Globethics Repository



Post-conflict peacebuilding and prospects for democracy with reference to Africa

This page was generated automatically upon download from the Globethics Repository. More information on Globethics see https://www.globethics.net. Data and content policy of Globethics Repository see https://repository.globethics.net/pages/policy.

Item Type	Book
Authors	Adebo, Tarekegn
Publisher	Life & Peace Institute
Rights	With permission of the license/copyright holder
Download date	2026-11-19 14:47:14
Link to Item	http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/180001

OCCASIONAL PAPER

Post-conflict peacebuilding and prospects for democracy with reference to Africa

Tarekegn Adebo, Ph. D.

PUBLICATIONS FOR PEACE EDUCATION
Life & Peace INSTITUTE

Post-conflict peacebuilding and prospects for democracy with reference to Africa

Tarekegn Adebo, Ph. D

Life & Peace Institute, Uppsala, Sweden

Life & Peace Institute, Uppsala, 2005

POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING AND PROSPECTS
FOR DEMOCRACY WITH REFERENCE TO AFRICA
© 2005 by the Life & Peace Institute
Printed by Temdahls Tryckeri AB, Östervåla, Sweden
ISBN 91-87748-74-6

Table of contents

About the author 5

Preface 7

Introduction 9

Conflict de-escalation and peace agreement 10

Conflict resolution 11

Major tasks of post-agreement peacemaking 13
- Implementation 14
- Consolidation 14

Democracy and peacemaking 15

Democratic institutions as forums of negotiation and conflict resolution 16

Prospects for 'democratic transition' and some challenges 18

Democracy and identity 21

Democratisation and ethnicity 24
- Under the shadow of identity/ethnicity 27
- Identity under democracy and human rights 27

Some key tasks 30
- Reconciliation, taking peace to the village 30
- Strengthening the civil society 31
- Local governance 32

On approach and philosophical basis 33

Summary 35

References 38

About the author

Tarekegn Adebo obtained his BA in Political Science and International Relations minoring in Sociology from the Addis Ababa University (1971), Postgraduate Diploma (1977) and PhD in Political Science (1982) from Lund University. His published thesis title was Ideological Trends in the Political Thinking of the Developing Regions: The Case of Sub-Saharan Africa. He has taught Political Science and Human Rights with the rank of Assistant Professor at the universities of Addis Ababa and Lund.

Presently he is Research Co-ordinator at the Life & Peace Institute in Uppsala and teaching Religion in conflict and Reconciliation to a graduate class at Uppsala University. His research area includes state, ethnicity and democratisation, human rights and integration, and democracy and development.

Preface

This paper was originally meant for internal use by the Life & Peace Institute, LPI, highlighting the current stage in the development of conflicts, particularly in the Horn of Africa where the Institute has been active for more than a decade. However, colleagues who read the manuscript found it interesting and recommended its publication for wider readership.

The destructive conflicts that plagued much of Africa including those still lingering in the Horn and the Great Lakes Regions are presently moving to the post-conflict stage. This phase has its own particular characteristics that need renewed analyses and understanding of the realignment of actors and their behaviour, as well as the nature of incompatibilities and the reformulation of strategies and methods, in order to meaningfully respond to the urgent needs of consolidating the peace process. Democratic transition is a pronounced aim in every case.

LPI, with its community-based approach in conflict transformation, facilitated valuable meeting points during the late 1980s and 1990s, where practitioners and researchers met grassroots and middle level actors, pioneering in the development of new terminologies and conceptual frameworks in the area of emerging conflict patterns, characterised as intrastate and identity-based.

Presently there is a need to focus on post-conflict stage, its characteristics, conditions, as well as the key tasks thereof. This is a stage concerned with the decisive step of abandoning violence, developing institutions conducive for non-violent conflict resolution and sustainable political and socio-economic development. This paper, based on earlier research and lectures by the author, argues that sound representative institutions, based on the principles of democracy and human rights and creatively integrating traditional values and wisdom of each society, have a good chance to usher in a hopeful system where future violent conflicts can be averted and peaceful mechanisms prevail.

The discussion highlights the challenges of democratic transition in war-torn conditions, weak or shattered political institutions, economic underdevelopment and confusing identity complex. Besides these hurdles, external unfair economic exchange and global relations play a negative role. Briefly examining the prevailing theoretical discussion on the issue, the paper suggests an analytical tool for clarifying the complex entanglement between transitional democracy on one hand, and identity/ ethnicity, on the other. The approach suggests an integrative perspective, which can counter the usually polarised and adversarial conceptualisation, despite prevalent human needs and desire for bonding and mutual respect, with which much of the existing social science literature is replete.

May 2005
Tarekegn Adebo
Research Co-ordinator, Life & Peace Institute

Introduction

Africa has embarked on a serious uphill journey struggling to shed its largely post-colonial authoritarian legacy, culture of violence and anarchy spread in many of its regions and moving towards democracy. Some call the trend a "renaissance", while others doubt if there is much substance to such claims while the continent is still saddled with grinding poverty, disease and foreign debt. Despite all odds, surely, major conflicts in the continent are ebbing away.

An African Union document, which introduced the emerging vision and mission of the newly reorganised body, summarises the main causes for Africa's problems as follows: "Distrust for constituted authority, corruption and impunity coupled with human rights abuses have kept Africa in a situation of conflict, thereby undermining all initiatives towards sustainable development."[1]

The political arena, which is responsible for society's overall leadership, is singled out as the primary source for the chaos Africa has experienced. No wonder this appears to be so when one considers that Africa experienced 186 coups d'état between 1956 and 2001, half of them occurring in the 1980s and 1990s alone[2].

Undeniably, Africa has seen rejuvenation and revival in recent years where countries rose from the ashes of crippling violence and despair and moved towards a peaceful course. Today too we see some glimpses of hope, albeit in the midst of despair, in the Horn of Africa with the current positive trends of peace negotiations in Somalia and Sudan. The Democratic Republic of Congo is already struggling with post-conflict adjustments. It is this optimistic trend which recently emboldened Gertrude Mongella, the Speaker of the first Pan African Parliament, to assert: "We have hope that those pockets of conflict in Africa are its last."

There is a clear sign of hope, a sign to abandon violence and to pursue settlement through dialogue and power-sharing inclusive institutions. The aim of this discussion is to highlight at this juncture the importance of the post-conflict phase in peacebuilding - a phase "following armistice or peace agreement"[3], where, as a rule, interests are pursued through dialogue and non-violent constructive means. In this discussion we touch upon some of the key tasks of the stage including key transitional principles and institutional mechanisms, the continued efforts of people-to-people reconciliation and the importance of the democratic choice, particularly the need to strengthen the institutions of local empowerment/government for lasting peace and development.

1 The African Union Commission, Strategic Plan of the African Union, Vol. 1 (Addis Ababa, 2004): 14
2 The African Union Commission, 2004:14
3 Alex P. Schmid, *Thesaurus and Glossary,* (London: FEWER, 2000): 66

Conflict de-escalation and peace agreement

The term conflict has many meanings[4]. One earlier definition put it as "A struggle over values or claims to status, power, and scarce resources …"[5] The groups or the individuals involved, it is argued, may not only try to obtain the desired values but may try to neutralise, injure, or eliminate rivals. Others see conflict as "contests, competition, disputes, and tensions as well as manifest clashes between social forces." Still others see it as striving for goals and interests, which are "incompatible".

Wallensteen defines conflict "as a social situation in which a minimum of two actors (parties) strive to acquire at the same moment an available set of scarce resources"[6]. He identifies action, incompatibility, and actors as the key elements for analysis.

Peace researchers and practitioners believe conflicts, 'even intractable' ones, are 'solvable.' War, being the most terrifying level of conflict, can be avoided if conflicts were resolved at dialogue levels through reforms and accommodations.

Conflicts tend to escalate[7]. The logical stages of their progression are often indicated as: a) *a discussion/dialogue stage* where the parties may disagree but work together; b) *polarisation* - a stage where parties distance themselves from each other; c) *segregation* - moving away from each other completely, and d) a *destruction stage* – one of all out antagonism including violence and war among the parties.

