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Foreword

Jannie Malan

Recently, I was startled when realising that most of the forewords I have written thus far were mainly *reader*-oriented. That prompted me to write an *author*-oriented one, for a change. More than that, it made me realise that it is indeed an editor's responsibility to share some important thoughts with prospective authors. Apologies, therefore, for having neglected this duty.

The most important thought I feel urged to communicate is one that comes from my experience during the processes of peer reviewing and editing. It is about something that is emphasised at the very beginning of the *National Code of Best Practice in Editorial Discretion and Peer Review for South African Scholarly Journals*, namely '*new findings and/or insights*' (ASSAf 2008:2, my emphasis). According to this Code of Best Practice, this is perhaps the most fundamental principle of research publishing.

When reading this five-word phrase, 'new findings and/or insights', in the context of an important paragraph in the Code, one tends to respond with 'Yes, of course'. Which is a good response, but needs to be taken seriously and implemented properly. From my experience, therefore, I wish to annotate the phrase with three paragraphs.

The first is about *acknowledgement*, which is duly emphasised in the Code. As researchers we have a treasury of already existing printed and electronic information at our disposal, which contains the new findings and new insights of researchers who have preceded us – in the more distant and the more recent past. When making use of their work, it is therefore incumbent

upon us to recognise and duly reference their findings and insights, and to present ours in a way which precludes any appearance that we are claiming credit for the achievements of a predecessor.

Secondly, there is the factor of genuine *innovation*. While we are privileged to build on previous research in our field, and are indeed entitled to do so, we are supposed to avoid mere rehashing, replicating, rearranging or reformulating. We are expected to come up with our original findings and/ or insights. According to the Code, the question is 'whether the context and/or detail of the new findings and/or insights are sufficiently different to merit addition to the matrix of knowledge through publication' (ASSAf 2008:3). And, very correctly, the Code calls this 'a frequently vexed question'. Indeed, peer reviewers and editors often have to ponder over whether their assessment takes full regard of the 'sufficiently different' criterion. They may have to guard against subjective impressions, and try to be as objective as possible. They may have to remember that as knowledge and insights grow, sometimes with explosive increases or quantum leaps, the probabilities for stunning new discoveries may be decreasing. We may have to learn to be satisfied with smaller, incremental bits of newness.

Thirdly, there is the option of attention-attracting *emphasis*. As academic researchers we are probably not on the show-business wavelength, and may even frown upon such propagandising, but we may have to acquire some degree of showmanship/showwomanship. After all, we have to remember that our 'learned' articles are usually labelled by the reading public as 'dry, boring stuff'. We should therefore give heed to ways of attracting the attention of colleagues and readers to what we regard as a contribution which is *new **and** significant*. (Please note how I use a few tricks of emphasis.) Some innovations are clever and cute, but not necessarily very meaningful. Our challenge is to make it clear – from title and abstract, through headings, sub-headings and body, to the conclusion and recommendation(s) – that our articles are disseminating currently relevant and significantly applicable messages.

Once again, please remember that answers to the question about sufficient newness are possibly always arguable. But to the best of our own insights, our peer reviewers and editorial teams have used it in the past, and will keep using it in future. We therefore encourage prospective authors to bear this criterion in mind and plan their articles accordingly. Such articles should make a significant impact, and should be, not only reader-friendly, but also reader-inspiring.

Source referred to

ASSAf (Academy of Science of South Africa) 2008. *National Code of Best Practice in Editorial Discretion and Peer Review for South African Scholarly Journals.* Pretoria, ASSAf.

Jannie Malan

Efficacy of top-down approaches to post-conflict social coexistence and community building: Experiences from Zimbabwe

*Manase Kudzai Chiweshe**

Abstract

This paper provides an assessment of the work done by the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) in post-2008 Zimbabwe. ONHRI was employed by the Zimbabwean government (precisely as Government of National Unity) to ensure national healing and integration. The efficacy of top-down approaches to social cohesion in post-conflict contexts is questioned. The paper outlines how political expediency, mistrust and polarisation debilitated the work of ONHRI. There was little consultation done in creating ONHRI, especially with communities affected by political violence. Academics, civil society, smaller political parties and private entities were left out of the process of creating social cohesion mechanisms. For the Zimbabwe African National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), the Organ was a concession on their part to the demands of the MDC and this led to problems in implementing its mandate. What transpired became a political cat and mouse game in

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which actors at the national level frustrated the process of uncovering the truth and the promotion of healing. ONHRI's work has to be understood within a context of political competition in the Government of National Unity (GNU) in which self-interest overtook the mandate of the Organ. The paper therefore argues that Zimbabwe lost an opportunity to entrench grassroots social cohesion and healing processes.

Keywords: National healing, social cohesion, Zimbabwe, Global Political Agreement, transitional justice

Introduction

This paper provides an analysis of Zimbabwe's Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration (ONHRI) as a mechanism of achieving national healing, reconciliation and social integration. It highlights how top-down approaches to national healing are ill-equipped to achieve any meaningful impact at the grassroots. The establishment of the Organ was expected to usher in a promising era for most victims of violence in Zimbabwe. The work of the Organ did not meet the expectations, however, as it failed to provide any recourse for victims and survivors of violence. National healing has thus remained a dream. The paper draws from a wide-ranging selection of literature in order to highlight the problems inherent in initiating a national healing process as a centralised process without the participation of those at the grassroots. It highlights how national healing in Zimbabwe was captured by the political elites. It was turned into a political chess game with little regard for the process of social cohesion and healing. Without any legal powers, the Organ could not enforce any agreements or codes of conduct. The paper will cite many commentators who argue that the Organ was a political smokescreen for ZANU-PF to appear as if they were taking transitional justice seriously. What is clear from research is that the Organ was ineffective in its approach and performance, and in its objective of providing transitional justice.

Boraine (2006) argues that there are five key pillars constituting a holistic approach to transitional justice: accountability, truth recovery,

reconciliation, institutional reform, and reparations. However, the Organ in Zimbabwe failed to meet any of these requirements. The Global Political Agreement (GPA) did not provide for reparations or institutional reforms. The process to achieve transitional justice is usually implemented through structures known as truth and reconciliation commissions, such as those in South Africa and Rwanda. Torpey (2006) argues that before such commissions are established, there is a need to set up global processes that cater for pacification, democratic transition and legal procedures relating to perpetrators of violent acts. This will also include procedures for criminal proceedings, reparation programmes and long-term security measures. Looking at the Organ in Zimbabwe through such conceptual lenses, however, provides a picture of a hastily put together institution, born out of compromise, and without the necessary structural support to perform the job of national healing.

This paper will examine these issues according to the following structure: First, historical processes of violence and top-down reconciliation in Zimbabwe will be interrogated. After a note on methodology, this is followed by a look at the history of the Organ, its structure, operations and key challenges. These challenges include polarisation and the difficulties of enforcement; lack of political will and commitment; the dilemma over what to do with perpetrators of violence; and lack of understanding by the Organ of the complexities of violence. The article will then assess the efficacy of top-down approaches by examining the extent to which local communities, and especially women, have been engaged. Lastly, the article presents some alternative local approaches to reconciliation. Then some concluding remarks.

Historical processes of violence and top-down reconciliation in Zimbabwe

The historical fabric of the Zimbabwean nation is steeped in violence. After all, the country was born out of a violent liberation struggle after almost a century of brutal colonial rule. In tracing the roots of violence in Zimbabwe, it is important to note, from a post-colonial standpoint,

that what we are witnessing today has its roots within the colonial system. As Chung (2007:165) aptly notes, 'the culture and political polarity that leads to the killing of opposition members has its roots in the colonial settler heritage'. State power was used by white people to violently evict blacks from fertile lands (Muchemwa et al. 2013). Black Zimbabweans responded violently to brutal colonial rule through the First Chimurenga war which was ruthlessly crushed, and then the Second Chimurenga which led to a negotiated settlement and independence. Structural and institutionalised violence did not come to an end, however. It was built into the structures of state governance, and became an institutional characteristic for politics and change in independent Zimbabwe.

The pre-colonial era saw Shona-speaking societies emerging in the middle Limpopo valley in the 9th century before moving on to the Zimbabwean highlands. In the 11th century, many states rose and fell including the Kingdom of Mapungubwe with the capital of Great Zimbabwe. The Mutapa State existed from 1450 to 1760, and the early 17th century saw the rise of the Rozvi State. Zimbabwe was under colonial rule from 1888 when Cecil Rhodes's British South Africa Company obtained a concession for mining rights from King Lobengula of the Ndebele peoples which he (Rhodes) used to persuade the government of the United Kingdom to grant a royal charter. After obtaining this charter the Pioneer Column (a group of white settlers protected by well-armed British South Africa Police [BSAP]) travelled from South Africa and raised the Union Jack at Fort Salisbury (now Harare). The Ndebele rose up in insurrection which saw the death of their leader, King Lobengula. Another uprising, the First Chimurenga, was brutally crushed and spirit mediums Kaguvi and Nehanda, who had led the revolt among the Shona, were hanged. The white-minority Rhodesian government led by Ian Smith's Rhodesian Front (RF) dropped the designation 'Southern' in 1964 and issued a Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) from the United Kingdom on 11 November 1965.

In 1978 the white Rhodesian government under Ian Smith signed an Internal Settlement with Bishop Abel Muzorewa that gave birth to Zimbabwe-Rhodesia. The following year negotiations with liberation movements

under the auspices of the Patriotic Front commenced at Lancaster House in Britain, ushering in majority rule on 18 April 1980. At independence the black government embarked on a social development project that saw an increase in social amenities, especially health care and education. Robert Mugabe won the first democratic election and preached reconciliation, arguing that:

> If yesterday I fought you as an enemy, today you have become a friend and an ally with the same national interests, loyalty, rights and duties as myself. If yesterday you hated me today you cannot avoid the love that binds you to me and me to you. Is it not folly, therefore, in these circumstances that anybody should revive the wounds and grievances of the past? The wrongs of the past must now stand forgiven and forgotten (Huyse 2003:37).

This was a rather cosmetic papering over of historical conflicts, which required a much wider process of healing that included the grassroots. Mugabe and white capital agreed on an approach to reconciliation which did not address the needs of victims at the grassroots, thus sowing the seeds for the post-2000 land invasions by veterans of the liberation struggle.

Post-colonial peace in Zimbabwe was short-lived, as the Zimbabwe National Army unit known as Fifth Brigade, descended on Matebeleland and Midlands regions to suppress ex-Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA) fighters and civilians. In 1962 ZAPU, led by Joshua Nkomo, was split into two, which saw a mostly Shona ethnic group led by Ndabaningi Sithole leaving ZAPU to form the rival party ZANU-PF. This sowed seeds of mistrust and division along tribal lines which would later boil over into open civil strife and leave 20 000 people dead (Muchemwa et al. 2013). The strife was ended when another top-down agreement was reached by the political elites in which a Unity Accord was signed and Joshua Nkomo became vice-president of the country. Victims and communities were left out of this process and nothing was done to ensure healing and to cater for the traumatic experiences of communities in the region. By the early 1990s the spending on social services, including free primary education, was

causing serious budget deficits and, following advice from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, the Zimbabwean government adopted the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). The austerity measures that characterised the SAPs, coupled with devaluation and mass retrenchments, affected the poor negatively. The introduction of user fees meant that most social services were out of reach for the poor, especially in rural areas. The drought in 1992 worsened the situation.

By early 2000 Zimbabwe was facing an unprecedented social and economic crisis. The deteriorating economic situation adversely impacted on the pace of land reform. The food riots in 1998 were the beginning of open protest against the ZANU-PF establishment in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The economy was taking a battering, as the costs of Zimbabwe's involvement in the Congo war and war veterans' pay-outs took their toll. The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) took the lead as a conglomeration of civil society organisations and challenged the ruling hegemony with the formation of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) – the first real threat to ZANU-PF's political hegemony in Zimbabwe. The rejection of the draft constitution in February 2000 was a precursor to the land occupations in Zimbabwe – a period popularly known as *jambanja* (chaos) due to the violent nature of the process. This led to a serious reduction in food and crop production, leading to food shortages and widespread hunger. The ensuing crisis was exacerbated by the economic sanctions of America and its allies, that led to world record inflation, cash shortages, fuel shortages, massive unemployment and mass migration of skilled and unskilled labour.

Electoral Violence

Electoral violence has been a further part of the Zimbabwean political landscape since 1980. The violence became much more pronounced at the turn of the twenty-first century as Zimbabwe witnessed the emergence of a strong opposition party with the formation of the MDC in 1999. Selby (2006:3) highlights that Zimbabwe since 2000 has been dominated by violence, political intolerance and intimidation, economic implosion,

food insecurity and general uncertainty. In many ways this crisis was an unavoidable culmination of unresolved and deep-rooted resource and race disparities, but the crisis has been dominated by ZANU-PF's often ruthless struggle to retain power. There was a sudden instrumentalisation of power in what Selby (2006:4) calls the rejuvenation of the security state:

> Had ZANU-PF lost power in 2000, senior officials would probably have been held accountable for a range of unresolved issues such as the genocide in Matabeleland, key corruption scandals of the 1990s, and the looting of the War Victims' Fund. Senior officials therefore had a clear interest in retaining power which clearly influenced ZANU-PF's post-2000 strategies. The nature of the state changed considerably during the late 1990s with the co-option of the war veterans and the growing influence of an impatient and radical empowerment alliance.

There is no way we can talk of a land reform movement in Zimbabwe without the crucial intervention of the state. More specifically, understanding the forced land takeovers can only be accomplished through a thorough analysis of the monopolisation and militarisation of state apparatuses. Raftopoulos and Phimister (2004:356) elucidate that this authoritarianism involved an 'internal reconfiguration of Zimbabwean state politics' leading to the emergence of domestic tyranny.

A referendum held in February 2000 led to an overwhelming defeat for government. According to Kagoro (2004:249), 'it was a protest vote against the manner in which the constitution-making process had been carried out by the government', as well as 'an angry protest against the performance of the government and parlous state of the economy'. This unprecedented defeat of the ruling party by an opposition party (which, according to ZANU-PF, was backed by white commercial farmers and the West) appeared to precipitate the largely state-sponsored land invasions, political violence, institutional interference and economic decline that were to follow – although there was of course a much longer and more complex history behind these trends (Hammar 2005:4). A massive campaign instigated by and comprising the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA), the MDC

and the white Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) led to the defeat of the draft constitution at the polls, with Mugabe immediately accepting the result. But, within days, twelve war veterans occupied farms in Masvingo Province, proclaiming that the white farmers had connived to defeat the constitution in the referendum. The Zimbabwe National Liberation War Veterans Association (ZNLWVA) supported these occupations and called for further action as a way of demonstrating the need for land. When leaders of the war veterans association and the ruling party realised by the end of March that white farmers were actively campaigning for the MDC, and encouraging farm workers to do the same, farm occupations became more violent with the build-up to the political campaign for the June 2000 parliamentary elections (Moyo 2001:318).

Elections in 2002, 2005 and 2008 were highly contested with many incidents of violence. A report by the Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum shows there were 3180 reported cases of organised violence and torture between March 2008 and July 2009 perpetrated by state institutions such as the police, army and intelligence officers (Crisis Zimbabwe 2009). Research and Advocacy Unit (2011:1) noted that the period before the June 2008 runoff presidential election 'saw many people losing their lives, maimed, raped, abducted, losing properties and exposed to all forms of torture all in the name of fighting for political hegemony'. The violence in 2008 before the presidential runoff election saw many cases of members of communities beating and killing each other. ZANU-PF supporters led by war veterans set up base camps in which people were forced to come at night and pledge support for the party (Alexander and Tendi 2008). Known opposition supporters were beaten and tortured at the base camps. These incidents of violence led to Morgan Tsvangirai withdrawing from the election, yet the elections proceeded, with Robert Mugabe victorious. The win was however contested and not accepted worldwide, leading to negotiations for a Government of National Unity. What is clear from the above discussion is how violence was already institutionalised within the state apparatus.

Methodological note

This paper is based on document analysis conducted through systematic review. Systematic review is appropriate in identifying, appraising and synthesising research-based evidence and presenting it in an accessible format (Mulrow 1994). A systematic review attempts to collate all empirical evidence that fits pre-specified eligibility criteria in order to answer a specific research question. It uses explicit, systematic methods that are selected with a view to minimising bias, thus providing more reliable findings from which conclusions can be drawn and decisions made (Antman et al. 1992; Oxman and Guyatt 1993). Unlike traditional reviews, the purpose of a systematic review is to provide as complete a list as possible of all the published and unpublished studies relating to a particular subject area. While traditional reviews attempt to summarise results of a number of studies, systematic reviews use explicit and rigorous criteria to identify, critically evaluate and synthesise all the literature on a particular topic. For this paper, searches on literature relevant to social cohesion and national healing in Zimbabwe were conducted on the internet, and in journal articles, books and newspapers.

History of the Organ on National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration

Zimbabwe's major political parties signed a historic political agreement on 15 September 2008 that gave birth to the Government of National Unity (GNU). The deal brokered by former South African president Thabo Mbeki brought together ZANU-PF and the two Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) formations into a single government as a way to end the political impasse which had degenerated into a socio-economic crisis. The power sharing arrangement in Zimbabwe provides an important insight into how transitional formations can provide a pathway to sustainable peace and the well-being of citizens. It is intriguing to understand the internal dynamics of this political 'Frankenstein', in which sworn enemies are forced to co-exist for the betterment of the populace. Clearly, the GNU was riddled

with problems from its inception, coming into fruition after months of negotiations, marked by accusations and counter accusations. With three parties making up the government, 'the implication is that despite being in the same cabinet, the ministers put party loyalty first. They do not view themselves as one unit and this surely is not good for state affairs' (Chigora and Guzura 2011:25).

The agreement included sections on social cohesion and national reconciliation. The relevant sections of The Global Political Agreement, Article VII, are cited below to highlight the parties' commitment to national healing given the widespread political violence after 2000.

Article VII: Promotion of Equality, National healing, Cohesion and Unity

7. Equality, National Healing, Cohesion and Unity

7.1 The Parties hereby agree that the new Government: …

c) shall give consideration to the setting up of a mechanism to properly advise on what measures might be necessary and practicable to achieve national healing, cohesion and unity in respect of victims of pre- and post-independence political conflicts; and

d) will strive to create an environment of tolerance and respect among Zimbabweans and that all citizens are treated with dignity and decency irrespective of age, gender, race, ethnicity, place of origin or political affiliation.

