

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES TO ACHIEVING SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN AN AGE OF GLOCAL CONFLICTS

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ABSTRACT

The unending, multi-faceted inter-connectedness and complexity of glocal conflicts demand an urgent paradigm shift in some of the approaches adopted to achieving sustainable peace. This paper provides a qualitative discourse on modern approaches to promoting sustainable peace in an age of glocal conflicts. The novel innovative approaches explored in this paper include but not limited to hybrid peace building, digital diplomacy, inclusive governance, economic peace building, and cultural peace building inter alia. These innovative approaches prioritize adaptability, flexibility, context-specificity, and multi-stakeholders' engagements in ensuring sustainable peace in an age of global conflicts. The paper adopts qualitative method in its analysis. This paper argues that these innovative approaches and others offer promising and genuine pathways to achieving sustainable peace. The paper emphasizes that by embracing adaptive, flexible, multidisciplinary strategies and plans, Policymakers, Practitioners, Researchers and Scholars in the field of conflict resolution and management can be better off in addressing the complexities and inter-connectedness of glocal conflicts. The paper concludes by the way of highlighting the imperative and urgency of collaborative efforts as well as continuous innovations and breakthroughs in the pursuit of sustainable peace in an age of global conflicts.

Keywords: Glocal Conflicts, Sustainable Peace, Innovative Approaches, Hybrid Peace Building, Digital Diplomacy, Inclusive Governance

Introduction

Sustainable peace in an age of glocal conflicts cannot be achieved in the absence of peace and security. Peace, as a concept sets a conducive environment for growth, stability and development at all levels in a given country. The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP 2019) has defined peace as not just the presence or absence of war, but a concept that captures the absence of violence or fear of violence across the dimensions of safety and security, ongoing conflicts and militarization in a given political milieu.

Therefore, the multi-faceted inter-connectedness and complexity of glocal conflicts demands an urgent paradigm shift in some of the approaches employed to achieving sustainable peace. The intersection of localization and globalization attributes and characteristics in these conflicts in an age of glocal makes traditional methods unworkable and practically impossible which warrants the need for innovative strategies, plans and modern approaches.

According to Hansen, et al, 2025, peace operations have traditionally been state-focused and have often struggled to engage at the local level in a way that allows for local ownership, local agency and self-organization. This is despite, according to them, the fact that the role of local-level actors has been at the core of various policy and conceptual debates with frequent calls for “local ownership” and “people-centered” or “locally-led” approaches.

They are of the opinions that localized approaches have proven to be extremely effective, including in crises where local actors constitute the first responders. They gave a prominent example of Sudan’s so called “emergency response rooms.” for what might be possible if this approach is fully utilized. Accordingly, these local initiatives and networks developed during the 2018 revolution, have adapted since the war started in April 2023 and are implementing highly decentralized humanitarian, resilience and social cohesion efforts. Including in areas of active combat, where international actors often lack access, they provide meals for neighbourhoods through “community kitchens,” receive the displaced and support survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

In line with the propositions of Hansen, A. S et al, 2025, how can innovative, glocal-oriented peace building approaches be designed and implemented in order to achieving sustainable peace in an age of glocal conflicts? This paper will among others provide a analytical discourse on modern approaches to achieving sustainable peace in an age of glocal conflicts.

Conceptual Framework

Some of the concepts used in this paper will be conceptualized to give a clear cut understanding of the research work and this will lead us to the conceptualization of the two main concepts used in this paper vis-a-vis concept of peace and concept of conflict.

1 Concept of Peace

"The world today is dangerous not because of those who do harm but because of those who look at it without doing anything" ~ Albert Einstein ‘Peace’ is a universal word, though it has different meanings across different cultures and ideologies. As one moves eastward from the Western hemisphere, the peace concepts and policies become more introverted: the concepts in the West are too external and those in the East too internal. Peace in the East is seen as concord, harmony, tranquility, peace of mind or serenity (Bitterman et al, 2007), whereas in the West a common definition is the “absence of war, hostility and physical violence”. The concept of peace has been widely discussed. The goal is to reach an intercultural agreement for this term, as it is necessary to speak the same language to reach the same goals. Miller (2005) introduced a new definition of the word that goes deeper and attempts a worldwide understanding: “a political condition that ensures justice and social stability through formal and informal institutions, practices, and norms”.

