Abuja (Guinea-Bissau) peace agreements.¹⁵ All

¹¹ In fact, the author is not familiar with a single work on power sharing from a notable political scientist that contemplates, let alone substantively considers, the role of law on the practice.

¹² Caroline Hartzell, *Explaining the stability of negotiated settlements to intrastate wars*, 43 *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 3, 7–12 (1999).

¹³ See generally Timothy D. Sisk, *POWERSHARING AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION IN ETHNIC CONFLICTS* (1996).

¹⁴ Jeremy I. Levitt, *Illegal peace? An inquiry into the legality of power-sharing with warlords and rebels in Africa*, 27 *Michigan Journal of International Law* 495 (2006).

¹⁵ The Accra, Lomé, and Abuja accords are domestic agreements (between actors within a state) rather than international treaties because their jurisdictional powers, even if illegitimately derived, are based on principles of territoriality and nationality, and under international law, states and rebel groups can only make agreements from powers and authorities they possess, which, in these cases, are wholly domestic in nature. Moreover, under the VCLT, “a ‘treaty’ means an international agreement concluded between States in written form and governed by international law, whether embodied in a single

three accords prescribe unlawful power sharing irrespective of its long-term impact on their states' sociopolitical and legal orders, thereby raising an important question:¹⁶ to what extent, if any, does and should the rule of law influence or shape the character of peace negotiations, agreements, and political transitions?

This book is the first to address the aforementioned questions; present a conceptual framework for examining the legality of power sharing between DCGs and the warlords, rebels, and junta who seek violently to unseat them; and originate a law of power sharing that illuminates a legal framework intended to apprise and order peace processes and transitional peace agreements.¹⁷ As such, its primary aim is to contemplate and situate the legality and political efficacy of transitional political power sharing on the radar of scholars and policy makers, knowing that the book's aims, theoretical approach, findings, and conclusion will be improved on by other analysts.

This book is interpretive, normative, and polemical. It questions the dominant logic that transitional political power sharing is lawful and legitimate and that it unequivocally serves the public good. Rather,

instrument or in two or more related instruments and whatever its particular designation." See VCLT, *supra* note 6, Article 2. Moreover, despite their internal character, the accords cannot be considered or recognized as treaties under international law because they were not registered with the UN Secretariat in accordance with Article 102 of the UN Charter. The registration of a treaty or international agreement does not imply a judgment by the Secretariat on the nature of the instrument, the status of a party, or any similar question; it is the understanding of the Secretariat that registration does not confer on the instrument the status of a treaty or an international agreement if it does not already have that status and does not confer on a party a status that it would not otherwise have. Finally, the agreements under review are not international treaties because they are not concluded between states; however, as instruments of law with transnational dimensions, they are nonetheless governed by international law principles, as are the states that birthed them. *Id.*

¹⁶ Other important examples of power sharing used to mitigate civil strife and/or armed conflict in need of constructive analysis include, among others, Angola, Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Columbia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Fiji, Lebanon, Nepal, Rwanda, Somalia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe.

¹⁷ Given the proliferation of internal challenges to democratically constituted authority in Africa, this book is limited to the study of transitional power sharing between democratically constituted governments and the warlords, rebel groups, and junta that seek to violently unseat them. It does not consider the legality of power sharing between undemocratically constituted regimes and rebels because the arguably normative statuses of the rights to democracy and internal self-determination, particularly in Africa, engender different legal questions.

the book postulates that power sharing deals that ignore controlling rules are unlawful, illegitimate, and often unviable and generally do not serve the good of the public. This does not mean that an exclusive recourse to law or legalism is more practicable than a resort to politics or politicism or that unlawful agreements cannot be effective; rather, it reveals that it is more difficult to create sustainable peace if its literal foundations are birthed in unlawfulness or illegality that conflicts with the moral imperatives of law: fundamental human rights and representative government. It is this belief in the essential and regulatory role of law that led me to reject minimalist conceptions of it and adopt a substantive and interpretive theory of the utility of law in peacemaking. A substantive conception of law argues, as Cicero noted, that “the people’s good is the highest law,”¹⁸ injustice is incompatible with “true rule of law,”¹⁹ and the dignity of the person should be protected against the unsavory edicts of politicians and principalities. This essential formulation of law underpins the book’s methodology, which I refer to as the *neo-Kadeshean model* (NKM), and anchors its central syllogism: transitional political power sharing is subject to law; law is derived from and embedded within historical experientialism;²⁰ and therefore transitional political power-sharing agreements that ignore and/or fail to comport with pre-existing and predominant rules are unlawful and too often unsustainable over the long term.

A. THE NEO-KADESHEAN MODEL

The NKM of analysis complements the central syllogism and postulates that law (principles, norms, doctrine, and jurisprudence) rather

¹⁸ Cicero, *DE LEGIBUS* (106–43 B.C.).

¹⁹ Jane Stromseth, David Wippman, & Rosa Brooks, *CAN MIGHT MAKE RIGHTS? BUILDING THE RULE OF LAW AFTER MILITARY INTERVENTIONS* (2006), at 71.

²⁰ In this sense, historical experientialism philosophically connotes that law’s internal logic is derived from historical experiences of either people, states, or institutions, which in turn generates knowledge of its central purpose (e.g., the adoption of the Genocide Convention on December 9, 1948, by the UN General Assembly was a consequence of the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany during World War II). Consequently, it is important to understand the historical rationale for rule existence or history of law to ascertain the probable impacts of ignoring them.