Section 7.1c thus provides for the establishment of ONHRI. In a speech in 2009, Sekai Holland, then Minister responsible for the Organ, noted that: 'the key result area…was the launching of…the machinery for national healing, reconciliation and integration… [with] three specific targets…: launch the Organ for National Healing, Reconciliation and Integration and establish a secretariat; hold pre-conference workshops for local and international experts; establish machinery and processes for national healing, reconciliation and integration' (Holland 2009:2).

Mbire (2011) argues that the ONHRI provided a new frame through which the discourses on transitional justice, reconciliation and national healing

could be understood. The task of the Organ however was soon limited to an advisory role as it fell to the Principals (the three political leaders who signed the Global Political Agreement) to accept or decline the offered proposals. According to the then Minister Holland in a speech at Chatham House in 2012, the GPA 'gives us the mandate as the Organ to advise on what mechanisms to address pre- and post-independence conflicts' (Chatham House 2010). This was a serious flaw in that the Organ could not make independent decisions outside the Principals. Its proposals were voluntary and not legally binding. In essence the Organ was toothless. As an advisory body its tasks did not extend beyond producing documents and voluntary codes of conduct.

Structure and operations of ONHRI

The ONHRI was headed by three co-ministers appointed by the president but nominated by each of the three political parties. The three included Vice-President John Landa Nkomo (ZANU-PF), Gibson Sibanda (Movement for Democratic Change faction led by Welshman Ncube, known as MDC-N founder member, later replaced by Moses Mzila-Ndhlovhu when he passed away) and Sekai Holland (Movement for Democratic Change faction led by Morgan Tsvangirayi, known as MDC-T founder member). There was both cause for optimism and concern when the three were chosen (Chipaike 2013). The optimism stemmed from the belief that appointing such very senior members of each party reflected the great deal of importance the GNU placed on social cohesion and national healing. On the other hand, however, placing senior members in these roles was really geared towards ensuring advantage in manoeuvring the work of the Organ towards certain political goals. The members were chosen by party leadership without any form of consultation. Zimbabwe Watch and Crisis Coalition (2008) thus concludes that political elites excluded the concerned and affected communities from any discussion of building up a mechanism for national healing. The three ministers embarked on a wide-ranging consultation exercise with traditional leaders, churches and civil society, but not with the victims of violence in Zimbabwe. The result was that only the elite

with access to traditional and church leaders were heard. The exclusion of rural women and children from these consultations highlights another patronising tendency of top-down approaches to governance by the Zimbabwean state. In November 2011 ONHRI reported that it had finished drafting a code of conduct to hold political parties perpetrating violence to account for their actions. The code emphasised that political parties should be able to campaign and disseminate their political ideas around the country without fear. It was a voluntary mechanism without any legal backing. As such, the Organ had no power or authority to compel political actors to act in a peaceful manner. The Organ was thus largely ceremonial, and without any real impact on the lives of ordinary Zimbabweans.

Challenges facing ONHRI

Polarisation and the challenges of enforcing healing and coercion

ONHRI was a child of a compromise government made up of conflicting and suspicious partners. The polarised nature of the political scene made any work towards national healing almost impossible as any talk of violence was seen as political manoeuvring to discredit ZANU-PF. The GNU was championed as a power-sharing arrangement to end the political crisis in Zimbabwe. Yet at its worst it was a dysfunctional animal with separate heads pulling in different directions. Burgess (2011:101) notes that successful power sharing is capable, in theory, of preventing the outbreak of violence by bringing all major stakeholders to the table. The Zimbabwean case of power sharing and subsequent political brokerage showcases the overall fragility, but effectiveness towards peace, of putting to the test such systems after election disputes (Neal 2012). There were, then, grave issues around the dysfunctionality of the GNU as a viable governance instrument in Zimbabwe. Despite successes in reducing both record-breaking inflation and political violence, the GNU faced serious problems in functional and control areas (see Mandaza 2012). One of the most interesting cases was the long-drawn contestation over the control of money from diamond deposits, which were allegedly not going through the

MDC-controlled Ministry of Finance. Suspicion and accusations saturated the everyday operations of a government with such inconvenient partners.

Lack of political will and commitment

Whilst the GPA provided a framework to implement national healing and social cohesion, the political actors remained unwilling to ensure the full implementation of the agreements. The language of Article VII in the agreement that led to the birth of the Organ highlights how provisions of social cohesion are dependent on the will of the political parties who had the power or choice to stall any process. Machakanja (2010:4) argues that:

> Article 7.1(c), which focuses on national healing, cohesion and unity, is also stated in very vague and ambiguous terms as it lumps together conflicts from different historical periods. This lack of clarity and specificity makes the job of national healing overwhelming as the process may take decades. Such vagueness abrogates the ZANU-PF party from taking social responsibility in accounting for post-independence human rights violations.

Zimbabwe has gone through different epochs of violence so often that for any mechanism to succeed there first needs to be an admission and acceptance of historical moments of violence. There are still 'silences' on the part of the state on the exact nature of the 1987 conflicts in the Matebeleland regions known as Gukurahundi where, according to the Catholic Commission for Peace and Justice (1997), 20 000 people lost their lives. Mapuweyi (2014:9) notes the view of MDC-N on this issue:

> Moses Mzila-Ndlovu, who replaced Gibson Sibanda on the organ following the death of the MDC founder, summed up the civil society and private media sentiments saying, ZANU-PF was making a mistake by trying to sweep the Gukurahundi issue under the carpet because many people are still angry about the massacres and want the issue discussed in public and they also want compensation.

There is thus no clarity on which exact period the Organ focused on and whether it had the mandate to finally provide impetus towards resolving social justice for victims of the violence in the Matebeleland region.

The lack of political will was thus a deliberate ploy especially for those political actors who had vested interests in ensuring their part in violent activities remained (and remains) hidden across the political spectrum. Any healing has to start with admission and confession of past atrocities in colonial and post-colonial eras. Machakanja (2010) argues that ZANU-PF even after the signing of the GPA continued to arrest and detain political activists aligned to the MDC parties. This went against the spirit of social cohesion and healing and, in the eyes of some observers, highlighted the disregard and unwillingness of ZANU-PF to follow the provisions of the GPA (Machakanja 2010).

The question about what to do with perpetrators of violence

One of the key questions that was never addressed by the GPA but is now included in the work of the Organ is what to do with known perpetrators of political violence in Zimbabwe. The agreement was a negotiated affair between political leaders with the aim of ending a political impasse. Thus from the onset of negotiations, '[i]t [was] the needs of the nation, not individuals, that [were] of paramount concern…' (Machakanja 2010:5). Individuals' search for truth, justice or compensation was to take a back seat for the good of the nation. The macro focus of the GPA thus ignored critical issues affecting communities at a local level. National healing cannot be a national affair for politicians, but is rather a concern for people now living together who might have turned against each other in the past – leading to deaths, serious injuries as well as inter-generational grudges and hatred. Without understanding how healing and social cohesion are intricately relational issues concerned with lived experiences of individuals, the Organ was also bound to become irrelevant to the victims of violence. Any transitional justice mechanism needs to include measures to deal with perpetrators of violence. If amnesty is offered, it has to be based on total transparency and public acceptance of violent acts in the past. The Organ has no plan in place even for compensation of victims, because '…Article VII precludes civil claims against perpetrators as this [was] likely to erode the state's limited fiscus…Article VII does not represent an

individual-friendly process but rather a politically-orchestrated national healing and reconciliation project' (Machakanja 2010:5). The project had little to offer victims and survivors of violence. Their physical, spiritual and emotional needs were not catered for in the negotiations. Gabriel Shumba, speaking at Chatham House, argued that the perpetrators of post-colonial violence have never been arrested and that 'these people are still roaming the streets; they are part of the power sharing agreement' (Chatham House 2010).

The failure to understand the complexities of violence in Zimbabwe

The Organ seemed to have been limited in its scope to the post-electoral violence of 2000. In fact, the then Minister Holland admitted that the Organ categorised violence as mainly political and thus as perpetrated by political parties – thereby masking various complex factors around race, ethnicity and gender. Whilst the majority of cases of violence may indeed be intertwined with periods of political upheavals, most cases usually do involve complex questions around the social make-up of communities. A good example is violence against women – including rape – perpetrated under periods of political violence. Political promotion of violence is intertwined with a patriarchal social system in which women's bodies are portrayed as sexual things. Moyo (2008) argues that violence in Zimbabwe is structural in nature and steeped in historical processes. These processes can be explained through a political economy approach but there are also social factors such as ethnicity, race and gender which intersect with politics to create complexities in Zimbabwean violence. To simply locate violence as an inter-party phenomenon without asking how personal, family, community, regional and ethnic grudges tend to play out within communities masks the true nature of how violence occurs and is experienced. There are different forms of violence which include physical, symbolic, mental and psychological violence. To understand the interplay of all these forms of violence within a transitional justice framework requires understanding the fluid nature of violence as a process

and not an event. This requires a more in-depth analysis of the nature and factors influencing violence as a historical process in Zimbabwe. The Organ did not undertake such an analysis, erroneously categorising violence as a political act perpetrated through political party structures.

Hiding in plain sight: the Organ's experience with the public

The Organ did little to engage communities. There may be various factors to explain this, which include lack of skills, resources, political space or the will to engage the grassroots. This lack of engagement led Mapuweyi (2014) to label the Organ the 'Invisible ONHRI' due to a serious lack of reporting of its activities in the major newspapers in Zimbabwe. Due to this invisibility, the Organ was rendered useless to most Zimbabweans who did not know or understand what its role included. Chipaike (2013:22) further asserts that the Organ:

> …ha(s) not been proactive in the communities. What they have simply done is to issue… statements in the media calling upon people to desist from political violence (Newsday, 27 July 2012). Instead of mobilising communities against violence before it occurs, they have mainly been reacting to those occurrences.

The Organ had no community or grassroots structures, which seriously limited its effectiveness. National level processes are concentrated in the capital Harare with very little devolution to districts and wards. Given the limited access of rural communities to news sources such as newspapers or television, news of the Organ was not reaching the grassroots. The urban bias of the Organ, which appeared to place an emphasis on engaging 'experts' and conducting international travels to hold meetings in the United States of America and in South Africa, meant that it was separated from the rural masses who had lived through violence as perpetrators, survivors and victims. There was no investment in community structures for social cohesion and national healing. The process of the creation of the Organ and the planning of its activities was not participatory, which

seriously limited the input of most ordinary Zimbabweans who did not fit into the categories of traditional chiefs, experts, or people in the Diaspora or in the church.

In 2013, after the elections paved the way for the 'death' of the GPA and GNU, the Organ died as a legal entity. National healing and post-conflict justice were not made explicit in the new constitution which ushered in the elections. With ZANU-PF the ideology of the liberation struggle remains dominant and constructed narrowly to shower praise on the ruling elite. This ideology has led to the demonising of dissenting voices and the sweeping under the carpet of many problems. As noted elsewhere in this paper – except for one description by the president of Gukurahundi as a 'moment of madness' – nothing has been done to initiate processes of healing, reparations and social cohesion (New Zimbabwe no date).

Women's exclusion from national healing processes

The role of women in the national healing process has remained marginal. The exclusion of women from these processes is rather worrying given that many women suffered serious trauma due to beatings, rape, murder and sexual abuse. Shaba (2011) argues that women were the majority of victims in post-2008 violence yet the Organ has proven ineffective in the following ways: The Organ did not provide a gendered analysis of violence in Zimbabwe which would have spelt out how the experience and impact of, as well as the nature of, violence remain gendered. It did not seek to understand how perpetrators, survivors and victims are all gendered beings and that gender is a central issue in understanding the historical processes of violence. Victims and perpetrators were assumed to be homogenous without further interrogation or analysis. This mirrors the historical patriarchal nature of the Zimbabwean state.

Major political parties involved in the GNU remain male-dominated and patriarchal in orientation. Women are represented in the two biggest parties, the MDC and ZANU-PF, yet the women's wings of these parties remain oriented towards the political goals of male leaders.

Without women-centred political parties, the efforts of women within these patriarchal structures will achieve very little as women's activist Thoko Matshe notes, 'Zimbabwe will still be a patriarchal state no matter who wins [the elections] currently, so for women it is 'Aluta Continua' – the struggle continues' (Jones 2008). In a gender analysis of the Global Political Agreement, Mugadza (2011:6) argues that:

> There have been many issues related to politically motivated violence in Zimbabwe's past that necessitate provision for a comprehensive national healing and cohesion mechanism, especially for women who bore the brunt of the conflict in 2008. …Given that healing and cohesion are not clarified, there is a danger that it will be difficult to implement anything under this article, to the detriment of women who suffer violence, discrimination and intolerance disproportionately.

Even in practice the Organ proved incapable of responding to historical gendered processes of violence or of challenging the patriarchal status quo which often promotes abuse of women in conflict situations. The Organ had no capacity or mechanisms to deal with women victims because of the unique nature – often both physically and mentally brutal – of violence against women.

Efficacy of top-down approaches

Experiences from Zimbabwe highlight the serious limitations of top-down approaches to national healing and social cohesion. Without the involvement of communities – especially the input of victims – any mechanism for healing after conflict will fail to achieve its objectives. There was naivety in believing that social cohesion can be forced from above. Without full participation of communities, the Organ was doomed to fail in achieving its mandate. For commentators such as Muchemwa et al. (2013) this is precisely what ZANU-PF wanted. ZANU-PF did not want an effective process which provided truth and reconciliation for the post-independence conflicts, particularly in Matebeleland and Midlands in 1987, and the 2008 post-election violence (Dzinesa 2012; Machakanja

2010). The Organ was an instrument of the powerful, and thus served a limited political purpose which reduced transitional justice to mere statements and consultative meetings with experts.

Top-down approaches rarely take a victim's rights perspective. The major focus is on broader political and economic considerations which do not necessarily favour the rights of the victims. Political elites have vested interests in post-conflict mechanisms which do not necessarily serve the needs of the ordinary people. The Zimbabwean example highlights how the need for self-preservation especially within ZANU-PF has resulted in tokenistic approaches to national healing. In arguing for a grassroots-based approach to national healing in Zimbabwe, Thomson and Jazdowska (2012:77) point out that:

> …local communities hold the key to a more inclusive and sustainable restorative justice process in Zimbabwe (and elsewhere). The more people that participate in, and benefit from, a transitional justice programme, the broader the 'ownership' generated, and the more chance there is that outcomes will be sustained. Transitional justice, and its content, should not therefore be the sole preserve of international lawyers, human rights NGOs /or national politicians, as it so often is. Instead, alongside these aforementioned practitioners, those who suffered politically motivated violence also need to participate in policy formulation and decision-making.

Yet the Organ was dominated by experts of all kinds speaking for the victims. The lived experiences of communities that suffered trauma remain silenced.

Muchemwa et al. (2013) argue that the failures of the initial reconciliation project at independence were reborn with the Organ under the Government of National Unity. They argue that:

> …while the notion of resuscitating reconciliation is an important step towards durable peace, this institutionalised, state-centric and state-propelled project is haunted by the very same challenges that undermined and shattered its predecessor…reconciliation and healing project, which is politically engineered and institutionally driven without being inclusive

and community driven, (and) is a mere token that comes at the expense of durable peace and the actual victims of violence and impunity (Muchemwa et al. 2013:145).

At a 'meeting held in Bulawayo, on 26 November 2009, ONHRI members exchanged harsh words with former ZIPRA liberation fighters who accused them of living a lavish life on the national healing assignment at the expense of victims who are struggling to eke out a living' (Muchemwa et al. 2013:154). This is probably the greatest weakness of state-centric, top-down approaches carried out by state bureaucracies. The resources expended on the functions of the Organ with three co-ministers all with a salary, benefits and allowances, day to day administration and staffing together with foreign trips could, in principle, have gone a long way to initiating and establishing community cohesion projects. Top-down approaches are thus top heavy, requiring enormous financial outlays that do not necessarily flow to the communities or meet any needs of the victims or survivors. In the following section, a consideration is made of how indigenous systems can be factored into local social cohesion and reconciliation processes.

Infusing indigenous systems in social cohesion processes

Chimuka (2009) uses Shona concepts of *kugarisana* (cordial co-existence) and *kunzwanana* (mutual understanding of one another) to highlight an approach grounded in *Ubuntu* to explain social cohesion in Shona societies. Such an understanding grounds social cohesion as something inherent in African social systems. Zimbabwean communities have endogenous systems of promoting social cohesion and healing. Amongst the Shona, concepts such as *kugarisana* and *kunzwanana* assist in explaining social cohesion in Shona societies. Communities have knowledge accumulated over centuries on how to manage conflicts and ensure social cohesion. Such knowledge was however not utilised by the Organ. In explaining these concepts Chimuka (2009:117) argues that:

> …*Kunzwanana* (mutual understanding) and *kugarisana* (peaceful co-existence) are still relevant to the moral, legal and political spheres, though some modifications are anticipated to reflect the changed needs of modern social configurations. Historically, *Kunzwanana* was conceptualized as the recognition by one (or a group of people) of the humanity of the other (or group of people). This recognition meant the creation of space for the other. Admittedly, one gained direct access to *ubuntu* through a certain entrance. In principle, there was so single and rigid access point. The family was the usual starting point. Civic relationships were cemented by blood – (*hukama*). One then went out and got connected to the wider web of people related largely by blood.

Relations are not only based on blood but sharing a totem can lead to building of community spirit. Peter (2007) defines totem as an animal, plant, or natural object (or representation of an object) that serves as the emblem of a clan or family among traditional people. It represents a mystical or ritual bond of unity within the group. Such interpersonal relationships, built over time, is the basis upon which that social cohesion is hinged.

Conclusion

This paper has shown how top-down approaches are inadequate in achieving national healing and social cohesion. I have argued that any sustained search for national healing requires the active participation and voices of communities, survivors and victims of violence. Through an analysis of various processes, the paper has shown how the Organ tasked with national healing under the Government of National Unity in Zimbabwe became a tokenistic window-dressing exercise meant as an obligation rather than a duty to implement a process of forgiveness and healing. The institutional apparatus of violence in Zimbabwe was not challenged or dismantled, which makes it inevitable that Zimbabwe will experience further episodes of violence and societal fractures. The paper concludes that any hope for lasting peace and social cohesion in Zimbabwe depends on the willingness of political elites to allow communities the space and support to engage in processes of engaging historical hurts, where truth, justice and reparations are the cornerstone.

