

Chapter 11

Peace-building and Human Security: A Constructivist Perspective

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1. Introduction

This late-Westphalian/accelerated globalization era is characterized by two simultaneous trends: global political and economic integration processes and national/local disintegration with serious ontological and existential insecurity implications. Accordingly, the international relations of the new millennium is impelling many analysts to broaden their conception of security to include issues of human security broadly defined. Societal disruptions in the form of civil wars produce dissatisfaction and multilevel (individual, group, communal, and national) insecurity that have profound implications for conflict management/peace-building efforts in war-torn regions. The many conflict management/peace-building operation and democracy promotion efforts since the end of the Cold War have spawned many academic works on the subject.¹ While these studies have underscored the strengths and weaknesses of particular efforts, relatively little attention has been devoted to the implications of the interactive relationship between peace-building and human security. In other words, what are the prospects for effective peace-building in post-war societies beset by (in) security problems? What paradigmatic shifts in the theory and practice of international relations, for example, underlie the relationship between peace-building activities and human security? In what ways do these paradigm shifts/interactions shape the conduct of peace-building and affect dominant attitudes towards human security concerns?

Current peace-building efforts whether in Africa, Asia, or Europe are largely

characterized by a language of power, exclusion, or defense of an international order that does not adequately address issues of emancipation and inappropriate impositions. In most cases of peace-building (reconstruction efforts after conflict termination) it is the integrity of the state that is often given security.² Insecurity is, in other words, synonymous with an attack on the integrity of the state. As a result of this unidimensional, state-centric view of security, many states confronted with civil strife have been unable to resolve their difficulties. Besides, many peace-building efforts undermine the emphasis on human security because people are viewed as the “means” to political stability as opposed to being the “end” of all peace-building efforts. People are also viewed as the means to a stable state conducive to the infiltration of globalization trends. The objective of this chapter is to utilize a constructivist approach to human security and peace-building in order to better understand current peace-building efforts in war-torn countries. In other words, how relevant is a constructivist approach to a better understanding of human security concerns and peace-building efforts in post-war societies?

2. Human Security, Peace-building, and Constructivism: Conceptual, Relational, and Theoretical Clarification.

An analysis of the relationship between peace-building and human security should begin from a broad conceptualization of human security that takes into consideration the individual situated in broader social structures. Such a conceptualization should include:

(1) Individual sources of human insecurity - harmful actions directed against people or property with visible and immediate consequences. They include banditry, lootings, and intercommunal strife, among others. The worst affected are women, children, and the elderly.

(2) Institutional sources of human insecurity - harmful actions and neglect of institutions that undermine human rights and human security. These include, among others, the collapse of welfare systems, the politicization and neglect of the military, the unprofessionalism and paramilitary and police forces that were once an integral part of the neopatrimonial system. The specific examples are reduced wages, layoffs or a freeze on hiring, and workers (even soldiers) going for months without pay. Medical

institutions such as hospitals without drugs and facilities, dilapidated schools and teachers with low morale, and increasingly corrupt civil servants are some of the effects of the neglect of institutions.

(3) Structural and cultural sources of human insecurity harmful actions and results linked to the new modes of thinking and cognition in society at large, including international society. This results from the decline of the old social security/neopatrimonial systems and the ascendance of a neo-liberal morality that is more suitable to the societies of the advanced industrial states. The consequence is that tensions heighten between groups within a country, along with an increase in cross-border crimes and violence. Fresh outbreak of old diseases, lowering of life expectancy, and an increase in infant framework mortality, among others, also abound.

Sources of Human Insecurity: A Conceptual Model

<u>PERSONAL SOURCES</u> banditry, looting, rioting, hate crimes...
└
<u>INSTITUTIONAL SOURCES</u> Oppression, corruption, torture, paramilitary brutality, state repression...
└
<u>SOCIAL STRUCTURAL/CULTURAL SOURCES</u> poverty, hunger, avoidable inequalities, unemployment

In order to guarantee human security at the personal, institutional, and structural-cultural levels, power relations and relations of power should be underscored within a socio-cultural context. In other words, questions like the following, among many others, should be thoroughly analyzed:

- (1) What is the underlying structure of privilege to the formation and conduct of domestic politics?
- (2) How is daily life affected by the historical constructions of gender, class and culture, and their impact on individuals, institutions, and structures?
- (3) What effect do the construction and reproduction of exploitative class/power elite identities have on the theory and practice of peace-building and human security?

