

Dynamics of PEACE PROCESSES

Edited by
Isaac Olawale Albert
Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede



CENTRE FOR PEACE AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

Contents

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Isaac Olawale Albert

and

Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede



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Chapter 1:	Beyond Is
Chapter 2:	Ethics of Ja
Chapter 3:	Strategic R.
Chapter 4:	Democr Ge
Chapter 5:	Can Fed N.
Chapter 6:	Rethinki Ad
Chapter 7:	Curricul Manager Bo
Chapter 8:	Mainstre Curricul Ola
Chapter 9:	Commun Tur
Chapter 10:	Sustainin Has
Chapter 11:	Viewing Analysis Eun
Chapter 12:	The Crisi Experienc Ben
Chapter 13:	Rivers Sta Between I J. S

Contents

Chapter 1:	Beyond Adversarial Conflict Management <i>Isaac Olawale Albert and Is-haq Olanrewaju Oloyede</i>	1
Chapter 2:	Ethics of the Inter-Religious Dialogue <i>Jacob Kehinde Ayantayo</i>	9
Chapter 3:	Strategising Peace Through Islamic Ethical Values <i>R.I. Adebayo</i>	24
Chapter 4:	Democracy as a Conflict Management Strategy <i>Gerald Ekenedirichukwu Ezirim</i>	38
Chapter 5:	Can Federal Democracy Manage Identity Conflicts in Nigeria? <i>N.D. Danjibo</i>	49
Chapter 6:	Rethinking Democracy and Peace in West Africa <i>Adeniyi Semiu Basiru</i>	64
Chapter 7:	Curriculumising Peace Education as a Strategy for Conflict Management in Africa <i>Bonnie Ayodele</i>	75
Chapter 8:	Mainstreaming Emotional Intelligence in Peace Education Curriculum in Nigeria: Prospects and Problems <i>Olabisi Olasehinde-Williams</i>	87
Chapter 9:	Communication and Conflict: Bypassing as Unspoken Vector <i>Tunde Ajiboye</i>	95
Chapter 10:	Sustaining Peace Through Strategic Communication <i>Hassan Olalekan Akibu</i>	106
Chapter 11:	Viewing Peacebuilding Through Literature: A Thematic Analysis of Olu Obafemi's <i>Wheels</i> <i>Eunice Chinyere Nwodo</i>	117
Chapter 12:	The Crisis of Public Policy in a Plural Society: The Nigerian Experience <i>Benjamin Adeniran Aluko</i>	127
Chapter 13:	Rivers State's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Between Hope and Despair <i>J. Shola Omotola</i>	139

Chapter 14:	Democracy and Ethno-Religious Conflict: A Study of Jos-North, Plateau State, Nigeria <i>Obadiah Samuel and Asmau Benzies-Leo</i>	156
Chapter 15:	Guarding the Guardians: Parliamentary Control of the Armed Forces in Nigeria's Fourth Republic <i>Professor Isaac Olawale Albert</i>	167
Chapter 16:	International Private Security Companies and Nigeria's National Security: Options for Government Regulations <i>Olusola I. Isola</i>	185
Chapter 17:	Security Sector Management and Peace Processes in Nigeria <i>Joseph O. Fayeye</i>	195
Chapter 18:	Security Sector Management: A Pivot to Economic Development of Nigeria <i>Samuel Odoma</i>	202
Chapter 19:	Interrogating Security Sector Reforms in West Africa <i>David Udofia</i>	218
Chapter 20:	The Role of Traditional Rulers: Nigeria's Emirs and Chiefs in Conflict Management Since 1976 <i>Abubakar Zaria Ibrahim</i>	237
Chapter 21:	The Epistemology and the Logics of Ethnic Conflict Within the Modern African State and the Concept of <i>Alajobi</i> in Yoruba Cosmology <i>Badru Ronald Olufemi</i>	249
Chapter 22:	Integrating Traditional Modern Conflict Management Strategies in Nigeria <i>Akeem Ayofe Akinwale</i>	261
Chapter 23:	Modernisation and the Traditional Methods of Social Control <i>E.O. Anyacho and David B. Ugal</i>	283
Chapter 24:	Traditional Beliefs and Practices in the Sustenance of Peace <i>Nurudeen Olarinde</i>	301
Chapter 25:	Indigenous Institutions and Peace Processes in Nigeria: The Yoruba Example <i>R.A. Olaoye</i>	312
Chapter 26:	Alternative Strategy in Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in the Niger Delta: A Case Study of Traditional Councils in Bayelsa State <i>Ambily Etekpe</i>	319

Chapter 27:	Ethno-I in Nige Ri
Chapter 28:	Nigeria Role of Manage Be
Chapter 29:	The Hy in Nige Jo
Chapter 30:	Credibi The Key O.
Chapter 31:	The Inte Az
Chapter 32:	Comm Re
Chapter 33:	Establis Nigeria: Peace C Province Na
Chapter 34:	Manager Ayinla S
Chapter 35:	Crises an J.A
Chapter 36:	Impact M Managen Project E Ach
Chapter 37:	Managing Areas of t Abos

Chapter 27:	Ethno-Religious Crisis and Traditional Peacemaking Processes in Nigeria <i>Ridwan Olabisi Yousouph</i>	332
Chapter 28:	Nigerian State and Institutional Capacity: Rethinking the Role of Traditional Rulers in Post-Election Conflict Management <i>Babajide O. Ololajulo and Bosede F. Awodola</i>	354
Chapter 29:	The Hybridisation of Conflict Resolution Models and Strategies in Nigeria: A Case Study of Non-Governmental Organisations <i>Joseph T. Atang</i>	371
Chapter 30:	Credibility in Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution: The Key to Communal Peace and Development <i>O.B.C. Nwankwo</i>	394
Chapter 31:	The Interfaith Mediation Centre and the Kaduna Peace Process <i>Azeez O. Olaniyan</i>	404
Chapter 32:	Community Response to Ethnic Conflicts in Jos Metropolis <i>Rasheed O. Olaniyi and Ernest O. Nnabuihe</i>	411
Chapter 33:	Establishing Community Structures for Peace in North-Central Nigeria: The Contribution of Health/Justice, Development and Peace Commission (H/JDPC) of the Catholic Ecclesiastical Province of Abuja, Nigeria <i>Nathaniel Msen Awuapila, M.IAM</i>	428
Chapter 34:	Management of Ethno-Religious Conflicts in Kwara State <i>Ayinla Saadu Alanamu</i>	447
Chapter 35:	Crises and Peace Initiatives in Ilorin Emirate Mosque <i>J.A. Jawondo</i>	456
Chapter 36:	Impact Mitigation Monitoring as an Environmental Conflict Management Tool: The Gbaran-Ubie Integrated Oil and Gas Project Experience <i>Achimota A. Dickson and Tarilayefa E. Dadiowei</i>	465
Chapter 37:	Managing Environmental Conflict in the Oil Producing Areas of the Niger Delta <i>Abosede Babatunde</i>	487