The Horn of Africa in many situations has lived through the horrific last stage over decades. Assefa, from his long experience in the area of peacebuilding blamed "Lack of political will" as a serious barrier "for taking action to creatively solve problems." And recounted: "I have at times felt that parties to conflict are like people who have dutifully constructed prisons for themselves, and upon finishing, they enter and lock themselves in. After that they scream with anguish about being trapped in prison. One would think that they could solve their problem since the key is in their hands. Strangely, even after someone comes to help them, they are reluctant to hand over the key so that they can be released."[8]

4 Schmid, 2000:12

5 Schmid, 2000:12; see also Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1956), 8

6 Peter Wallensteen, *Understanding Conflict Resolution* (London: Sage Publications, 202), 16

7 See Peter Harries and Ben Reilly, Eds. *Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiators* (Stockholm: IDEA, 1998), p. 3

8 Hizkias Assefa, "Critical Perspectives on Peace Theories and Practice", Proceedings of the International Ecumenical Consultation 8-12 October 2003 (Uppsala: Life & Peace Institute), p. 9

The aim of peace agreement is a result of successful negotiations to bring the warring parties back to the dialogue stage and negotiation. Unlike the Cold War times when intrastate conflicts were seen as a zero-sum game, 'one of winning or losing', analysts see a civil war "as something that can be traced back to its origins in legitimate grievances and 'normal politics gone bad', and that such wars can and should be resolved through negotiated compromise."[9]

The understanding that conflicts are 'solvable' is a positive starting point in conflict resolution, which is an integral part of peacebuilding. Unfortunately, warring parties often start to soften their positions after committing a lot of destruction and when the war is deadlocked due to 'power politics, force and fear.' More than good will and commitment to principles, 'hurting stalemate' and changed power balance force a 'ripe condition' whereby belligerents give in to peaceful resolution efforts.

Conflict resolution

As it is with bonding and cooperation, incompatibility of interests causing conflicts is a widespread phenomenon in human life. Human nature is capable of both peaceable life and violence. Most conflicts are resolved peacefully on a daily basis. War is the most serious level of conflict, which mobilises violence. The key issue in peacebuilding is transforming and mending damaged relations between antagonists and re-establishing amicable cooperation.

In this regard, the best course is to intervene before incompatibilities hike to the level of violence. Preventive diplomacy with peacemaking or conflict resolution and peacekeeping constitute the main steps in the UN Agenda for Peace.

Conflict prevention is defined as "short- and long-term engagement to stop, before it starts, the emergence, outbreak, or spread of any collective violence and the activities that precipitate that violence."[10] Its aim is not merely "to contain conflicts but also to transform those contentious issues in order to eliminate the outbreak of violence and move towards processes that foster cooperation rather than conflict among groups within or across national borders."[11] It is about 'reversing a rising tension' rather than waiting until things slide into violence and war.

9 Thomas Ohlson and Mimmi Söderberg, *From Intra-State War to Democratic Peace in Weak States* Uppsala Peace Research Paper No 5 (Uppsala: Uppsala Univ., 2002), p. 14; see also I. William Zartman, *Illusive Peace. Negotiating an End to Civil Wars* (Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995):332-333

10 See John J. Kirton ed., G8, the United Nations, and Conflict Prevention (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004):3

11 Kirton, 2004:3

Conflict resolution, on the other hand, concentrates on *termination of war*. Its task starts with analysing and understanding conflict. Three approaches are mentioned in this regard: a) conflict dynamics, b) need-based conflict origins, and c) rational strategic calculations[12].

Wallensteen defines conflict resolution "as a situation where the conflicting parties enter into an agreement that solves their central incompatibilities, accept each other's continued existence as parties and cease all violent action against each other."[13]

The basic elements of conflict resolution indicated in this 'functional' definition are:

1) agreement, a formal understanding among the parties where a signed document is produced;
2) continued existence of the opposing parties, not a situation of defeat and win or capitulation but "fighting parties accept each other also as parties in future dealings with one another", and
3) termination of violent actions against each other wherewith war ends fear and insecurity of persons, including former belligerents.

This measure ushers in *the post-conflict situation.* Such agreements, analysts underline, must be inclusive so as not to leave out all the major *contending forces* and *outstanding issues* uncovered. Peace cannot be achieved by leaving out certain groups in the bush or neglecting non-armed political actors. A non-inclusive accord has little chance to succeed. If temporary exclusion is necessitated for some tactical reasons, the matter has to be clarified/rectified as soon as possible. Peace agreements must carry the interests and will of the people with them. Involving civil society representatives and proper media communication can pave the way for legitimacy.

Confidence building is important in peace process. This includes overcoming what Curle calls the three poisons of human relations: "ignorance, hatred and greed."[14] These ills have to be countered by proper knowledge of the 'other', mutual respect, as well as caring and an attitude of sharing.

12 Wallensteen, 2002:34

13 Wallensteen, 2002:8

14 Adam Curle, *Tools for Transformation. A Personal Study* (Bankfield House, UK: Hawthorn Press, 1990):23

Major tasks of post-agreement peacemaking

The post-agreement stage comes after violent conflicts have been terminated through peace accords. It is obviously a risky stage where "a relapse into violent conflict or war" is quite a possibility. In fact it is indicated not less than "50 per cent of all ongoing violent conflicts have emerged from previous violent conflicts."[15] The post-conflict stage has both short and long-term tasks. In this discussion we will concentrate on long-range institutional issues in pursuit of lasting peacemaking.

Ohlson and Söderberg have discussed 'successful conflict resolution' in three phases.[16] They distinguish the process as *dialogue phase,* which comes before peace agreement, *the implementation phase* and *the consolidation phase.*

After a long journey of distrust and devastation, the warring parties return to where they departed first: the stage of dialogue, negotiations and efforts of mutual adjustment. The venture to this stage might have cost a great deal in human and material resources. And yet it is an inevitable step towards normality. Negotiations that can be short or protracted start with the help of third party facilitators. At this stage, the primary parties to the conflict may want to pursue both violence and dialogue, but ceasefire must be effected at a certain stage. It must be noted that the third parties also have their own interests in the peace process, political, strategic, economic or otherwise[17]. One only hopes such interests will not make peace efforts a hostage prolonging the agony of war victims.

Signing of *peace agreement* is the main element in phase one. This is achieved at the end of negotiations/dialogue where third parties play a supporting role, at times using significant leverage. Peace agreements include, among other things, a) *military provisions and security guarantees* aimed at termination of violence, including cantonment, disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration, as well as setting up of a smaller joint force with reduced military spending. There is a guarantee for the safety of different participants (here it must be noted that sensitive issues such as human rights abuses and war crimes during armed confrontation are matters that are to be handled with care by each case), and b) *political stipulation* – in this, provisions are made regarding power-sharing, "participation of parties in a society after a war" opening the way for a "constitutional and non-violent form"[18] of struggle with democratic rights.

15 Sida, Conflict Sensitive Development Co-operation, How to Conduct a Conflict Analysis. (Stockholm: Sida, 2004): 32

16 See Ohlson and Söderberg, 2002:13-24

17 Chester A. Crocker et al, *Taming Intractable conflicts (*Washington, *D. C.*: USIP, 2004*)*: 21

18 See Wallensteen, 2002:139

Implementation

A well-prepared agreement is realistic and includes all the important parties and crucial issues, which are at the root of the conflict. It must represent a just peace. Implementation of the agreement, however, is a 'fundamental test' for the 'sincerity' and 'quality' of the agreement signed.

There must be sufficient trust developed among the primary parties to the conflict. Particularly crucial to the process are, as mentioned above physical safety and military security and agreement on a mechanism of power distribution.

Peace must be made attractive, 'enticing' to pursue and to sustain. A situation for its attraction is enhanced by the perceived benefits including the feeling of safety and security, immediate material benefits, constitutionally guaranteed rights of property or position or participation, an opportunity to gain power with legitimate and non-violent means, enhanced international prestige, or domestic legitimacy, an inflow of donor funds, an opportunity to have a say, an opportunity to stay alive.[19]

Consolidation

The process must create a change of mind among the participants. Through the win-win mechanism and democratic indicators, major parties must have gained some access to power.

There is a serious advice to be heeded by the primary parties: that "risk minimization is preferable to advantage maximization". It is argued that "if the primary parties, in negotiating the nature of the political mechanism, search for a mechanism that will maximize their gains and their power if they come out the winner after its implementation, then the risk for a return to war is high".[20]

Thus, consolidation means acceptance by all parties and the people of the provisions of the accord and implementing them. The central term in this phase is *'legitimacy'*. What the 'elites' or leaders have agreed on must be what the people at large accept and sustain as their own. All the three phases are connected to three explanatory terms: *change, trust and legitimacy*[21].