In other words, emancipation or sustainable peace-building occurs when one understands the true nature of things - class, gender, ethnic equality, etc. A great deal of

peace-building deals with issues of security within a positivist-rational epistemology.³ Cultural and identity, ideas, knowledge, and structures within an interpretive “bottom-up” approach to peace-building are crucial for understanding human security of marginalized individuals, groups, and communities. Human security is therefore a situation/condition free of injury/threats to an individual’s group’s, or community’s well-being, including freedom from threats and/or direct attacks on physical and psychological integrity. To ensure such security involves the understanding of, or elimination of human security located at the structural, institutional, and personal (individual) levels of society. It involves an attempt to understand human security/insecurity in terms of those who experience them. What motivates the dissatisfied to agitate and their beliefs as marginalized individuals should be seriously taken into account, instead of merely imposing on them.

Peace-building with a view to alleviating human insecurity involves transforming the social and political environment that fosters intolerable inequality, engenders historical grievances, and nurtures adversarial interactions. This may mean the development of social, political, and economic infrastructures that produce tolerable inequality and/or prevent future violence. The focus is on dismantling structures that contribute to conflict - in particular, moving beyond short-term functions of maintaining a ceasefire, demobilization and disarmament, and monitoring competitive elections among former adversaries.

While peacekeeping/peace-building efforts generally operate on the assumptions of neorealist or neoliberal approaches to world order that underscore material power as the principal source of authority, influence, and struggle for dominance, social constructivism would emphasize both material and discursive (communicative: ideas, norms, knowledge, or culture) power as avenues for a better understanding of wars and peace-building. In particular, constructivists would argue that violent political behavior and thereby its resolution and future prevention could be explained and even understood by focusing on the role of norms and ideas as determinants of such behavior. Constructivism focuses on what John Searle has called ‘social facts’ - things like sovereignty, rights, or money, which have no material reality, but are vested with importance and reality by people who act accordingly towards them.⁴ The intersubjective (collectively held) transmission of ideas and beliefs as opposed to

material factors is the primary source of interaction among humans. Collective intentionality can “will” the rules of behavior, interactions, or the game of change within and among nations.⁵ Examples would be the end of slavery or colonialism, or the ongoing changes in state sovereignty, humanitarian interventions, or the creation of global human rights through collective intentionality.

Many conflicts and disputes in the world, their intensity, and the level of participation in them by groups or states could be explained in terms of how the identities, ideas, and goals of the actors are affected. The socially constructed understanding and perceptions or interpretations of such actors shape the way in which conflict and/or cooperation unfold. For instance, it could be argued that rebels whether in Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, or Colombia, their understandings of who they are, as well as what they consider legitimate and want to achieve, had their origins in their social environment - an environment perhaps characterized by injustice, inequality, and oppression. In other words, the social relationships (exploitation, corruption, and the like) in which actors (states, groups, individuals) find themselves determine how they interpret events and others' actions, define interests, and how they pursue goals - whether peacefully or through the use of violence.

There is not doubt that changes in norms, values, and beliefs in the recent post-Cold War past have ended some violent systems in the world, such as apartheid in South Africa, oppressive communist control in Eastern and Central Europe, and the blatant dictatorial behavior of leaders in many developing states of the world. The positive outcome of all these normative developments is the spread of a more comprehensive peacekeeping and peace-building agenda, as well as the spread of a culture of human rights and democracy.⁶ The questions that social constructivists will continue to grapple with include: When do norms change? What causes them to change? Is it when they are too costly to sustain that they change? How do actors accept the new norms? Do actors persuade or coerce others to accept new norms?