Chapter 38: The Impact of Political Liberalisation and Democratisation on Ethnic Conflict: Nigeria as Case Study <i>'Lanre Olu-Adeyemi</i>	501
Chapter 39: Food and Nutrition Security: A Conflict Prevention Strategy in Nigeria <i>O.R. Karim and O.A. Adekunle</i>	513
Chapter 40: Achieving Food Security and Peace: The Role of Pre-Conflict Situational Analyses <i>O.S. Balogun and J.O. Atteh</i>	523
Chapter 41: Peace Issues in Assisted Reproductive Technology <i>A.A.G. Jimoh, J.O. Ashaolu and O.K. Ghazal</i>	528
Chapter 42: Peace and Security Issues: Biomedical Perspectives <i>O.K. Ghazal, J.O. Ashaolu, A.A.G. Jimoh and L.A. Olayaki</i>	533
Chapter 43: The Impact of Artisanal and Illegal Mining on the Environment in Nigeria <i>Jacob I.D. Adekeye</i>	540
Index	549

Beyond Adv

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"You don't make peace
your enemies."

from those presented at the Strategic Studies of the United Nations the 3-day conference which conference was "Peace Process" was to review and draw so

Ethno-Religious Crisis and Traditional Peacemaking Processes in Nigeria

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Faculty of Business and Social Sciences
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INTRODUCTION

NIGERIA is a multi-ethnic society characterised by conflicts and human rights violations. This diverse society is populated by different ethnic nationalities, some of the different ethnics are strange bedfellows joined together by the Amalgamation of 1914. The effects of the amalgamation is the various religious cum ethnic-communal conflicts. During the long years of military rule, communal and ethno-religious clashes were minimal because they were repressed and suppressed, but with the advent of the current democratic dispensation in 1999, wherein almost every citizen tends to have the right to self-determination and self-expression, the crises have tended to be on the high side.

The effect of rights guaranteed under the 1999 constitution is the increment of conflict among the diverse ethnic groups and religions (Adewole, 2000). Ogar (2001) observes that religion and other social interests seem to have fuelled these crises, stating that violent clashes among clans, kindred and ethno-religious crisis are as dangerous as the Nigerian civil war.

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The conflict and wanton destruction of property recorded in the Niger Delta (among the Ijo, Itshekiri and Urhobo), Ife and Modakeke, Benue (between Tivs and Jukuns) and so many others could lead to another dimension of unimaginable magnitude if not properly handled.

Shortly after the inception of Obasanjo's regime in 1999, there was widespread breakdown of law and ethnic crisis in Nigeria. Ethnicity, which encompasses the cultural, spiritual and political make-up of a community, with a strong feeling and believe in their customs, belief systems and other components that make up that community. Ethnocentrism is looking down on other people's culture as inferior, while judging your own culture as superior. The resultant effect of this ethnocentrism has led to ethnic rivalry and tribalism (Ojo and Aka, 2001).

Territorial rivalry, claims and counter claims over access to and control of resources as well as claims for political space and corresponding power and privileges by the ethnic groups in the Niger Delta serve as the basis of the armed struggle there (Daramola, 2003). John (2003) confirming the losses that conflict has caused Nigeria, reports that many lives, houses and other Government infrastructures have been destroyed in the conflict.

The wanton loss of lives and properties has caused various unfavourable reactions from foreign governments, for instance the British, French and Australian governments indicated that it was dangerous for their nationals to attempt non-essential travel to the Niger Delta as well as northern regions of Nigeria (Kaduna, Kano, Jos) and scores of other places. It is noted that there had been a continuous pattern of serious inter-communal violence and unrest in these areas, which has led to thousands of deaths and curfews imposed in those areas (Madunagu, 2003). The continuous conflicts in the Niger Delta areas have led to unimaginable high rate of expatriate workers who were usually taken as hostage which is now a common phenomenon in the Niger Delta area.

Canadian Advisory also reported that "Oil rigs in the Niger Delta region have been occupied by Villagers who demand jobs or compensation for damages done to the environment" (Madunagu, 2003).

In the Middle Belt of Nigeria, longstanding ethnic clashes between the Tivs and Jukuns have defied all solution. According to Alao (2001), there may be nothing bad on ethnicity, if cultural diversities have exploited the potentialities of the different ethnic groups for national development. Faleye (2003) also views that nothing is inherently pernicious about ethnicity, but what matters is its manifestation of instruments to perpetuate domination which is questionable in a world where diverse human resources are blended to bring about even development. But by emphasising the importance of ethnicity, national issues are generally perceived from narrow ethnic perspectives. Ethnic loyalties remain much stronger than national unity. Ethnic jingoism has become destructive, force a bye-product of unhealthy rivalries, tribal sentiment, personality clashes and disagreement among ethnic group.

Yusuf (2003) opines that, it is an undisputable fact that Nigeria is an amalgamation of diverse and distinct ethnic nationalities with unique background and cultural

orientations. Many of its citizens are tempted to disagree with the sentiments expressed by its colonial masters to amalgamate the Northern and Southern Protectorates. Quoting Sir Peter Smitter, the parliamentary private secretary of the Secretary of State for the Colonies 1952-1959, as confessing that it was a palpable and regrettable error committed by the British to fuse diverse ethnic groups into one (Yusuf, 2003).

The above reveals beyond any doubt that the genesis of ethnic crisis in Nigeria is rooted in the amalgamation of 1914. There is no gainsaying the fact the major cause of ethnic crisis in the country is the feeling by some ethnic groups that successive governments both at the federal and state level are insensitive to their plight. Such ethnic groups persistently cry of disparity or unequal treatment by the federal and state governments.

Conflict prevention and achieving peace has been high on the agenda of most political writings on international conflicts since the early 1990s. It has been seen as a response to the many failures recorded in international reactions that were recorded at the time, the most haunting still being the war in Bosnia (1992-1995) and the genocide in Rwanda (1994). Nigeria is also susceptible to the many violent crisis that are recorded, and these violent conflicts are largely responsible for the backwardness being experienced by most countries and Nigeria is also not left out. Crises such as the Zango-Kataf 1987, Tiv-Jukun 2001, Aguleri-Umuleri 1999, Yoruba-Hausa (Fulani) 1999, Ijaw-Itshekiri crisis have hindered the people from active participation in the economic, social and political progress of the country. It is evidently clear from the 2008 GNP of the country, states that are rated as being backward are those that are crisis prone. Obviously, the effects of the phenomenon on Nigeria can best be seen than imagined.

