Journal of
Developing Country Studies
(JDCS)

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Journal of Developing Country Studies
ISSN 2520-5307 (Online)
Vol.1, Issue 1 No.5, pp 54 - 57, 2012

www.iprjb.org

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Abstract

The paper expounded on the role of local structures for conflict management in Sudan as well as providing highlights to the inner workings of the local traditional peace processes and their limitations to the management and resolving the Sudan's north-south conflict hence the necessity of the IGAD peace process. The paper concludes that while local Sudan peace processes were not able to stop a large conflict, they helped prevent small disputes from escalating into larger conflicts. However, Local conflict management's potential effectiveness was diminished where traditional authority had eroded and armed authority had increased. This is so simply because these trends run counter to traditional values and ways of social organization, including those of handling conflict. Desktop literature review was conducted. Critical analysis of the literature was conducted.

Key words: *Conflict management, traditional structures, IGAD*

1. Introduction

The paper endeavours to introduce and discuss selected concepts of conflict management including conflict prevention and conflict resolution. It strives to expound on the role of local structures for conflict management in Sudan as well as providing highlights to the inner workings of the local traditional peace processes and their limitations to the management and resolving the Sudan's north-south conflict hence the necessity of the IGAD peace process. In order to appreciate the difference between the two peace structures, it is important to discuss various terminologies of conflict management such as conflict prevention, conflict management mechanisms and conflict resolution mechanisms.

2. Conflict management and conflict resolution

Tanner[1] has defined conflict management as the limitation, mitigation and /or containment of as conflict without necessary resolving it. Wallensteen[2] has also defined conflict management

[1] Tanner Fred, 2000, " Conflict prevention and conflict resolution: limits of multilateralism", International review of the Red Cross, Vol 82;541-559

as a change in the mode of interaction from destructive to constructive. Swanstrom further asserts that the process of conflict becomes the foundation for more effective conflict resolution. In sum, it could be argued that conflict management and conflict resolution are two mechanisms at different sides of a continuum, which are used to deal with the same conflict in different settings.[3]

Conflict management indicates in the first instance the perspective of the so called "third party" (a mediator, conflict advisor, conflict manager, or supervisor), which is called to help, or engages itself after its own incentive, in order to provide assistance to both conflict parties (and eventually one of them). One can speak about conflict dealing also when during the conflict both parties look for a consensual solution, without asking for an external assistance. The forms of approaching and dealing with conflicts could be of very different nature. What then is a conflict management mechanism?

The basis for a definition can be found in what makes parties accept a solution, since without the acceptance of a mechanism, there can be no conflict management. Galtung[4] has argued that "one way of accepting the mechanism lies in its institutionalization". This means that there would be a lesser acceptance of ad hoc mechanism, and it is only mechanisms that have reached some form of institutionalization that are accepted, both for formal and informal mechanisms.

According to Swanstrom, conflict management mechanism can thus be defined as an institutionalized instrument under which the information is coded and decoded to offer a solution to a problem. Further, he distinguishes between formal and informal conflict management mechanisms. Accordingly, formal conflict management mechanism are institutionalized structures aimed at minimizing disputes through rule based regulations whereas informal conflict management mechanisms are institutionalized structures aimed at minimizing disputes through negotiations in a power or consensus based way.[5] The same structure will apply for conflict resolution, with the exception that conflict resolution is always rule based. Thus it would not be possible to operationalize an informal conflict resolution mechanism since no disputing parties would accept a resolution mechanism without any predictability or formality.[6]

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[2] Walensteen Peter,1981, " Incompatibility confrontation and war: Four Models and Three historical systems 1816-1976", Journal of Peace Research , No. 1vol xviii

[3] Swanstrom, "Regional Cooperation and conflict management: lessons from the Pacific Rim". Department of Peace and Conflict Research; Report No. 64, 298 pp-Uppsala. ISBN 91-506-1632-3

[4] Johan Galtung, "Violence, peace and peace research" in *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Oslo: International Peace Research Institute, 1969).

[5] Swanstrom, "Regional Cooperation and conflict management: lessons from the Pacific Rim". Department of Peace and Conflict Research; Report No. 64, 298 pp-Uppsala. ISBN 91-506-1632-3

[6] ibid

2.1 Effectiveness of local traditional structures in Sudan conflict management

Indigenous conflict mitigation mechanisms[7] can address some of the proximate factors that help fuel conflict at the local level—access to land or water, competition over foreign assistance—and can provide appropriate, sustainable and long-term solutions. While local Sudan peace processes were not able to stop a large conflict, they helped prevent small disputes from escalating into larger conflicts. Many communities in Sudan perceive conflict resolution activities directed by outsiders as intrusive and unresponsive to indigenous concepts of justice, and prefer to resolve conflicts within the community.