Successful completion of the post-conflict period opens the way for more determined work of reviving/strengthening the state institutions and the civil society and revitalising the economy through implementing the democratic reforms promised in the peace accord**.** What do we mean by democracy and what challenges do democratisation efforts face in situations immediately after

19 See Ohlson and Söderberg, 2002:19
20 Ohlson and Söderberg 2002:20
21 Ohlson and Söderberg, 2002:21

long-drawn civil wars in weak states? Is transition a possibility for societies passing through a post-conflict stage? These are among some of the key questions the following discussion tries to address.

Democracy and peacemaking

Democracy is a widely acclaimed political system in the present day world. In the traditions of all organised societies, including many of those of Africa, there are certain tenets and practices, which resemble some elements of democracy. Ancient Greek societies have left an acknowledged legacy of a version of the earliest democracy.

The term democracy itself is of Greek origin made up of two words *demos* (people) and *kratos* (rule), hence meaning, "rule by the people"[22]. Democracy in politics is about the people and those who hold power. People's self-rule is exercised today largely through elected representatives, while referenda offer a case of direct participation in decisions.

Modern democracy, through its development over the last two centuries, has spread in a wave-like pace since the mid-1970s, particularly during the 1990s. Countries in civil wars too look up to democracy for their lasting peace, development and unity with equality and justice. But the path towards democratisation is not an easy one.

Democracy has both formal/constitutional and substantial aspects. According to what is called 'narrow' meaning, "the democratic method is that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for the people's vote"[23].

The wider view talks in terms of "democratic autonomy" which calls for a 'high degree of accountability' of the state and substantial direct 'participation' of the people in 'community institutions'. It also requires the creation of equal opportunity for participation including "social and economic rights".[24]

Rudebeck sees a tension between the two conceptualisations of democracy, namely the procedural one characterised by, on one hand, universal *suffrage, regular elections and basic civil rights* and, on the other hand, democracy conceptualised as *political equality in actual practice* and speaks of "democratic constitutionalism and popular sovereignty/citizen autonomy as two distinct but linked dimensions of actually existing democracy and ongoing processes of

22 Georg Sørensen, *Democracy and democratisation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993): 3

23 Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976):260

24 Sørensen op. cit., p, 10; David Held, *Modern Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987):271

democratisation"[25]. He also terms the two aspects as *democratic constitutionalism* and *citizen autonomy/popular sovereignty.*

One thing is clear: democracy today rejects dictatorship in any of its forms. While the discussion about the most suitable meaning of democracy continues, in political terms three main elements are identified: '*competition, participation and civil and political rights'*[26].

Preconditions for democracy are sought in such circumstances as industrialised socio-economic system, certain political culture, and external support[27]. Such conditions, it is argued, 'set the stage for actors to play' but may not necessarily result in democracy. There is no fixed model, but one thing is clear: that democracy "*is brought about by individuals and groups, by social actors, who fight for it*[28]. It is also argued that without a welfare state that prevents extreme material poverty and steep socio-economic inequalities, it is not possible for the poor section of the population to fully enjoy their political rights[29].

Democratic institutions as forums of negotiation and conflict resolution

Analysts underline the decisive role "that appropriate democratic political structures play in forging an enduring settlement to an internal conflict."[30] Democracy is not a problem-free system, but "in the absence of a better alternative", it is argued, "democratic structures", in various forms, "can offer an effective means for the peaceful handling of deep-rooted difference through inclusive, just and acceptable social frameworks."[31]

Others argue peace mobilisation is not an end in itself and peace agreement is only one step in a long process towards normal political life. As it is underlined: "Successful peacemaking seeks to establish institutions and mechanisms for sustaining and expanding peace, for revitalizing cultural norms and reconstructing governance systems, for strengthening communities to have capaci-

25 Lars Rudebeck, in *Democracy as Actual Practice: What Does Democracy Really Bring?* (Uppsala: The Collegium for Development Studies, 2003):6

26 See Sorensen, op. cit., p, 12 and 'the institutional guarantees' by Robert A. Dahl, *Poliarchy: Participation and Opposition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971):3

27 See Sorensen 1993:25-28; Symore Martin Lipset, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy – Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," American *Political Science Review* 53(1959):75

28 Sorensen, 1993:29

29 Sorensen 1993:15

30 Harris and Reilly, op. cit. 1998:16

31 Harris and Reilly 1998:17

ty and skills to contain their conflicts, and to be able to reach out for reconciliation with one another."[32]

At the same time we are cautioned: "poorly designed democratic institutions can also inflame communal conflicts rather than ameliorate them. And the introduction of 'democratic' politics can easily be used to mobilize ethnicity, turning elections into 'us' versus 'them' conflicts." The same authors propose the importance of democratic values such as "pluralism, tolerance, inclusiveness, negotiation, and compromise" as "keys to lasting settlements to conflicts".[33]

Democracy presents standing representative structures and meeting places for continuous conflict resolution and prevention system through non-violent mechanisms on national and local/regional as well as international levels. Multiple political, ethnic, religious, socio-economic and regional diversities can find their expression in the political assemblies, where laws and policies are made and their effective and efficient execution is assured for the interest of all.

Democratic systems are based on and guided by the known fundamental principles of *freedom, equality, and solidarity* interpreted practically in the constitutions, laws and policies of respective societies and implemented through relevant institutions. There are adversarial and integrative approaches to dealing with political matters. The democratic method relies on integrative, consensual, and tolerant methods and negotiation. Violence is repudiated unless in the case of self-defence in accordance to international norms.

Hence, the key question for lasting peace and development in societies emerging from violence and authoritarian rule is crafting appropriate an *idea-institutional framework* that enables peaceful life for all. For the constructing of such a framework the main sources are *democratic principles, human rights instruments and society's positive traditional/cultural heritage* in consonance with the realisation of freedom, equality and solidarity.

Such an *idea-institutional* framework is a useful instrument for building a democratic political system. In fact, one can say, democracy in its various expressions is what individuals and leading groups in the political and civil society arena of a society agree upon and the people support as this encompasses and expresses common interest.

32 *People-to-People Peacemaking*, (Nairobi: NSCC, 2004): 20

33 Harris and Reilly, 1998:17

Prospects for 'democratic transition' and some challenges

Movement towards democracy for countries emerging from protracted civil war is a trying journey. Analysts indicate, democratic transition, even for countries that approach the path from relatively peaceful starting point, is not an easy matter.

Major political change that has come to be known as the "third wave" of democracy[34] has touched all the continents hitherto in the grip of authoritarian political traditions. Exhausted in the belated African colonial wars, Portugal spearheaded the fall of right-wing authoritarian regimes in Southern Europe in the mid-1970s. Across Latin America elected civilian governments replaced military dictatorships during the late 1970s. The mid-1980s saw the 'decline of authoritarian rule' in parts of East and South Asia. The collapse of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe came at the end of the 1980s, followed by the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and in the sub-Saharan Africa massive political upheavals, starting from the first half of the 1990s, brought the decline of one party and/or military regimes. The Middle East too experienced some 'recognizable liberalizing trend' in the 1990s.[35]

It is argued that a large number of the countries that were said to be on the transitional course towards democracy are still in problem, failing to complete transformation and consolidation. Of the estimated 100 countries considered as transitional, fewer than twenty are clearly on the democratic course. A small number of them have even reverted to dictatorships. Thus, a large number of the countries remain on an undecided course that one analyst terms "a grey zone", which is "neither dictatorial nor clearly headed toward democracy" or "falling between outright dictatorship and well-established liberal democracy."[36]

Countries stranded in this obviously pessimistic 'grey zone' are further regrouped as "feckless pluralist" and "dominant-power elite" systems. In the former, democratisation is said to remain "shallow and troubled" where "participation goes little beyond voting". The political elite is said to be "corrupt, self-interested and ineffective", and politics is seen as a "stale, corrupt, elite dominated domain that delivers little good to the country and commands equally little respect". Above all, "economic performance is frequently bad or even calamitous"[37].

34 Samuel P. Huntington, 1991, The Third wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press

35 Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm." *Journal of Democracy* 13:1(2002)

36 Ibid., pp. 9-10. In the transitional course of the 1990s sub-Saharan Africa has featured 30 cases, the largest number, Latin America 20, Eastern Europe and former Soviet Union 25, Asia 10 and the Middle East 5.