According to Moses (2004), armed struggle and violence in many areas of Nigeria have escalated since 1999, destabilising and impoverishing many communities. Furthermore, gun culture has been established among the youths and there has been a progressive militarisation of the society. Small arms and light weapons (SALW) are now freely available in Nigeria, which was made available to willing hooligans and political touts by external sponsors desperate in causing crisis because it is an avenue for personal aggrandisement.

Thus, considerable work was initiated on developing preventive measures and applying them to a number of contexts and situations. It has also drawn the attention of scholars, often writing with a hope of having an impact on improving the success rate of international engagements to reduce violence in conflicts. Furthermore, the scope was rapidly broadened to cover structural and long-term aspects as well. Structural and direct or operational prevention strategies were juxtaposed against each other.

ETHNICITY AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

Ethnicity is the state of being ethnic or belonging to a certain ethnic group (Kellas, 1998,p:6). An ethnic group is defined as .a group of people who are generally recognised by themselves and/or the others as a distinct group, with such recognition

based on social or cultural characteristics (Farley in Cornell, 1998, p. 17). Thus, when a sub-population of individuals reveals, or is perceived to reveal shared historical experiences as well as unique organisational, behavioural and cultural characteristics, it exhibits ethnicity (Aguirre and Turner in Cornell, 1998, p. 17). Smith refers to six main attributes to define an ethnic group, a group sharing the same ethnicity: a collective proper name, a myth of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more differentiating elements of common culture, an association with a specific homeland, and a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of the population (Smith, 1991, p. 21).

Since all these attributes of ethnicity give the group its individual characteristics and distinguish it from the others, ethnicity could be considered in a way synonymous to the notion of identity or, to set it in a different way, identity is that sense of ethnic distinctiveness (Cornell, 1998, p. 18). This link between identity and ethnicity is made explicit in Horowitz (1985) definition of the latter: ethnicity is a highly inclusive group identity based on some notion of common origin, recruited primarily through kinship and typically manifesting some measure of cultural distinctiveness (Horowitz in Vuckovic, 1997, p. 1).

Nationalism

Ethnicity is highly linked to the concept of nationalism, since the latter is based on real or assumed ethnic ties (Cornell, 1998, p. 37). However, nationalism has more ideological and political dimensions (Kellas, 1998, p. 5), as it refers to the expressed desire of a people to establish and maintain a self-governed political entity (Cornell, 1998, p. 34). When ethnicity becomes nationalist, the result is the emergence of ethnonationalism, which in turn can prove threatening to the existence of the state and lead to ethnic conflict and disintegration.

Ethnic Conflict

Ethnic conflict is therefore the result of cultural incompatibility of groups, coupled with a sudden rise in awareness of one's identity vis à vis another ethnic group (Roessingh, 1996, p. 17). In such a conflict, at least one of the groups will define its goals in ethnic terms, i.e. it will claim that its distinct ethnic identity and the lack of the opportunity to preserve, express and develop it, is the reason that its members do not have the same rights, and cannot realise their interests. It is thus made clear that ethnicity and ethnic identity play an important role in conflicts of that kind, as they can provide a power that is capable of arising passion and nationalistic feelings which are used by elites for pursuing territorial and political power.

CONCEPTUAL PROBLEMS

What are some of the difficulties of using the concept of ethnicity as a framework for

understanding and addressing the conflicts in the Nigeria? First, it is not clear what is meant by the terms "ethnic group", "ethnicity", and "ethnic conflict". In the context of Nigeria, many concepts, such as nationality, tribe, and now clan, have been used interchangeably with that of ethnic group, and it is very difficult to distinguish between them. A commonly used definition is that an ethnic group is a collectivity of people who share the same primordial characteristics such as common ancestry, language, and culture. (People have included religion in the category of shared culture.) Ethnicity then refers to the behaviour and feeling (about oneself and others) that supposedly emanate from membership of an ethnic group. Ethnic conflict thus means cleavages between groups based on differentiations in ethnic identities.

A major question that arises from the above definition of ethnic group is whether people must share commonalities in all the criteria mentioned to be members of the same ethnic group or to share the same ethnicity. There are instances in Nigeria in which just belonging to the same religion seems to suffice to classify people as members of an ethnic group, although they might differ in other criteria. But there are also cases where commonality in language and religion has not signified membership of the same ethnic group. Especially where groups have interacted for a long time, there are situations where people might have overlaps in one of these ethnic criteria (religion, language, culture, or ancestry) but lack commonalities in the rest. How are people to be ethnically classified under those circumstances?

Some have argued that membership of an ethnic group is not determined by objective factors such as sharing common primordial characteristics. They point to subjective factors such as perception, belonging, self-identification, and the like (Hymes, 1968:1220; Nadel, 1947:13). They argue that a person, regardless of primordial commonalities, can become a member of an ethnic group if he or she feels and acts as a member and is accepted as such by the group. But this raises some problems. If the basis for the perceived commonality or belonging is not the primordial common factor, then what is it? Could the basis be commonalities in interests, aspirations, psychological orientations? If so, why should this kind of identity and bond be characterised as "ethnic"? Moreover, what happens in cases where some feel and act as if they are members but their membership is not accepted by the reference group?

In short, the definition of ethnic group and the distinction between people based on ethnic criteria is difficult, inconsistent, and confusing. One could come up with different results, depending on whether one uses objective or subjective criteria. This has led to a great controversy concerning the identification and measurement of the phenomenon. But the preoccupation with definition is not simply an academic exercise. It has very important practical implications. It should go without saying that we cannot develop effective mechanisms to deal with a problem if we do not fully understand it. Frustration with the inability fully to grasp and define the concept of ethnicity has led to a tendency which says: "Let us not waste a great deal of time trying to define the concept; instead let us recognise it as a major problem and put our

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energies into developing mechanisms to deal with it".

Another difficulty with the concept of ethnicity and ethnic conflict is the common assumption that ethnic similarities and differences are the basis for social harmony or discord. Thus, it is expected that those who share a common ancestry, language, culture, and religion should have a relationship of solidarity and harmony with one another but one of cleavage and conflict with those who do not share their ethnic identity. This concept is also full of problems. There are societies in Nigeria where ethnic similarity has not assured social harmony nor avoided the outbreak of large-scale conflict. Especially where there is no perception of external threat, there is a great deal of evidence that ethnic groups have divided into lower-level identities and fought each other with as much zeal as they might fight other ethnic groups. Alternatively, there are also societies where ethnic diversity has not been a prescription for violent conflicts.