Conflict management mediators from the Sudan local community were generally more sensitive to local needs than outsiders and were immersed in the culture of the violence-afflicted community. Their activities were rooted in conflict's context, addressed some of its immediate causes, and therefore brought long-term solutions. They drew people away from the conflict, breaking its momentum.[8] Indigenous conflict management and resolution mechanisms in Sudan aimed to resolve conflicts locally, preceding or replacing external dispute resolution and thereby reducing reliance on external structures. Traditional mediation helped the community keep control over the outcome of the dispute.

Implementing this approach did not require sophisticated party structures or expensive campaigns; it provided a low-cost, empowering means of resolving conflicts within a relatively short timeframe. In many societies, elders had traditional jurisdiction in facilitation, arbitration, and monitoring outcomes. Local conflict mediators typically possessed moral status, seniority, neutrality and respect of the community; they were acceptable to all parties and demonstrated leadership capacity. Resolutions were generally accepted and respected by all concerned parties.

Documentation on the effectiveness of Sudan grassroots conflict prevention mechanisms is inconsistent[9], yet indicate that indigenous mediation may be powerless to address some of a conflict's root causes-centrally-instigated conflict, predatory behaviour linked to exploiting economic advantage, external meddling. Indigenous mediators often bring important social influence but may lack the power and the means to enforce the resolutions adopted. Advice is only accepted when both parties agree to it, and both parties must feel their concerns were properly addressed. Traditional structures' power to prevent the occurrence of violence is hence limited. Some of Sudan traditional conflict mitigation efforts were weakened by age or gender bias—for example, in cases with no women elders, some women believed that male elders were biased against women and that this was reflected in their decisions. Indigenous, traditional authorities generally were not progressive elements of social change.[10] Local conflict management's potential effectiveness was diminished where traditional authority had eroded and armed authority had increased. This is so simply because these trends run counter

[7] John Paul Lederach. Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies. Pg 56: Tokyo: United Nations University, 1994.
[8] ibid
[9] Rahim Afzahir, 2000, "Empirical studies on Managing Conflict". International Journal of conflict management. Vol II
[10] Ibid

to traditional values and ways of social organization, including those of handling conflict. International agencies' efforts to build local capacity and enhance participation in Sudan should question whether traditional authority structures are being undermined, what their role is in keeping the society intact and managing conflict, and whether it is important to make efforts to retain such structures. Indigenous mediation has a dynamic of its own and does not always respond positively to external prompting. Indigenous mediation requires delicate and knowledgeable management, and external actors must bring an intimate understanding of local conditions.[11]

The process of strengthening international and regional institutions has neglected internal solutions. Conflict is inherent in society; so are mechanisms for dealing with it. The decline of traditional authority and its role in conflict mediation has contributed to the development of large-scale conflict (as in Liberia, Somalia and Sudan).[12] In other cases (Rwanda and, to a lesser extent, Burundi) the parties to broader conflicts have subverted traditional mediation mechanisms or included them in the conflict. External initiatives can renew indigenous forms of peacemaking and conflict resolution to restore the balance in society that was destroyed by modern internal war. Such work must rebuild indigenous peacemaking capacity from the bottom up, and from the periphery in.

Traditional mechanisms have been less effective in areas where foreign aid resources were heavily concentrated; such aid may have stimulated conflict and undermined local structures and mechanisms. High-profile peace fora financed and organized by external parties may interfere with more than assist in producing plausible settlements, especially if conducted without coordinating with local non-military leaders. At the national or international level, such efforts may require external support, such as logistical assistance, and probably should be accompanied by other actions to prevent the immediate outbreak of violence. [13]

3. Conclusion

The paper expounded on the role of local structures for conflict management in Sudan as well as providing highlights to the inner workings of the local traditional peace processes and their limitations to the management and resolving the Sudan's north-south conflict hence the necessity of the IGAD peace process. The paper concludes that while local Sudan peace processes were not able to stop a large conflict, they helped prevent small disputes from escalating into larger conflicts. However, Local conflict management's potential effectiveness was diminished where traditional authority had eroded and armed authority had increased. This is so simply because these trends run counter to traditional values and ways of social organization, including those of handling conflict.

[11] Ibid

[12] Reimann, Cordula (2005), "Assessing the state-of-the-art in conflict transformation", in David Bloomfield/Martina Fischer/Beatrix Schmelzle (eds.), Berghof handbook for conflict transformation, Berlin, http://www. Berghofhandbook. net/articles/reimann_handbook. pdf.

[13] Ibid