37 See ibid., pp. 10-11

The dominant-power elite type could be where "one movement, party, extended family, or a single leader dominate" political life. As in the "feckless pluralist" the citizens "tend to be disaffected from politics and cut off from significant political participation beyond voting".[38] A key political problem here is " the blurring of the line between the state and the ruling party, who control not only the state power but also its assets including "source of money, jobs, and public information". Separation of power and decentralisation are resisted and the civil society and media still lack freedom.

The main problem in conceptualising democratic transition is blamed on the simplistic assumptions analysts hold that did not allow serious examining of complex problems each region and country confronts when the democratic process unfolds. Experience has shown that no "fixed model or law" can be formulated about democratic transition.

However, valuable attempts have been made to conceptualise the process of transitions to democracy. The earliest meaningful formulation, which has strongly influenced recent analyses, is the one presented by Rustow[39]. His model anticipated democratic transition to move through three phases, namely a) preparatory phase – breakdown of the non-democratic regime, b) decision phase – beginning establishment of a democratic order, and c) consolidation phase – further development of democracy or democracy ingrained in the political culture. Rustow underlines one factor as a background – national unity. It is argued, "the vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be … have no doubt or mental reservation as to which political community they belong to".[40]

As Carothers reveals, the key conditions for democracy indicated by many are decision by elites and holding of elections. Discussions on transition, he says, envisage the process in stages as a set path encompassing *opening, breakthrough* and *consolidation,* a modification of the above.

The main assumptions are:[41]

- any country moving away from dictatorial rule can be considered as moving toward democracy;
- democratisation tends to unfold in a set sequence of stages;
- the belief in the determinative importance of elections;
- that underlying conditions or structural features – economic level, political and institutional legacies – will not be major factors;

38 Ibid., p. 12

39 Dankwart Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy," Comparative Politics 2, no. 3 (1970); see also Sorensen, 1993:42

40 Rustow, 1970:350

41 Carothers, 2002:6-8

- the assumption that the transitional process is being built on coherent, functioning states where bottom-up pressure results in the opening up and top-down institutional reform, elections and democratic development.

The main worry that arises here is that these assumptions which may not correspond to the reality of many of the 'third wave' cases may inhibit proper understanding and, therefore, hinder the necessary tasks that determined actors should accomplish for the success of the transitional process. There are formidable hurdles to be overcome to move towards democracy for countries in situations like those in sub-Saharan Africa. In many places after overcoming the challenges of violence and security, building of institutions from the scratches and rehabilitation of the economy become urgent tasks to be accomplished. Little is readily available to turn to in terms of resources, and many transitional efforts get frustrated.

Among the stories of post-conflict peace building and democratic transitional efforts, the case of South Africa is mentioned for its encouraging trends. One analyst argues that an environment of sustainable peace in South Africa required the development of a strong and responsive state, based on the principle of separation of powers, the presence of a strong private sector and functioning economy and autonomous civil society[42].

The particular condition and approach that favoured sustainable peace in South Africa are described as "the absence of full-scale civil war, complemented by a negotiated, peaceful settlement of the conflict that was characterised by compromise and inclusiveness "[43].

The main factors favouring peace and democratic transition are both conceptual and structural, summarised as:

- A responsive democratic state with clear separation of powers (legislative, executive, judiciary) assuring the rule of law and respect for human rights;
- The presence of political parties that are based on inclusive values and not driven by narrow identities;
- Security agencies, professional, placed under civilian accountability;
- A sustainable, independent and diverse private sector with "good commercial, financial, and physical infrastructure"; and
- An independent and strong civil society.

Two areas are singled out for caution: a) South Africa is still on the course of transitional process as regards democratic consolidation, and, particularly, political parties have yet to work hard in terms of firmly rooting their work on

42 Vasu, Gounden, "Conditions for Peace: The State, Private Sector and Civil Society" *Conflict Trends*, 1/2005, ACCORD (2005): 12-14

43 Gounden, 2005:13

an inclusive value basis and move away from narrow identity affiliations. b) Another area of "serious threat" is "the continuing concentration of capital in the hands of a few". It is argued: "Unless the benefits of a strong economy are distributed widely within a society, conflict will arise", and that as long as "a critical mass of redistribution of economic resources has not yet been reached" "a threat to stability"[44] remains.

Democracy and identity

Identity, the sense of belonging to a certain group, has become an influential concept in recent social science debate. Particularly ethnic identity has become a popular theme included in conflict analysis efforts.

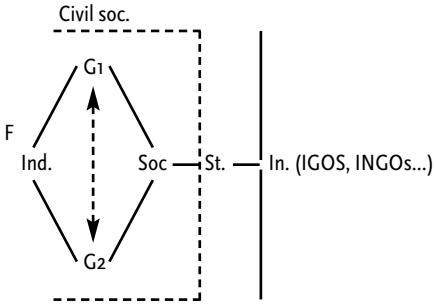
In general terms there is a tendency to use the concept in adversarial notion, seeing that identities always clash. The cooperative element and bonding which are common among humans is largely neglected.

Secondly, the term identity is used in a one-dimensional fashion, which artificially simplifies a multifaceted and overlapping character of identity.

Human beings experience multiple identities and relationships, which they utilise as a strategy for their survival.

There are six major *sites of identity*, which should be seen in their interaction for human survival in African societies. These are individual (Ind), identity groups (G1), associations and interest groups (G2), society (SC), state (St) and global organisations (INGOS, IGOS, UN).

Loci of key identities (Fig. 1)



Key:
Ind.: individual as part of other identity sites and universal humanity
F: family
G1.: primary identity largely marked by criteria of birth – ethnicity, religion, language, culture
G2: secondary relations marked by criteria of choice, e.g., interest groups, professional associations, trade unions, and political parties
Soc.: society indicates people at large, individuals and groups that inhabit a country
St.: state – a political organisation of a society encompassing a government
Int: international arena – governmental (IGOs) and nongovernmental (NGOs) orgs.

: a line showing multiple linkages
: Sovereignty line
: Civil soc. civil society space
: a line of indirect influence

44 Ibid

Civil society is a concept filtered from the 19th century liberal political debate in the West with its central ideals of "personal independence" and "respect for persons."[45] Ekeh indicates that the concept entered the African political discourse around the mid-1980s with the same purpose of "individual liberty and personal security" to be guaranteed through "intermediate organisations standing between the state and the individual."[46] It is said, the early discussion was directed mainly against the spread of 'totalitarian' rule, while the current usage focuses on "efforts and structures that challenge dictatorship and maximize individual freedom."[47] Ekeh argues, major associations in Africa that widely influence life are those based on kinship relations, which he terms the "primordial public realm", while modern voluntary associations of the "civic public realm" are quite limited in their coverage and weak in their influence.[48] (In the figure above both of these realms are represented by G1 and G2) While recognising their tendency of 'segmentation' Ekeh recognises kinship groups as a variant of civil society providing individual security and freedom, needs which the African state and the 'civic public realm' fail to satisfy.

Another researcher, particularly reflecting the Ethiopian experience, defines civil society as "a variety of autonomous, voluntary institutions which provide services to individuals and which articulate public interests. Civil society institutions occupy the space intermediate between the state on the one hand and the lowest unit of social life, the family on the other."[49] Here too one of the aims of such organisations is to "protect the individual from the overwhelming power of the state." Such organisations combine personal aspirations with public interest and are primarily of civic nature, rather than being kinship-based. They include: NGOs, advocacy organisations, professional associations, cooperatives, trade unions, religious organisations and independent press. This view also argues that "the foundation for democratic and accountable government lies not so much in discrete civil society institutions but rather in popular, mass-based civic movements."[50]

45 See Anthony Black, 1984, Guild and Civil Society in European Political Thought From Twelfth Century to the Present, London: Methuen, p. 32, 34.

46 Peter P. Ekeh, 1992, "The Constitution of Civil Society in African History and Politics" in Caron et al, *Proceedings of the Symposium on Democratic Transition in Africa*, Ibadan: Institute of African Studies, p.188.

47 Ibid.

48 Ibid. p. 198

49 Dessalegn Rahmato, 2002, "Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia", 2002, in Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang eds., *Ethiopia, The Challenge of Democracy from Below*, Uppsala: Nordic African Institute, p.104.

50 Ibid. p. 104.

The challenge is how to combine the two realms – the traditional and the modern, the ethnic/kinship and the democratic – in the building of a new system.

