

Exploring the Nexus between Peace-building Techniques and National Development in Contemporary Africa

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ABSTRACT: *The difficulty of peace-building and development remains a burning issue in the African continent. There have been several attempts to bring about peace in the continent that did not produce the expected results. Enormous resources have been used to facilitate/promote peace accords, which frequently collapsed under the weight of conflicting interests. It is vital to investigate whether there are any more peace-building techniques that may be used to supplement current initiatives to promote peace in the continent. This paper explores indigenous African methods and contemporary measures for fostering social cohesion/inclusion and peace-building. The research employs the thematic interpretative and historical analysis in the data collection process. The study is anchored on conflict resolution theory. The paper starts by examining the justification for why establishing peace is critical. The next section of the paper examines how indigenous and contemporary methods are helping in the promotion of peace in Africa. It also looks at how these methods highlight the significance of encouraging social inclusion. Last but not the least, is the question of how to create Pan-African unity.*

KEYWORDS: national development, conflict, peace-building, social inclusion, Africa

INTRODUCTION

Many indigenous African communities had well-established traditional dispute resolution mechanisms in place before colonial penetration into the continent. In order to reduce inter-human and intra- and inter-communal disputes, the various groups in Africa have a variety of customs. These customs were supported by taboos that were necessary to uphold in order to peacefully regulate human activities, relationships between individuals, and relationships within the society (Woko & Osagie, 2014).

Before the arrival or advent of British administration, the Africans are believed to have developed a well-established traditional conflict settlement technique that was unique to their own traditions. This ancient approach was based on conventions and traditions and was successful for settling disputes within their communities and kingdoms from a cultural perspective. Such traditional African conflict settlement techniques arose from the accumulation of knowledge that was passed down from one generation to the next.

This study discusses conventional approaches of promoting peace and handling disputes in African states in general. The indigenous method has been impacted by colonialism and modernization, especially with the introduction of the formal legal system, but Africans are still sensitive to their traditional method of handling conflicts, which provides a more permanent solution to conflict situations than the formal / modern method (Ezesuokwo, 2022).

Conceptual Clarifications

Conflict

Conflict is defined as any dispute between two or more opposing parties. Conflict management is the process used to settle and manage conflict between parties in order to prevent a recurrence. Additionally, it is the process of enhancing good elements of conflict while minimizing its negative ones. Significantly, conflict management is the capacity to recognize conflict and manage it in a way that gives a long-term solution to the issue while maintaining relationships between the parties to the dispute. Conflict management and the notion of conflict resolution go hand in hand (Daudu, 2009).

Conflict Resolution

According to Wallenstein (2012) conflict resolution occurs when disputing parties come to an agreement that addresses their core differences, accept one another's ongoing participation in the dispute, and put an end to any acts of violence towards one another. Any disagreement must be resolved and brought to a condition of reconciliation. Conflicts are not always welcomed by people, therefore they often take action to control, modify, or resolve them. Otite and Ogionwo (1994) claim that while lengthy disputes or even their occurrence might be unacceptable in communities, prompt action is almost always taken to resolve them. This is done to prevent

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disasters from occurring while the two sides are at war. This viewpoint demonstrates that conflict is often undesirable and that prompt action is necessary to end it. However, some of the actions taken are hampered since, in most cases, a delay in the prompt resolution of the conflict leads to intractable conflict (Wallenstein, 2012). Conflict resolution, according to Mialli, Ramsbotham and Woodhouse (1999) is a more inclusive phrase that denotes addressing and transforming the conflict core causes. In order to resolve conflict, this work recommends that more attention should be placed on uncovering its underlying causes.

