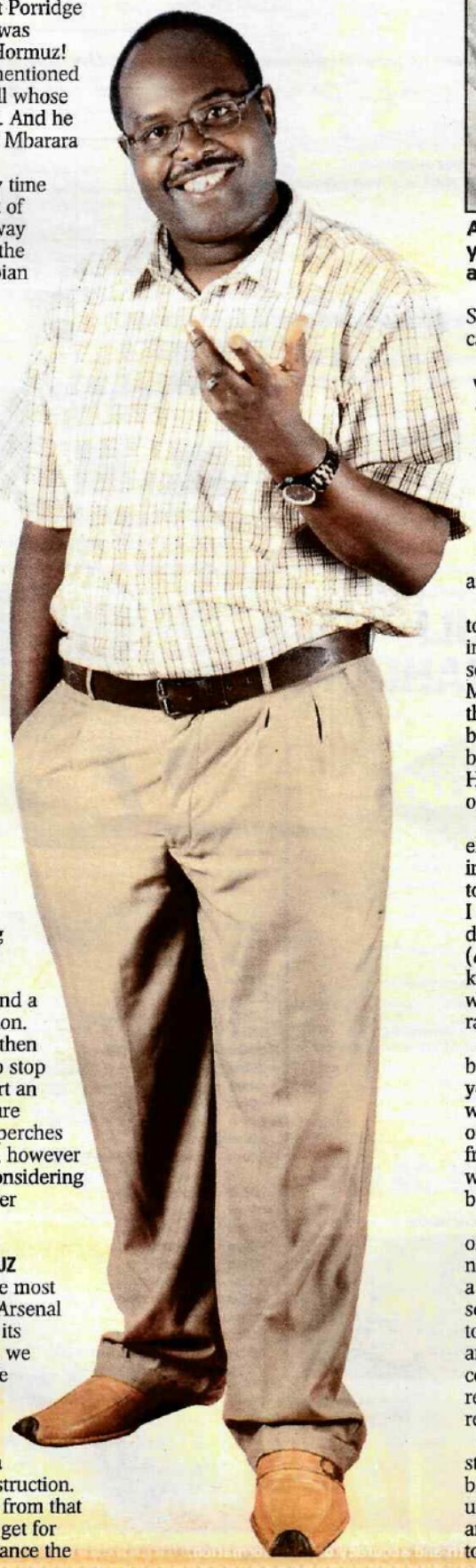
EVOKE A LOVE STRATEGY: THE STRAIT OF HORMUZ

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You might find that there are people who don't know the Strait of Hormuz! Or others who don't even know that USA, Israel and Iran are at war. Or that there is an Israel which is Biblical, but not Christian. Yet even my cousin in the village, who never studied beyond primary school, called to ask if Aunt Porridge was safe considering what was happening at the Strait of Hormuz! Yes, he knows it! And he mentioned it as if it was the village well whose name everyone must know. And he has never travelled beyond Mbarara city!

For those who duck every time politics comes by, the Strait of Hormuz is a narrow waterway linking the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, off the Indian Ocean. That ocean, by the way, comes up to Mombasa; I think geography gave it to India just to annoy our president! Anyway, to the ignorant, the name, Strait of Hormuz, can pass for a rebuke to a stubborn child, a noisy dog or an inscrutable traffic jam. It wouldn't pass for a football team, but it can be a good name for a Jazz band. In real life, it has turned out to be the world's most critical oil chokepoint, after Iran zipped it up.



Before now, even I, a former teacher of geography, didn't know the Strait of Hormuz was an important gate way of world economics. The narrow inlet is reminiscent of Museveni's Katonga Bridge for its role in the 1985-86 battle of Kampala. Iran calculated that choking the Strait of Hormuz would stifle about a third of the world's liquid natural gas and a fifth of global oil consumption.

The starved world would then bear upon the aggressors to stop the war immediately to avert an international crisis. Its closure analogy is a mosquito that perches on your testicles. Suddenly, however violent you are, you start considering negotiations as a much better alternative to aggression.

MARRIAGE'S STRAIT OF HORMUZ

The Iran war is arguably the most discussed crisis right now. Arsenal has tried to displace it with its impending victory but, still, we quickly got back to Iran. We have even mastered such formerly strange words as Zolfaghar, Khorramshahr and Kermanshah. But it is a sad sort of violence and destruction. Today, I want to distract us from that mess to the lessons we can get for our own lives. Take for instance the Strait of Hormuz concept and how it can stifle conflict in relationships.



A couple going through a conflict. Depending on the temperature of your partner, you may need to invite a relative home to shield you as 'the Strait of Hormuz' in case your partner reacts with violence

I grew up in the days and area where husbands would beat wives as a matter of course, sometimes to kill their own boredom. Many times, when a husband approached home in the night, bellowing drunken chants unto the darkness, the wife would quickly tie a baby behind her back because she wasn't sure if he was in moods for another battering.