These sites of identity must be governed by an inclusive system of ideas that is based on democratic principles, human rights and positive and humane values and heritage of each society. This entails building a *coherent democratic system of ideas – a minimum inclusive ideology* – that is imperative for guiding a society.

The individual is largely neglected in the economically problematic situations and exposed to massive human rights abuses and neglect. Proper citizenship is due to all not to be treated as mere subjects, parochial or captives in their settings. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides a standard: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." The provisions in the International Bill of Human Rights, the separate conventions against racial and ethnic discrimination and on the rights of women and children provide ample norms regarding the fundamental rights and freedoms of all human beings.

Identity sites, either those of primordial origin or free associational groups, all have their own places and make useful contributions to the psychological, social and political needs of the individual. The roles of these groupings cannot be neglected or exaggerated out of proportion at the expense of the individual or the other sites. Society at large is also important for solidarity and collective survival of all who inhabit a country. The role of the national state as a guarantor of security and order, as a facilitator of conditions for socio-economic development too is well known. A democratic state is best suited to serve all as it is legitimised by its citizens and is obligated to function in accordance with the will of the governed.

In the international arena, the UN, a leading representative of the international community, makes human rights laws and strives to promote human security and welfare of all individuals, groups, societies and states. Thus, it has a task to protect all the sites of human identity and concern. As it has duties, the UN has prerogatives and powers that require respect as well as deference from all in its area of jurisdiction for the sake of world peace. However, in order to serve all regions and humanity properly, the UN's structures too must be governed by democratic norms and practices.

Both governmental and nongovernmental organisations led by the principles of international law also play an important role in the efforts of peace and human development.

Identity criteria related to descent are largely fixed attributes. They mark diversity. They may not automatically signify what is basic and inherent about

humanity. They must be respected, but should not be allowed to block the other aspects that manifest what is multifaceted and effusive in human life. Even traditional societies, when examined carefully, manifest a combination of diversity and unity[51].

There must be due recognition and respect in handling the issues of human identity. Any system that loses balance in such a way that it neglects the natural rights and freedoms of the individual under any pretext is missing the point. There are many imbalances in history. At times those who emphasised the socio-economic aspect of human well-being tended to neglect individual freedom. At others people tend to neglect the welfare while claiming individual liberty, and yet there are those who devote their action to ethnic/religious identity to the detriment of individual freedom.

Some obviously exaggerate differences and try to solve problems through adversarial means and separation. However, as Dr. Kobia argues: "Problem solving is not an end in itself – creating spaces, for mutual learning, mutual inspiration, and increased levels of acceptance are all part of the outcome".[52] Cooperation and integrated approach in diversity help "overcome prejudices and misconceptions about one another. Then the otherness of your neighbour ceases to be a mystery and a threat to our persons and life".[53]

In state-building efforts, human, historical, administrative efficiency and imperatives of economic cooperation and peaceful development force actors to seek common space for multiethnic living rather than pushing some differences to the extreme.

Democratisation and ethnicity

Diversity is not an exception, it is a rule, particularly in today's world. Although they belong to the same and one human race, people are identified by various markers, such as language, religion, and ethnicity that have come to signify the current highly charged term identity.

How can democracy as the most popular political system of the day be translated in action in multi-identity situations of economically underdeveloped societies? Is it ever a workable system of government in such terrains?

51 See Tarekegn Adebo, "Ethnicity and Democratisation: Problems of Diversity and Interconnections in African Societies" in Bartolomei & Hyden, eds., *The Implementation of Human Rights in a Global World*, Lund : Lund University, 1999

52 Samuel Kobia, 2003, "Global Ecumenical Response to the Challenge of Interfaith Cooperation" in Tony Waworuntu and Max Ediger, Eds., *To Seek Peace, Justice, and Sustainable Lifestyle*, (Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia): 13

53 Ibid

Can societies emerging from civil wars benefit from the current democratic surge?

Today's states are characterised by their ethnic, religious and cultural diversities. It is said out of the 190 or so countries of the world only 15 can be considered 'homogenous'. It is said there are no less than 10,000 diverse identity groups in the world, out of which over 2,000 are to be found in Africa alone. Thus, diversity is a rule in our world. Democracy promises to provide a more suitable governance mechanism that enables diverse communities to live in cooperation and unity, where equality and justice can be defended by laws for individuals and groups. Today there is a widespread convergence of thought on that. But the problem lies with the exact formula with which to put such a rule in practice. How can democracy be practical in pluralistic societies satisfying the aspirations and needs of particular groups without losing its universal principles?

Pluralism is one of the serious challenges to integrated social development. What authoritarian regimes managed to bring is ethnic hegemonic rules, which caused deprivation of various groups and violent resistance in many countries. Again democracy is revived in Africa and other diverse situations in the wake of the current wave.

Many thought that democracy with its principle of universal suffrage and giving each adult person the right to vote in competitive elections would guarantee equal participation of all individuals. This variant is called *plurality election* and has been found insufficient as it leaves out certain minorities permanently excluded from democratic decision-making. The second variant is *proportional representation*. Analysts underline that it favours pluralist and inclusive participation, arguing that it enables "proportional representation, decentralisation and various forms of power sharing", at least at an early stage of democratic transition[54]. These are models based on the assumption of competing parties as the basis of inclusive democratic choice, rather than by the criteria of primordial sentiments.

Proportional representation would sound favourable in a multiethnic situation, however, there are problems to be cautious of. Some writers suggest that crafting federal politics on identity and "ethnic-based institutions"[55] is a preferable course.

For others, though not explicitly formulated, the ethnic factor is a given element that can help as an indicator of a degree of inclusion or exclusion of different groups in a political system. Depending on each situation, this view can

54 Ohlson and Söderberg, 2002:20; see also Arend Lijphart, "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies", *Democracy Theory and Practice* (Paris: UNESCO, 1995): 71-91

55 Mwangi S. Kimenyi, "Harmonizing Ethnic Claims in Africa: A Proposal for Ethnic-based Federalism", in John Mbaku et al, Eds. *Ethnicity and Governance in Third World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001): 118

help correct any imbalance in a society as regards equal participation, resorting to the principles and norms of democracy and human rights. Here it is democracy, not ethnicity, which should guide political organisation. This means that democracy can be built with its own principles and methods without being a tail to any identity kite. This view combines the respect for the individual with that for group expressions such as language, religion, and culture. But it firmly holds that ethnocentric politics leads to dictatorship and political parties aspiring power in any society must be inclusive and be based on the principles of democracy and human rights.

On the other hand, the objective linkage of people to identity roots should not be confused with ethnocentric politics and ideology. We have to discern the two. Every political move in Africa is not narrow-identity driven, as many analysts tend to project. In a multiethnic and multi-structural set-up, people can be identified by different markers. But all can adopt the democratic principle, inclusive values and mindset, as they should, particularly in the political arena. There is nothing that hinders people of multiple identities to be democrats, unless they choose otherwise. We need a clear guide to discern what is what as the following discussion attempts to do.

This four-field table can illustrate the four variants of trends in the discussion (one of the dimensions here can be seen as a system and the other as a method – choice vs. birth).

(Fig. 2)

	Democracy	Ethnicity
Democracy	DD	DE
Ethnicity	ED	EE

DD *Diversity-blind model*. Here democracy is seen in its universal application as an individual right, based on the principle of majority rule and individual choice. In multiethnic situations, however, this practice without consideration of minorities can end up in excluding certain groups and individuals who fail to benefit from the promised universal principles. Experience shows that ardent efforts to bring freedom, equality and tangible benefits of democracy to the lowest depths of a society need special constitutional protection for the excluded, requiring commitment and creative work.

DE *Diversity-sensitive model* – attempting to handle/resolve ethnic/identity problems through democratic means. Here the ethnic element is seen as an objective indicator of exclusion/inclusion, which should be corrected by special measures that enhance equality and democratic participation. Democracy is a guide and provides leading principles. Proportional presence in society's vital development is key.

EE *Ethnicity/identity-dominated system* – attempting to resolve ethnic problems through ethnic competition and ethnocentric methods. This would not lead to democracy unless one adopts a democratic system of ideas.

ED *Ethnicity/identity-led democratisation effort* – indicates an attempt to approach democracy through ethnic criteria and methods. On the other hand, this does not mean that all nationalist struggles are void of democratic content, but that content must provide guiding principles for development of the movement.