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'There's no thing as a whole story': Storytelling and the healing of sexual violence survivors among women and girls in Acholiland, northern Uganda

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Abstract

Storytelling has become an acceptable intervention tool among transitional justice promoters and peace-builders because of its cathartic nature and ability to help society in transition to come to terms with a traumatic past. It has played a significant role in the area of truth finding and accountability and has been widely used in several countries in the last decade. In this article the focus is on Acholi women and girls in Acholiland, northern Uganda, who have suffered most severely from the impact of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led by Joseph Kony. Their stories of trauma in the face of terror have not been properly acknowledged. This paper examines the role of storytelling in the healing of sexual violence survivors. It argues that constructive storytelling projects can

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provide an avenue for survivors of sexual violence to acknowledge trauma and attain healing, and counter the violent narrative of the group. Finally, the paper proposes a platform for a community initiative storytelling project.

Keywords: Sexual violence; Storytelling; Survivors; Northern Uganda

Introduction

Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence and rape in situations of armed conflict. This kind of violence is often used to instil fear and to humiliate individuals and communities, and it indeed leads to devastating psychological trauma. The United Nations (1993) identified sexual violence and rape as one of the most prominent problems in post-war peacebuilding in northern Uganda.

From independence in 1962 to date, Uganda has had nine different heads of state with varying tenures. Dr Milton Obote, who received the instruments of power from the British at independence, became the first president with executive powers and set the trend for the future leaderships. The significant turning point towards a manipulative style of leadership in Uganda came in 1967, when Obote abrogated the independence constitution and introduced the republican constitution which granted the president the means to exercise his executive powers according to his whim (Odongo 2003:87).

The advent of manipulative politics paved the way for the rise of armed conflicts in the country. Since it began in 1986, the armed conflict in northern Uganda has gone through various stages and transformations, with several groups emerging to fight the government of Lieutenant-General Yoweri Kaguta Museveni. They have included the soldiers of the former Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) (the army formed to oust the Idi Amin regime); the Uganda People's Democratic Army (UPDA) led by the late Brigadier Odong Latek; the Holy Spirit Mobile Forces (HSMF), led by a prophetess, the late Alice Auma Lakwena (who died in February 2007 in a refugee camp in Kenya); the Holy Spirit Movement II

(HSM II) led by Alice's father, Severino Lukoya; and the Uganda Christian Democratic Army (UCDA), led by Joseph Kony, which changed its name in 1991 to the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and is still active with devastating consequences.

The attacks serve an even more sinister purpose, as the LRA uses its raids as a means of exerting control over the Acholi population by creating a constant state of fear. Common LRA tactics used to instil such fear included not only rape, but also mutilation by cutting off breasts. The LRA has abducted more than a thousand women and girls, who have then been subjected to or forced to witness – or commit – atrocities that compelled them to remain with the LRA as fighters, porters, or 'wives' (Human Rights Watch 2003). Also, large numbers of women and girls are still displaced in northern Uganda, especially in the provinces that constitute Acholiland – Gulu, Lira, Kitgum, and Pader.

As Dolan (2011:214) reveals, many survivors of sexual violence and rape in northern Uganda live with the experience of multiple traumas, as a result of having experienced or witnessed violence enacted either on themselves, or on their family or community. Sexual violence and rape have acute physical, psychological and social consequences for those who experience and witness them, and also have long-term effects on the survivors. If not well addressed, such effects may make them more vulnerable to other social ills (Henttonen et al. 2008:124).

Considering the plights of survivors of sexual violence and rape, and the silence surrounding their situation in Acholiland, this article attempts to critically examine the role of storytelling in the healing of survivors of sexual violence and rape. Informed by storytelling discourses, the argument is that constructive storytelling exercises can provide an avenue for survivors of sexual violence and rape to acknowledge trauma, attain healing, and counter the violent narratives of the group. The article is structured in four parts. Part one briefly identifies which categories of people are appropriately labelled 'sexual violence survivors'. Part two conceptualises

the storytelling approach and reviews its strengths and weaknesses. Part three presents several stories of survivors of sexual violence and rape and examines such storytelling in the context of post-war peacebuilding reconstruction. The final part proposes a community initiative storytelling project as a possible approach for the healing of sexual violence and rape survivors in Acholiland.

1. Sexual violence survivors

Definitions and characteristics

Watts and Zimmerman (2002:1232) define 'sexual violence' as:

> … any violence, physical or psychological, carried out through sexual means or by targeting sexuality, thus including both physical and psychological attacks directed at a person´s sexual characteristics, such as forcing a person to strip naked in public, mutilating a person's genitals or slicing of a woman´s breasts as well as situations in which two victims are forced to perform sexual acts on one another or to harm one another in a sexual manner.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) definition was adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), and used as the basis for its guidelines on sexual violence interventions in storytelling settings, which were published in 2015:45). In what was not meant to be a legal definition, 'sexual violence' was defined as:

> Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work (Inter-Agency Standing Committee 2015:45).

It has been widely acknowledged that the majority of persons affected by sexual violence are women and girls, a result of unequal distribution of power in society between women and men. Further, women and girl survivors who have

been sexually abused, suffer from specific consequences as a result of gender discrimination. As summed up by United Nations Children's Fund (2012:27):

> The primary targets of sexual violence are women and girls, but not only are they at high risk of sexual violence and rape, they also suffer exacerbated consequences as compared with what men endure. As a result of gender discrimination and their lower socio-economic status, women have fewer options and less resources at their disposal to avoid or escape abusive situations and to seek justice. They also suffer consequences [on their sexual and reproductive health], including forced and unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions and resulting deaths, traumatic fistula, and higher risks of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV.

The LRA victimised not only the direct survivors but also entire communities and the nation by spreading fear through sexual violence (Akumu et al. 2005:9). The United Nations Children's Fund (2012:28) broadens the categorisation of sexual violence victims to include all civilians, and the society as a whole 'who are indiscriminately targeted regardless of their status or function, or public institutions'. There is a number of factors to be taken into account in determining who is a survivor of sexual violence. For instance, who puts the label on survivors, and how legitimate is such labelling? In addition, the notion of 'survivor' may create an act of marginalisation for the people who have survived the violent acts of the LRA. For this purpose, the article will use the label of 'survivors' to acknowledge the resilience of those who have been affected by the LRA in Acholiland.

2. Storytelling

The concept

> Storytelling awakens us to that which is real. It is the purest form of communication because it transcends the individual. The Kalahari Bushmen have said, 'A story is like the wind. It comes from a far-off place, and we feel it'. Those things that are the most personal are most general, and are, in turn, most trusted. Stories bind. They are connective tissues. They are basic to who we are (Chaitin 2003).

Storytelling is one of the most fundamental means of making meaning. As such, it is an activity that pervades all aspects of healing. When storytelling becomes overt and is given expression in words, the resulting stories are one of the most effective ways of making one's own interpretation of events and ideas available to others. Through the exchange of stories people involved can share their understanding of a topic and bring their mental modes of the world into closer alignment. In this sense storytelling is relevant in all areas of sexual violence and rape (Chaitin 2003). In the telling of stories, a wide variety of ideas can be heard, considered, compared, interpreted, and acted upon. The bridges built in oral play or oral presentation are lengthened, their partially exposed signposts organised and labelled in ways that commit the storyteller to travel in particular directions. The subject can be more broadly explored, using more devices of language and philosophic thought: It is the academic inheritor of the creative wisdom of play (Chaitin 2003).

Storytelling develops positive skills in the area of social responsibility: self- and cultural awareness, recognition of social roles, and opportunity for reflection (Burk 1997:3). Hilder (2005:158) quotes the influential anthropologist Levi-Strauss when she describes stories as a kind of healing tool due to their 'power ... to fix affective responses to the messages'. Storytelling connects our emotions, which help us to remember (Hilder 2005:164). Adam Hutchinson (1999:85) claims 'stories, like persons, originate alogically'. Due to this 'alogical' origin, diverse forms of storytelling should be acknowledged (Nicholson and Nicholson 2005:23). While there is a familiar dominant story structure existing in Western culture, others exist as well. To deny these alternative voices is to deny the teller his/her self, and to exclude alternative ways of being (Nicholson and Nicholson 2005:25). Hutchinson (1999:86) recognises the existence of diverse story forms when she highlights the accommodating qualities of stories: they have the ability to hold at once all of the 'ambiguities, contradictions, and breaks in meaning that occur in a life'. Such accommodation does not always occur in linear, logical, climactic order. For Hilder (2005:176), storytelling must be approached with the intention to 'deconstruct exclusivity and invent inclusivity'. This involves exposure

to and experience with various forms and structures of a story. Dyson and Genishi (1994:3) examine the risk of not allowing 'inappropriate' stories such as those of violence, or abuse.

Through stories 'societies create, recreate, and alter social identities, memory, and emotion' (Simmons 2006:181). Stories 'influence our ability to recall events, modulate our emotional reactions to events, cue certain heuristics and biases, structure our problem-solving capabilities, and ultimately perhaps even constitute our very identity' (Simmons 2006:105). Storytelling also 'include[s] a temporal ordering of events and an effort to make something out of those events; to render, or to signify, the experiences of persons-in-flux in a personally and culturally coherent, plausible manner' (Simmons 2006:219). During a storytelling project, 'events are selected and then given cohesion, meaning, and direction' (Burk 1997:5). Telling a story could be done through a variety of means. The choice of the medium and method used in telling stories depends on the societal context and the preferences of the storyteller and, perhaps, on the needs and cognitive abilities of the listener(s).

Stories are easily told and disseminated through different outlets: oral, written, gestures, images, paintings, theatre, music, documentary, film, and drawings (Barton and Booth 2000:76) and may be told chronologically. The notion of time and sequence of events is essential to the act of storytelling. When recounting experiences, survivors of sexual violence and rape often begin their narrative from the period before the crisis, then narrate their actual experience of the violence, and conclude by sharing experiences of grief, trauma, and grievances after the violent events (Chaitin 2003).

Quite aside from the notion of time, stories are told within a specific context. The effectiveness of a storytelling project may depend on the kind of atmosphere and space wherein it occurs. The context in which stories are told 'influences what, how, and why elements within the story are seen as relevant' (Daemmrich 2003:215). Closely related to the notion of context are the minds of the audience which according to Miller (1996:46) 'are the canvas on which storytellers paint their narratives'. The role of the

audience is to identify with the storyteller in a manner that will touch their hearts and lead them to transformative action (Sogol 2014).

Storytelling and the healing of sexual violence survivors

Telling one's story brings to consciousness experiences that may have been buried in the pursuit of forgetting. Forgetting is a passive experience. The experience of intrusive memories might also be classified as passive. But both are often experienced as a loss of control. To counter this, narrative in a supportive context becomes an active decision. Narrative can be empowering when the individual decides how and where they are willing to share memories (Brison 2002:52). Based on personal experience of the narrative act of remembering, Brison (2002:54) argues that traumatic memories feel as though they are passively endured, and that narratives are therefore the result of certain obvious choices. Survivors are often taught by their perpetrators and/or community not to acknowledge the abuse, but to forget their experience, and to believe that their experience does not constitute abuse. This makes the act of remembering and retelling all the more important. Narratives can therefore be seen as an active way of regaining control of one's memory, and recognising the perpetrator's actions as wrong.

Through narrative, survivors of sexual violence and rape can transform their relationship with their memory of trauma. As Herman (1997:1) posits, 'remembering and telling the truth about terrible events are prerequisites for the healing of sexual violence and rape survivors'. In theory, survivors of sexual violence and rape are able to reclaim their own humanity, and establish a connection to and control over their own life story. As a conscious act of remembering, sexual violence and rape survivors are able to use narrative to integrate the experience of past trauma into a larger life story. Narrative provides an avenue for human connection.

Like trauma, narrative is inherently relational and requires an audience, providing a witness or witnesses to the act of telling one's story. Brison (2002:53) explains that 'in order to construct self narratives we need not only the words with which to tell our stories, but also an audience able and

willing to hear us and to understand our words as we intend them'. Yet, the witness can take many different forms, influencing the questions that are asked, how the narrative is formed, and the way in which the story is heard. Watts (1992:85) explains 'the idea of framing the speaking of memories as storytelling is then directly aimed at the release of such emotions through a collective process of narrating life experiences'. As a collective process, narrative allows survivors of sexual violence and rape to discover that they are not alone. This reduces the burden of self-blame and isolation. Uncovering similarities and overlap among the stories, survivors of sexual violence and rape are able to reconstruct their own identity in relation to others. The telling of a survivor's personal story can be employed to reconstruct the past, providing consideration and potential healing for the individual's current identity.

Storytelling also has the potential to transform broken relationships among survivors of sexual violence and rape in a community that is recovering from armed conflict or war. As Sogol (2014) notes, through the act of telling their stories, survivors of sexual violence and rape 'engage in a dialectic way, with their past and also exchange information and perspectives, externalize grief, loss, and anger, and try to reach some form of consensus as to a way forward'. In addition, storytelling creates 'a familiar learning space, a safe space, a communal space, an empowering space, and an imaginative space' for sexual violence survivors and rape (Sogol 2014). These spaces instil confidence, courage, and create understanding and transformational dialogue among survivors of sexual violence and their community members. In Herman's (1997:1) work, narrative is associated with reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring connections between survivors of sexual violence and their community. Through narrative, survivors of sexual violence and rape piece together their past, and in this process connect with others. In her work on trauma recovery among survivors of sexual abuse, Herman (1997:1) emphasises that 'the fundamental stages of recovery are reconstructing the trauma story, and restoring the connection between survivors of sexual violence and rape and their community'.

An advantage of the collective sharing of trauma is that it empowers people who have a common adversity, and as the narrative 'evolves from personal stories to a group story, the narrative gains potency…. The new group narrative becomes a new framework for thought and blueprint for action' (Chaitin 2003). At the same time, when survivors share their experience with the public, they transform their situation from a 'narrative of shame and embarrassment to a narrative of witnessing and healing' (Chaitin 2003). Once a 'story has been made public, the person who tells it can regain further healing toward reconciliation' (Miller 1996:45). Sharing and integrating one's experiences of trauma with that of others is the empowering aspect of storytelling, and in 'recounting one's own story, one salvages and reaffirms, in the face of dispersal, defeat, and death, the social bonds that bind one to a community of kindred souls' (Odongo 2003:89).

3. The narratives of sexual violence survivors

The narratives of survivors of sexual violence and rape and other forms of sexual violence reveal that many still suffer the effects of psychological trauma, as well as discrimination and stigma from the community. The researcher interviewed thirteen (13) of the women and girls who suffered sexual violence and rape. They were selected through purposive and random sampling techniques, and were from the following districts: Pader (4), Gulu (4), Kitgum (2), Lira (2) and Amuru (1). They were ensured that their real names would not be disclosed and that their stories would be used with due discretion. They understood that the purpose of the project was not only to share their own experiences and feelings with the public and the world, but also and especially to propagate the creating of similar opportunities for many others to share stories, experience healing and spread encouragement. The interviews took place between 3 and 21 December 2012.

Joanna (not real name) (14 years) and Alice (not real name) (13 years) in Kitgum narrated their ordeal as follows:

On our way home; we met two LRA rebels at a junction in the road.

The LRA rebels told us to sit on the ground. Then they asked if we have chickens at home. Alice replied in the affirmative, and one LRA rebel then said, 'If they are there, let's go and get them.' At a certain point, one LRA rebel stopped and began to prepare the ground, stepping on the grass. According to Joanna, He said to us to sit down and then ordered us to take off our clothes. First we refused, and one of the LRA rebel said that if we didn't, he would shoot us. Then he told us to lie down. When Alice [her cousin] didn't, one of the soldiers kicked her in the chest. The darker LRA rebel took Alice a short distance away, while the other one stayed with me. He threatened me with a gun and raped me. I was just crying. The other LRA rebel raped Alice. Then the darker LRA rebel who had raped Alice called me to him and raped me too, while the other one raped Alice. It is the time we need to let the world know what we have gone through.

In another story in Pader district, a female survivor named Evelyn (not real name) (15 years) narrated her ordeal as follows:

LRA raped many women and some of them were taken and [they] never came back. We don't even know what happened to them, maybe they became wives. Some who came back had children and they told us they were everyone's wife, any man in the jungle could be their husband and the women had no choice. I wish to tell and share my story with the next generation if the Ugandan government can give me the opportunity.

A female survivor in Gulu, Victoria (not real name) (16 years), who was kidnapped narrated her experience in the LRA camp thus:

Sexual and domestic violence was common because of the congestion in the camp and thus people used to conflict amongst them[selves] in homes and in the community. … they used to tell us not to walk at night because you can meet the rebels and they rape or kill you. It happened to me when I was trying to move to another village but it was during the day and I met them with two other women and they raped all of us and then told us to run or we will be dead. I was too weak to run but I tried. My story is yet to be shared for people to hear but if I can have the venue to share my story the government of Uganda can have better event for us in Acholiland.

Discussion with Akullo (not real name) (13 years) a female survivor in Pader revealed that:

> ... without any delay, he started demanding for sex forcefully while pulling my clothes until he made it. After raping and defiling me I decided to have him as my husband. I lived with him for two years and gave birth to two children but later on he started mistreating me. We used to over quarrel and fight in the house. I also want to share my story for the next generation to learn about my ordeal and if the government can organise a program for those of us that we are passing through this situation, the Acholi society will be a better place to live.

Another survivor, Janet (not real name), was abducted from a secondary school in Pader when she was 15 years old and she spent five years in captivity. She said:

> I was given to one of Kony's senior commanders. I was his fourth wife. He soon brought in four other young girls. They were to become his wives when they were slightly older. In the meantime, they were told to baby-sit for his other wives. When you are given a commander as your husband, you are expected to produce food. You are also given a gun and expected to fight. I was often picked to go out on patrols. I became pregnant in early 2002, when Kony predicted an attack from the UPDF on our bases in Sudan. By June, our whole group [had] sneaked back into Uganda and hid in the Imatong mountains. This was the most difficult time for captives. My husband was part of the attack on Anaka [a village in Gulu District]. He was shot in the chest by the UPDF. He died a few days later. I gave birth to a baby boy, but he died after a month. We need to share our story if we have that opportunity. We are ready to move from one school to the other and one community to the other in Uganda for people to see hear what we have pass through and for justice should not be delay again.