Problems of Definition

Once one goes beyond the labels and begins to decipher the claims and counter-claims in Nigerian conflicts, all the problems associated with the concept of ethnicity discussed earlier begin to surface. To begin with, the definition of the "oppressors" and the "oppressed" in ethnic terms becomes an insurmountable task. Who have been dominating the Yoruba, Niger Delta or Igbo people? How is membership in this group defined? What is the Yoruba, Niger Delta or Igbo culture? Is "Hausa domination" a code word that disguises other grievances or does it signify supremacy of one population over another, as the term implies?

It is true that most of the persons who have occupied power and privilege have, by and large, borne Hausa names. But this situation does not mean that the great majority of the Hausa have been "dominators" or beneficiaries of the political, economic, or social system that bore their name.

Thus, we find the ethnic explanation of the conflict that has gripped Nigeria for the past 30 years, such as the theory of "Yoruba, Niger Delta, Hausa or Igbo domination", very inadequate and misleading. This is partly because it is very difficult to define the actors in ethnic terms (for instance, who are the Hausa, Yoruba, Niger Delta or Igbo?). Secondly, even if it were possible to define the actors in ethnic terms (if one were to define easily who the Hausa, Yoruba, Niger Delta or Igbo were), the reality on the ground does not support a conclusion that what was witnessed in Nigeria was ethnic conflict.

In fact, a good case can be made that ethnic conflict, in the sense of one ethnic group waging a war against another, or pogroms motivated by ethnic hatred, such as we have seen in some societies, has been a very rare event in the history of Nigeria. The norm in the country, if not in the region, with the exception of recent developments in Nigeria, has been ethnic coexistence rather than ethnic warfare. Clapham (1990:10) argues: "Viewed across the region as a whole, economic marginalisation provides a

much clearer guide than either ethnicity or even political exclusion to the incidence of warfare in Nigeria". On a more cautionary note, Bhardwaj (1979: 69) argues:

The importance of the ethnic factor [in Nigeria] is recognised by all. But it is our contention that, along with the role of the ethnic actors, the socio-economic basis of the ethnic hostility must also be given due weight. A clash of interest of the exploiters belonging to different ethnic groups and the masses in general precipitates the ethnic hostility. The struggle of the Hausa against the Yoruba, Niger Delta or Igbo of the South — all bring ethnic differences to the fore and distort a basically socioeconomic conflict into an ethnic one.

It can be argued that, to a large extent, what has been called ethnic conflict is élite-driven conflict. When one talks of ethnic conflict between the Hausa, Yoruba, Niger Delta or Igbo in Nigeria, for example, it is more accurate to talk about conflict between elite groups who come from different ethnic backgrounds than about people-to-people violence among the masses arising from ethnic animosity, as the term "ethnic conflict" implies. However, such an élite-driven conflict has a powerful capability of turning into widespread conflict among the masses.

It is true that Nigeria's ethnic groups have their own prejudices and stereotypes about one another. But these attitudes have not normally turned into conflict at the people-to-people level unless manipulated and organised by political leaders. Élites find ethnic prejudices and stereotypes fertile grounds in which they can easily cultivate support for their political and economic aspirations. Expressing their objectives in ethnic or nationality terms (such as "advancing the interest of our own people" or "protecting ourselves from another ethnic group") ennobles the pursuits and gives them more legitimacy. As we have seen in many instances in the continent, the major beneficiaries of such aspirations might be the élites, but the whole ethnic group becomes associated with these aims since they are pursued in the name of the entire group.

Once this cycle starts and conflict begins to be waged in the group's name, fear and further animosity pervade the whole group, since all members become perceived as the enemy by those against whom the conflict is being waged. Pre-existing ethnic prejudices further fuel the conflict because they simplify the complex motivations of the actors, making it easy to create an immediate "us" and "them" perception as well as to demonise the adversary. Thus, a conflict started by the élites ends up in a self-fulfilling prophecy, engulfing the entire ethnic group. Interestingly, despite such efforts by the élites, at least in Nigeria, the incidence of people-to-people violence and pogroms have been quite rare.

Despite the confusion generated by the concept of ethnic conflict, many analysts have latched on to this simplistic concept, implying people-to-people antagonisms based on ethnic differences to describe the conflicts in Nigeria. As Clapham and Bharwaj have indicated, analysis of "inequitable economic and class stratification" or "monopolisation of access to state and economic power by an ethnic-based élite"

(in the case of Nigeria, a multiethnic elite under the name of Hausa, Yoruba, Niger Delta or Igbo oligarchy) might provide an equally sound if not better explanation of the conflicts in the region".

THE ROLE OF RELIGION ON ETHNIC CONFLICTS

Many conflicts related to religious differences arise every day. Even though some sociologists and economists have not paid special attention to the issue of religion to explain ethno-religious crisis, many researchers in sociology have emphasised the importance of religious differences as a cause of ethnic conflicts.

Religion is considered as the most important element of a common culture. Religious affiliation is a significant marker of ethnicity (Pavković, 1997, p.6) and religious symbols, rituals and institutions were used to activate aggressive nationalistic feelings for the promotion of political agenda.

Nigeria's ethnic groups were differentiated in their religious beliefs. Predominantly, Hausa are Muslims, Igbo in the South-east are Roman Catholics, while in South-west there are a sizeable Muslim and Christian population (Kupchan, 1995, p. 105). The differentiations in terms of the various religious affiliations created distinctive customs, rituals and beliefs which shape everyday life of the groups. However, these differences in the way of life and religion, although they differentiate the culture of Nigeria's groups, they could not shape a national ideology capable of leading to an ethnic conflict. It was again the politicisation of these religious identities and the polarisation of the people along ethnic lines that created the conditions for conflict. It was when the élites started to play upon these differences that religious beliefs became a marker of ethnic identity and, to quote Huntington again, each ethnic group identified itself with its broader cultural community and defined itself in religious terms (Huntington, 1997, p. 269). Consequently, religion, as a fundamental aspect of ethnicity, became a useful political tool in the hands of the élites for the promotion of their own plans.