According to Bitterman et al, 2007, certain conditions need to be reached and maintained in order to achieve sustained peace and stability and these are listed hereunder:

1. A balance of political power among the various groups within a society or region
2. Legitimacy, transparency and accountability for decision makers and implementers of decisions
3. Interdependent relationships and cooperation during periods of agreement, disagreement, normality and crisis
4. Reliable and trusted institutions for resolving conflicts
5. A sense of equality and respect
6. A mutual understanding of rights, interests, intents and flexibility despite incompatibilities.

According to Global Peace Index, 2020 , there are eight (8) key components that define the concept of Peace. These are:

(a) **Well-functioning government:** Well-functioning government upholds the rule of law thereby creating an ambience for peace and security. Peace and security is hinged on a Well-functioning government which stems from quality democracy and political culture, political participation, the separation of powers and public service delivery.

(b) **Sound business environment:** The strength of economic conditions and the formal institutions put in place to support the operation of the private sector is a strong component of peace and security.

(c) **Equitable distribution of resources:** Equity in access to resources and benefits of governments such as education, health, security, transportation, access to justice etc. are pivotal in sustaining peace and security. Uneven distribution of resources is a threat to peace and security through incessant protests and social and civil unrest.

(d) **Acceptance of the rights of others:** Peace and security is enhanced when there is tolerance between the different ethnic, linguistic, religious, and socio economic groups within a country.

(e) **Good relations with neighbours:** peace and security comes to be when countries have positive external relations. This also helps countries in terms of regional integration and also lowers the levels of organized internal conflict.

(f) **Free flow of information:** peace and security is also sustained when citizens have free access to information. This is essential because free flow of information through independent media help to disseminate information in a way that leads to greater knowledge that helps citizens, businesses and civil societies make better decisions which leads to better outcomes and rational responses in sustaining peace.

(g) **High level of human capital:** A high level of human capital is essential to sustaining peace because a skilled human capital base reflects the extent to which societies educate citizens and promote the development of knowledge, this in effect improves economic productivity, caters for the young and vulnerable, and allows full political participation.

(h) **Low levels of corruption:** High level of corruption and resource inefficiency leads to social vices such as civil unrest, banditry and in extreme situations can be the catalyst for violence. However, low level of corruption can enhance confidence and trust in institutions which in turn help to create peaceful societies (Global Peace Index, 2020).

2 Concept of Conflict

Conflict, according to Miller, 2005 is a confrontation between one or more parties aspiring towards incompatible or competitive means or ends. Conflict could be obvious, recognizable through actions or behaviours. Therefore, according to Deutsch 1994, conflict generally has a negative connotation, although according to him, not all conflicts are harmful. Some have positive functions, as they could be the roots of personal and social change; "the medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at" (Deutsch 1994). They

carry a creative element that changes societies and achieves goals and aspirations of individuals and groups (Miller 2005). Hence, conflict doesn't carry a value judgment; it's the path it takes that determines whether it's a constructive or a destructive course. There are some common themes across conflicts according to Deutsch 1994, cited in Bitterman et al, (2007) and are listed below:

1. Most conflicts have several motives involved at the same time: both competitive and cooperative
2. Conflict may be constructive or destructive
3. There are two processes of conflict resolution (the competitive and the cooperative); consequently the strategies and tactics are different accordingly
4. There are dynamic forces between the cooperative and competitive interests within the conflicting parties - the relatedness and variation of strength during the course of a conflict (Deutsch 1994, cited in Bitterman et al, 2007).

Conflict is a situation in which people, groups or countries are involved in a serious disagreement or argument. Thus, according to Mutiullah, conflict has been defined to mean an ubiquitous and a necessary process of life (Mutiullah, 2016). Through the review by various literatures, provides a comprehensive illustration of what the term means, they describes conflict as "a situation of competition in which the parties are aware of the incompatibility of potential future positions and in which each party wishes to occupy a position that is compatible with the wishes of the other".

In the same vein, Fearon (2004) defines conflict as any random or organized act that seeks to determine, delay, or otherwise influence a process through threat, verbal intimidation, hate speech, disinformation, physical assault, forced protection, blackmail, destruction of property, or assassination.