17 year old Arach (not real name) from Pader district narrated her ordeal in the hands of LRA rebels and she explained:

> Even though I am back to the school and my life is normal, I still hallucinate and dream a lot about what happened to me in the forest. I dream about my

forced marriage with the Joseph Kony's commander and I was made to kill and others who were killed during our time with the LRA … Because of my experience, I sometimes find myself shouting uncontrollably…

25-year old Angela (not real name) of Kitgum district told the author:

I was abducted and forcefully married to LRA soldier with whom I stayed with, against my will, for seven years. During this period, I underwent many abuses … Upon returning to my village, I was helped to trace my home within a matter of days ... The time spent at the reception centre was very short – about three days. I have heard what some other abductees underwent … Because of my psychological problems which relate to the painful memories of my experience.

Many survivors experienced sexual violence. Another survivor is 14-year old Atim (not real name) from Gulu district who narrated how she was abducted by the LRA when she was only 8 years old. She was made to carry heavy luggage and walk for long distances inside the thick forest without food to eat and water to drink and eventually married to a rebel. She also explained how her experience in captivity affects her today:

I was only ten years old when I gave birth to the LRA rebel's child. I was not ready to carry the pregnancy and remember very well how painful the experience, I bled a lot and feared that I would die as I just gave birth in the forest. One of the unforgettable of my experience is that I feel pain as a result of the experience. The memory of my experience has left a big mental scar on me. From time to time all this come back and haunt me … I feel constant pain around my waist and feel that this is as a result of the difficult childbirth that I had and a result of repeated beatings by the LRA rebels with sticks around my waist.

Most survivors of sexual violence and rape who suffered during the conflict still endure the psychological effects of their experiences. These public sessions have given them an avenue to share their unforgettable experiences with the public in order to be healed.

16 years old Eunice (not real name) of Amuru district explained that psychological trauma remains with her and people in the community are also not in support of her. She said:

> I have a friend whose LRA rebels was also abducted and killed in LRA camp. Now her parent vents out her anger on me and says she wishes I was killed too because I am a ghost haunting them … Although it is not true, my friends tell me that because of the period I spent in LRA camp my behaviour does not conform with that of the community again. Even my father now tells this to my mother although I am his child … Since God has brought me back home and given me training and showing more love to me, let me concentrate, maybe I'll do better in future. This is the only hope I have …

20-year old Jacqueline (not real name) of Lira district who is also a survivor of abduction and forced marriage by LRA narrated how she would not be left at home with her relatives' children because people often think she would kill them. Another one is 22-year old Jane (not real name) from Lira district, also a survivor of LRA abduction who narrated to the author how she was rejected by her mother upon returning back to the community when her mother was traced and brought to see her at the NGO reception centre. As a result, she has had to live at an NGO reception centre since she returned eighteen months ago. She 'hopes that one day my mother will have a change of heart'.

The story of 30-year old Kihika (not real name) of Gulu district is more illustrative. She explains:

> I was abducted with 7 other girls … All of us were about 10 to 12 years old … and we were made wives at a very young age. After about 4 years of life in captivity, I managed to escape and came back with 2 children and I now live with them here as a single parent. These children have difficulties. We have no money for food, school fees … And the culture … My children are treated differently, they have no clan, they don't belong. It is as if they are not meant to be …

Regarding the lack of a comprehensive reparation program targeting survivors of sexual violence, Kihika (not real name) added:

What breaks me down is that we were abducted and forcefully married to LRA rebels, many of whom are now granted amnesty and resettlement packages when they return … Some of us women and girls that come back with children to care for are not given opportunity to share our narratives with public for next generation to learn from what they have done to us and for us to be able to receive psychological healing. The government should see that this is not fair … Most of us are in need of some medium to be able to share our stories. We need well organised government project or comprises of all the survivors of sexual violence in the camps of LRA.

Many women who have been survivors of sexual violence have also been widowed. This has come with its own complications. In addition to having to cope with the consequences of the sexual violence they suffered in the hands of LRA rebels, they have to take on the role of sole family breadwinners. Nearly all survivors who were interviewed by the author expressed the need for them to narrate their ordeal in an organised community initiative storytelling event and be able to express their views in such a set-up. They recommended that such an event should be developed in consultation with them. The article therefore proposes the creation of a well-organised environment for the staging of constructive community initiative storytelling projects where survivors of sexual violence and rape can take charge of their situation (Caruth 2001:8). Given this, therefore, section 4 will present a scenario of a storytelling exercise that could be organised for the healing of LRA sexual abused survivors in Acholiland.

Storytelling of sexual violence survivors in post-war peacebuilding

Storytelling has already been used in post-war peacebuilding situations by community development practitioners, peacebuilders and transitional justice promoters (Folami and Olaiya 2016:17; Van Zyl 1999:652). Storytelling has indeed been found to be therapeutic (Folami and Olaiya 2016:13; Guthrey 2015:9) and therefore very valuable in post-war peacebuilding reconstruction. Storytelling, like mediation and other conflict resolution methods, as well as peacebuilding approaches, has its

antecedents in traditional healing culture. Moreover, many storytellers emphasise that we are all natural storytellers. It is necessary, however, to distinguish between constructive stories (Senehi 2009:203) which may promote healing in a post-war peacebuilding setting and others which may not have such a potential value.

Storytelling does not require a special environment. In any situation, stories can engage the emotions of the teller and the listener and offer the possibility of empathic response. What storytelling requires, is the imagination of both the teller and the listener, and what it can bring about is moving the heart and the mind of both. Telling a story of pain, violence and suffering to a concerned and empathic group of witnesses can lead to a much needed catharsis.

According to Lederach (2005), cultivation of the art of imagination allows post-war peacebuilders to work in the messy and chaotic complexity of real conflict. Storytelling is one way to harness these imaginative impulses so that they provide real images for tellers and listeners to explore. In the context of healing, the importance of personally narrated truth is foremost. Care should be taken, however, to guard against any tendency to seek a hasty conclusion of healing in order to absolve past truths without adequately addressing the problems that have arisen. Therefore, although special circumstances are not a prerequisite for storytelling, it is usually worthwhile in a post-war context to create conditions conducive to uninhibited storytelling.

Apart from nurturing healing, storytelling can also play a valuable role in nation building (Schaffer and Smith 2004:52) and the development of a new culture. Where transitional justice is being sought, the revelations from stories may help to acknowledge the complexities of a spectrum of possibilities beyond guilty and innocent. In a dialogue between different truths stories about pain and violence may make an important difference.

To summarise, storytelling has been described as a part of post-war peacebuilding mechanisms that have assisted in the area of healing and reparations without any effect. Storytelling has been found to be a useful

post-war peacebuilding mechanism (Sogol 2014) in deeply conflicted communities. In the post-war peacebuilding era, storytelling can contribute to psychological healing for sexual violence survivors and rape. But, in order for the storytelling to be effective, it must engage the self and others, and provide a narrative that is both cognitively and emotionally compelling (Hancox 2011:8). Storytelling 'remains unquestioned as one of the marks of being human' (Daemmrich 2003:23).

4. Community initiative storytelling project for survivors of sexual violence and rape

In post-war peacebuilding, the already weakened social fabric of society necessitates the implementation of healing and community building activities (Dryden-Peterson 2006:385). Storytelling is one medium through which individuals and communities affected by sexual violence and rape could restore hope and receive healing within and among themselves, reclaim their lives, and acknowledge trauma. Compared to other post-war peacebuilding initiatives, storytelling is one of the 'expressive intervention strategies that have few obstacles, and can be conducted regardless of socio-economic restraints and in the dire conditions that often exist at post-war peacebuilding' (Ntakarutimana 2008:163).

Based on the argumentation in the previous sections, a community initiative storytelling project is suggested, specifically for Acholiland, but also for other regions where needed. Its primary purpose would be the healing of survivors of sexual violence and rape, but an obvious secondary purpose would be to encourage other young survivors of sexual violence and rape wherever such violence exists. It may also be envisaged, however, that others more indirectly affected by LRA abuses would participate in the event. Such other prospective participants might include leaders from communities where victims were abducted by the LRA, and both local and foreign civil society groups.

The event could be carried out by the ministry of arts and culture, in conjunction with transitional justice organisations in Uganda, and

non-governmental organisations and humanitarian agencies working in the area of sexual violence prevention. At the beginning of each local occasion, the purpose of the community initiative storytelling intervention project should be emphasised, possibly by one of the transitional justice promoters in attendance. The introducer should underscore the relevance of the storytelling exercise in terms of its potential to foster healing, as well as to create the opportunity for survivors of sexual violence to express themselves.

It is hoped that the survivors' stories of courage, persistence, faith, and resilience will instil healing in the minds and hearts of those people present at the community initiative storytelling intervention project. After the survivors of sexual violence and rape have shared their stories, the Ugandan transitional justice promoters of the project may encourage those who attended the event to engage with those survivors and acknowledge them with expressions of gratitude. They might also validate the survivors and offer some words of support and encouragement. They could share what they might have learned from the survivors' stories of trauma. As stated, there is always the possibility of re-traumatisation to occur during such an exercise. To avoid or manage such an outcome, survivors should be adequately prepared and introduced to some of the necessary tools of counselling. It will be important to keep in mind the aim: to heal their past. The support of the Ugandan transitional justice promoters may be needed when survivors of sexual violence become emotionally exhausted or re-traumatised.

A possibility that might be explored, only where the storytellers do give their consent, is the documentation of the stories in a documentary film in which identities would not be disclosed. This could form part of early warning material that may help to prevent further wars and may be used as a tool by transitional justice practitioners, peacebuilders and conflict resolution practitioners in Uganda. If such a project in Acholiland is judged by the community development practitioners and transitional

justice promoters to be successful, it could be replicated in several regions of Uganda where there are many survivors of sexual violence and rape by the LRA.

Storytelling, especially in the context of post-war peacebuilding reconstruction, can also open discussions on broader ethical issues and challenge survivors to re-consider values and beliefs that may be detrimental to their wellbeing and the stability of their society. The stories of the survivors can also play an important role in conflict resolution and peacebuilding and in empowering the upcoming generation of females to be peacemakers.

Conclusion

This article has examined the potential role of storytelling in the healing of survivors of sexual violence and rape in Acholiland. Having defined and conceptualised the notions of survivors of sexual violence and rape and of declaration storytelling, some real stories served as illustrations of the role played by storytelling. Thereafter, a potential community initiative storytelling project was proposed and discussed. The article underscored the need for the Acholiland women and girls in northern Uganda who have shown remarkable courage, in spite of or because of their victimisation by the LRA, to share their stories during the research project. It has been argued that the survivors' stories can serve as source of healing to themselves and others, and that if documented, they may also serve as a teaching tool for post-war peacebuilding in Uganda. In the final analysis, it is worth noting that storytelling is a strategy for the healing of survivors of sexual violence and rape. It is proposed in this article as one medium through which survivors of sexual violence and rape can acknowledge and own their trauma, take charge of their lives, and transform their societies. The hope is expressed that such a storytelling project will be well supported by the transitional justice system in Uganda. Storytelling can indeed play an important role towards basing the resolution of the conflict on unveiling the truth and pursuing justice.

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Competing orders and conflicts at the margins of the State: Inter-group conflicts along the Ethiopia-Kenya border

*Asebe Regassa Debelo**

Abstract

In this paper, the interplay between various competing orders among three ethnic groups on the margins of the Ethiopian state that have overlapping presence along the Ethiopia-Kenya border is analysed. The paper probes into complex and intertwined causes of inter-group conflicts by going beyond the commonly asserted resource scarcity and ethnicity assumptions, arguing that any attempt to establish sustainable peace becomes futile without assessing inter-group conflict within a context including historical, environmental, political, economic, cultural and institutional dimensions. The paper also conceptualises the state as an active player in inter-group relations, as it plays a fundamental role in instigating and/or resolving conflicts based on its political, economic and

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strategic interests. Taking the case of inter-group conflicts among three groups inhabiting border areas along southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya, and by employing actor-oriented perspectives, the paper argues that the involvement of competing interests and claims on the side of the Ethiopian state, local communities and individuals, both in the instigation of conflicts and peacebuilding processes further complicates the situation. It concludes that inter-group conflict and attempts at peacebuilding in the region are to a large extent influenced by national political dynamics, changes in traditional institutions and cross-border relations.

Keywords: Inter-group conflict, peacebuilding, competing orders, Ethiopia-Kenya border.

Introduction

Inter-group conflicts in pastoralist and agro-pastoralist regions of eastern Africa have increasingly become the defining features of the region, causing major humanitarian, security and political challenges to states and local communities. In this regard, the southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya pastoral frontiers are typical examples of areas where conflict has become recurrent with a convergence of complex and multi-layered actors and causes (Bassi 2010; Oba 2013). Although there is no major divergence on the consequences of such conflicts in terms of humanitarian crisis, political instability and economic impacts, there is no consensus among researchers and policy makers on the causes of conflicts and the actors involved, as well as on peacebuilding processes.

Ascribing inter-group conflicts in post-colonial Africa to ethnicity and resource scarcity is the dominant feature of literature on conflict studies, political science and international relations (Dunn 2001; Zeleza 2008). The resource scarcity theory was built on positivist epistemological thinking and posits that there is paucity of natural resources and an irrational competition among people to gain maximum access. This continues to be a predominant discourse in conflict studies of pastoral and agro-pastoral regions in developing countries (Hagmann 2005:3).

In fact, from a rational choice theory and entitlement perspectives, pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities' exertion of different strategies in utilising common resources can be interpreted as a systematic and rational approach for human-environment interactions (Bogale and Korf 2007:746). Likewise, some scholars (and the western media) try to attribute conflict in Africa to primordial and instrumentalist notions of ethnicity (Dunn 2001:51). Invariably, ethnicity and resource competition are interconnected factors; with ethnic identity – a socially constructed phenomenon – influencing people's perceptions about their rivals while scarcity of resources at their disposal eventually instigates conflict between ethnic groups (Azarya 2003). These theses will be analysed in detail later in this paper.

In contrast, there are emerging scholarly works that question these perspectives, arguing that while ethnicity and resource scarcity are salient factors in inter-group conflict, a comprehensive understanding of such conflicts demands an in-depth analysis of the complex interplay between actors, interests and strategies. This is because, for ethnicity and resources to cause conflict, there would be an actor or force that mobilises people and changes their perception on their identity vis-à-vis others, resource availability, ownership, utilisation right and governance. Hence, it is the volatility of ethnicity that can be activated by ethnic entrepreneurs for different purposes, and the activation of people's perceptions of their resources that both act as potent forces in reactivating past inter-ethnic antagonisms (Hagmann 2005; Regassa 2010, 2012a).

This paper argues that inter-group conflicts in Africa, including the recurrent conflicts on the margins of the Ethiopian state along the Ethiopia-Kenya border are caused by a complex interplay of factors and the involvement of actors, and should not be just reduced to ethnicity and resource scarcity. Preconceived assumptions about ethnicity and resource scarcity as the predominant causes of inter-group conflicts are regarded as too reductionist, and as a too simplistic starting point for

planning peacebuilding mechanisms. Moreover, the presence of competing institutions with different approaches to conflict resolution further complicates the situation.

The paper also addresses the complexity of conflict factors and actors in inter-group conflicts and the predicament of peacebuilding in such regions. This is done through the analysis of the notion of competing orders. This refers to contradictions in conflict research involving epistemological perspectives, multi-layered actors and institutions. The Ethiopia-Kenya borderland is an interesting scene because it is a frontier where three ethnic groups – Borana, Gabra and Garri – transcend national boundaries both in terms of settlement and of kinship relationships. Moreover, the border town of Moyale, on the Ethiopian side, is contested between different actors ranging from local rival groups to regional states and the federal government. This paper considers the state as an active agent in instigating conflicts, and also a self-proclaimed negotiator based on its political, geopolitical and economic interests. That is why understanding conflict and peacebuilding processes in such a context demands a more nuanced contextual analysis of the complex interplay of actors, institutions, historical narratives, local and national political dynamics, and cross-border relations.

Data for this paper was collected through intensive fieldwork conducted from July to December 2015 in southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. However, this paper does not claim to dwell on cross-border conflicts. Rather, it focuses on conflicts on the Ethiopian side of the border but integrates data from northern Kenya for information on mobilisation of kin groups across the national border during conflict and conflict resolution. While in-depth interviews and focused group discussions were used as methods of data collection, grounded theory was used during the data generation, categorisation and analysis process because as Emerson and others (2010) argue, it enables us to create categories and assemble concepts. The subjects involved in this research are members of traditional

institutions, local elders, local government officials, cross-border traders and members of local communities from the three groups (Borana, Gabra and Garri).

The paper is divided into three sections. The section that follows presents the context of the study, arguing that the contested frontier should be discussed in the light of historical, geographical and political contexts. In the second section, competing orders and narratives related to pastoralist conflicts are critically evaluated, deconstructing the notions of ethnicity and resource scarcity and discussing the state as an active player in conflict and in peacebuilding. In the third section, by identifying key actors and causes in the conflict, the paper analyses challenges to building sustainable peace in the region. The last section gives a brief conclusion.

Producing the context

The study area straddles both sides of the Ethiopia-Kenya border and provides unique features containing not only diverse ethnic groups and identities but also overlapping cultural repertoires transcending the geographical boundaries of two countries. On the Ethiopian side, the Borana, Gabra and Garri live side by side though their territorial possessions have been fluid across time (Oba 2013:215–216). The Gabra and Borana speak the Oromo language and are among the groups making up the broader Oromo nation. According to the post-1991 political and administrative reordering of Ethiopia along ethno-linguistic lines, the two groups form the Borana zone in the Oromia national regional state (Adugna 2009). The Garri, however, are part of the Somali clans who have progressively been expanding to Borana land since early 20th century (Bassi 2010:228) and currently live in the Somali national regional state as well as in the Borana zone. These three groups also live on the Kenyan side of the border in counties such as Moyale, Marssabet, Isiolo and Sololo.