Men never ran out of reasons to beat their wives then; it was impossible for any woman to be so nice that she cannot be beaten. Men even beat wives just because their drink mates declared it a wife beating night! So, she strapped a baby on her back to create a Strait of Hormuz in attempts to abort, deflect or soften the violence.

Marriage, by nature, is a protracted exposure to conflict because it involves two imperfect people trying to become one imperfection squared. I always heard parents advise their daughters at give-away ceremonies (*okuhingira*) to drink in and keep the water inside the mouths whenever their husbands started raising their voices.

It was a good Strait of Hormuz because, with water in the mouth, you cannot answer the man back without spilling it. That would freeze off the violence because she desisted from returning verbal fire. Some women even dare their husbands to beat them if they are real men!

By stretching the term Strait of Hormuz, I mean using a non-traditional asset to solve a problem that has tradition solutions. Traditional solutions to domestic violence are many and include focusing on proactive communication, emotional regulation, and fostering a positive, respectful environment.

Other key strategies include steering away from unsubstantiated blame, practicing active listening, understanding your temper limits and giving time to regular discourse to address small issues before they escalate. However, a couple is free to deploy whatever can work including the Straits of Hormuzes. These tactics, that steal the thunder off either couple's rising rage and lowering logic, include the following:

LET A RELATIVE VISIT

There are times when a conflict is predicted. For example, an investment your husband warned you against, went on to go wrong and you have been fleeced of family savings! Or she gave you money to buy her a car and you passed by a betting agency, only to come back empty handed. It can be worse; it may be time to declare the child you got outside the marriage and nobody expects madam to cheer you on. The examples are many and galore.

Depending on the temperature of your partner, you may need to invite a relative home to be the Strait of Hormuz in case your partner reacts with violence. It is unlikely that your partner will raise his or her voice when your mother is visiting for a week. At worst, he will postpone the fight and that fans the hope that, by the end of the week, you will have innovated an atonement to make him or her forget your trespasses. Some women invite their brother home because the husband is unlikely to fight when a sturdy, muscled *muko* is around.

GET SOCIETY TO WATCH

I have actually advised newly marrieds to use their societies as their third eye. You only need to be intentional in the way you elevate your partner's role and positions in your society. For example, encourage and support them to play leading roles at the church communities where they will be required – and deemed to be good examples. When your husband becomes the leading lector or your wife a chairperson of Mothers' Union, nobody will expect them to be violent at home. That becomes your Strait of Hormuz! They will also feel obliged to maintain a holy reputation in the society among who you always practice public display of affection. When tempers flare, deploy your mega Strait of Hormuz question: How will it look among our parishioners that we fought?

CREATE ENEMIES FOR THE LOVE

In many love songs in the central region, reference is made to the enemies of the love, who are depicted to be watching and waiting for cracks in the marriage in order to celebrate the fall. This motivates the lovers to work hard and disappoint the enemies. But what if the love has no enemies? Simple, you create them. After all, not all enemies are clearly labelled. Convince Beloved that multitudes of people are watching and waiting for you to clash. That can be your Strait of Hormuz! No one will want to play into the wishes of an enemy.

Look at a football team like Arsenal. When you see them playing tic-tac football, you can easily get convinced that they are the best of friends. But in reality, they may not be. Footballers usually clash over their egos, deals, coach's attention, women, etc. But when it comes to a match, they get a common enemy who then unites them over and above their petty differences.

When a marriage gets enemies, real and imagined, the motivation to make it work becomes your Strait of Hormuz. A partner's appetite for self-sacrificing effort to make the love work, strays into the martyrdom ranges, where they dare not fight you and give victory to the enemies.

SEX FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION

I kept this Strait of Hormuz for the last. Those who drop off faster will miss it. I hope you all know the meaning of make-up sex. Many married people know about the sex after a fight. How wouldn't they? It is usually intense, energy sapping, punctuated by the urge for intimate reconciliation and concluded by the magical apology. In psychology, we now use the term "factory reset" as a reference to erasing the conflict overtones.

The high emotions and adrenaline from the argument increase the passion and end up restoring intimacy to overcome feelings of abandonment or insecurity the fight had caused. What better Strait of Hormuz do you want?

In the end, the sex reduces the tension and repairs the emotional connection. In Psychology we call it "excitation transfer" where the adrenaline and arousal from the argument are transformed into sexual gratification.

However, do not start conflict or default hoping to rely on makeup sex for the Strait of Hormuz miracles. It can end up creating unhealthy relationship patterns. It is most effective when used to cement reconciliation rather than to mask, avoid, or manipulate, which can lead to unresolved, recurring issues.