3 Glocal Conflict Conceptualized

In its broader conceptualization, glocal conflict arises from the intersection of global and local dynamics, where a global issue or trend impacts a local community, leading to conflict. This concept acknowledges that conflicts are often influenced by multiple levels of factors, including global, national, and local dynamics (Kaldor, M, 2013). This conflict can manifest in various forms, including struggles over resources, cultural clashes and disagreements about development policies, all being influenced by global forces while rooted in local contexts.

Recent examples of global conflicts resulting in glocal conflicts include the war in Ukraine (beginning in 2022) and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (beginning in 7th October, 2023) which have had significant local impacts in countries bordering Ukraine and Israel respectively, as well as globally. These conflicts have led to refugee crises 6 million in Ukraine, economic disruptions, over 33,000 deaths and displacement of about 2 million in Gaza, 8 million in Sudan, 2.6 million in Myanmar, humanitarian emergency, protests across some states in the United States, Europe, Africa and politically instability, imparting local communities and exacerbating existing grievances.

Globalization and localization, multilevel governance, transnational networks, cultural and identity crisis and economic and resources issues have been identified as various dimensions of glocal conflict (Autesserre, S., 2014; Sen, A, 2006).

From Globalization to Glocalization: The Paradigm Shift in the Sustenance of Peace in an age of Glocal Conflicts

The term "glocalization" first appeared in the late 1980s in Harvard Business Review articles, written by Japanese economists, and comes from the Japanese word dochakuka. The Japanese ideographs "do", "chaku" and "ka" means respectively "land", "arrive" and "process of" in English. Roland Robertson, who is credited with popularizing the term, describes glocalization as „the tempering effects of local conditions on global pressures" and

that it means “the simultaneity – the co-presence – of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies.” (Robertson, 1995).

In Ulrich Beck’s opinion, he addressed globalization and indirectly the local-global dynamic where he discusses the ambivalences and paradoxes of globality, focusing on political responses to globalization and arguing for a clear critique of “globalism” to make room for the primacy of politics in the global age (Beck, 2000). Martin Albrow is known for his work on the “global age” while he didn’t focus on “glocalization” specifically. He explores the transition from modernity to a new epoch where globality displaces the central role of nation-state (Albrow, 1996). The Scholars views on the paradigm shift in the sustenance of peace in an age of glocal conflicts have been established to be effective in Sudan’s so called ‘emergency response rooms’.

Innovative Approaches to Achieving Sustainable peace

Having conceptualized the concepts of peace and conflicts as well as discussing the paradigm shift from globalization to glocalization as done above, it is pertinent to critically undergo an analytical discourse on modern approaches to achieving sustainable peace in an age of glocal conflicts. This would be done because of the intersection of localization and globalization attributes and characteristics in an age of glocal conflicts.

1 Digital Diplomacy

In the 21st century, digital diplomacy has emerged as a pivotal element in shaping international relations, with social media platforms playing a central role in this transformation.

According to Smith, L, 2024, digital diplomacy has emerged as a transformative force in international relations due to the rapidly evolving landscape of global communication. Similarly, according to (ibid), the advent of social media platforms has fundamentally altered how states engage with one another and how they communicate with the public. Unlike traditional diplomatic channels, which were often characterized by formal, state-to-state interactions, social media facilitates instantaneous, public discourse that can influence perceptions and policies on a global scale (Smith, L, 2024).

Digital diplomacy has been defined to involve the harnessing of technology to facilitate dialogue, mediate, negotiate and resolute conflict between and among the warring factions. Smith, L, 2024 has noted that digital diplomacy in sustaining peace in an age of glocal conflicts has led to enhanced communication and engagement where social media has revolutionized diplomatic engagement by enabling real-time interaction with international publics. This direct communication between and among warring factions fosters greater transparency and allows states and non state actors to manage their global image, differences and local conflicts more effectively. Examples of country where digital diplomacy has helped in sustaining peace include Somalia 2020 when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Somalia Federal Government launched the Digital Dialogue Platform, a virtual mediation hub that linked local civil society groups, regional administrations and international mediators. Also, India’s Ministry of External Affairs rolled out a Digital Diplomacy Initiative in 2024 to support peace building across borders.