In terms of livelihood engagements, all of these groups are pastoralists and thus rangeland, water wells and customary institutions regulating inter-personal and societal relations, human-environment interactions and rangeland management remained crucial among all of them (Tache and

Oba 2009; Bassi 2010). In the past, these communities shared resources and resolved conflicts through customary institutions where inter-group and trans-boundary relations were carefully negotiated on the basis of local customs, traditions and reciprocity embedded in their culture, institutions and rituals.
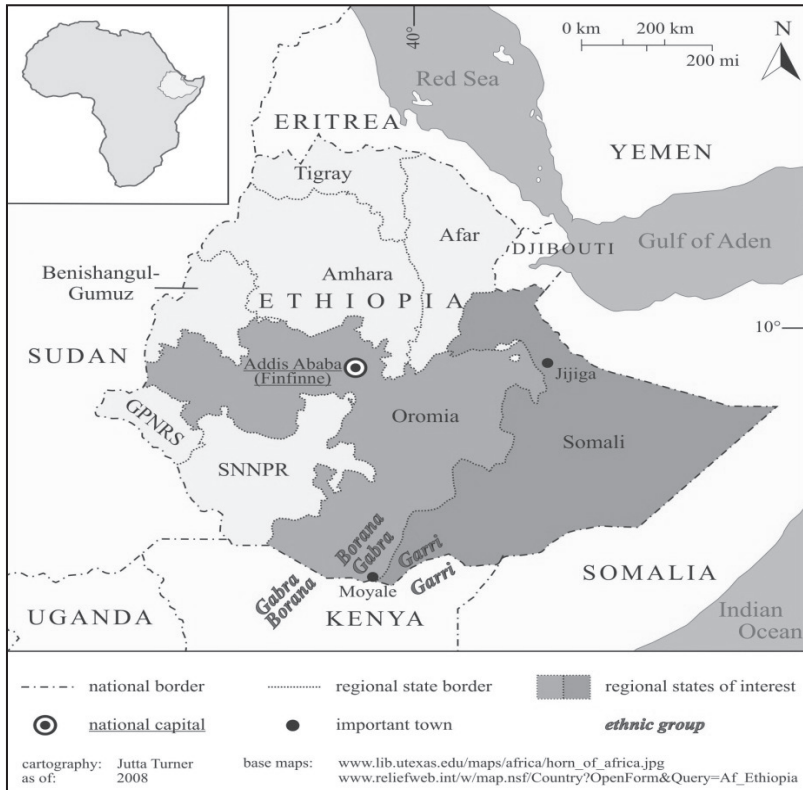
Source: Adugna 2009, with permission.

According to Adugna (2009), rather than being a constraint to inter-group interactions, national borders serve as economic, political and cultural resources for kin groups across different sides of the Ethiopia-Kenya border during conflict, conflict resolution and political mobilisation, and at times of drought and other forms of natural or human induced crisis. Conversely,

the strategic geopolitical and economic importance of the border between the two countries made it one of the contested spaces among many actors including the federal state, Oromia national regional state, Somali national regional state, the three groups, and settlers who are engaged mainly in informal cross-border trade.

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This region has already been a serious test to Ethiopia's ethnic federalism due to frequent outbreaks of inter-ethnic and inter-group conflicts that required intervention by the federal government – as was evident in the call for a referendum in Oromia and Somali national regional states in 2004 (Tache and Oba 2009; Bassi 2010). Beginning from the early 1990s, the Borana-Somali conflict on the Ethiopian side of the border claimed the lives of many people, and led to cattle rustling, displacement of people and destruction of property (Abbink 1997; Clapham 2002). Because of

territorial claims involving many villages in some districts of the Borana zone and Somali region, the federal government arranged a referendum in 2004 on the arguable principle of minimum majority (i.e. 50% plus one) – leaving out substantive issues relating to historical, cultural and economic variables that the competing groups brought forward (Bassi 2010:235).

For example, in May and June 2015, conflict erupted between the Gabra and Garri over territorial claims as a result of the Somali's establishment of a new village under the Liban zone but crossing into the Borana territory that the Gabra use for grazing. Although there was no historical evidence showing Garri's territorial possession of and settlement in the currently contested village, the group, backed by the federal government in Addis Ababa, has continuously been expanding into Borana land. The federal police force intervened and temporarily stopped the conflict, but the situation seems to be waiting for just another igniting factor in the future. According to a Gabra elder from the contested village called Laga Suree, the conflict is purely a result of the Somali's territorial expansion on the one hand and the Borana zone's lack of autonomy to defend its territory on the other hand:

> In the past, the three groups lived together, sharing resources without any problem. But now, after this issue of kilil [region] came, those in kilil 5 [Somalis] are continuously expanding to our land, taking portions of villages and establishing their own new villages. All these villages over there were our land. The Garri people came to this place very recently. They were supported by the government and took our land. Whenever we appeal to the Borana zone and Oromia region, they say it is beyond their authority pointing out that the federal government handles such issues. But the federal government does not respond (Anonymous informant, Laga Suree village, August 2015).

What is striking about inter-ethnic conflict in the region is the ease with which the conflict escalates across the border because of strong cross-border cultural, identity and economic ties between kin groups on both

sides of the border. In 2012 for example, conflict erupted between Borana and Gabra in Marssabit county of Kenya mainly due to contested claims and competition among local politicians following the constitutional devolution in the country. As a result, nearly 20 000 people crossed the border into Ethiopia while dozens lost their lives (Oromia Times 2012). Although the Borana and Gabra coexist in relative harmony in Ethiopia, the conflict on the Kenyan side of the border affected the level of trust and coexistence between those in Ethiopia as well. As informants from both groups in Moyale district in Ethiopia affirmed, members of the two groups crossed the border into Kenya to fight on the side of their kin during the conflict, which directly affected inter-group relations at home (in Ethiopia).

Competing narratives about pastoralist conflicts

Understanding competing epistemological contradictions in conflict research and situating discussions on peacebuilding within complex power relations between various actors gives us the insight to move beyond deterministic and reductionist approaches that tend to treat inter-group conflicts as driven by resource scarcity and ethnicity. By interjecting empirical data from the field, three epistemological flaws in the debate on inter-group conflicts among the three communities have readily been exposed and analysed. First, this paper deconstructs the epistemological basis for the direct correlation of resource scarcity and conflict, and argues for multi-dimensional interpretations of conflicts. Second, it scrutinises the 'ethnicity' factor because ethnicity as a social relation by itself is not a cause of conflict. Rather, it can be a potent force used in the mobilisation of ethnic groups (Regassa 2010:100). Third, when situated within the centre-periphery debate, literature on inter-ethnic conflicts in Ethiopia rarely consider the state as an important actor in the conflict at local levels. An understanding of these three perspectives is capable of aiding a better comprehension of the conflict dynamics and peacebuilding processes. Indeed, the aim of this paper is to consider the state, pursuing its own interests, as a flexible actor both in conflict as well as in peacebuilding.

Built on the conventional positivist approach in investigating cause-effect relations between resource scarcity and inter-group conflicts, early works on conflict studies attributed local tensions, clashes, violence and war in developing countries to competition over resources (Homer-Dixon 1994). According to this notion, resource scarcity linked to climate change and population pressure constitutes the fundamental cause of conflict in developing countries, including Africa (Homer-Dixon 1994; Zeleza 2008). Homer-Dixon (1994:24) further connects inter-group conflict to resource competition because the control of natural resources would give the conflicting actors the leverage to influence political and economic situations in the contested areas. Likewise, Azarya (2003:3) asserts, 'We regard conflict as endemic, a natural order of things as long as scarcity of resources exists'. This argument further reiterates that as long as scarcity is acute with critical consequences to resource users, conflict becomes inevitable and difficult to manage.

Such an assertion is, however, too reductionist and flawed. Firstly, it reduces complex causes of inter-group conflicts to resource scarcity, thereby trivialising the local people's ability and skill in negotiating and adapting to changing environmental conditions. Secondly, it is based on simplistic cause-effect relationships without probing into how local processes are influenced by extra-local forces, phenomena and actors (Hagmann 2005; Tache and Oba 2009). Moreover, the assumption detaches the biophysical environment from the cultural environment and thus constrains us from understanding how 'conflicts are emerging and developing on the basis of the meaning and interpretation people involved attach to actions and events' (Hagmann 2005:19). Such a deterministic notion of population growth, resource scarcity and social strife also does not indicate empirical reality, particularly in pastoralist parts of the study area. The fact that Ethiopia's pastoralist regions, including those along the Ethiopia-Kenya border, are sparsely populated and have a very low population growth rate, but do experience recurrent conflicts refutes the association of conflict with population growth. In addition, in the past the groups managed

and regulated their rangeland through traditional customary institutions within the context of scarcities (Legesse 1973; Bassi 2010). Therefore, the assumption does not have strong empirical ground because the people maintained peace even under circumstances of resource scarcity in the past.

The second major gap in the literature on inter-ethnic conflicts in Africa is related to the fixation on ethnicity as a key trigger of conflict. Influenced by western academia and the media, particularly after the early 1990s in the context of major inter-ethnic conflicts and wars in different parts of Africa, some scholars consider both the primordialist and instrumentalist notions of ethnic identification as major triggering factors for inter-ethnic conflicts (Azarya 2003). However, such fixation on the binary perspectives related to resource greed and ethnicity has actually made it difficult to understand discursive aspects of conflict in which different actors with various levels of power relations, interest and network are visibly or invisibly involved (Dunn 2001:51).

In the context of Ethiopia as well, many scholarly works emphasise the ethnicity factor for post-1991 inter-ethnic conflicts in the country, arguing that ethnic federalism has reactivated dichotomies and antagonisms, and administrative and resource boundaries have taken ethnic dimensions (Abbink 1997; Schlee 2003; Berisso 2009). While this argument is valid, its fundamental weakness is its assumption of conflict as a direct result of ethnicity without probing into the complex factors behind it. However, according to previous empirical studies regarding conflicts between the Guji and Gedeo, and between the Guji and Burji in southern Ethiopia, for instance, ethnicity was not a cause of the conflicts in both cases; but ethnic dichotomies were reactivated for mobilisation of the society during the conflicts (Regassa 2012a, 2012b). That is why understanding the national political discourse, local inter-ethnic relations and the role of actors in the conflict is imperative to gaining comprehensive insights into inter-ethnic conflicts and to pursuing peacebuilding processes that address the issues at stake.

This perspective was emphasised by a key informant from the Gabra community in Moyale district of Ethiopia who associates inter-group conflicts with what he considers 'people in the politics' rather than ethnicity. According to the informant, government authorities have been working on polarisation of ethnic differences rather than building on historical and cultural commonalities.

The third fundamental point that limits the understanding of inter-ethnic conflicts, particularly in pastoralist areas, is the failure to recognise the state as an active actor in conflict, conflict resolution and peacebuilding. From an actor-oriented perspective, Bryant and Bailey (1997) and Long (2001) argue for positioning the state as an active actor in development intervention, environmental degradation and conflict. As a rejoinder to the environmental scarcity-conflict hypothesis, Peluso and Watts (2001:7) argue for the deconstruction of any consideration that the state is a neutral mediator in inter-ethnic conflicts because economic and political interests of government authorities complicate conflicts and make conflict resolution and peacebuilding difficult. Further, from the political ecology perspective, Robbins (2012) brings up issues of power and discourse, and how major actors including the state play active and invisible games to control environmental resources, territories and spaces, thereby exacerbating conflict.

In the case of Ethiopia, apart from reconfiguring administrative structures along ethno-linguistic lines, the post-1991 experiment with ethnic federalism has redefined traditional resource utilisation and management strategies in pastoralist regions along ethnic-based territorialisation. This is in contradiction with the pastoralists' customary regulations and rangeland management strategies (Tache and Oba 2009:422). By redefining physical boundaries and activating ethnic boundaries, the formal institutionalisation of ethnicity as a mobilising force brought latent elements of dichotomies and antagonisms between former friends, while sometimes bringing former enemies together in alliance (Berisso 2009). Moreover, the empirical data from the Borana, Gabra and Garri communities showed the federal government's partiality in the management of inter-group

relations. According to interviewed Borana elders from Moyale district, the federal government considers them as its enemies because the Garri and sometimes the Garba give false information alleging the Borana youth to be members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF). As a result, the federal government sides with the Somalis as a mechanism of punishing the Borana. A key informant from the Garri community in Moyale town also indirectly confirmed the Borana elders' complaint against government's lack of impartiality, stating that the Borana shelter the rebel group and that it would not be possible to ensure peace in the region unless they stop sympathising with what the elders call the *shifta* (rebels).

These sentiments echo the concern that the federal government has, since the withdrawal of the OLF from the transitional government in 1992, been very cautious in dealing with the Oromos (Clapham 2002). In other words, the fact that the OLF and the Borana belong to the broader Oromo nation has put the Borana at a disadvantage in their relations with the federal government. They have, in significant ways, become victims of the national political dynamics – being sidelined by the federal government on questions of territorial rights and access to customary resources. Therefore, the state remains the central actor in igniting inter-ethnic tensions, using its power for systematic control of the society.

Multiple actors, causes and the predicaments of peacebuilding in the region

In terms of categorising actors, the state (still heterogeneous and with varying degrees of interest), traditional institutions, local communities, NGOs, and other individuals engaged in cattle rustling and theft, and smugglers were found to be the major actors in the conflict. All these actors subscribe to different perspectives of causes and claims of entitlement and advance various understandings of peace. While the state and local communities practise conflict resolution initiatives using their own approaches, various NGOs try to play the role of bridging the state-society rift and at times try to bring the two together. Beyond the resource scarcity thesis, therefore, this paper found multiple causes of the conflict, broadly

categorised into political, economic, cultural, geographical and identity issues. These two aspects of the conflict – multiple actors and multiple causes – together complicate the peacebuilding process and exacerbate conflicts, and will thus be analysed below.

The duality of the Ethiopian State in the conflict

Beginning from the colonial period, both the British and Ethiopian imperial rulers had competing geopolitical and economic interests in the wider Horn of Africa that made pastoral communities victims of predatory state systems for much of the colonial era, and after (Schlee 2003; Oba 2013). This is because of the states' extractive approaches of resource exploitation and due to the dominant notions of denigrating pastoralist modes of livelihood as backward (Behnke and Kerven 2013). On the Ethiopian side, pastoralist groups have long been considered as security threats to successive regimes in the country because of their cross-border relations, their inhabiting of peripheral regions which the state considers as ungoverned, and their easy access to firearms (Hagmann and Mulugeta 2008).

The state is, of course not monolithic. If anything, it maintains a variety of interests, and institutions, and is constituted of individuals who subscribe to different values, cultures, religions, gender perspectives and so on. As Migdal (2001) argues in his notions of entanglement of state in society, the conventional perspective considering the state as constitutive of uniform perspectives and interests is misleading. Similarly, Long (2001) clearly explains cases where different state institutions advance different interests. The state is constitutive of internally heterogeneous entities that one way or another compete, contest, negotiate and come to terms based on interests, power relations, agencies and networks within and beyond its heterogeneous structures and individuals (Bryant and Bailey 1997; Long 2001). In this regard, the Ethiopian state could be seen from three different levels in the context of this study: as the federal state, the Oromia national regional state, and the Somali national regional state.

Before interrogating the roles of the state in conflict and conflict resolution in the region, it is important to briefly discuss the historical roots of contradictory competing orders between the Ethiopian state at the centre and its peripheries. The centre-periphery relation echoes how contrasting worldviews are produced, institutionalised and communicated (Donham 2002; Markakis 2011). Following the imperial conquest that created the modern Ethiopian empire in the late 19th century, the narrative of depicting culturally, religiously, economically, and politically distinct peripheries as backward, violent, wasteland, empty and untamed resources became a dominant marker of state-society relations (Markakis 2011:30). Such denigration of peripheries reminds us of what Das and Poole (2004:19–20) opined on how the state uses different technologies of power to 'manage' and 'pacify' subjects on its margins considered as unruly and violent. Through disciplinary and coercive power, successive regimes in the country tried to pacify, manage, govern and bring the subjects on the margins of the state from the 'state of nature' to the 'state of law' (Korf et al. 2015:886).

While discussing the federal state and its interests, it is important to distinguish between ontological contradictions and geopolitical interests, both of which complicate local inter-ethnic relations and efforts at peacebuilding in the region. Ontologically, for the federal government that inherited the dominant and salient cultural and political identities of the centre, governing and subjugating the people in its margins is considered as a civilising mission. As a result, it resorts to implementing coercive administrative apparatus to incorporate them into the administrative, cultural, economic and political logic of the mainstream society.

Conversely, local communities consider peacebuilding as a holistic process in which human-human interaction as well as human-nature relationships are governed by cultural values, customs and belief, rather than regulated through top-down state administration. Moreover, the government's ethnic-based federal arrangement has been blind to traditional resource regulations, coexistence and reciprocity between pastoral communities.

It rather disrupted the system by activating territorialisation of space, an act contrary to customary resource governance, utilisation and ownership rights (Tache and Oba 2009).

Politically, the federal state seems to have been playing a strategy of decentring conflict and reserving the role of mediator for itself, which gives it the leverage to exercise authoritative power. A member of *Caffee* Oromia council – a regional state's legislative house – powerfully reflected on the federal government's strategy of playing the Garri and the Borana against one another:

> The Garri came to this land during the last years of the imperial regime. Some of them came during the military period but the majority were brought by the current government and resettled on Borana land in 1990s. Some came during the referendum in 2004 to add votes for their Garri kin. You know what? This Moyale town is located at border between Kenya and Ethiopia; and on border between Oromia and Somali regions. I guess the government wants to keep this town under its control or at least wants to keep it under the control of two competing groups – the two regions. It doesn't trust Oromia because of the OLF, and it doesn't trust the Somali because of the Al-Shabab and also other rebel groups on their side. It is an economically important town. All commodities enter via this border from Ethiopia to Kenya and vice versa (Anonymous MP, Moyale town, August 2015).

The above statement hints at the federal government's strategy of decentring conflict from the centre, co-opting some groups and weakening others. It follows the strategy of strengthening the weak and weakening the strong so as to maintain a local power balance. Likewise, scholars have also documented how the OLF factor at the Ethiopia-Kenya border has influenced the government's administrative approaches at the frontier, particularly in sidelining the Borana Oromo's claims to customary land rights and conversely favouring the Somali's eventual expansion to the Borana land over the last two decades (Tache and Oba 2009; Adugna 2009;

Bassi 2010). It is in this context that ethnicity is played out and past inter-ethnic animosities are reactivated in the process of serving the state's political and security interests.

The Borana zone in general and the Moyale district in particular are important in geopolitical and economic terms for the government in Addis Ababa especially because of its strategic location on the border with Kenya, along the main highway from Addis Ababa to Nairobi. An indication of the strategic importance of the area is evident in the establishment of a military radar station on the outskirts of Moyale town, which helps the regime to monitor liberation movements in the borderlands. Economically, the new plan to link the South Sudan-Kenya-Ethiopia pipeline through the town of Moyale would make it a major border business hub in the country. That is why, according to local sources, the federal government does not resolve land claims between the Borana and Somali over the town of Moyale. The two regional states also play the OLF factor for different purposes. While Oromia national regional state uses the OLF factor as instrument for suppressing dissent, the Somali national regional state has systematically exploited the national discourse that labels the Borana as sympathisers of the OLF in its claim for Borana land as it did during the 2004 referendum (Tache and Oba 2009; Adugna 2009; Bassi 2010). As a result, the conflict and peacebuilding process in the region has become much more complicated.