The theory of Samuel Huntington (1996) about the cultural fragmentation of the world initiated a large debate. Huntington proposed a model to interpret the new reality of the world, because the explanatory factors are not ideological but cultural. Following Huntington, we have to grant religions a fundamental role in world politics. In the modern world, religion is a central and, in many situations, the primary force that motivates and moves humans. In such situations, what counts is not political ideology or economic interests. Faith and family, blood and belief are the aspects with which people identify themselves, the characteristics for which they fight and die. People belonging to different religions have different versions of many relations among individuals and authorities. Following Huntington, one of the most important causes of future conflict among civilisations is that their characteristics and differences are less mutable and, therefore, more difficult to reach agreements and solve than

political and economic differences. More than ethnicity, religion discriminates and differentiates humans in a sharp and exclusive way, even more than belonging to a country would do. A person can be half-French and half-Saudi and, at the same time, be a citizen of both countries. However, it is difficult to be half-Catholic and half-Muslim. Following Horowitz (1985), in plural societies in Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean, parties tend to be organised along ethnic lines. Most of them in Africa belong to animist religions. In Western Europe and North America, religion, social class, and language are the basic dimensions of a political party. Lijphart (1984) found, in a sample of 22 democratic regimes, that the two dimensions that most frequently differentiate systems are the socioeconomic and the religious.

These authors, among others, claim that religious differences are more important than language differences as a social cleavage that can develop into a conflict. There are two basic reasons why religious differences can generate more violence than other social cleavages. First, there is no doubt of the exclusivity of religion. One can speak two or more languages, but you can have only one religion. Religion can be used as a sign of identity, stronger than language in the sense that you exclude those from other religions, whereas speaking two languages diffuses the division line among groups.

Second, religious differences, which are the basis of differences among civilisations, imply different ways of understanding the world, social relationships, and so on. Even if different groups speak different languages, they could share the same way of understanding the world and relationships if they belong to the same civilisation. However, this is more difficult for people of different religions.

DETERMINANTS OF ETHNO-RELIGIOUS CRISIS

The incidence of rebellion is decided by *motivation*, *opportunity*, and *identity*. First, rebels need a motive. This can be negative — a *grievance* against the existing state of affairs, or positive — a desire to get rich, sometimes called *greed* in the civil war literature. Second, potential rebels need to be able to achieve their goal. The realisation of their desires may be blocked by geographical factors (if the rebels are thinly spread out) or by the lack of financial means (if they are very poor). Third, a common identity is essential for group formation. Regardless of the motives of the rebels and their opportunities, they will not act together unless they see themselves as being in the same boat. We see all the three factors as necessary for the launching of a rebellion sufficiently plausible to start an ethno-religious crisis. All three factors also affect the length of conflict; rebels need motivation to keep on fighting, and they have to be able to do so financially.

Group cohesion is necessary to minimise deterrence and risk that the group splits into two or more competing rebel groups. Various models of conflict are related to this three-factor model of rebellion, which is largely inspired by Gurr (1970). Ellingsen

(2000, 229) identifies the same three factors but labels them *frustration*, *opportunity*, and *identity*. Collier and Hoeffler (1998, 2004) in their work on ethno-religious crisis that formed the core of the recent World Bank project (Collier et al, 2003) formulated their work around the concepts of *greed* and *grievance* (see also Berdal and Malone, 2000). In other writings, Collier and Hoeffler speak more of *opportunity* than of *greed*. To some extent they identify opportunity with greed, but they also study geographical opportunities for rebels, such as the presence of forest cover and mountains. Collier and Hoeffler recognise that both opportunity and grievance are necessary for the outbreak of ethno-religious crisis, but usually conclude (e.g., Collier and Hoeffler, 2004) that "opportunity provides considerably more explanatory power than grievance". Similarly, in the study of interstate war, Most and Starr (1989, 23) posit that decisions to go to war require *opportunity* and *willingness*. Willingness refers to "the choice (and process of choice) that is related to the selection of some behavioural option from a range of alternatives," while opportunity is a shorthand term for "the possibilities that are available within any environment". Identity is not part of their model, probably because for interstate war it is assumed that group formation is defined by the nation-states.

Natural resources are relevant to all the three factors: rents from natural resources provide income for corrupt, incompetent, and repressive governments while at the same time increasing the value of holding the reins of government. Such rents increase the motivation to overthrow the government although revenues accruing to the government make it more able to defend itself. The looting of natural resources (or extortion in connection with extraction activities) provides economic opportunity for rebel movements. And finally, the promise of rent from natural resources may also contribute to strengthening group identities, as when Scottish nationalism was stimulated by the discovery of oil in the North Sea. In the ethno-religious crisis literature, most of the attention has been focused on the economic opportunity provided by abundant natural resources (see, for instance, Collier et al, 2003). Collier and Hoeffler (1998, 2004) were among the first to suggest that natural resource abundance may increase the risk of ethno-religious crisis onset, arguing that rebels can loot primary product commodities to finance their fighting. Furthermore, Collier and Hoeffler (2004) contend that natural resources provide financing as well as motivation for secessionist conflicts. Collier and Hoeffler provide empirical evidence that their measure of natural resource dependence is strongly associated with the onset of ethno-religious crisis. Their subsequent work has continued to emphasise natural resource dependence over resource endowment as such (Collier and Hoeffler, 2002, 2004; Collier, Hoeffler, and Söderbom, 2004).

Addison, Le Billon, and Murshed (2002) assess the possibility that some natural resources may be associated with conflict while others are not. Lootable natural resources are likely to have a negative impact on a peace process since continued conflict might be more profitable for the combatants than an outbreak of peace. Similarly, Le Billon (2001b) divides natural resources according to their geographical

location in relation to the country's centre of (*proximate* vs. *distant*) resources and their *concentration* (*point* vs. *diffuse*) resources. He argues that point resources are associated with state control and coups d'état (when they are proximate) and with secession attempts (when distant). Diffuse resources are associated with rebellion and rioting (when they are proximate) and with warlordism (when distant). Ross (2004a) develops several possible mechanisms for how natural resources may affect conflict characteristics and also argues that the lootability of a resource is central in determining the impact on conflict.

Who Benefits From Conflicts

The benefits of rebellion might accrue through a variety of sources. The rebellion might be motivated purely by greed — the income that can be achieved either during the rebellion from quasi-criminal looting and the benefits that ensue if the rebellion is victorious from control of the state revenues. Alternatively, it might be motivated purely by grievance — the opposition to perceived or actual injustice. The costs of rebellion are the labour force and equipment needed for a rebel army that can survive against the military threat posed by government forces. Because these costs must be met, even if the rebellion is motivated entirely by grievance, it must generate revenue. Hence, the circumstances that determine financial viability are potentially important regardless of the motivation for rebellion. The probability of rebellion increases as benefits rise relative to costs. It is useful to consider four extreme variants of the model, in which finance, grievance, military viability, and history are the decisive determinants of the risk of rebellion.