2 Cultural Peace building

Cultural peace building utilizes cultural exchange, values and education to promote tolerance, understanding, and reconciliation among the parties involved. According to Nacef, H. and Djamel, M in their paper presented at the Journal of Politics and Law titled ‘An Introduction to Building A Culture of Peace’ observed that cultural approaches in peacebuilding, in particular the approach of the peace of culture with the aim of emphasizing the importance of building a culture of peace as a fundamental input in understanding and interpreting the conflict furthermore, thereby transforming it to what prevents its return again (Nacef & Djamel, 2021).

They concluded that building a peace of culture as a basic input includes basically various pillars and controls which identified its success including; dialogue, justice and reconciliation, in managing and organizing relations among the different actors whose functions are varied and different as well as their influences and levels, carried out by a set of mechanisms such as diplomacy, religion, media and others. Culture is among the fundamental concepts in the field of social and human sciences, in which visions and perceptions differ in defining and fine-tuning their concept, because of the multiplicity of backgrounds, viewpoints and ideologies on which researchers and scholars in this field rely (Nacef & Djamel, 2021). How do we then achieve sustainable peace through cultural approach in an age of glocal conflicts? In their paper, Nacef, H. and Djamel, M, have observed that the attribute of peace as one of the most important features of culture which can be expressed in the concept of a peace culture, this concept that is based on the recognition of the existence of difference. Its acceptance and respect without discrimination, in addition to the ability to adhere to the principles and ideals that support, embody and activate the state of coexistence such as freedom, justice, equality, solidarity, dialogue, participation, tolerance and unity, in order to reject violence and an attempt to stabilize its prevention (Nacef, H. and Djamel, M, 2021). A recent case of using cultural peace building to restore peace happened in South Kordofan's Delenj area where local peace committees mediated tensions between semi-nomadic herders and settled farmers.

3 Inclusive Governance

The five key principles as identified by Scholars for inclusiveness per se to sustain peace in an age of glocal conflicts are:

- Include all in the opportunities for development. This can be achieved through enhancing opportunities for education and employment; access to publicly-provided civic amenities such as infrastructure for water, energy, transport, health and safety; and safety nets for those who cannot access these opportunities;
- Include the knowledge of all in development processes (e.g. inclusive knowledge, indigenous and community knowledge, and scholarly knowledge focused on inclusive development);
- Engage all in the politics of development (in political, economic, social, environmental, and cultural governance processes);
- Build targeted capacity building to help the most vulnerable benefit from opportunities and engagement processes; and
- Enhance the level of protection for the most marginalized communities. This means ensuring that they do not lose their traditional access to the natural resources they depend on, such as forests, land, water, fish and other resources (in terms of quality and quantity), and that they are not disproportionately exposed to the impacts of global change. (Joyeeta G. et al 2014).

In peacebuilding, according to Swain, A. and Krampe, F the development-induced environmental stress, population displacement, unnecessary huge projects and corruption are often the result of mismanagement within a system suffering from poor governance. There is a need for development projects to be planned, built and managed in a proper and just manner for achieving sustainable development in the post-conflict situations through good governance by managing the natural resources well (Swain, A. and Krampe, F. (2010)

The (ibid) went further to say that by infusing good governance at the local level, bringing civil society to play an active role in policy formulation and implementation, and encouraging public and private partnership, peacebuilding through inclusive governance systems are more likely to undertake environmentally sustainable development projects that are less likely to displace people. Moreover, responsible and effective local management of

shared natural resources may help to resolve long-standing irritants and conflicts over their sharing between and among the groups through inclusivity (Swain, A. and Krampe, F. (2010). A critical case in hand is that of Governor Uba Sani initiative where he rolled out the Kaduna Peace Model, a home grown framework rooted in dialogue, reconciliation and inclusivity. This initiative reduced tensions and restored confidence in governance especially in the Southern part of the state.

4 Hybrid Peacebuilding

Hybrid peacebuilding has been defined to refer to an approach that combines different peacebuilding strategies, actors and levels to address complex conflicts. This innovative approach to achieving peace in an age of glocal conflicts actually recognizes that peacebuilding is not a one-size fits-all solution and that it requires a nuanced understanding of the local context, conflicts dynamics as well as the needs of the various stakeholders involved in the conflicts. Hybrid peacebuilding approaches according to Uesugi, focus on the dynamic mechanisms of interactions and relationships (Uesugi, 2020).