Mialli et al. (1999) emphasize that through conflict resolution, it is necessary to address and resolve the fundamental causes of conflict and ensure that attitudes and behaviours are no longer hostile or aggressive to any greater degree than before the conflict structure was altered. This perspective appears more elaborate because it represents the benefits of conflict resolution, which include bringing peace to warring parties. From this standpoint, it may be inferred that, in theory, conflict resolution implies logic of finality where the parties to a disagreement are mutually satisfied with the outcome of a settlement and the issue is ended in a free sense. According to Miller (2003) conflict resolution encompasses a range of strategies intended to put an end to disputes through the effective resolution of issues. The accuracy of this research comes from its consideration of the traditional institutions value in the study's main topic. The state is a significant institution for dispute resolution. It is imperative to know that in other situations, the state turns to hapless proselytizing. Then commissions and panels are established, but their findings or recommendations do not serve as the foundation for any further corrective action or even substantial resolution. Similar to this, Kayode notes that groups predispose the state toward partisan or partial acts that weaken its integrity as an arbitrator or mediator in conflict, in addition to the inclination of the state to be utilized or appropriated for hegemonic purposes.

The term "traditional or indigenous conflict management" refers to those conflict resolution techniques that have been used for a long time, developed among a group of people in a specific civilization, and have been used to resolve conflicts. For instance, using the traditional council / institution to manage and resolve various sorts of dispute has been a significant practice among Africans for a very long time. The term "traditional institution" describes the local laws and authority that are used to settle disputes. In this instance, the institution that settles disputes at the informal or community level is represented by the elders, chiefs, and supreme / paramount rulers in a traditional council.

Peace-building in Context

An Agenda for Peace, released by the United Nations in 1992, promoted humanitarian intervention and proactive peacemaking (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). It provided advice on how to deal with threats to world peace and security in the post-Cold War era. *Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding* were specifically mentioned as the four main areas of operation.

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According to the definition of *preventive diplomacy*, it is an "action to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflict, and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur" (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). *Peacemaking* is an "action to bring hostile parties to agreement, primarily through such peaceful means as those foreseen in Chapter VI of the Charter of the United Nations." The definition of *peacekeeping* suggests the deployment of a United Nations presence with the consent of the parties involved and with restraint on the use of force except in self-defence. While *peacebuilding* refers to efforts in the medium to long - term process of re-establishing communities that have been damaged by war. This process includes re-establishing a society's political, security, social, and economic pillars or dimensions after a war. It also entails addressing the conflict's fundamentals and underlying causes, advancing social and economic justice, and establishing political structures of governance and the rule of law that will strengthen peacebuilding, reconciliation, and development.

Therefore, it is clear that fostering peace in Africa has several difficulties. What exactly do we mean when we talk about fostering peace? There are two ways to interpret the nature of peace, roughly speaking, and this has to be taken into account. There is a difference between a situation of negative peace and a condition of positive peace, according to the majority of analysts (Lund, 2001). When addressing themes related to peace and conflict, majority of people refer to the negative peace condition, which is the situation when peace is based only on the absence of violence. We must put more effort into achieving the ideal of positive peace, which is one that encourages rapprochement and peaceful cohabitation on the basis of human rights, social justice, economic fairness, and political justice. Therefore, in this context, when we talk about peacebuilding, we mean the process whose objective is to increase societies' ability to advance a lasting peace. Most actors and organizations involved in peacebuilding and development are putting more emphasis on the value of fostering constructive peace.

Indigenous Techniques to Peace-building and Social Cohesion

Apart from eradicating the foundations upon which Africans could identify themselves, colonialism also co-opted native institutions and methods of resolving conflicts in order to further the objectives of the colonial government. The main institution that settles disputes at the traditional, informal or community level is represented by the elders, chiefs, age grade and paramount rulers in a traditional setting. The centralizing influence of colonialism, thus, perverted indigenous African systems for ruling and settling conflicts. Since there are numerous ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groupings on the continent of Africa, it is impossible to generalize about the degree to which cultural traditions contain progressive values and principles that might guide our efforts to promote social cohesion and peace (Murithi, 2006).

However, we must be careful not to glorify or romanticize indigenous methods of dispute resolution in particular. This is due to the fact that African indigenous systems, like those of the rest of mankind, tended to be gender-exclusive in nature. Most indigenous women were not represented in the main decision-making organizations. To develop something that is really

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African, we must integrate modern ideas of gender equality with progressive native customs and ideals. To ensure the human dignity and inclusion of all elements of society, we must develop a framework that is a hybrid of indigenous African traditions and contemporary ideals, which will include women, men, girls, and boys (Murithi, 2006).