Potentially, finance is the only binding constraint on rebellion. Ethno-religious crisis occur only when rebel groups are able to build large organisations, and such organisations require substantial financial resources both to meet their payrolls and to purchase armaments. Societies may differ considerably in the extent to which such large-scale finance is available so that this is decisive. Conversely, the supply of groups willing to engage in violence may be sufficiently large in most societies that variations — for example, due to differences in objective grievances — have no effect on the risk of conflict.

An alternative is that finance is usually available when needed, whereas the supply of groups wishing to satisfy grievances through violent means is the binding constraint on rebellion. In this case, we would expect that objective indicators of grievance, such as economic inequality and ethnic or religious divisions, would fuel grievance, but the lack of democracy might channel these grievances into violence. Hence, these indicators would predict rebellion.

A further alternative is that rebellion is determined by its military viability. Rebels may need to meet a "survival constraint" determined by the size of rebel forces relative to government forces and geographic factors, such as whether the population is dispersed. Below a certain threshold, rebellion is not militarily viable. Rebellions

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are then more likely in societies in which government forces are weak and geographic conditions make it difficult for these forces to defend national territory.

A final alternative is that conflict risk is determined by history. Once a conflict has occurred, it creates a legacy of hatred, and this hatred fuels further conflict. In this analysis, some societies are doomed to a cycle of repeated conflict.

TRADITIONAL AND INDIGENOUS PEACEMAKING

The terms traditional and indigenous peacemaking require careful conceptualization. Respectively, they are taken to mean dispute-resolution and conflict-management techniques that are based on long-established practice and local custom. Anthropological literature provides a rich source of information on customary norms and rituals for the recalibration of inter-group and intra-group harmony in traditional societies (Kemp and Fry, 2004).

In many traditional societies, the core of peace-making is the restoration of balance in order to ensure the sustainability of the society. Given the fragility of the human resource ecology in many traditional societies, the restoration of balance was regarded as essential for survival. Exchange and compensation were vehicles for the restoration of balance: restoring honour so that two groups could live in harmony; restoring access to agricultural resources to a group that had been denied these resources, or compensating a group for losses incurred due to aggression by others. In many cases, compensation was nominal — an object with symbolic rather than commercial value, for example sea shells among the Sivaï in Bougainville (Oliver, 1955: 418) or green stones among the Maori (Vayda, 1960: 121). Guiding the exchange and compensation mechanisms were principles of reciprocity and mutuality — or a recognition that groups in a relatively enclosed society required transparent and repeatable behavioural norms.

Conceptual Clarification of Traditional and Indigenous Peacemaking

Common features of traditional and indigenous peacemaking are, and were, consensus decision-making, a restoration of the human/resource balance, and compensation or gift exchange designed to ensure reciprocal and ongoing harmonious relations between groups. Many traditional societies developed and maintained sophisticated mechanisms for non-violent dispute resolution and constructed complex conceptions of peace. These versions of peace were far removed from versions of peace introduced by colonial powers or sponsored by elements of the international community in the contemporary era. Having little conception of state sovereignty, modern bureaucracy, written covenants, formal participation structures, and linear, sequential notions of time it is unsurprising that traditional societies found, and still find, Western versions of peace alien. This inter-cultural miscommunication, or less favourably the imposition of one culture's mores on another culture, may in part explain why so many peace

accords in contemporary ethnonational conflicts have difficulty in making meaningful connections with communities.

Before proceeding, four points of clarification may help with the conceptualisation of traditional and indigenous peacemaking. First, despite the common conflation of the terms 'traditional' and 'indigenous', the two are not interchangeable. Although, there may be considerable overlap, traditional denotes that a practice or norm has a heritage of considerable duration. Indigenous suggests that an activity or norm is locally inspired. Crucially, indigenous norms and activities need not be traditional. Like all human communities, indigenous groups engage in constant processes of adaptation to their social environment. Thus, intra- and inter-group negotiation and renegotiation of modes of social operation are embedded practices and provide sites for social innovation and exposure to new or externally inspired practices and ideas. Communities described as 'indigenous' are capable of employing, or adapting to, new methods of social, economic and political interaction, including new approaches to peacemaking (Scott, 1998). A second conceptual point is that it should not be assumed that traditional or indigenous peacemaking can be blithely equated with 'good' or a higher normative value. Rather than a romantic defence of all things traditional or indigenous or the pursuit of a discourse of authenticity (which attaches a premium to anything deemed authentic), all peacemaking techniques and assumptions should be exposed to rigorous tests of relevance and fitness for purpose (Ilesanmi, 2002:222).

Al-Krenawi and Graham (1999: 170) note the 'hidden power' of rituals to coax participants into adherence to the social order. With reference to Melanesia and Polynesia, Helu (1997: 3) notes how political customs are 'the handiwork of the chiefly classes' and designed to reinforce their authority. In extreme cases, some traditional approaches to dispute resolution — for example, placing hot metal on the tongue as a test for telling the truth — can objectively be described as harmful to human well-being (Al-Krenawi and Graham, 1999: 168).

A third conceptual point is that the notions of the 'traditional' or 'indigenous' can be hastily invented or cynically manipulated by actors in a peacemaking process who attempt to benefit from the supposed higher moral value to be gained by labelling a practice or attitude as 'traditional'. For example, peace process participants may make recourse to apparently traditional practices or notions as part of a wider peace process strategy of delay or obfuscation. They may calculate that privileges may accrue if certain issues, norms or communities are cast as 'traditional'. Thus, to label an issue as 'traditional' may award it a legitimacy it would not otherwise attain and obligate peace process participants to employ additional sensitivity when approaching that issue. In relation to Canada, for example, Alfred and Corntassel (2005: 598) argue that "aboriginalism" is a legal, political and cultural discourse designed to serve an agenda of silent surrender to an inherently unjust relation at the root of the colonial state itself.

They paint a picture in which the label 'indigenous' is part of the 'political-legal

compartmentalisation of community values' that is vital to a 'post-modern imperialism' (Alfred and Cornthassel, 2005: 600-1). The fourth guiding point for the conceptualisation of traditional peacemaking is to caution against regarding traditional and Western peacemaking as discrete conceptual categories. It would be appealing to conceive of distinct categories of peace-making with neatly contradictory qualities and sharply delineated boundaries. The construction of over-simplified dichotomies of a Western-political-legal-rational sphere versus a non-Western-psychological-moral-emotional sphere may even reinforce a sense of cultural imperialism (Brigg and Bleiker, 2007:57).

Traditional Remedies

Now, if we focus on the solutions that have been traditionally applied to the problem of ethnicity and the conflicts it generates, we notice that the remedies seem to present as many difficulties as the problem itself. The traditional responses have been either "nation-building", which has meant forging one nation out of diverse peoples, or, in rare cases, "self-determination", which in many people's minds has been associated with separation and the formation of another state.