This discussion should make some points clear. Almost everybody in the multiethnic African setting is born within known ethnic/linguistic/religious confines. This is objectively so, whether one subscribes to democratic ideas or not. People largely belong to certain known identity groups, whether they profess it or not (which many may not do comfortably). The difference is in the political life, whether they pursue inclusive democratic principles and practice with others or they rely on ethnic criteria. Democracy has its own "minimum ideology" to guide the establishment and functioning of a legitimate representative political system. Ideally, it is a system of choice and merit, rather than birth and ascription.

Thus, the question is not whether one belongs to a certain identity or not. It is rather if someone is a democrat or not. It is these people as individuals and groups who struggle for democracy and build it.

Under the shadow of identity/ethnicity

In the combinations EE and ED above**,** identity factors dominate. Tradition, religion and ethnicity can provide relative warmth, hope and security to the individual. They also have certain traits that resonate positively to democratic principles and human rights. At the same time, they have dark sides that militate against democratic principles and human freedom. Thus, tradition, the 'village', 'sons of the soil', notions so primordial and warm, can also be domains of subjection, inequality, injustice, and illusions that evade civic culture.

Identity under democracy and human rights

DE is about penetration of the realm of that human condition, with its tradition, beliefs, and habits, to reinforce and institutionalise what is liberating and enhancing human well-being and to correct what is dehumanising and degrading.

Democracy in the political arena entailing electoral competition, participation and respect for civil and political liberties cannot be meaningful if it fails to seriously and consequentially care for the diffusion and rooting of the ideas of freedom, equality and solidarity in the life of individuals as well as groups of a traditional society. We can see here how human rights make up an organic part of democracy and its building material of a healthy social system.

The starting point and, indeed, the litmus test for any healthy mindset in democratisation is the view people hold about their fellow humans. As mentioned above, 'village life' can be notoriously ambivalent regarding human equality, as prejudice in lieu of gender, status, descent or profession is rampant. The 'village', tradition, a soft-sounding realm of thick life, must be properly ventilated with democratic and human rights ideas, so that the individual may be a free member of groups, liberated from subjection to crushing paternalism and perpetual authoritarian ethos.

Fundamental respect for the human person – his/her *freedom, equality and dignity* – is the starting point in democracy, which it shares with human rights, which are rights *due to every person on one ground alone: that he/she is just a human being*. Traditional practice manifests other views: rating human beings according to ethnic descent, colour/race, gender, language, religion, status, profession, political opinion etc.

The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination attacks the evident problem arising among people of different colours and/or status. But a close look into its provisions reveals that it also includes ethnic and other forms of discrimination common in the domain of the 'village.'

In this Convention, 'racial discrimination', is a generic term which is defined as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction, or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life".[56]

This is an interesting point. Here we see that the term includes wider considerations, beyond colour. After all, the genocide in Rwanda took place among people of the same colour, language and religion. Therefore, the soft-sounding but deeply painful words exchanged in the village, bullying carried under tree sheds, small insults hurled at children's play grounds, cattle grazing meadows, or market places and worship shrines, all those reminders of deeply hurt feelings, unless corrected by human respect, can someday erupt into deadly violence.

56 United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination Art. 1

Civil society forums, and religious institutions with their moral commitments to human welfare do well by adopting and legitimising democratic principles and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. They must educate society about fundamental human unity and equality of all, as science and major religions, albeit from varying angles, have come to agree.

The recently adopted Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (1998), Article 1 states: "The human genome underlines the fundamental unity of all members of the human family, as well as the recognition of their inherent dignity and diversity".

Democracy begins with respecting life, freedom and human dignity of all, upholding the right to: a) life, liberty and security of the person; b) freedom from slavery and servitude; c) freedom from torture and degrading treatment; d) recognition of individuals before the law and freedom from arbitrary arrest; e) freedom to privacy; f) freedom of movement; g) own property; h) freedom of thought, conscience, religion; i) freedom of opinion and expression; j) freedom of assembly and association, k) economic, social and cultural well-being[57]. This signifies an integrated approach in implementing the human rights instruments in building a democratic system.

What Dahl presents as institutional guarantees of democracy in the political arena agree with the above: freedom to form and join organisations, freedom of expression, right to vote, eligibility to public office, right to compete for votes, alternative sources of information, free and fair elections, and institutions for making government policies depend on votes and other expression of preference[58].

It is the task of political parties and civil society forums to create integrated and inclusive democratic space for diverse people to cooperate. It is not to say that parties within certain identity groups cannot be democratic. But they have to seek unity with others that have similar views on inclusive democratic and human rights principles. Moreover, political parties, even though they may agree on political democracy, tend to differ on socio-economic welfare or other issues. Therefore, they should seek alliance with groups that have similar convictions. But democratic parties agree on fundamental issues regarding the nature of the society they want to build. Such basic issues and principles are usually enshrined in a democratic constitution.

57 See the main UN human rights instruments. – The International Bill of Human Rights; International Convention on the elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women; Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and Convention on the Rights of the Child

58 Robert A. Dahl, Polyarchy: Participation and Opposition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971): 3

It is also important to note that peace, democracy, human rights and development are crosscutting issues that strongly complement each other. Without respect for human rights, democratic governance is unthinkable. It will be only another authoritarian variant. Human rights and socio-economic welfare too are interconnected as provided in the UN Covenants. Without peace neither democracy, nor development and human rights are possible.

Democratisation and development in societies emerging from deep-rooted violent conflicts and wars are possible as part of a successful process of conflict transformation. Lasting peace and a culture of tolerance can be achieved through entrenching a democratic system and realisation of socio-economic development built on justice and equity.

Democracy has an inbuilt 'conflict-sensitive' institutional framework. Its methods of tolerance, moderation, mutual respect and consultation very well fit the traditions of many societies that uphold the virtues of solidarity, consensus-building and human dignity.

People who conceptually adhere to its tenets and institutionally practice the same can build democracy. Its values, norms and rules are internalised and respected in the life of the individual, group and society.

Some key tasks

There are three important institutional areas, which deserve special attention during the post-conflict stage for organisations working with people at local/middle levels.

Reconciliation, taking peace to the village

Firstly, working for the implementation of the provisions of peace accords, particularly those in the areas of reconciliation, human rights and democratic change.

Here, particularly the efforts of *people-to-people peacemaking/reconciliation* are very relevant. Peace efforts must be streamlined in all activities of the society as well as given emphasis as specialised and continuous action.

Violent conflicts affect diverse groups and sever multiple relationships in a society. Often widely publicised peace processes are those that take place on national level, involving negotiations and signing of agreements embodying various stipulations about realising peace. At the post-conflict stage reconciliation work continues to be one of the key concerns of peacebuilding.

The Life & Peace Institute (LPI) with its community focused conflict transformation approach puts great emphasis on people-to-people reconciliation.

While agreement among the leaders of the protagonists sets clear tones for peace, reconciling communities ripped by prejudices, hate and violence on various 'fault-lines' do not get serious attention. Particularly, civil wars, as they are fought near villages and homes, among folks that are destined to share everyday life, inevitably rock the foundations of multiple webs of social relations. For lasting peace the whole society must share the spirit of forgiveness and healing. For this there must be consistent work to bring about both intra- and inter-communal reconciliation, which includes the whole society.

Reconciliation involves restoring damaged relationships among parties in harmful conflicts. The practice of reconciliation "involves addressing the ways and means of building relations". As experience shows the process entails "self-examination, acknowledgement of responsibility, public admission, apology, forgiveness and restoration".[59] It is an act of conflict resolution, which is also related to prevention and transformation processes.[60] Another discussion combines "truth, justice, mercy and peace"[61] as defining features of reconciliation.

Reconciliation does not negate the political and legal mechanisms of conflict resolution; neither does it try to replace them, rather through its engaging process it attempts to deepen peace – moving it to a level of personal healing. Reconciliation, it is argued, "not only tries to find solutions to the issues underlying the conflict but also works to alter the adversaries' relationships from that of resentment and hostility to friendship and harmony".[62]

One can say that conflict resolution or peace accord brings peace message to the capital city, while reconciliation brings it to the village and to home.

Peace is a people's agenda pursued through a soul-searching dialogue to overcome the effects of violence and to experience reconciliation. A lot of debate and negotiation takes place using time-celebrated conceptions, values and norms. Principles of humanistic tradition, moral force of religions, and the wisdom of tradition are blended to restore harmonious life.