Constructivism as an approach is a useful theoretical lens in understanding the true nature of things such as collective violence, class, gender, and racial issues, among others. Within these units emancipation (security) occurs when the accurate picture (view) of things is understood. When agents (individuals, groups, or nations) and events are contextualized in a normative and material structure it becomes easier to understand

and even evaluate the resulting political action (cooperation or conflict). For example, rebellious behavior may be better understood in the context of a corrupt, insensitive, oppressive, and patrimonial behavior of inept power elite in a situation of resource scarcity and economic derivation. The goal is to examine human behavior (cooperative or conflictual) in an effort to understand it. A violent event can only take on meaning if it is considered in relation to other meaningful events. That meaning can be found in structures. In this sense constructivism emphasizes *understanding* and not necessarily *explanation*. Understanding implies a profound and complex appreciation of the phenomenon.⁷ For example, in order to understand group rebellion, one must get a sense of the rebels' worldview, their motivation within a normative-material social structure. Similarly, in order to achieve sustained peace and human security following a brutal civil war, peace-builders must delve into the normative, ideational, and intersubjective beliefs that constructed the interests and identities of key actors during the civil war.

Constructivists operate on the ontological assumption that actors are shaped by the socio-cultural milieu in which they live. Accordingly, an obvious research question is to determine how this shaping occurs and with what results. Whereas materialist theories such as realism, liberalism, or Marxism take interests and identities for granted, constructivists are preoccupied with their origin and change. Constructivists try to go beyond description to an understanding of constitution of things in order to explain how they behave and what causes political outcomes.⁸ For instance, an understanding of how issues such as sovereignty, human rights, laws of war, peacekeeping/peace-building, or bureaucracies are constituted socially allows for hypothesizing about their effects in both international relations and internal politics. An obvious task for constructivist empirical research related to peace-building is to establish that norms and the social structures are critical to the realization of human security. Various social structures could demonstrate how individual and group interests, self-understandings, and behavior relate to demobilization, identity politics, or post-war reconciliation activities. Constructionists have produced empirical studies showing how "global culture" shaped national policies, especially the policies of developing nations in many different policy arenas.

Constructivism is not only limited to the influence of norms and social

understandings on different actors (individuals, groups, and states), it also investigates why they (norms and intersubjective beliefs) often had different influences on different actors (agents).⁹ A crucial research task will be to try and understand the political effects of global social structures on domestic politics. For example, how do global norms related to peacekeeping/peace-building influence domestic politics? In human rights, studies have shown how regime type, civil war, and the presence of domestic human rights affect the degree to which states will comply with international human rights norms.

Many constructivist studies have emphasized the ways in which ideas and norms become more powerful in their effect than conventional conceptions of strong state interests. More powerful state and corporate business interests are often undermined by norms related to human rights, preferences of the weak and environmental norms, among others. However, critical constructivist scholarship by Giddens, Habermas, or Foucault is more skeptical about this autonomy of ideas from power.¹⁰ For them, constructions of reality reflect, enact, or reify power relations. It is certain powerful groups that play a primary role in the process of social construction. In other words, ideas play a weaker autonomous role because they are viewed as more directly linked to relations of material power. In the arena of peace-building, the role of analysis will be to determine whether efforts related to demobilization, reintegration, reconciliation, and overall post-war construction perpetuate these ideational structures of domination. Will the relations of material power change to the point of ensuring individual, group, and societal security?

The transmission of ideas/norms in this era of globalization is done through transnational civil society. A good example is in the areas of environmentalism, and human rights. An increasingly transnational civil society is also emerging in the areas of poverty, hunger, and disease.¹¹ All of these issues are tightly linked with human security broadly defined. The powerful pressure from both transnational and local NGOs has no doubt contributed to the changes in the areas of conflict mediation ranging now from preventive diplomacy/peacemaking to peace enforcement and peace-building.