The Value of Social Cohesion

In a crucial sense, social cohesion is also present when there is peace, in addition to the lack of violence. In order for a society to achieve social cohesion, its members must rediscover their shared humanity and develop a sense of care for one another's wellbeing. Social inclusion is necessary because we can only protect our own security, safety, and well-being if we also look out for the interests of others. Acknowledging the interconnectedness of every human being means emphasizing the need to promote social cohesion. This study will later make the case that the only way for African countries to flourish is by fostering Pan-African social unity.

Illustrations of Indigenous Techniques for Peace-building

Interestingly, we discover that there are indigenous peacebuilding measures in Africa that may teach us a lot about healing and reconciliation, which lay the foundation for reestablishing social cohesion (Zartman, 2000). The current problem is for us to figure out how to draw lessons from the regional cultural mechanisms to peacebuilding. Combatants, notably child soldiers, were able to be reintegrated into their communities in Mozambique during the post-conflict period through the adoption of traditional healing and reconciliation measures. Traditional institutions have been employed in the past to resolve the low intensity conflicts that impacted Chad, Niger, and Ghana.

For instance, traditional leadership structures and procedures for resolving conflicts were deployed to unite the clans and establish a legislative and governmental architecture in Northern Somalia, now known as Somaliland. The government of Somaliland, which has its capital in Hergesia, has been able to preserve some degree of relative peace and stability by drawing on Somali culture and fusing these traditional structures with contemporary institutions of administration like the parliament. It has been over fifteen years since the self-declared Republic of Somaliland proclaimed its independence from Somalia. President Dahir Rayale Kahin of Somaliland requested recognition and observer status from the African Union (AU) in December 2005 (International Crisis Group, 2006). Somaliland was established following native cultural standards of administration, according to some, making it the first true nation state in Africa. In this way, it was a result of the efforts and aspirations of Somali tribes to form a state. This is completely in contrast to the majority of post-colonial republics in Africa, which were founded and built by former European colonial powers and arbitrarily divided ethnic groups, leading to the issues and pathologies we see today.

Additionally, the Rwandan government used the gacaca system of traditional justice and reconciliation to try and judge some of the people who were alleged to have participated in the 1994 genocide. This gacaca system's intriguing lesson is that it is mostly organized on local

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community engagement. The victims are involved in deciding what restitution is necessary so that the offender may be reintegrated into the community, and the local community is involved in helping the perpetrators to realize what they have done. The manner gacaca tribunals have been used has drawn criticism. This is inevitable since using indigenous traditional methods to administer justice in a contemporary nation state is untested territory. The most compelling evidence, however, that African indigenous techniques may play a part in attempts to consolidate peace and restore social cohesion is the Rwandese government's use of the gacaca strategy (International Crisis Group, 2006).

The Role of Culture in Peace-building

Despite this, we cannot discount the important part that culture may play in allowing people to settle disagreements and fortifying the bonds that unite them. People's perception of meaning is derived by their culture. What does being a human mean? What should the nature of human relationships be? These ideas influence the attitudes and values that we decide to uphold, which in turn influence how we behave with one another. Thus, cultural attitudes and values serve as the basis for the social rules that individuals live by (Malan, 1997; Abu-Nimer, 2000 & Avruch, 1998). Societies may, and often do, re-construct themselves in accordance with a specific cultural image by internalizing, transmitting to, and sharing these cultural attitudes and values with their fellow community members, as well as by passing them on to future generations.

In order to re-set up social solidarity in conflict-affected groups, a key step might be to find a way for individuals of those groups to 're-inform' themselves with a cultural common sense that emphasizes sharing and equitable resource distribution.

Ways towards Developing Education, Training, and Research on Indigenous Methods of Peace-building

It will be necessary to create education and training programmes for government officials and members of civil society that are based on African cultural values systems, but keep in mind that not all traditions are empowering, particularly when it comes to issues of gender equality. This will allow culture to start playing a significant role in the reconstruction of Africa. Progressive cultural ideals that uphold human dignity and the welfare of the person and society can shed light on how Africa might be peacefully rebuilt utilizing its own native value systems, which place a strong focus on fostering social inclusion. Therefore, fighting corruption and encouraging power sharing, inclusive governance, and the equal allocation of resources among all members of society are examples of how to do this in practice.