Strengthening the civil society

The *second* is strengthening the civil society partners/actors institutionally and functionally, equipping them for their continued autonomous continuation and effective contribution in the areas of sustainable peace, democratisation and human rights. Sometimes organisations that work actively as the voice of the

59 *People-to-People Peacemaking*, (NSCC, 2004): 24

60 Hizkias Assefa, "The Meaning of Reconciliation" in *People Building Peace* (Utrecht: European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 1999): 37

61 John Paul Lederach, Building Peace (Washington, D. C.: USIP, 1997): 30

62 Assefa, (1999): 38

people during conflicts tend to fade away or are silenced from the public arena after peace is achieved. This could be through cooptation by the political system or through some negative pressure. But civil society forums must act as the continuing voice of conscience, rule of law, good governance and justice and thus be strengthened beyond conflict limits.

Thirdly, the idea of power-sharing as a key transitional mechanism often targets the national level. This is where the promise for democracy is enshrined in transitional documents. Within the framework of national accord, it is important that the beginnings of democracy and human rights are reflected on the level of communities, and that *research and education focus* on facilitating the development of viable local-regional government. Further elaboration is necessary on this vital question.

Local governance

LPI's approach on peace building focuses on involving the people who usually bear the brunt of violence. There is a strong emphasis on empowering communities at the grassroots level, as well as involving the middle level actors as owners of the peace process. Involving civil society actors, women, professionals, and religious as well as traditional leaders has been the practice. The approach which earlier emphasised the bottom-up direction in Somalia, where there had been no central authority to deal with, now works with peace process efforts in an integrative manner ready to assist local, middle as well as national efforts, as the current involvement in the Somali Peace Process in Nairobi shows. This is done in other places too without neglecting the emphasis on popular participation.

In a situation where there is no organised civil society, the aim is to train leaders and to assist in organising civil groups. In fact disseminating knowledge in peacebuilding through multiple workshops and seminars has been one of LPI's strong areas in the field. One of the indicators for this is Paffenholz's research finding from the 2000 Somali conference of Arta (Djibouti). Among the conference participants it is found that "more than 50 per cent of the …delegates had been trained by or involved with LPI in one way or another".[63]

One of the challenges of the post-conflict period is to build representative state institutions, not only at national but also at local and regional levels, where people can exert their participatory will on a continuous basis. In places where there is prior democratic experience, respect for civil liberties, rule of law, free competitive elections, the matter is to revive these elements. But in

63 Thania Paffenholz, *Community-based Bottom-up Peacebuilding*, (Uppsala, Nairobi: Life & Peace Institute, 2003): 76

places where experience had been authoritarian (traditional or modern) or where institutions have been totally obliterated, the task of building representative institutions becomes a burdensome task of starting everything anew.

Democracy, with all its 'imperfections', is said to be the best available system, which "can offer an effective means for the peaceful handling of deep-rooted difference through inclusiveness, just and accountable social frameworks".[64] In particular, establishing functioning local-regional government with constitutionally protected powers, clearly defined duties and proportionally and democratically representing all diverse groups in localities – municipalities, rural districts and regions – are important instruments for dialogue and non-violent resolution of conflicts on daily basis. Therefore, *the issue of local governance must be one of the top priorities of post-conflict research, education and practice.*

Reconciliation involves restoring damaged relationships among parties in harmful conflicts. The practice of reconciliation "involves addressing the ways and means of building relations". As experience shows the process entails "self-examination, acknowledgement of responsibility, public admission, apology, forgiveness and restoration".[65] Discussions of reconciliation include such elements as truth, justice, reparations and change as key elements. It encompasses conflict resolution, prevention and transformation process.[66]

Reconciliation is a people's agenda allowing the participation of traditional mechanisms and norms in a thorough and soul-searching dialogue to solve the problems at stake. A lot of debate and negotiation takes place using time celebrated conceptions values and norms.

On approach and philosophical basis

The next key question is: How do we approach and handle conflicts at this juncture? Peacebuilding approaches and entry points vary according to opportunities available and the nature of initiatives that emerge in a particular situation of conflict. By now experience in peacebuilding in intrastate conflicts, with LPI being among the earliest, and academic conceptualisation, have identified three entry points, namely community/grassroots, middle-range and top/national levels.[67]

64 David Bloomfield and Ben Reilly, Eds. *Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict*: *Options for Negotiators* (Stockholm: IDEA, 2003): 17

65 *People-to-People Peacbuilding* (NCC: 2004): 24

66 Assefa, in *People Building Peace*, 1999:37

67 See John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, D. C.: USIP, 1997): 38-42; Thania Paffenholz, *Community-based Bottom-up Peacebuilding* (Uppsala: LPI, 2003): 16-24

In the situation of Somalia where the top/national and middle levels were shattered by the civil war that raged from the early 1990s, what was available was largely the local community level with individuals that could form the middle level, and LPI had to deal with that situation. This entailed efforts of local institution building and training local leaders for the empowerment of the grassroots in anticipation that the process would gradually reach all levels. Thus, understandably, a community-based bottom-up approach was devised.

Paul Lederach, on the other hand, argued for the middle-range approach, whereby strategically located middle-range leadership "might provide the key to creating an *infrastructure* for achieving and sustaining peace".[68] It is believed that middle-leadership (drawn from religion, academia, and the arts) due to its access to both levels, can easily link efforts on top and grassroots levels.

Paffenholz, examining LPI's policy documents and practice in the field, characterises this approach as "people-based, process-oriented, long-term peacebuilding"[69] with focus on empowering local people and raising the role of women in peacebuilding.

Paul Lederach has revisited his actors pyramid model, with which LPI's field experience and approach are intertwined. In a recent contribution to a book he speaks of three gaps observed on the different entry levels of peacebuilding, namely *interdependence gap, justice gap and process-structure*[70]. The first and the second points are important in this discussion.

Interdependence, he says, "is built on relationships and relationships are the heart and bloodlines of peacebuilding. In peacebuilding there are many forms of interdependence. Most recognised is the idea that we build new or rebuild broken relationships across the lines of divisions created through and by the conflict."[71] Then he speaks of *horizontal* and *vertical* 'capacities' and relationships.

Process-structure gap – understands peace as a change process based on relationship building. 'Reorient our peacebuilding framework *toward the development of support infrastructures that enhance our capacity to adapt and respond to relational needs* rather than being defined and driven by events and agreements'. Think in terms of '*long term peace structures*.'

The understanding that has evolved is, at whichever level one may enter the peace process, that the approach should not miss to be integrative, linking the local and regional efforts with those of the national level. This may be limited to sharing information until opportune time arises for tangible linkages.

68 Lederach, 1997:46

69 Paffenholz, 2003:65

70 John Paul Lederach, "The Challenge of the 21st Century Just Peace" in (Utrecht: European Centre for Conflict Prevention, 1999): 29-35

71 Lederach, 1999:29

In this regard, Paffenholz reminds us that "for further development of the LPI approach, it is necessary to clarify the relation to track 1 peacemaking. An unclear definition could limit the peacebuilding capacity of the approach, as the full range of networks, strategies and instruments might not be used."[72]

Peace efforts on community level, particularly at post-agreement stage, must take due consideration of accords and legal provisions available at national level. There must be conscious coordination and linking of efforts on all levels. At the same time, the local and middle level involvements and the empowerment of the people have to be stressed as key at all junctures of peace process.

Summary

In summary, this brief discussion has called attention to the current level in the progress in peacebuilding, namely the post-conflict stage, particularly in the African scene where much of Life & Peace Institute's present field efforts have been in focus. The following points are highlighted for immediate action:

- As the main conflicts are currently moving towards the post-conflict stage, it is important to pay serious attention to the contents and phases of the key tasks of this stage and to accompany properly the civil society partners and political actors in implementing them;
- Strengthening the civil society conceptually and institutionally in their continued roles in sustainable peacebuilding;
- Assisting peace activists in their efforts of people-to-people peace making and reconciliation;
- Assisting in elaborating and formalising the process of people's "empowerment", particularly conducting research on local/regional self-rule, grassroots participation in the establishment of inclusive democratic institutions as instruments of non-violent conflict transformation and democratic governance, and
- In terms of approach, continuing to underline the importance of the community-based and owned approach but with a clear formulation for linking the efforts of the local and middle-range levels with those of the national level. As LPI is working mainly with civil society actors, the strategic importance of the *middle level leadership* and entry point for reaching both the grassroots and the national levels has become evident.