While most of the above analysis underscores the actor/agent role in social construction, some constructivists explore the structural side of this process by examining in more detail the ways in which contradictions and complementarities in

social structure produce opportunities for actors. For example, Burkavansky's work shows how the European Enlightenment as an international political culture produced a pattern of contradictions and complementarities that led to the success of some kinds of political legitimacy claims and not others.¹² Similarly Reuss-Smit has explored the ways in which the structure of different "fundamental institutions" in international society shape the kinds of policies that are possible.¹³

In constructivism in general, ideas are tightly linked to political change. Instead of simply assuming that new ideas are imposed by those with political, economic, and military power, it is rather argued that a process of learning is involved, especially in situations characterized by complexity, failure, anomaly, and new information. The process revolves around three main questions: (a) how do new ideas emerge and rise to prominence?; (b) how do ideas become institutionalized and take on a life of their own?; (c) how, why, and when do ideas matter in any particular circumstance?¹⁴ The learning process in terms of peace-building assumes that individuals, groups, and society in general process new information in order to create a better environment for themselves. New ideas emerge and are embraced by an entire nation because the old order has experienced policy failures, shocks, or crises. Peace-building in this regard could be seen as the process of introducing new ideas as a search for security at the individual, group, community, and national levels following the traumatic effects of a civil war.

3. Peace-building as Society-Building

The recent (2001) end to Sierra Leone's civil conflict has been accompanied by an augmentation of peace-building efforts conducted by a variety of state and non-state actors. What happened in Sierra Leone, Liberia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, or Angola, among others, had a psychological element to it. The crisis or trauma associated with intense relative deprivation was tantamount to severe repression which escalated into rebellion against authority, age-old traditional attitudes, and professionalism. The consequence in Sierra Leone in particular was blatant disregard for communal values such that individuals and groups were forced to take violent action against people or organizations believed to be agents of insecurity.¹⁵ The task of peace-building should,

first and foremost, be to eliminate the mind set that compelled people to distrust and question their socio-political and psychological environment. The emphasis should be on combating the structural and cultural sources of insecurity - harmful actions and results linked to new modes of thinking and cognition on society at large. This means engaging in resocialization in order to strengthen commonly held traditional ideas and understanding of political and social life.

Both material and ideational (norms, values, mores, etc.) factors are deeply interconnected. However, where peace-building efforts overemphasize the political (with its power centered focus) at the expense of normative integrity of individuals, groups, and communities, they may not flourish in war-torn countries in need of holistic security. Since the widely shared intersubjective beliefs (especially deep-seated psychological/moral values) in a war-torn country are often destroyed by violence and intercommunal bloodletting, the purpose of reintegration and rehabilitation should be, for instance, to reemphasize collectively held ideas of mutual support and sharing, the centrality of the extended family, respect for elders, recognition of customs and taboos, among others, especially in developing societies with a large traditional/rural sector like Sierra Leone, Liberia, or Angola.¹⁶

Judging from the many challenges peace-building efforts face in post-conflict societies in the world, it can be said that traditional conceptions of peace-building have to be reconsidered/complemented if a self-sustaining peace is to become a reality in a country like Sierra Leone. There is, in other words, a need for new concepts and practices that can advance the ideals of a positive peace. For Sierra Leone, self-sustaining peace means not just the cessation of hostilities, which has already been achieved, but the strengthening and reassertion of normative structures that enable individuals in postwar settlement situations to share common identities, understandings, and expectations that enhance a social order that eliminates exploitation, corruption, and all forms of existential insecurity. Traditional conceptions of peace-building merely promote negative peace by emphasizing state security/state building mechanisms. Examples, however, show that this approach does not translate into a self-sustaining peace in places like Bosnia, Afghanistan, Kosovo, or Liberia.

A study by the World Bank concluded that the international system has consistently failed to reconstruct the “social fabric” of war-torn societies.¹⁷ The reason

behind this neglect is the assumption that politico-economic reconstruction defined as strengthening of the state and introduction of market economics can automatically foster sustainable peace that goes far beyond the end of hostilities. Issues of cultural integrity and identity, interethnic dialogue, social empowerment, and collective intentionality are all necessary conditions for the attainment of human security.