It is necessary to provide opportunities for future generations to learn about these customs. The elders who are knowledgeable with the traditions are allowing the wisdom of Africa to disappear (Murithi & Pain, 1999). In order to prevent this indigenous knowledge from entirely disappearing from the face of Africa, a number of methods are needed.

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- To conduct the necessary interviews and research to document these traditions.
- To prepare teaching and training material and develop curriculum on how indigenous approaches will be transmitted in educational programmes.
- To train, where necessary, qualified teachers and trainers who can facilitate learning on indigenous approaches.
- To establish partnerships between organizations (the AU, the University for Peace, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), educational institutions, professional teachers associations and non-governmental organizations which are working in this field of peace education to disseminate and share the training material and curricula.
- To disseminate and operationalize educational and training programmes on indigenous approaches to peacebuilding.

The young Africans across the continent should ideally be the focus of these measures as they are the ones who will ensure the future stability of the continent. These traditional methods for fostering social cohesion and peace need to be shared urgently in the present. So, in addition to developing and introducing novel means of spreading and conveying this information, strategies must also be built upon previous efforts. At the level of governments, efforts must be taken to take into account the beneficial role that indigenous methods may fill in resolving conflicts and fostering peace in the policy-making and policy implementation process. It is vital to implement a media strategy that encourages awareness of and contemplation on how indigenous traditions might support efforts to create a more peaceful society. Newspapers and radios are becoming more widely available to Africans, especially those who live in rural regions; therefore this should be taken into account as a way to support the spread of information about traditional methods.

Towards a Pan-African Integration

The leaders of Africa worked hard to create the AU. The concept was initially introduced during the AU Summit in Sirte, Libya, in 1999. The AU was founded in Durban, South Africa, in July 2002 after a transitional period. Through the peace negotiations in Abuja and the deployment of AU peacekeeping forces on the ground, the AU is now operational and actively working to promote peace in several regions of Africa, particularly in the Darfur region, several African states and currently, the peace deal between the Ethiopian Government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) signed on Wednesday 2nd November, 2022, in South Africa. But there is a fundamental issue with the creation of this Pan-African idea of continental unification. It is now only being used at the level of the societal political and corporate leaders. At the level of grassroots communities all throughout Africa, a basis for Pan-African unity must be built (Kornegay, 2006). Furthermore, the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union started looking at ways to ease travel between states during the AU Summit in July 2005 (Konare, 2006). If Africans could travel across borders without the time-consuming and ludicrous visa procedures that they currently must endure, our educational, training, and research endeavours in peace and development would be considerably strengthened. If at the most fundamental levels, Africans are unable to travel, meet, strategize, and put their ideas into action, we cannot encourage Pan-African

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unity. Our citizenship in Africa must be institutionalized, and policy must reflect this fact (Kornegay, 2006).

The AU, its member states, and communities must seek to spread knowledge of the organization and its Pan-African goals throughout all of Africa's peoples. It is necessary to provide African citizens the chance to promote greater intra-African and inter-African solidarity. In order to engage directly with civil society and grassroots communities who might not have access to communication tools to establish a dialogue with the African Union, more work needs to be done. For example, the Pan-African Parliament might provide a forum through which Africans can express their views (Konare, 2006).

CONCLUSION

In a significant sense, social cohesion as well as the absence of violence constitutes peace. There are traditional peace-building techniques in Africa that may teach us a lot about forgiveness and healing and lay the groundwork for re-establishing societal cohesion. We must acknowledge that certain traditions have not always supported gender equality, even while indigenous methods and institutions teach us many lessons we may also use current reconciliation efforts. The best teachings from history must thus be combined with forward-thinking contemporary norms and standards for the defence of human rights. Progressive cultural ideals that uphold human dignity and the welfare of the person and society can shed light on how Africa might be peacefully rebuilt using its own native value systems, which place a strong emphasis on fostering social cohesion. Crushing corruption and promoting power sharing, inclusive governance, and the equal allocation of resources among all members of society are examples of how to effectively strengthen social harmony. It will be necessary to establish education and training programmes for the government, authorities, civil society actors, and other individuals in order to enable culture to start playing a vital part in the reconstruction of Africa.

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