Attempts at building new nation-states out of a multitude of ethnic groups has generally taken two forms. One has been the creation of a multi-ethnic culture, which all groups identify with and voluntarily adopt as their own. The other is the assimilation of different cultures into a dominant one, usually by the direction of a highly centralised and coercive state. The first approach is complicated and normally takes a long time to develop. The second approach, seemingly expedient, has been adopted by many post-colonial African states in their eagerness to generate quick results. But this approach has often been associated with manipulation and at times outright repression by those in power. The 30 years of experience with this approach since independence has shown that not many new nation-states have been forged in Africa. In fact, it might be said that the efforts made in this direction seem to have backfired. More recently, animosity and violence along ethnic lines has been on the increase in many African societies, especially as the highly centralised nature of these states is being challenged with the movement towards multi-party politics.

As another response to ethnic conflict, people have proposed "self-determination" as an alternative to "nation-building". But the concept of "self-determination" is so riddled with confusion that it does not provide a viable alternative. The term itself is composed of two concepts, "self" and "determination", whose definition and operation raise a multitude of problems. What constitutes the "self"? Is it a group that is connected by primordial ties like an ethnic group? Could any other group form the "self"? Can the "self" be engineered? And what is the meaning, implication, and scope of "determination"?

If the "self" were to refer to a group having primordial ties, we are again faced with all the problems discussed earlier regarding group definition, especially in cases of a long history of intergroup interaction. The distinction between objective and subjective criteria again becomes an issue. Mayall argues that it is not clear whether

some of these aggregate identities like nations exist "as an objective reality, as claimed by nationalists, or should be understood as an imagined community or creative fictions as others have claimed" (Mayall, 1990: 2; see also Gellner, 1983).

If one uses the objective criterion of primordial ties for defining nations, then there are many who feel that their primordial roots do not solely dictate their interests, needs, aspirations, and ability to forge common purpose as well as affiliations with those who do not come from the same roots. If one uses the subjective criterion — and there is a lot of merit to that — a major problem becomes how to identify those who feel they belong to an ethnic group so that they are clustered in one territory? What if those who feel they belong are not accepted by others as belonging?

To the extent that self-determination has meant separation and creation of a state, how might it be possible to build a state around an ethnic group without provoking chauvinism, ethnic animosity, and the wrenching apart of communities, given the cultural, linguistic, ancestral, and religious continuities between ethnic groups that have interacted with each other for long periods? The search for the pure ethnic group as a foundation for building a state has led to fascism, Nazism, pogroms, massive dislocations, and genocide's in many parts of the world, including the African continent itself.

If, on the other hand, the "self" refers to an "imagined community" or "creative fiction", as Mayall argues, could one then stretch one's imagination to include others in the community so that the "self" becomes a larger and more inclusive unit?

Aside from the definition of the "self", there is still a problem with the content of "self-determination". What is to be determined? What is the scope of the "determination"? Some have defined self-determination as the aspiration "to have control over one's affairs in order to ensure one's economic and social well-being" (An-Na'im, 1989:21). But the ability to determine one's own affairs or economic and social well-being is increasingly being complicated by the realities of an interdependent world. One is constrained not only by one's own capabilities but the interests and capabilities of others. Except in a world of autarky or complete isolation, any actor must recognise how his or her needs and actions are compatible with those of others in the system. The more interdependent the world becomes, as the trend seems to indicate, the more one's orientation might need to be towards coalition-building, coordination, negotiation, and consensus rather than unilateral determination of one's own affairs. If so, how much autonomous control can one sensibly exercise in this modern and rapidly shrinking world? How meaningful is it to *absolutise* "self-determination" in such circumstances?

The major limitation in all of these approaches to defining the "self" for the purposes of "self-determination" is the failure to recognise that primordial elements constitute only one consideration in that definition. It cannot be denied that there are other considerations based on human choice rather than mere coincidence of birth. Common perceptions, needs, aspirations, and interests can also enable people to include others who share these sentiments in their definition of "themselves" even if

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they do not share primordial links with them. Therefore, to define the "self" exclusively in terms of primordial givens by creating ethnic states seems to ignore, artificially and detrimentally, the various dimensions that enter into people's definition of themselves. The challenge becomes how to recognise and legitimise the unavoidable and undeniable fact of primordial roots, but to temper its detrimental and exclusionary tendencies by encouraging broader definitions that can accommodate others. In other words, how might it be possible to encourage and emphasise the consociational aspect of "self"-definition as much as the primordial aspects?

An Alternative Approach

The two conflicting demands of "nation-building" and "self-determination" have embroiled Nigeria, as well as much of the African continent, in decades of bloodshed and destruction. However, we have seen that both approaches suffer from severe limitations which prevent them from providing avenues for the effective creation of harmonious societies.

Given these limitations, a more promising direction, especially in the case of Ethiopia, might be to re-examine the notion that ethnic animosity and the domination of one ethnic group by another are the causes of the conflicts in the country and that the solutions to these conflicts lies in secession or the creation of independent states.

Instead, addressing the economic and political inequities in the system (which no doubt had been disguised and confused by ethnic labels), enlarging the economic base so that there are resources to share among various ethnic groups, opening up the political system so that everyone, regardless of his or her ethnic background, can have access to it, as well as creating a system of governance that is democratic and respects the political and human rights of all citizens, could go a very long way towards remedying the so-called "ethnic" conflicts in Ethiopia.

In conjunction with this, one should work at developing systems that could prevent ethnicity from becoming a cause for further cleavages and civil war in the various societies of Nigeria. First, it must be established that the question of identity is not and should not be a zero-sum issue in human relationships. All peoples have multiple identities which are expressed differently in different circumstances. The freedom of an individual or a group to choose its own separate identity should not, therefore, be a threat to others as long as that individual or group also recognises that there is common identity at another level with those from whom it is distinguishing itself. Thus, as much as people endeavor to articulate and enhance what is unique about themselves, an equal amount of energy should be invested in articulating and enhancing what binds them with other people.

A mechanism must be found to legitimise ethnic identity in Nigeria without making it incompatible with the formation of a larger unit of identity based on mutuality and beneficial collaboration. A promising endeavour in this context might be to adopt a very loose federal system of governance supplemented by building infrastructures for regional integration. The loose federal system of governance would allow for the

expression of ethnic identity. But the tendency towards fragmentation that might arise from legitimising ethnicity would be balanced and tempered by providing incentives towards higher levels of integration and identification with the entire region. As the various ethnic groups become reassured of their identity and security, they would also be provided with incentives for a larger regional identity by highlighting the benefits that could emerge from higher levels of association and integration.