To a large extent reconciliatory mechanisms are the domain of ideas, norms, and identities. A substantial literature in social psychology has demonstrated that perceptions have a great deal of influence on human behavior.¹⁸ For instance in Sierra Leone and other post-conflict societies, the effort toward political reintegration and social rehabilitation could be hampered by strong feelings of hatred, mistrust and fear among groups in society. In discussions with ordinary Sierra Leoneans, for example, it is easy to see the high level of contempt for people in uniform, especially soldiers because of their connivance with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), the rebel group notorious for amputating the limbs of ordinary people during the civil war.¹⁹ There is still a high level of mistrust among ordinary people, police, soldiers, ex-civil defense force members, and government officials. Because of the prevailing high levels of social distance in many post-conflict societies, a key objective of peace-building is to foster a dimension of human security that nurtures a culture based on tolerance, cooperation, and empathy. It involves a deliberate effort to deconstruct the negative images of the “other” that prevailed during the years of conflict.

Often the pervasive violence of the civil war years does not totally destroy the discourses, ideas, and institutions communities shared and collectively upheld during the years of peace. These are usually “social facts” such as legitimacy, rights, fraternal relations, and others, which serve as the bedrock of national reconciliation. The problem with state-centered peace-building is that it is often characterized by internationally-backed mechanisms, structures, and ideas that lack indigenous legitimacy since they are not a product of internal intersubjective understandings and/or agreements. They do not encourage post-war communities to critically reflect on their own socio-political and economic condition, so they can determine what mechanisms of social change are best suited for their society.

In war-torn societies like Liberia, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Rwanda, and so on, the war years are synonymous to a violent imposition on society and culture. Such

imposition curtailed the power and opportunity of the weak (women to a large extent, the old, children, and non-combatants) to shape and control liberties and duties within society. Thus, whatever collectively held, norms, rights, or cultural that existed prior to the war were disrupted, undermined, outlawed, and/or marginalized by the coercive environment of the war. In largely traditional settings (e.g. village level) even the web of kinship that provided the frameworks within which individuals and groups exercised their economic, political and social liberties and duties were jolted, undermined, or stifled. An effective peace-building and human security agenda ought therefore to reactivate and reaffirm the right to life, education, freedom of movement, to receive justice, to work, and participate in the benefits and decision-making of the community.²⁰ These rights which were pervasive in pre-Westphalian traditional societies existed within collective contexts.

Often, for example, in the case of African states there is an inherent tension between external impositions (e.g., neoliberal internationalism) and communal African lifestyles. Thus an African model of human security, especially with regards to human rights broadly defined, may be more relevant for sustainable peace-building and human security. Josiah Cobbah in his critique of the Western rights tradition captures the relevance of the African model of human rights to peace, stability and security. He emphasizes communalism, duties, and hierarchy:

Within the organization of African social life one can discern various organizing principles. As a people, Africans emphasize groupings, sameness, and commonality. Rather than the survival of the fittest and control over nature, the African worldview is tempered with the general guiding principle of the survival of the entire community and a sense of cooperation, interdependence, and collective responsibility.... Although African society is communal, it is [also] hierarchical.²¹

Since universal human rights emphasize a Lockean abstraction of natural rights, certain groups (women, minorities in general) have not fared well because Western rights tradition assumes an abstract equality of all individuals and downplays the reality of discrimination based on group identity which undermines individual, group, and human

security in general. In especially a non-Western post-conflict society, the relevance of culture is significant for protecting the rights of the less powerful.

Where peace-building is based on external impositions aimed at merely securing the late Westphalian state and other elements of neoliberal internationalism, the moment the foreign actors (UN, external NGOs, etc.) withdraw, people who did not interact mutually with regards to political and economic reconstruction, or collectively define their postwar relationships will have to confront key issues. One issue might be what right did groups made dominant by external favor had to retain their position. An equally important issue might be what claim does the postwar state have to the obedience that had recently been demanded by the external peace-builders. The character and success of peace-building and human security will depend to a large extent on how effectively these major issues would be resolved. Some of the consequences have been or are seen, in recurrence of civil wars and other types of political violence: coups, riots, or even genocides.