De Coning observed that the traditional approaches trend in achieving peace is moving away from technocratic programmatic activities with a clear blueprint for goals and outcomes, and steers toward political undertakings in conflict-affected societies that have a direct impact on the everyday experience of actors on the ground (de Coning 2018).

The framework of peacebuilding endeavours must in this light reflect the understanding of reality held by actors in the setting, which are rooted in the specific historic context of power relations, norms and expectations (ibid.). A narrow definition of peace and a skewed understanding of how peace can be built, which are based on Western images of 'justice' and 'legitimacy', would not work in a different social context, considering interpretation of what constitutes the world may be quite different from those of Western donors (Richmond and Frank 2009).

Such a critical view against the conventional Western-centric approaches to peacebuilding has led to the emergence of the 'local turn', which seeks to avoid the pitfalls of an imposed peace. Critical scholars such as Donais (2008, 2018) and Mac Ginty and Richmond (2013) explored ways to place the 'local' at the centre of peacebuilding endeavours. Although according to him, locals have been marginalized in liberal peace building, critical Scholars therefore, shed light on locals who live in and experience the very context, and they themselves are the constituting elements (Richmond 2014).

In social science, hybridity according to Kent et al is defined as the outcome of interactions amongst hegemonic practices, and as the attempt to decolonize peoples, territories and knowledge. Hybridity therefore according to him, became prominent in the discourses of identity, culture, economic and power relations, and political systems (Kent et al. 2018).

In Papua New Guinea, the inter mix of local legitimacy and external support created a hybrid political order that proved resilient, maintained order and paved way for long term stability in the country since 2011.

5 Economic Peacebuilding

Economic peacebuilding as an innovative approach to sustaining peace in an age of glocal conflicts prescribes the promotion of fiscal, labour and market reforms as a means to realize international peace. This assumption by Marangos 2009, is that conflicts arise in economically stressed situations, meaning that outsiders should promote development through providing loans, donations and investments to address economic grievances. This approach is known as the Washington Consensus that advocates structural adjustment programmes (Marangos 2009). Both Chinese peacebuilding endeavours and Japanese peacebuilding endeavours have adopted this approach, focusing on providing development

and investment to countries experiencing poverty or economic stagnation as these approaches operate on the premise that economic disparities and grievances cause conflict.

Economic development can help to build peace by reducing poverty, creating jobs, and providing opportunities for all segments of society. A good example of a country where economic development helps to sustain peace is Rwanda, it was reported by Saaida, M. B, that in Rwanda, after the 1994 genocide, the government focused on economic development as a way to rebuild the country and promote peace. According to him, the government invested in infrastructure, agriculture, and education. As a result, the economy grew and poverty declined. This helped to create a more stable and peaceful environment in the country. (Saaida, M. B, 2023).

Conclusion

Derived from the findings of this paper, innovative approaches to sustainable peace in an age of glocal conflicts offer last longing solutions to some challenges faced in the peace building processes. if international actors, state and non state actors can leverage on inclusive governance, hybrid peacebuilding, digital diplomacy, economic and socio-cultural peacebuilding, couples with involving community engagement in a conflicts ravaged environments, resilience can be built and address conflicts completely. The innovative peace building-leveraging digital tools, hybrid governance and cultural initiatives-differs from traditional, state-centric approaches by centering local agency and technology. Policy must embed AI-driven diplomacy; legally recognize customary structures, fund inclusive cultural programmes, mandate diverse participation and foster cross-sector partnerships to achieving sustainable peace in today's glocal conflicts.

Recommendations

Arising from the discussions made, the following recommendations are made:

1. There should be continuous assessment of the peacebuilding processes.
2. Stakeholders should develop strategies that address the root causes of the conflicts.
3. Marginalized group, women and youths should be supported in the processes leading to peacebuilding efforts.
4. Awareness and education should be done on the need to promote peace and tolerate one another.
5. Local communities should be incorporated in the peacebuilding processes.
6. Diverse stakeholders should be encouraged in the peacebuilding processes.

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