The fear and resentment which groups have of the current state systems in the region, as well as their tendency to view separation as a solution, can be tempered if the state is viewed as an intermediate institution rather than the institution of final resort to work out problems, as it has been to date. The creation of a supra-state regional structure, in which the various groups in the region have a say but which is capable of dealing with problems that cannot be dealt with at the state level, could have a salutary effect on the conflicts between the state and the various groupings within it.

This approach could enable the societies in Nigeria to work at both ends of the identity problem. While people would be reassured about being what they are or cannot avoid being, they would also be encouraged to explore greater vistas of meaningful identity with greater entities, beyond the state. The disintegration and exclusive orientation of ethnicity would become more balanced by the synthesis and inclusiveness that comes from a sense of regional identity. Creating a regional framework with a move towards regional integration could permit the relaxation of strict boundary demarcations, allowing freedom of movement and interaction between peoples. It could reduce the pressure for the creation of new independent states by disaffected groups, since there would be a new regional forum to redress their grievances or address their interests and rights without their being forced to resort to secession.

The concept of a regional identity arising from a vision of regional integration could create a less threatening, consociational process where all the actors in the region could be engaged in building a more equitable and peaceful social contract that could lead to mutually enriching relationships. Regional identity would not be an end in itself, but a step in a transition to more inclusive identities. It would challenge groups to recognise aspects of themselves that could they could share beyond the ethnic group and the state.

WHY THE RENEWED INTEREST IN INDIGENOUS AND TRADITIONAL?

Ideas of traditional and indigenous peacemaking and dispute resolution in ethno-religious crisis have found increased credence among certain states, international organisations, international financial institutions and NGOs as the post-Cold War period has progressed. Crucial in this has been a renaissance in the concept of 'the indigenous'. Resistance and activism by indigenous groups gave indigenous issues a

much higher profile. In large part, this was also aided by the United Nations designation of the 1995–2004 period as the ‘International Decade of the World’s Indigenous Peoples’. Although, the UN General Assembly failed to adopt the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, debates and policy concern on the rights, plight and capacities of indigenous peoples spread far beyond the UN. Thus the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development has funded ‘project work with indigenous communities that promotes their views and voices, helps exchange information and improves communication’ (FCO, 2006), while the Inter-American Development Bank established an ‘Indigenous Peoples and Community Development Unit’ and developed an ‘Indigenous Strategy’. The International Labour Organization, for example, has sponsored research on indigenous peoples and poverty reduction (Bhattachan and Webster, 2005). Concerns with indigenous rights have been evident at the INGO level as well with Oxfam International’s *Strategic Plan* aiming to ‘facilitate a stronger voice for indigenous people at the global level’ (Oxfam International, 2001:15).

While interest in indigenous peoples is not the same as an interest in their practices, the above cases show some evidence of the mainstreaming of the concerns of indigenous peoples among international actors involved in international development. In relation to ethno-religious crisis and dispute resolution, there has been greater interest in the actual peacemaking techniques and practices on offer from indigenous groups. Indeed, some of the international actors who have shown interest in these techniques could be described as bastions of the liberal peace. The World Bank, for example, offers a training video on ‘Building Social Capital through Peacemaking Circles’, in which the Circles are ‘an indigenous traditional mechanism for communication and building shared values, consensus and resolving conflict that was the core of earlier participatory forms of government’ (World Bank, 2004). UNITAR, the UN Institute for Training and Research, has developed a training programme ‘to enhance the conflict prevention and peacebuilding capacities of minority and indigenous peoples’ (UNITAR, 2006). The draft UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples noted that such peoples should have access to ‘mutually acceptable and fair procedures for the resolution of conflicts and disputes’ which would ‘take into consideration the customs, traditions, rules and legal systems of the indigenous peoples concerned’ UNHCR, 1994: Article 39).

A number of conflict resolution authors and practitioners have also highlighted the importance of culture in dispute resolution. At its most basic, their reasoning is that since conflict is often culturally located, then it is sensible that attempts to ameliorate and manage conflict are respectful of culture (Avruch, 1998: 63). John Paul Lederach’s (1995) notion of ‘elicitive training’ rejects the idea of external conflict resolution ‘experts’ having a monopoly of wisdom and highlights the importance of local inputs in peacebuilding. Significantly, ADR — which respects many of the qualities found in indigenous and traditional approaches to peacemaking — has gained immense respectability. Such approaches emphasised that win-win outcomes were possible, that ongoing relationships were more useful than one-off victories, and that third parties could play useful roles as invited facilitators rather than unilateral interveners.

These approaches placed an emphasis on dialogue, social justice and conflict transformation (rather than resolution) (Burton, 1969: 49-56; Ropers, 2004). Legal systems in the United States, New Zealand and elsewhere have institutionalised ADR, drawing it into the mainstream (Nader, 1969; Nader and Todd, 1978; Slaton and Becker, 1990: 301-15; Jabri and Burton, 1997: 94-5). The chief point is that many international actors hold generally positive attitudes (at the rhetorical level at least) towards traditional and indigenous approaches to peacemaking. What explains this apparent popularity of activities that are identified as 'indigenous' or 'traditional' peacemaking? At a superficial level, this 'popularity' may reflect a prosaic and mutually beneficial relationship between local and international actors: the former may be motivated by a desire to secure any resources and kudos the latter can offer, while the latter may regard traditional and indigenous actors as a means of achieving donor-driven conditions on local participation and acceptance. But this 'popularity' of the indigenous and traditional also operates at the normative level, where practices of traditional peacemaking are able to synchronise with two cardinal ideas in development intervention strategies: local participation and sustainability.

Alongside local participation, sustainability is the second key idea from development and humanitarian interventions that has fuelled renewed interest in traditional and indigenous approaches to peacemaking. The logic of sustainability was that if communities could access their own resources and capacities over the longer term, then their reliance on external assistance would be reduced. Much of the discourse on sustainability in development and humanitarianism arose from frustration at repeated, short-term interventions that dealt with the manifestations of underdevelopment and failed to build or enhance capacity to deal with future problems.

Sustainable practices often gave priority to environmental harmony and ecological balance, which also lay at the core of many traditional peacemaking approaches (Vayda, 1976: 4). Also relevant to the increased attention to the benefits of traditional and indigenous approaches to peacemaking was a growing awareness by some states, international organisations and NGOs of the complexity of ethno-national conflict situations and the need for multifaceted conflict management approaches. The linkages between uneven development and conflict were internalised by a widening circle of conflict-intervening actors. Thus, the environment in which peace-support activities were being supported was more amenable to ideas of cultural sensitivity and local approaches to peacemaking.

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