Traditional institutions and their co-optation

While the conflict can be traced to historical and political dynamics at the national level (Oba 2013), it is important to examine how traditional institutions of conflict resolution and peacebuilding were eventually reduced and/or how they contributed to the exacerbation of the conflict. The Borana and the Gabra are the groups with an egalitarian and democratic system of socio-cultural and political organisation called the *Gadaa* system, which enabled them to sustainably manage their rangeland, coexist with other groups and maintain social cohesion within their community

(Legesse 1973, 2000; Bassi 2005, 2010). The *Gadaa* system served as a strong institutional basis of inter-group coexistence between these groups and their neighbours, most of whom shared similar forms of socio-political organisation. Although the Garri do not subscribe to the *Gadaa* system of administration, clan elders played significant roles in conflict resolution within the group and between them and their neighbours (Schlee 2013). However, since the last few decades, these traditional institutions have taken ethnic lines in creating dichotomies rather than playing the negotiator role, building on common values and practices. The political background for the divergence of traditional institutions from the role of negotiating for social harmony to that of igniting inter-group animosity and differences is closely connected to the post-1991 political order in the country and is discussed below.

The post-1991 regime in Ethiopia is strongly engaged in a 're-traditionalisation' process through which it ambivalently 'empowers' traditional institutions and at the same time co-opts them into official administrative structures (Regassa and Zeleke 2014:49–50). The government resorted to appropriating indigenous institutions and co-opting local leaders as instruments of broadcasting state authority and ideology to the society via these channels. In the case of the Gabra and Borana, for example, local elders from both groups asserted the co-optation of *Gadaa* leaders (*Abba Gadaa*) into the government system, citing instances of these traditional leaders being invited to attend government meetings and receiving orders from the officials to convince the community to implement government policies and programs. A Borana elder from Dirre district commented as follows:

> In the past, Gadaa elders governed the people according to Gadaa rules and norms. Now, they serve only as mouthpieces of the government. They travel to Addis Ababa or Adama, stay in big hotels, are paid per diem, stay with big politicians and when they come back to the people, they become completely like the government officials. They don't perform according to traditional ways of governance. They talk the same way as

the government authorities talk their politics. These Gadaa elders seem to have forgotten the fundamental values and principles of the Gadaa system (Anonymous elder, Dirre, July 2015).

In line with the above claim, it is important to discern why and how the government co-opts traditional institutions and their leaders. During my fieldwork, I witnessed the entanglement of the state and these traditional institutions, with the former frequently inviting leaders of the *Gadaa* system for ceremonial blessings of public gatherings and festivals but without any meaningful engagement. During conflict resolution practices, for example, the government officials decide on how things should be handled and hand it over to the traditional leaders only to practise the rituals (Regassa 2012b). The government considers the *Gadaa* elders and other traditional institutions as competitive threats to its legitimacy and authority. As a result, it does not empower them to the extent where they could autonomously deal with important issues like inter-ethnic conflicts.

In connection with government's appropriation of traditional institutions and its co-option of traditional leaders, it is important to discuss how this challenges peacebuilding processes. This can be explained in terms of the detachment of traditional values, norms and wisdom enhancing social harmony, reciprocity and coexistence from practices of conflict resolution. According to local informants from the three groups, ethnicity and local politics have changed the perspectives of traditional authorities from that of sharing common values and resources to creating dichotomies and asserting territoriality. As a result, these traditional leaders and their institutions have lost social legitimacy within the society. According to a Gabra elder:

> In the past, Abba Gadaa lived with the society, respected the culture and norms and acted accordingly. Now, the Abba Gadaas, both from Gabra and Borana became politicians. They stay with politicians and now forgot what our society had in common with others. The same is true for Garri local elders. Their clan elders are more or less political appointees. They incline to ethnic loyalty rather than working for broader inter-group harmony and

coexistence. How can you expect peace between different groups in such situation? Politicians talk about difference than similarities. The same is true for these traditional leaders (Gabra elder, Moyale district, July 2015).

Borana informants share this view as well; and they opined that the fundamental problem militating against ending conflict and ensuring sustainable conflict resolution and peace formation is the decline in values embedded in the *Gadaa* system following the government's co-option of the institution and its leaders.

Local communities and their contestations

Ongoing conflicts between the Garri and Borana cannot be understood without tracing the historical processes of Somali expansion to Borana land and how political dynamics at the national level have continuously shaped their relationship. While the three groups had locally well-defined and mutually recognised territories even before colonial conquest in Kenya and Ethiopia, territories and resources within them were flexibly negotiated on the basis of customary institutions and forms of reciprocity (Bassi 2010). However, by systematically creating allegiance to the British colonial rulers in northern Kenya and the Ethiopian imperial regime, the Garri successfully pushed the Borana further west, claiming pasture and water grounds in the Dirre and Dillo districts. Although the Garri's alignment to the Somalia irredentist group during the 1977/78 Ethio-Somalia war had temporarily made them subject to the military regime's punitive actions, the post-1991 political change has shifted the game once again in favour of the Garri in their territorial claims of Borana land.

Conversely, the districts Moyale, Dirre and Liban where the Garri partly inhabit had historical, cultural and economic significances for the Borana Oromo because it was where Borana ancestors lived, practised rituals, grazed their livestock and dug deep wells for their livestock. These districts were among the best rangelands in the Borana zone, and the Garri and Gabra from both Ethiopia and Kenya got unrestricted access to its resources in the past through mutual negotiations (Oba 2013). For the three groups,

the connection between space, identity and resource, following the ethnic based federal arrangement, has become more contentious. As people whose culture is physically constituted and intertwined with their livelihood practices, access to a certain territory or lack of it hints at issues of identity, territoriality and culture, and this goes beyond existential livelihood concerns.

From the Garri's perspective too, the territorial claim has historical and economic (resource) reasons. The districts mentioned earlier where the Garri recently gained control are among the best rangelands compared to the arid and fragile districts in the eastern part of Somali national regional state. They trace their settlement in the Borana land to past historical phenomena for which the current generation would not be accounted. The Gabra on their part also have some claims of entitlement and concerns of being unequally treated under the Borana zone on the one hand and pushed by the Somalis on the other. According to Gabra elders, their numerical minority and their settlement between the Somalis and the Borana have put them on the disadvantageous side whenever conflicts arise between them and their neighbours. It is such conflicting claims of entitlement with historical, cultural, identity and economic attachments that instigate inter-group conflicts in the region. Therefore, territorialisation of pastoral frontiers into ethnically demarcated boundaries has changed the perception of people about resource, its utilisation and ownership vis-à-vis their rival 'others'. This makes the perceived or real condition of scarcity a potent rallying point for conflict although resource scarcity per se is not the underlying cause of conflict.

As part of local communities, but more specifically at the level of individual actors, the role of ethnic entrepreneurs – state representatives, smugglers and cattle raiders – in complicating conflict situations in the region should not be underestimated. As Migdal (2001) noted, we cannot plainly discern between the state and society as both are entangled into one another, and thus the state operates its agenda through its local agents who play double subjectivities. These individuals resort to ethnic repertoires to mobilise members of their group to their interest, usually for individual benefits and

at times to serve the interests of the state. In the local political landscape, there is an evident rift within the Borana and Gabra. During elections, local politicians emphasise the apparent differences between the groups, thus using society forces to mask their pursuit of private political interests.

From an economic dimension, the border town of Moyale is a hotspot and major hub for cross-border illegal and informal trade. In fact, this statement alludes to a wider perspective on the nature of borders in Africa, and how borders generally have been zones of anonymity and clandestine business (Adugna 2009; Korf and Raeymaekers 2013:9). The presence of the Borana, Gabra and Garri on both sides of the border enhances easy manoeuvring of the traders using their respective kin as reliable agents in the process. Traders activate the use of kinship networks to engage in informal and illegal activities such as contraband trade and cattle rustling. While this makes the border an economic resource, there are cases where individual smugglers blame members of rival groups when their goods get confiscated by custom controllers and this sometimes leads to conflict. In situations where ethnic dichotomies are polarised, inter-personal conflicts are easily translated into inter-ethnic conflicts.

Cattle rustling has been common practices among pastoral communities in eastern Africa since the pre-colonial period (Gray et al. 2003). Cattle rustling is located within cultural and social dimensions as it gives the raiders the prerogative to demonstrate their capability, power and bravery both in the eyes of their victims as well as within their own communities. Cattle theft on its part is currently practised for the economic interests of individuals and as reprisal against any conflict or previous rustling/theft from a rival group. Cattle raiding is not a common cause of conflict in the study area, but it is practised after conflicts have begun. It is a common practice, which government authorities, NGOs and local elders have not been successful in eradicating. According to oral reports during the workshop organised by the Oromia Pastoralist Association (OPA) in August 2015, cattle theft is common on both the Ethiopian and Kenyan sides. A central difficulty in solving this problem is the fact that once thieves take stolen cattle to their villages, no resident will expose their

presence. The politicisation of ethnic differences, the decline of traditional institutions and the prevalence of recurrent conflicts have weakened old values of reciprocity and coexistence, and conversely enhanced antagonism and the covering up of morally unacceptable practices such as theft.

NGOs and their powerlessness

Another challenge to peacebuilding processes is related to the government's closer scrutiny and co-option of NGOs engaged in conflict resolution. Following the promulgation of 'Charities and Societies Proclamation No.621/2009' in 2009, the activities, areas of engagements and autonomy of Civil Society Organisations have been significantly restricted. This was done by mandating them to be registered under an agency governed by the federal government, placing a restriction on budget solicitation from abroad, and putting their jobs under strict scrutiny whether there is a political element to it or not.

To illustrate this clearly, a brief outline of the activities of an NGO called Oromia Pastoralist Association (OPA) that operates on peacebuilding activities in the region is informative here. I had the opportunity to attend a 'Peace Committee Follow-up Meeting' organised by OPA on 21 and 22 August 2015 in Yabelo town, Borana zone. The participants came from eight districts in Borana zone and each team presented security problems and peacebuilding activities they have been engaged in during the previous months. Out of six members from each district, four were government authorities at the district level while the remaining two were from local elders. Following the usual blessing by elders, an opening speech was delivered by the head of Security and Administration office of Borana zone. This highly placed official emphasised problems related to inter-group conflicts between the Borana and their neighbours including those from northern Kenya. The government official also talked about the challenges of maintaining peace and tried to blame local communities and individuals, whom he labelled as 'anti-peace groups', for prioritising their interests rather than working on peacebuilding for the communities. It was within this context that the discussion was started.

During the presentation and discussions, it became clear that most of the participants very cautiously reflected the complicity of the state in the conflict or as a challenge to the peacebuilding process. However, workshop conveners from OPA were careful not to allow discussion which might place incriminating responsibility on the government. In one instance, one of the participants from the local elders strongly raised points on the involvement of the government as one of the challenges but the workshop leader interrupted and suggested that the focus should be on any weakness of the committee or the society.

Thus, whereas NGOs rhetorically claim to be bridging the gap between government and society, in practice they align with government approaches, giving little or no focus to traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution. In this regard, even though OPA tries to transcend ethnic boundaries in bringing elders together for dialogue on causes, consequences and solutions to conflicts, it is strongly associated to the state. Inversely, it tries to maintain its legitimacy and credibility by focusing on the rhetoric of dialogue and cross-border relations unlike the government that emphasises structural approaches and ethnic boundaries. OPA does not however provide alternative approaches to ensure sustainable peacebuilding. Local communities also do not recognise OPA as a neutral NGO that could impartially and autonomously work on peace and conflict resolution.

Conclusion

Conflict in the region has many causes, and often involves various ethnic groups on both sides of the Ethiopia-Kenya border as well as other actors. In a nutshell, two interconnected issues complicate the conflict dynamics and peacebuilding process, and remain the bottlenecks for understanding the inter-group conflicts in the region. First, the involvement of multi-layered actors with competing interests and the persistence of multi-dimensional causal factors of conflicts remain the major challenges. Second, conflict resolution and peacebuilding practices in the region have been crammed with competing orders and perspectives on the side of actors involved. This paper found that although resources remain fundamental for

pastoralist livelihoods, and access or restriction to resources determines not only wealth but also socio-political dynamics in such contexts, conflict in the region is much more complex than the dominant narrative of resource scarcity. In the post-1991 period in Ethiopia, common resource areas have been territorialised according to ethno-linguistic lines, which created barriers to customary resource bases such as rangeland and water points that were in the past mutually utilised. Since territorial control enhances political power and economic interest of rival groups, the conflict can then be understood from a political ecology perspective as it proposes causal links to power relations and contestations over territories for socio-economic, political and ecological reasons. Geopolitical and economic interests of the state over the borderland have also complicated conflicts because the federal government uses contestations between the Borana and Somali as a strategic approach to maintain a power balance between the two rival groups and in turn uses them as a security strategy against rebel movements from both sides.

This paper calls for the government to refrain from utilising decentring of conflict and differentially treating citizens as strategies for its security and political control. Rather, as an active constitutive of state power, the government should empower traditional institutions and respect their values and autonomy so that they might practise conflict resolution to complement the state's peace building practices.

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Indigenous institutions as an alternative conflict resolution mechanism in eastern Ethiopia: The case of the Ittu Oromo and Issa Somali clans

Zigale Tamir Tenaw*

Abstract

The study was conducted in eastern Ethiopia where the Somali and Oromo ethnic groups live. The main purpose was to examine the roles and challenges of the indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms practised as an alternative to modern methods among the Ittu Oromo and Issa Somali clans. The study employed a qualitative research approach under which key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observations and informal discussions were conducted. Key informants and focus group discussants were selected purposively. It was found that territorial expansion, resource competition and cattle raiding were considered as the main causes of violent conflict in the area. Boundary disputes between the two regions have been associated not only with the accessibility of resources, but also with issues of identity. According to the participants, the indigenous institutions can play a major role in preventing and resolving intra-ethnic conflicts.

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There are cases of government support for indigenous institution leaders, especially where there is proximity between such leaders and the current political system. Government intervention in the indigenous systems can also result, however, in the weakening of customary institutions in the area. The absence of a single common binding indigenous institution that governs inter-ethnic conflict in the area is another challenge for indigenous systems of conflict resolution. Indigenous institutions can deal effectively with many conflicts caused by the above mentioned factors, but since they also have certain limitations, serious thought should be given to the option of appropriately integrating modern and indigenous institutions.

Keywords: conflict resolution, indigenous institutions, resource competition, territorial expansion.

Introduction

Ethiopian pastoralists inhabit the arid and semi-arid parts of the country. They have been a socially, economically and politically marginalised and disadvantaged minority group of people. They have been overlooked in local development plans, and their movements have been restricted by regional boundary demarcations and by inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts. Their farming has been severely hampered by the harsh climate and a degraded environment. They are widely dispersed over an extensive territory, perhaps as much as 40 to 45 percent of the area of the country, while they constitute approximately 10 to 12 percent of the total population (Rahmato 2007:3). Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities have been competing for access to and control of scarce resources, and for dominance. Consequently, individuals as well as social, political, economic, and religious groups are involved in conflict at different levels and for different reasons.

The study area is prone to serious and frequent conflict. According to key informants and focus group discussants, the major causes for conflict in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas are territorial expansionary moves,

competition over declining resources, cattle raiding and counter raiding. After the introduction and implementation of ethnic based boundaries, the issue of administrative boundaries between Somali and Oromo regions in general and Ittu and Issa clans in particular has become another source of conflict in the area.

The life of the pastoralists depends on the quality and quantity of their livestock and its products, which are interrelated with the availability of pasture and water, and the health of the livestock. Both water sources and natural pastures are becoming insufficient during periods of drought. When pastoralists need to move their herds in search of pasture and water sources, there are frequent clashes over scarce resources. Oba (1992:1) argues that extended drought periods have the potential to catalyse resource-based conflicts in pastoral areas, where resources are shared among communities.

The Ittu and Issa clans have experienced a long history of negotiating access to and the use of available pasture and water points through negotiation. However, the stock of natural resources, particularly pasture, water points and forests, has become degraded because of the occurrence of drought and over grazing. As a result, free movement of pastoralists within and across boundaries has been restricted. Cousins (1996:44) points out that such mobility restriction, resource scarcity and frequent conflicts bring about instability and tension within and between pastoral and agro-pastoral groups.

The methods for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the study area arise from both indigenous and modern institutions. However, the pastoralist societies acknowledge that the indigenous mechanisms of conflict resolution are more practicable in dealing with the root causes of conflict and establishing sustainable peace. Peace agreements found through the process of mediation by indigenous institutions have the most legitimacy and the highest chances of success. In areas where for different reasons the state cannot prevent and solve inter-ethnic conflict, the role of indigenous institutions becomes a very significant alternative.

By providing specialised rules as tools to address peculiar problems related to the exigencies of time and place, they can forestall and resolve conflict, foster coordination and cooperation in jointly undertaken activities, and promote reconciliation of varied interests.

This study is therefore meant to examine the indigenous institutions as an alternative way of dealing with conflict in the Issa Somali and Ittu Oromo clans in eastern Ethiopia. The discussion focuses on the major causal factors that lead to violent conflicts, and on the roles and challenges of the indigenous institutions.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Study area

The study was conducted in eastern Ethiopia where the Issa Somali and Ittu Oromo practise different modes of production – pastoral and agro-pastoral. Both clans are Cushitic speaking, predominantly Muslim, and have somewhat similar socio-cultural practices. Under the Imperial regime, the areas of the different Oromo clans were classified and administered as Gara Guracha Awraja (less than a province but greater than a district) while the areas of different Somali clans were Gurgura Awraja. Under the Derg regime, the Somali clans in the area were administered and named as Issa Awraja while the areas of different Oromo clans were administered as Gara Guracha Awraja where they were administered under Hararghe province. However, after the introduction of ethnic based federalism in 1991, the Issa of Somali and the Ittu of Oromo clans were separated into two regional states and administered by their respective regions. They were named the Oromia National Regional State and the Somali National Regional State, respectively.