4. The Constitutive Force of Traditional Culture in Peace-building

Traditional indigenous societies by their very nature tend to be communal, collective, and more prone to foster an atmosphere of peaceful co-existence. The application of traditional customs and values in reconciliation efforts may result in a more communal grassroots involvement and thereby contribute substantially to eradication of the root causes of the conflict and to holistic reconciliation. Within this context, culture is viewed as the primary explanation of change, it is by nature intersubjective, and has real constitutive force. For instance, Josiah Osamba in his analysis of violence, warfare, insecurity, and reconciliation among pastoral groups in Eastern Africa, underscored the effectiveness of indigenous communal methods of peace-building.²² He maintains that the use of security forces and other extra-judicial methods of maintaining peace have failed. What is more likely to be effective is the adoption of norms and values based on those indigenous cultures. According to Osamba, the current climate of repeated violence in the borderlands of Eastern Africa, among pastoralists, is due to “the marginalisation of the African indigenous practices of conflict principles and norms.”²³ Such communities include the Turkana, the Pokot, the Samburu, the Somali, and the

Boran of Kenya. The Topasa and the Merille of Ethiopia and Sudan, and the Karamojong of Uganda are the others.

Among these Eastern African groups in particular, culture is hegemonic and thereby constitute the foundation of reconciliation efforts following violence and warfare. In other words, in such societies, cultural values are of primary importance to most members of the community. According to Burton, indigenous societies are more inclined to utilize rituals that foster collective “healing” than methods that emphasized confrontation and zero-sum/power bargaining which have become common in many peace-building activities.²⁴ Traditional cultures are often characterized by methods embedded in ethnic wisdom for effectively resolving conflicts. However, the influence of westernization and external impositions may lead to their demise.

In indigenous cultures conflicts are viewed as a collective/communal concern/responsibility. Both the conflict and its context are viewed as a communal issue. In the Western approach more emphasis is placed on personal and individual levels of ownership. In most cases it becomes a zero-sum situation.

A community-based grassroots peace-building approach is based on the argument that since war involves most of the masses (grassroots people) or rank and file as either active participants or victims, it only makes sense to involve this large segment of the society in the process of peace-building and fostering human security. A communal approach to peace-building translates into building peace from below. Among many African societies, symbols and rituals are key to an effective and permanent peace-building/reconciliation process.

A traditional/communal approach to peace-building is based on the premise that sustained peace and order in society results from the moral authority exerted by the communal group over its members. In pastoral communities peace-building takes the form of elders from two neighboring clans playing an important part in defusing tensions and conflicts, which usually revolve around the control of grazing land or water.²⁵ The wisdom and experience of the elders is manifested in clear and well-articulated procedures for conflict resolution in which all the parties to the conflict are given the chance to express their views. On the other hand, the elders were vested with cultural authority to act as arbiters and even give judgment on the rights and wrongs of a dispute submitted to them for resolution and then suggest a settlement,

although they may have no power of physical coercion by which to enforce them. But often the pressures of culture guarantee obedience.

The peace-building/reconciliation process in a communal/traditional post-conflict setting is often viewed as an opportunity to re-affirm and re-establish relationships not just between former protagonists but between all the people as well as with their God and spirits. According to Kiplagat: “There is a holistic approach to the process, working with the community as a whole, invoking spiritual forces to be present and accompany the community towards peace.”²⁶ Consensus is a key objective in negotiations, and the responsibility of the elders is to steer the negotiations towards that end. Reconciliation becomes the major preoccupation. Treaties or agreements concluded during negotiations are considered binding and sacred and are therefore entered into with solemnity. Members of the community believed that any violation of the oaths would incur the wrath of the supernatural against the culprit.