72 Paffenholz, 2003:64

On general conceptual level, the following points have to be heeded in the process of post-conflict transition and democratic institution building:

1. Post-conflict peacebuilding is a distinct stage with clear tasks in the process of conflict transformation. Implementation of these tasks provided largely in the peace accords heralds a change from violent confrontation to non-violent actions that enhance trust and legitimacy necessary for establishing a lasting peace. The process moves from signing of a peace accord, through implementation to consolidation. This opens up the way for approaching the democratic path – a struggle for building and strengthening institutions based on the will of the people.

2. The process starts through working out a system of inclusive ideas based on democratic principles, human rights and relevant cultural/traditional heritage to guide society's political, socio-economic and cultural development and enshrined in the constitution. Such a conceptual framework is an inevitable instrument as a guide for developing a relevant inclusive idea-institutional infrastructure towards democracy. Such a body of ideas can help to discern the confusion that may arise in handling democracy, identity and ethnicity.

3. A representative and inclusive state founded on the will of the people through fair and free elections, based on civil/political liberties, a government functioning on the principles of separation of powers (legislative, executive, judiciary) and the decentralisation of power to local-regional level creatively relating to traditional institutions, rule of law and human rights, professional public administration (inclusive, non-partisan and based on merit) and subjection of armed and security forces to civilian control. The polity must respect high ethical standards of transparency and accountability, and curb corrupt practices.

4. Political parties based on inclusive democratic values, expressing both particular and collective interests of a society.

5. A socio-economic, cultural and environmental policy of balanced and equitable development

6. An active and autonomous civil society based on democratic principles, working cooperatively for particular and common interests.

7. International conditions supportive of democracy, peace and socio-economic development.

Thus, the main focus of post-conflict peacebuilding and democratisation is to create a system, which routinely involves in the task of non-violent conflict transformation and development. This can be summed up as an effort to strengthen the three major pillars of society, namely the state, civil society and economy and assuring a balanced functioning of the three in their mutual relationships.

References

Assefa, Hizkias, 1999, "The Meaning of Reconciliation" in *People Building Peace*, Utrecht: European Centre for Conflict Prevention

Assefa, Hizkias, 2003, "Critical Perspectives on Peace Theories and Practice", *Proceedings of the International Ecumenical Consultation 8-12 October 2003*, Uppsala: Life & Peace Institute

Black, Anthony, 1984, *Guild and Civil Society in European Political Thought From Twelfth Century to the Present*, London: Methuen

Bloomfield, David and Ben Reilly, Eds. 2003, *Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict*: *Options for Negotiators*, Stockholm: International Democracy Education Agency

Carothers, Thomas, "The End of the Transition Paradigm." *Journal of Democracy* 13:1 (2000)

Coser, Lewis, 1956, *The Functions of Social Conflict*, New York: Free Press

Crocker, Chester A. et al., 2004, *Taming Intractable Conflicts*, Washington D.C.: United States Institute of Peace

Curle, Adam, 1990, *Tools for Transformation. A Personal Study*, Bankfield House, UK: Hawthorn Press

Dahl, Robert A., 1971, *Poliarchy: Participation and Opposition*, New Haven: Yale University Press

Ekeh, Peter P., 1992, "The Constitution of Civil Society in African History and Politics" in Caron et al, *Proceedings of the Symposium on Democratic Transition in Africa*, Ibadan: Institute of African Studies

Gounden, Vasu, "Conditions for Peace: The State, Private Sector and Civil Society" *Conflict Trends*, 1/2005, ACCORD (2005)

Harries, Peter and Ben Reilly, Eds. 1998, *Democracy and Deep-Rooted Conflict: Options for Negotiators*, Stockholm: International Democracy Education Agency

Held, David, 1987, *Modern Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press

Huntington, Samuel P. 1991, The Third Wave: Democratisation in the Late Twentieth Century, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press

Kimenyi, Mwangi S., 2001, "Harmonizing Ethnic Claims in Africa: A Proposal for Ethnic-based Federalism", in John Mbaku et al, Eds. *Ethnicity and Governance in the Third World*, Aldershot: Ashgate

Kirton, John J. ed., 2004, *G8, the United Nations, and Conflict Prevention*, Aldershot: Ashgate

Kobia, Samuel, 2003, "Global Ecumenical Response to the Challenge of Interfaith Cooperation" in Tony Waworuntu and Max Ediger, Eds., *To Seek Peace, Justice, and Sustainable Lifestyle*, Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia

Lederach, John Paul, 1997, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington D. C.: United States Institute of Peace

Lederach, John Paul, 1999, "The Challenge of the 21st Century Just Peace" in *People Building Peace*, Utrecht: European Centre for Conflict Prevention

Lijphart, Arend, 1995, "Constitutional Choices for New Democracies", *Democracy Theory and Practice*, Paris: UNESCO

Lipset, Symore Martin, 1959, "Some Social Requisites of Democracy – Economic Development and Political Legitimacy," *American Political Science Review* 53, no. 1(1959)

Ohlson, Thomas and Söderberg, Mimmi, 2002, *From Intra-State War to Democratic Peace in Weak States*, Uppsala Peace Research Paper No 5, Uppsala: Uppsala University

Paffenholz, Thania, 2003, *Community-based Bottom-up Peacebuilding*, Uppsala/Nairobi: Life & Peace Institute

Rahmato, Dessalegn, 2002, "Civil Society Organizations in Ethiopia" in Bahru Zewde and Siegfried Pausewang eds., *Ethiopia, The Challenge of Democracy from Below*, Uppsala: Nordic African Institute

Rudebeck, Lars, ed., 2003, "*Democracy as Actual Practice: What Does Democracy Really Bring?"* Utsikt mot Utveckling 20, Uppsala: The Collegium for Development Studies at Uppsala University

Rustow, Dankwart, 1970, "Transitions to Democracy," Comparative Politics 2, no. 3 (1970)

Schmid, Alex P., 2000, *Thesaurus and Glossary*, London: Forum for Early Warning and Early Response

Schumpeter, Joseph, 1976, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, London: Allen and Unwin

Sida, 2004, Conflict-sensitive Development Co-operation: How to Conduct a Conflict Analysis. Stockholm: Sida

Sorensen, Georg, 1993, *Democracy and democratisation*, Boulder: Westview Press

Tarekegn Adebo, 1999, "Ethnicity and Democratisation: Problems of Diversity and Interconnections in African Societies" in Bartolomei & Hyden, Eds. *The Implementation of Human Rights in a Global World*, Lund: Lund University, 1999

Wallensteen, Peter, 2002, *Understanding Conflict Resolution*, London: Sage Publications

Zartman, I. William, 1995, *Illusive Peace. Negotiating an End to Civil Wars*, Washington, D. C.: The Brookings Institution

People-to-People Peacemaking, 2004, Nairobi: New Council of Churches of Sudan

Strategic Plan of the African Union Vol. 1, 2004, Addis Ababa: The African Union Commission

Post-conflict peacebuilding and prospects for democracy with reference to Africa

Tarekegn Adebo, Ph. D

The destructive conflicts that plagued much of Africa including those still lingering in the Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Regions are presently moving to the post-conflict stage. The phase has its own particular characteristics that need renewed analyses and understanding. This paper highlights the current stage in the development of conflicts, particularly in the Horn, where the Institute has been active for more than a decade. It is a stage concerned with the decisive step of abandoning violence, developing institutions and sustainable political and socio-economic development.

The paper, based on earlier research and lectures by the author, argues that good representative institutions, based on the principles of democracy and human rights and creatively assimilating relevant cultural and traditional values of particular cases concerned, offer a good chance to usher in a workable system where future violent conflicts can be averted and peaceful mechanisms prevail.

Life & Peace Institute (LPI) is an international and ecumenical institute for peace research and action, based in Uppsala, Sweden. Founded in 1985 by the Swedish Ecumenical Council, LPI aims to further the causes of justice, peace and reconciliation through a combination of research seminars, publications and conflict transformation programmes.

LPI's projects and programmes focus on three broad themes:

- Religion, conflict and peace
- Human rights and economic justice
- Nonviolent conflict transformation



This paper is part of a project called *Publications for Peace Education*. Thanks to a grant from the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Life & Peace Institute has the possibility to republish a number of its publications on different subjects within research on peace and reconciliation. These books and research reports are sent free of charge to a number of selected key academic institutions in different parts of the world, to be used in relevant education to promote peace and conflict resolution.

LIFE & PEACE INSTITUTE, PO BOX 1520, SE-751 45 UPPSALA, SWEDEN

ISBN 91-87748-74-6