The Issa clan inhabits Shinille zone of Somali region, and borders Djibouti in the north, Somaliland in the east; Jijiga zone in the southeast; and Oromia and Afar regions in the south and west respectively. This zone is

part of the arid and semi-arid lowlands. The dominant clan groups in the zone are the Issa, Gurgura, Gedabursi and Hawiya. Five of the six *woreda* (district) towns are located along the Djibouti-Addis Ababa railway line. Some villages of Afdem and Mieso *woredas* are situated slightly off the main Awash-Mille road. The Ittu Oromo clan currently inhabits Mieso district in the western Hararghe zone of the Oromia regional state of Ethiopia. It is bordered on the south by Guba Koricha, on the west by the Afar, on the north by the Somali region, on the east by Doba and on the south east by Chiro. Major towns in Mieso district include Arba Bordode, Asabot, Kora and Mieso (Temam 2010:29).

These two clan groups (Ittu and Issa) who are sharing a long boundary and competing with each other for scarce resources are the major contenders in the study area. Numerous conflicts have taken place between the local Oromos and Somalis in Mieso. Since the 2004 referendum about the disputed boundary between Oromia and Somali National Regional States, over 2 500 people have been displaced from their homes. The study area is therefore a most conflict prone and volatile area (Mesfin 2006:22–24).

2.2 Data collection and analysis

A qualitative research approach was employed to attain the intended objectives of the study. Both primary and secondary data were collected through a variety of methods and approaches. Primary data were collected by using key informant interviews, focus group discussions, observations and informal discussions. Key informants and focus group discussants were selected from each village purposively. The researcher selected respondents according to sex, age, level of education and position in the society (community elders, district officials, religious and customary leaders). Six focus group discussions, each comprising 6 to 8 persons of the same sex but different age groups, sampled from each village, were conducted in the area. For cross triangulation, in-depth interviews with influential community members were conducted. Informal discussions were also held with government officials, development agents, religious leaders and local elders.

In addition, secondary data were collected through an extensive review of existing literature and official reports to cover current issues in relation to indigenous systems in conflict resolution. The descriptive study analysis technique was employed to analyse, interpret and discuss the qualitative data.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 The nature of conflict

Conflict and conflict resolution within and between the Somali and Oromo pastoral ethnic groups of Eastern Ethiopia are not new phenomena. Centuries of interaction between the two groups of people have also created a complex pattern of ethnic and linguistic group relationships. Currently, there is the issue of where the administrative boundary between the two Regional States should be drawn. In the areas concerned, there are mixed cultural, linguistic and ethnic affiliations, and competition for scarce resources (water sources and pastureland) – which lead to violent conflicts. Moreover, the emergence of local tribal elites on both sides exacerbates the problems with the boundary dispute (Mesfin 2006:5).

Both intra- and inter-ethnic conflicts over the use and control of natural resources as well as territorial expansionary moves are everyday business in the pastoral areas of Ethiopia in general and in the study area in particular. According to local elders in the area, there were frequent incidences of violent conflict among the different clan groups, resulting in large-scale destruction of livelihoods, loss of lives and massive displacement of people from their original residences to new settlement areas. For instance, the Issa Somali were displaced from Bordede of Oromia region and are currently settled in Mulu district (the Hawiya clan) and a new settlement site, named Hardim. The Ittu Oromo were also displaced from Bike of Somali region and are currently settled in Mieso district. Such displacement of people was due to competition over territorial expansion and the dissatisfaction of the Issa clan over the results of the 2004 referendum in the disputed areas.

According to key informants, the nature of conflict has been changed from time to time, and the opportunity of the two rival groups to access modern automatic weapons has made the conflicts more devastating than the earlier forms of confrontation. The conflict has also acquired a new dimension after the introduction of ethnic based boundary demarcation in Ethiopia in 1991.

3.2 Major causes of conflict

No single conceptualisation of conflict can capture the variety of intervening variables that are at play in practical conflict situations. These variables include cultural, historical, political, and economic motivations of the various parties involved in the conflict. Real world conflict situations are further complicated by the actions of secondary conflict parties expressing their interests through the primary contenders or actors (Adan and Pkalya 2005:1). The history of the region includes massive population movements pushed by different natural and manmade factors, and pulled by the search for better pasture and water sources (Kandagor 2005; Brock-Utne 2001; Markakis 1993).

The major causes of conflict in the study areas were identified by most key informants and focus group discussants as: territorial expansion, competition over scarce resources (pasture land and water points), livestock raids and counter raids triggered by prolonged drought, ethnic rivalries, and the revenge tradition. Resource scarcity and competition in the area arise from the natural resource base, population pressures, environmental degradation and the resulting climate change. A study conducted by Beyene (2007) in Mieso District of Eastern Ethiopia points out that factors like resource scarcity and competition, customary norms, power asymmetry and livestock raids are major causes of conflicts in the area. According to Mkutu (2001), the overall conflicts, animosities and competitions among pastoralists in the horn of Africa are basically due to the following reasons: scarcity of resources, poverty, pastoral mobility in search of pasture land and water points, historical relations and animosity, and government policies which lead to the marginalisation of some clans.

When ethnically based regional boundaries were introduced, access and ownership rights began to depend more on ethnic membership than on traditional negotiations. Besides physical boundaries that restricted free movement, the ethnic element of resource ownership also had to be coped with (Debelo 2012:524–525).

In order to arrive at a better understanding and assessment of the eastern Ethiopian indigenous institutions for conflict resolution, the respondents in the area were requested to identify factors that lead pastoral and agro-pastoral communities into conflict. In the following few sub-sections, their responses are briefly summarised and endorsed by references to relevant literature.

3.2.1 Resource scarcity

Key informants and group discussants described that the (agro-)pastoral areas are in a state of instability because of competition over scarce resources. Climatic changes have led to desertification and narrowed the belts of pasture and water sources, drastically reducing access to rangeland upon which the pastoralist mode of production depends. Supported by government-sponsored projects and changes in land use, sedentary encroachment has further diminished the range of pastoral mobility. Since the arid and semi-arid areas of the country where pastoral populations live receive insufficient rain during the year, mobility is important to make use of resources in different ecosystems during different seasons. However, in the current situation, mobility within and across regional boundaries has been restricted because of resource scarcity and ethnic based animosity.

In pastoral and agro-pastoral areas, the stock of natural resources, particularly grazing lands and water points, is shrinking from time to time as a result of several factors, including the occurrence of prolonged drought, environmental degradation, expansion of agriculture, and human and animal population growth. There is no doubt that all these factors intensify resource scarcity and competition for pasture and water sources in the area among the pastoralists. When pastoral groups compete

to maximise their share of the limited grazing resources and water points, the struggle inevitably leads to violent conflict. Pastoral conflicts occur mostly during the dry seasons when the stock of key resources declines.

Territorial encroachments, cattle raids and scarce resource competition between Ittu and Issa clan groups have resulted in conflict since the 1960s (Oba 1992:15; Blench 1996:3). Fratkin and Mearns (2003:112) stated that pastoralists are facing more pressures and challenges onto their way of life than ever before because of the loss of pasturelands to private farms, ranches and national parks; changes to other types of land use; increased commoditisation with concomitant inequality within the livestock economy; out-migration of poor pastoralists; and periodic dislocations brought about by drought, famine, and civil war.

Pastoralism as a way of life requires movement within and across regional boundaries in search for pasture and drinking water for their livestock. But the current situation is not conducive to a mobile way of life across regional boundaries because of enmity among ethnic groups. Consequently, territorial expansion becomes one of the main strategies for control over scarce resources. Such boundary claims resulted in violent conflict between the two clans in the area. For instance, in 2004, Somali Region claims that 21 *kebeles* (small units of administration in a district) should fall within its regional administrations. These events led to a referendum in November 2004, which allocated only one of the contested *kebeles* to Somali regional state and the remaining twenty to Oromia regional state. As a result, the Issa and other Somali clans were not satisfied about the result and they made indiscriminate violent attacks on Ittu clans. A finding of empirical research done in Sudan indicates that when land becomes scarce and agro-pastoralists come under increasing pressure, various stakeholders will lay claims to land and promote a history of conflict over land and access to natural resources (Taha 2007:15).

Bassi (1997) also argues that recent clan and inter-ethnic conflicts are related to national political processes. The absence of clearly demarcated

regional, zonal, district and *kebele* level boundaries in eastern Ethiopia led to stiff competition and territorial expansive moves by several ethnic groups. Though the two regional state governments (Oromia and Somali) tried to resolve the boundary dispute through the referendum in 2004, their efforts did not bring a long-lasting solution. In fact, Mesfin (2006:22) argues that the referendum intensified the conflict and the violence into a full-fledged war. Several incidents of violence were triggered in 2004 in the Mieso district and its surroundings after the referendum, and since then violent conflict has become a day-to-day activity. As a result of this, people were displaced, massacred and injured, houses were burnt and properties and cattle looted.

3.2.2 Livestock raiding

Livestock raiding is a widespread and long standing form of violence among many Ethiopian pastoral communities. Raiding livestock is an act of group invasion or forceful attack by an outside pastoralist group with the purpose of robbing livestock (Mkutu 2001:17–18). Community elders revealed that livestock raids and counter raids were regular phenomena between Issa and Ittu clans. Traditionally, there was the approval of elders and considerable preparation and coordination to raid cattle among Issa and Ittu clans. Raiding campaigns by young warriors had to be sanctioned by elders and evolved within strict rules governing preparation, engagement and disengagement.

The main driving factors for cattle raids were associated with social, cultural and economic issues of the pastoral and agro-pastoral societies. Pastoralist communities raided each other mainly for prestige, revenge, and to maintain their strength and power over the opponent parties. Cattle raiding was seen as a heroic deed and was praised through songs and poems. It has been used as an important mechanism for restocking when pastoralist communities experience loss of cattle through droughts, epidemic disease and conflicts. Michael (2000:2) states that motivations for cattle raiding attributed to East African pastoralists include the desire

for prestige, retaliation, loot, and trophies. The motive driving victimised ethnic groups to commit cattle raiding emanates from their desire to claim the death of favourite oxen, acquire or reacquire looted cattle, expand their herds, repair stock losses, and amass the stock needed for bride wealth payments. Adan and Pkalya (2005) describe that pastoralist communities raided each other's livestock, mainly to replenish their herds depleted by severe droughts, disease, raiding or other calamities. Raids were also undertaken to expand grazing lands, raise bride price and to a lesser extent to demonstrate the physical courage among warriors. Elders blessed the raiders before they set off.

Continuing the historical pattern, livestock raiding and counter raiding between the two clans is still one of the major causes for the occurrence of violent conflicts. In 2000, there was violent conflict between the Ittu and Issa clans in Dima, a small town between Assebot and Mieso, inhabited by the Oromo clan as well as some Issa cattle herders. The conflict started when the Ittu Oromos raided around 500 cattle and attacked Issa's herders. The Issa, afterwards, took revenge by mobilising their forces, attacked Dima and indiscriminately killed around fifty people. The situation escalated into violent conflict, not only because of the cattle raiding, but also because of a drought and scarce resources.

3.2.3 The need for territorial expansion

From the previous two sub-sections and from the literature, it becomes clear how interrelated the main causes of the inter- and intra-clan conflicts are. In the literature, one finds corroborating summaries such as the following.

According to Homer-Dixon (2007:3–4) and Mahmoud (2006:2), competition for scarce resources, enemy stereotypes, marginalisation of a society, and uncontrolled proliferation of weapons are found to be the causes of conflicts in (agro-)pastoral areas. Inter-ethnic conflict between pastoralists has been interpreted as competition for scarce resources. Raiding cattle of traditional enemies is a means to expand rangelands, restock herds and improve social status. Mahmoud (2006:4) also states that

the policy of ethnic based regionalisation, ethnic politics at the national level and ethnic based boundary demarcations are major causes of conflicts among groups of pastoralists in eastern Ethiopia.

The need for territorial expansion may therefore be used as a convenient umbrella term in a situation where several urgent problems can be traced back to a basic shortage of land. After all, land is the basic requirement for all pastoral and agro-pastoral farming.

3.2.4 Other factors

Other factors that affect the quality and availability of land have already been mentioned, but deserve more emphasis. Firstly, there is the occurrence of drought, which can be an annual or a cyclical phenomenon, and which can be of shorter or longer duration. During severe shortage of rainfall in pastoral areas, the groups residing in the area try to spread over more land. Sometimes, different pastoral groups move to the same place and want to use the same scarce resource, which cause stiff competition leading to conflict.

Secondly, local elders emphasised the problem of land alienation for investment or other purposes. Development projects might instigate or trigger existing or new conflicts in the area. For instance, a road from Bordede to Gelemso town and one that links Serkama and the surrounding *kebeles* to Dire Dawa city – although they are constructed by the Oromia regional state in collaboration with the local people – aggravate the already existing conflicts between Issa Somali and Ittu Oromo clans in the region. Communal property of pastoralists' extensive pastureland has been given to investors. For example, Indian investors in Mieso at Bordede area took an extensive piece of land to grow Jatropha plants. Market corridors are also sources of conflict between Ittu and Issa clans. Mesfin (2006:21) points out that violent conflict between Issa and Ittu erupted in 2003 at Bordede town to control the custom point and tax collection area that connect the eastern region to the centre of the country.

3.3 Dynamics of conflict

Historically, there were inter-ethnic conflicts about pasture lands and water points in the time of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930–1974), during the Derg regime (1974–1991) and even before. There have been conflicts between Somali Issa and Oromo clans as well as central government backed campaigns against the ambitious territorial claims of the Issa. However, after the introduction of ethnically based regional boundaries in 1991, the nature, behaviours and trends of conflict varied from time to time according to the root and immediate causes of conflict (Mesfin 2006:17). Community elders point out that the relationships among pastoral clans of different ethnic groups are increasingly becoming complex and dynamic in response to change in social, economic, political and cultural settings. In the past, the need to access and use resources was the main source of conflict. In the current situation, the right to own a scarce resource through territorial claims has also become a major cause of conflict among these ethnic groups. Conflict has been changed in its shape and nature over time from a simple confrontation by using traditional weapons to war-like scenarios with modern and more sophisticated weaponry.

It is believed that most of the states in the horn of Africa are considered to be fragile states or even stateless societies. The region is therefore regarded as very conflict prone and characterised by proliferation and circulation of modern firearms. The relative ease of acquisition and low cost of these illegal guns enable the pastoral communities to guarantee a sustained market (Mkutu 2001:18). Goldsmith (2006) estimates that there are between 150 000 and 200 000 firearms in the Karamoja region of Uganda alone. The exact number of small arms in the hands of pastoral communities is difficult to assess, but it is clear that the threat posed by them is enormous. A study conducted by Aredo and Ame (2002) indicates that the pastoral conflict is changing its nature with devastating effects. In 2000, three major conflicts have occurred between major rival pastoral groups, i.e. Borena versus Gari, Merihan versus Digidia, and Degidia

versus Borena in Oromia region. These conflicts resulted in the death of hundreds of people. In the study area, a referendum was held in 2004 in the Oromia and Somali regional states about the disputed districts and *kebeles*. Following the referendum result, violent conflict erupted between Issa and other Oromo clans. Consequently, new settlement camps were formed at Hardim and Meiso.

3.4 The role of indigenous institutions in conflict resolution

Pastoral and agro-pastoral communities have two conflict-resolution options: the formal (modern) and the informal (indigenous). The modern systems of conflict resolution are conducted in the court through litigation and are officially recognised by the government. Their procedures are more strictly examined and monitored for signs of impartiality, entrenched inequities and lack of due process. Indigenous systems of conflict resolution are an ancient set of practices in almost all the pastoral societies in Ethiopia. They are grassroots approaches, and essentially consist of time-proven applications of third party mediation and arbitration. Watson (2001:6) describes how indigenous institutions include local cultural forms of organisation, for example locally elected and appointed, or hereditary leaders and elders. They have customary rules and regulations as well as indigenous practices and knowledge regulating the access to resources. According to the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development (2008:26–27), leaders of indigenous institutions play a significant role in local and grassroots communities in relation to socio-cultural and economic development, and the administration of justice in the modern political system. They play two important roles: a proactive role to promote social cohesion, peace, harmony and co-existence; and a reactive role in resolving disputes which have already occurred.

According to key informants, when compared with modern institutions, the indigenous mechanisms for the prevention and resolution of conflicts are less complex, save time, money and energy and give chances for parties to actively participate in the solving of problems. Currently, however, there

is no single common binding indigenous institution that can govern inter-ethnic conflict. Consequently, the modern institutional approach is usually applied to handle inter-ethnic conflict among pastoral communities. When intra-ethnic conflict occurs, however, the indigenous institution leaders have power to sanction and penalise the perpetrators and enforce them to pay blood money. Each clan group in the area has their own process of conflict prevention and resolution based on the values, norms and cultural rules of the community concerned.

The key purpose of indigenous institutions in conflict resolution is therefore to find appropriate solutions to the existing conflicts – solutions based on the values, norms, complexity and culture of the society, and accordingly of significance to the conflicting parties. Most important elements involved in such mechanisms are the traditions of forgiveness and of respect for elders because of their symbolic authority to enforce decisions and implement compensation. Indigenous conflict resolution typically incorporates consensus building based on open discussions to exchange information and clarify issues. Conflicting parties are more likely to accept guidance from these mediators than from other sources because an elder's decision does not entail any loss of face and is backed by social pressure. The end result is ideally a sense of unity, shared involvement and responsibility, and dialogue among groups otherwise in conflict (USAID 2005:27). Tafere (2006:51) and Assefa (2001:27) state that indigenous institutions are time-tested and effective for handling conflicts that arise in the Horn of Africa in general and in eastern Ethiopia in particular. The pastoral and agro-pastoral people tend to refer any disputes to the local mediation process where conflicts are addressed in a less rigid manner, compared to the modern court where adjudication is largely based on standardised and uncontested rules.

Indigenous institutions can present locally meaningful solutions to problems of collective action confronting individuals and groups in the various particular environments they inhabit. In addition to resolving

conflict, they can foster coordination and cooperation in jointly undertaken activities, and promote the reconciliation of varied interests. Indigenous institutions are indeed relevant to conflict resolution, reconciliation and development because they reflect fundamental understandings among affected individuals, who must deal with each other within the context of a particular problem arena and overcome dilemmas of collective action.

Research conducted in Kenya indicates that lasting conflict resolution can only be achieved by the parties themselves, based on strengthened local institutional capability (including indigenous institutions and local civil society organisations), and key local individuals. However, government and outside agencies have an essential role to play in creating the external conditions for such local settlements, and in supporting local institution capability (Adan and Pkalya 2005:52–53). People in Africa in general and in the Horn of Africa in particular have effective indigenous mechanisms to prevent, mitigate, manage and resolve conflicts, and to draw the attention of the governments of the Horn countries to use these indigenous mechanisms to make the region more stable and peaceful (Assefa 2001:27).

3.4.1 Process of indigenous conflict resolution among the Ittu Oromo clan

Like other African pastoralists, Ethiopian pastoral and agro-pastoral societies in general and the Ittu Oromo and Issa Somali clans in particular have their own procedures to manage and resolve conflict through indigenous systems. According to key informants, the Ittu Oromo clan has its own rules and practices of governance for various maladjustments and happenings particularly with regard to conflict prevention and resolution. Compensation of a victim's family (known as *guma*) is one mechanism in indigenous conflict resolution. The type of offence (wound, amputation, murder, rape, etc.) determines the amount of blood money. When someone has killed an individual, third and independent parties will intervene and try to influence the victim's family not to take revenge. Until the murderer's clan negotiates with and compensates the victim's clan, the offender will go and hide himself somewhere else. Based on the *guma* system, the offender's

family will pay 2000 Ethiopian birr, 3 meters white garment, an ox to be slaughtered, and a quintal of maize for the burial ceremony. This is called *kefenafi kefera* (soothing of anger and drying of tears). After the payment of *kefenafi kefera*, the amount of blood money for compensation will be decided (100 cattle for unintentional killing and 150 cattle for intentional killing). Within two weeks, the first phase of blood money, called *immimetti*[1] and consisting of 15 to 20 cattle, has to be paid to the deceased's family. Then, a larger and wider appointment for conflict resolution at clan level will be organised. The elders will order the process of *guma* for *kondale karra*[2] to follow up the fair contribution of cattle from each of the offender's clan members. The offender's clan will assign responsible individuals (known as *seglen*) to collect cattle for compensation from their own clan members. Then, the murderer has responsibility to look after those cattle until the *seglen* members carry out their duties. As self-punishment, the murderer will exclude himself from certain activities, for instance, having any sexual relationship with his wife, living and eating together with his relatives, entering the house at the front, and washing his body. When the *seglen* have executed their responsibilities, a large temporary hut (*dass*) will be constructed as a meeting hall for the resolution ceremony. At this juncture the offender's clan will slaughter an ox for this ceremony. The meat is divided into two equal parts, one for the offender's and the other for the victim's clan. The meat from the left front leg of the ox will not be eaten.

The murderer who looks after the cattle for compensation at the nearby kraal[3] will be given an audience. He will request an acquittal to make him free from all the sanctions. The brother of the deceased and the killer will be tied together by the *meditcha* (rope made of leather) and come together in front of the audience. Community elders and religious leaders will bless

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1   *Immimetti* means the immediate gift to compensate the sorrow of the deceased's relatives.

2   *Kondale karra* is the elder who is responsible to enforce the offender's clan to contribute blood money (*guma*) as compensation to the victim's clan.

3   *Kraal* is a traditional enclosure made of wood and thorny shrubs for livestock, especially cattle.

them to become as one and as brothers to each other. The rope symbolises the ending of their enmity and their uniting for peace and development. The deceased's mother will lash butter on the hair and pour milk on the stomach of the belligerents so as to get rid of any evil spirit from their mind and stomach. They become relatives and inter-marriage is not allowed.

This seclusion process may last for about one to three months and more. Finally, the remaining blood money for compensation will be paid and the victim's clan members will share. Such a process of conflict resolution (*guma*) is functional only among the Oromo clans in the area, and not in the Somali clans.

In cases other than murder, as key informants said, the Ittu Oromo clan awards different amounts of compensation according to the type and extent of physical injuries, as indicated in the table below.

Table 1: Compensation for physical injuries

No.	Type of physical injury	Amount of compensation
1.	Loss of hand/arm	• 16 cattle and 15 cattle for left and right hand respectively. There is a belief that the left hand is considered as more important for making love, defending, etc. than the right hand.
2.	Loss of leg	• 16 cattle, 2 oxen and 1 mule for left leg • 15 cattle, 2 oxen and 1 mule for right leg
3.	Impairment of eye	• 19 cattle for each eye, or sometimes a gift of few cattle and a virgin girl to look after and guide him as a wife and compensation.
4.	Rape	• 5 cattle for a virgin girl; 3 cattle for a non-virgin girl • 5 cattle for a married woman

Source: Field inquiry

3.4.2 Process of indigenous conflict resolution among the Issa Somali clan

According to key informants, the process of indigenous conflict resolution in this clan is based on consultation and open discussions between the disputant parties. Mediation is carried out by a person or persons of high social standing, commonly chiefs or elders, who use their social legitimacy and facilitative skills. Indigenous institution mediators are indeed better able than government-led interventions to address the causes and resolve the conflict. Locally driven conflict interventions do not only have better ability to design a process suited to the local context, but they also have valuable experience which can lead to much faster response than state-led initiatives.

In accordance with Somali custom, elders are the key actors in the process of ending hostilities and negotiating agreements between disputing parties. The *guurti* elders (a council of clan elders that traditionally presides over a community) function as judge and jury, and their decisions are largely adhered to and respected. Most people would not consider deviating from the prescribed conflict resolution mechanisms, largely because of the strong peer pressure and inculcated societal expectations.

This clan's process of conflict resolution within the indigenous institution also focuses on reconciliation, stability, harmony and safety; and tries to reconcile individuals and groups on the basis of their cultural norms, values and practices. The institutional leaders impose different punishments on perpetrators based on the laws, rules and regulation of the indigenous institution. The amount and type of compensation for individuals or groups depend on the type and extent of offence (killing, amputation, wound, rape, etc). Loss of life during conflict demands a complex negotiated process and the murderer's families have to pay compensation of blood money (*mag*) to settle the conflict.

The most important process for resolving a murder-related conflict case is through the intervention of elders and an independent third party. After discussion with the victim's families, one camel, ritually named

axan,[4] will be slaughtered and means there is a promise not to take revenge. The procedures of compensation for blood money are discussed between the elders of the clans involved in conflict as well as an independent 'third-party'. In the first phase of negotiating blood money for compensation, the killer's families will give *kafan*[5] (a 3 meter white garment), *kefera* (a quintal of maize) and 2500 Ethiopian birr including *khat* (a mildly narcotic plant) for the burial ceremony. The family of the murderer hands over the gun to the victim's family during the funeral ceremony. After the funeral ceremony, the amount of blood money will be decided (100 camels for unintentional killing and 150 camels for intentional killing). The killer's families and clan members will not be allowed to move with their traditional as well as modern weapons during the process of conflict resolution. Within 15 days, the first part of the *mag* has to be paid (usually comprising 15 to 20 camels) to the deceased's families. The remaining compensation of blood money will be paid within 2 to 3 months after the initial agreement. All these steps of the conflict resolution process and agreement will be recorded and documented by mediating elders and district officials.

3.5 Challenges of the indigenous institutions

Currently, neither the *guma* nor the *mag* system of conflict resolution is functioning to resolve inter-ethnic conflicts between Ittu Oromo and Issa Somali. When violent conflict breaks out between the Ittu and the Issa, an intervention team composed of security forces, district officials and local elders is organised and rushes to the conflict site. The conflict parties are separated by force and fighting clansmen are disarmed. Once physical hostilities are controlled, a conflict resolution process will be started by a peace and conflict management team. The peace and conflict management team will contain elders of both clans and district officials.

The current situation of indigenous conflict resolution is severely challenged by escalated resource competition, continuous boundary conflict and cattle

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4   *Axan* designates the camel slaughtered at the funeral.

5   *Kafan* refers to the white garment used to cover a dead body before burial.

raids and the involvement of administrative entities in intra-and inter-ethnic conflicts. As the causes and frequencies of conflict increase, both institutional leaders and local elders lose the interest and commitment to invest their time without sufficient salary or other incentives.

In the name of collaboration with modern institutions, the historical structure of indigenous systems has become involved in political manipulation. The process of government intervention in the customary system is bringing about an increasing difference between the authority of elders recognised by district officials and that of community elders in remote rural areas. The district administrators treat customary elders differently according to their proximity to the political system. Directly or indirectly, government appointed elders have benefited financially from the district or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As a result, elders assigned by district authorities are not in a position to settle conflict according to the historical customary law; rather they serve to implement the modern administration system. Scholars argue that in the past decade government-sponsored elders of pastoral communities who engage in mediation and reconciliation are either paid by the government or by NGOs. Conflict resolution thereby became a profitable activity for indigenous leaders who promote local government agendas in return for per diems, *khat* (native to east Africa and the Arabian Peninsula) and other personal incentives. At the regional level special budget lines for conflict resolution were established, providing generous funding for politicians and government appointed elders (Hagmann 2006:26–27).

There is also contradiction between modern and indigenous institutional courts. For instance, sometimes individuals convicted through an indigenous institution authority may appeal to the formal court, and then be released without any punishment. As a result, the trust of the pastoral community in the indigenous system of conflict resolution has been degraded from time to time. The potential effectiveness of indigenous conflict resolution is diminished where indigenous authority has eroded and formal authority has increased.

4. Conclusion and recommendation

The complexities of causes of conflict make it difficult to single out any single factor as the trigger for a given conflict or series of conflict manifestations. The major causes of conflicts in pastoral and agro-pastoral areas apparently result from socio-cultural, economic and political factors that reinforce a chain of causes which limits the availability, accessibility and control over scarce resources. In the past, the need to access resources, particularly grazing lands and water points, was the primary source of conflict among pastoral and agro-pastoral societies. But now the question of ownership of these scarce resources has become pertinent, giving rise to territorial claims and competitive tension between the two ethnic groups. The pastoralists' area, especially the Issa Somali's extensive land, is not in a position to sustainably provide adequate pasture and water sources for their livestock because of the adverse effects of prolonged drought, insufficient rainfall, high temperature and over-grazing. There were, however, negotiations held with Ittu and other adjacent clan leaders to share the available resources when resource scarcity became very critical. Due to both natural and manmade disasters, however, sharing with and accessing scarce resources of the Ittu clan have become very difficult for the Issa. Thus, the primary need of the Issa gradually shifted from the question of accessing resources to controlling and utilising the resources through boundary claims and territorial expansion strategies.

As among other pastoralists in Ethiopia, looting livestock was a widespread practice and long-standing form of violence among the Ittu and Issa pastoral communities. The historical factors driving the cattle raiding practices between the two clan groups were associated with the quest for prestige, the taking of revenge, the desire for heroism, the restocking after drought, the obtaining of bride price and the general increasing of income. However, in recent time, the extent and magnitude of inter-clan livestock raiding has decreased over time and has been replaced by small scale theft.

Other more recent conflict-causing phenomena are the sudden killing of individuals and the animosity between the two clans.

Indigenous institutions, based on the norms, values, cultural and traditional settings of the community, can play an important role in managing and resolving conflict. The Ittu and Issa clans do have their own indigenous governance structures and processes of conflict resolution. In these processes, settlement is usually achieved with compensation payment (blood money) for the victim's families. However, in the process of conflict resolution, the indigenous institution leaders' capacity to convince the two opponent parties and to enforce the offenders to pay blood money for the victim's families becomes a major challenge. The role of indigenous institution leaders in conflict management and resolution has been degraded from time to time.

Therefore, in order to promote sustainable peace in the area, indigenous institutions should be integrated with modern systems of conflict resolution. This will require penetrating deliberations and creative planning about difficult adaptations from both sides, but it is a project that can be strongly recommended. A great deal of further research will obviously also be necessary. In collaboration with the Ministry of Federal Affairs, both Somali and Oromia regional state authorities should work hard to create awareness about tolerance, respecting each other and sharing the existing scarce resources regardless of manmade regional boundaries.

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Book review

Peace agreements and durable peace in Africa

Maina, Grace and Erik Melander eds. 2016

Reviewed by Jannie Malan

Previous ACCORD publications on peace agreements have now been followed up by this one, which may be regarded as most relevant and most revealing. For everyone and every organisation committed to conflict resolution, this topic is obviously of great and constant importance. Of special concern to all of us, however, is the prevalent phenomenon that between peace agreements on paper and peace agreements implemented in real life there can be disappointing differences. And that is exactly what this book is about. In the introduction and the conclusion it is emphasised that the volume is focused 'on two specific questions: Why did the particular peace agreements under study fail or succeed? And to what extent do peace agreements contribute to the durability or fragility of peace?' (p. 2, cf. p. 284).

Answers to these questions were expected to lead to 'lessons of both academic and practical relevance' (p. 2), which formed the main objective of the study.

The eight chapters contain case studies from countries in which peace agreements 'were finalised prior to 2010 and therefore allow for a rich analysis of their successes and shortfalls' (p. 2). The case studies are arranged according to the names of the countries in alphabetical sequence: Angola, Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. The title of each chapter mentions not only the country, but also indicates something about the essence of the peace process concerned:

> Peace accords in Angola: Contesting the meaning of success
>
> Peace and peace agreements in Burundi: When the right time comes
>
> Deliberate coexistence of war and peace in Chad: The case of the Tripoli Accord
>
> The long road to peace in Côte d'Ivoire: From civil war over power sharing to international intervention
>
> Analysing the peace process in the Democratic Republic of Congo: From war to uncertain peace
>
> Somali peace processes and agreements: From Djibouti I (1991) to Djibouti IV (2008-09)
>
> Elusive peace in Sudan: The endless episodic journey to stability
>
> Peace without an agreement? An analysis of the failed Juba peace process

In my opinion, the authors of the chapters have succeeded very well in describing and discussing the differences and complexities of the various situations. Without overburdening the reader with detail, they cover the conflict-waging years before the peace process, the challenging years of the process itself, and the better or worse years after the process. They do provide sufficient explanation, however, of the parties and their conflicting interests, views and purposes. In fact, when one opens the book and notices seven pages of about 150 acronyms and abbreviations, you get a good idea

of the numbers of liberation movements, other movements, armed forces, alliances, rallies, missions, commissions, monitoring groups and unions about which you can expect to read. Agreements also appear in the list, of course, but make up less than two percent of the entries. The long list therefore gives a clear indication of the bewildering number of differently oriented groups – let alone individuals. Such thoughts can make us, who are committed to conflict resolution, shudder and wonder. Or they can inspire us to become even more dedicated to our job.

At ACCORD we have indeed taken it seriously to study peace agreements and derive lessons from case studies. There have been, for instance, a Peace Processes Experts Workshop in 2006, a Peace Agreements Experts Forum in 2007, and a Peace Agreements and Durable Peace in Africa Workshop in 2009. Now, in the foreword of this new publication, our Founder and Executive Director has written: 'This book is grounded in the belief that the practice of peacemaking and academic peace research should be closely interlinked fields of activity, and that the two have much to learn from each other' (p. vii).

One of the working documents used during our workshops was one containing the actual texts of a number of peace agreements. That could only serve as a convenient frame of reference, however, for, as already stated above, there often are depressing divergences between the documentation and the implementation of an agreement. This is where this book makes a crucially important contribution to our insight into post-agreement achievements and failures. We read, in or between the lines, about hands that sign signatures, and hands that are symbolically shaken, but also about minds (or hearts?) that seek personal interest, ethnic group interest, or political party interest, and that are inclined to hate, curse or condemn. As we read, we may draw inferences about the motivations of parties that have led to toughness of talks and deviations from agreements.

Each chapter ends with conclusions that may be drawn from the case study concerned, and the book ends with an overarching conclusion in which success factors are highlighted: political power sharing, military power

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sharing, inclusiveness of the peace agreement, transitional justice, and the appropriate role of third parties. What is unfortunately not mentioned in the final conclusion, is the failure factor of *unwillingness*. This is however clearly emphasised in the introduction (pp. 5, 10):

> Most of the contributions to this volume discuss the central role of regime character and the issue of political will in the success or failure of peace agreements. The successful implementation of an agreement is largely dependent on the commitment of parties to the said agreement. Most agreements fail as a result of the lack of political will.

> As evidenced in various chapters of this volume, a successful peace agreement depends on the political will of the parties to implement its terms.

The introduction also frankly adds that three of the case studies 'are examples of how one individual can derail a peace process and render a peace agreement unsuccessful' (p. 5). And in the various chapters, the authors emphasise either the assistance arising from willingness (pp. 137, 146, 150, 154) and the hindrances arising from unwillingness (pp. 121, 180), or they provide examples of situations in which the influence and results of willingness or unwillingness are clearly implied.

The issue of political will, or in several cases politico-ethnical will, challenges us as readers and as researchers to explore the scope of such a lack of will, and to see whether we can fathom possible motivations and hidden agendas behind it. When we read this book in a searching mode, we may find clues to the ramifications of this unwillingness – such as the disinclination to understand, to tolerate, to include, to cooperate, to coexist. And we may find pointers to the roots of such a fenced-in mindset: individual self-interest; well-intentioned but narrow-minded political party interest; favouritism, defensiveness or even aggressive assertiveness about own-culture (and/or own-religion). As receptive, but also objective readers, we may find many places where we feel inclined to distinguish between roots that are really deep and others that may merely be shallow or even superficial. As we work our way through all the different convictions

about which the wars were fought, we might often come to points where we cannot help pondering over persistent questions. To what extent are such conflict-causing differences absolutely incompatible? Can there be ways to prod belligerents towards mutual understanding and tolerating?

The last page of the conclusion is about 'Reflections'. It begins by emphasising 'that there are no simple answers to the question of how to end wars and build strong, durable peace' (p. 294). To practitioners it is therefore recommended to make the best use of the case studies when asking what approaches might apply to each particular case. And researchers are challenged to consider the puzzles and contradictions as starting points for further investigation. Many of the sources listed in the introduction and the chapters may be found useful, but, apart from consulting existing literature, ground-breaking creative thinking will obviously be required.

This book, with its introduction by Dr Grace Maina, Manager of ACCORD's Knowledge Production Department at the time of writing, its eight chapters by academics and practitioners, and its conclusion by Prof Erik Melander of Uppsala University's Department of Peace and Conflict Research, can be highly recommended. It is very well organised and presented (with very few minor typographical errors). It clearly communicates the message that the proof of peace lies in the practising thereof. It focuses on the gap between a cease-fire and a cease-enmity. And it prompts us to search for ways in which, indirectly or directly, unwilling parties might be nudged towards willingness to *reach and satisfactorily implement* a coexistential peace agreement.