The convening of a traditional peace conference is normal, for example, among the Turkana following any serious conflict. The main purpose of such a conference is to restore broken relationships and strengthen the process of social healing.²⁷ Such a meeting is meant to be therapeutic in the sense that all participants are given unlimited time to vent their feelings. The meeting is also punctuated by singing, story-telling, dancing, proverbs, and the like such that the atmosphere takes on a form of a “celebration.” God’s name and the spirits would be invoked, and animal sacrifice performed. The slaughter of an animal and the sprinkling of its blood into the air is a way of getting the community to ratify the peace covenant. The entire community would then feast on the meat, followed by singing and dancing. The celebration would continue for several days.

In peace-building/reconciliation processes between the Luo and Maasai, the elders play a key role as conveners of a peace conference with women, youth, and children playing an active role. The two groups would then strengthen their blood brotherhood by performing a number of rituals, such as: (1) getting mothers to exchange babies with the “enemy” group and suckle them; (2) warriors exchanging spears; (3) prayers offered by the elders; and (4) a profound curse being pronounced on anyone who attempted any further cross-border violence. These rituals among others would make it almost impossible for the two sides to fight again.²⁸ The presence of the entire community

meant that the process of reconciliation was one of total communal involvement. William Ury underscored this process when he wrote:

Emotional wounds and injured relationships are healed within the context of the emotional unity of the community. Opposed interests are resolved within the context of the community interest in peace. Quarrels over rights are sorted out within the context of overall community power.²⁹

On moral issues, the elders are viewed as embodying the norms and values of the society. Since they are preoccupied with societal stability and cordial relationships, elders make sure that any settlement is based on consensus underlined by commonly accepted principles of justice based on custom, virtue and fairness. The main objective is to go beyond the mere satisfaction of justice, but to ensure longterm sustainable peace.

The culturally-based process of conflict resolution and reconciliation in the borderlands of Eastern Africa bear a strong resemblance to peace-building efforts in Mozambique. In the latter case peace-building has often involved rights activists, men who had fought in the civil war, and a traditional healer. The objective was for communities to embark on reintegrating community members back into society after the traumas of violence. The transition from violence to reconciliation is underscored by traditional ceremonies, thanksgiving services of special mass. In one account by Helena Cobban she notes that:

Jorge Moine, the healer, explained that when a community member returns from war, his or her parents would traditionally sit by a holy tree, and ask the family's ancestors for guidance on reintegrating the returning one. Then there would be special ceremonies to "cleanse" the former fighter of the taint of war before he would be allowed into the home.³⁰

Cobban argues that Mozambique's peace-building efforts have been durable because the country tapped into its many strong cultural resources for peacemaking and conflict resolution.

Rwanda is a good example of the simultaneous use of modern and traditional methods of ensuring justice and reconciliation following gross human rights violations: conventional criminal courts and “gacaca” courts. In October 2001, approximately 255,000 people were elected to act as judges in the “gacaca” courts. The tribunals are derived from traditional Rwandan community courts in which elders would sit on the grass (gacaca is the Kinyarwandan word for grass) and try to resolve disputes. Gacaca tribunals have many advantages. First, they would help relieve the backlog of cases related to the Rwandan genocide of 1994. Second, because of their inclusive and participatory nature the tribunals would help rebuild the communities through grass-roots efforts at reconciliation. Third, gacaca is an inexpensive way of dispensing justice and fostering reconciliation because it bypasses many of the time-consuming formalities of conventional trials, and does not require much expenditure of resources on training of court personnel. A fourth advantage of gacaca is that it is very democratic because it ensures popular participation of communities across Rwanda. Communal participation is supposed to foster a sense of solidarity or *esprit de corps*. Gacaca involves average Rwandans participating in the election of representatives, acting as judges, handling evidence, and shaping the direction and course of justice in their communities, rather than it being imposed from outside. Because gacaca involves localizing justice it ensures that the decisions are perceived as more legitimate by Rwandans.

However, gacaca is also characterized by some disadvantages. First, because of its power to convict and punish, it may result in some serious violations or deprivations of due process rights. In the end, instead of building peace, reconciling groups, and healing wounds, it may end up aggravating bitter memories. A second potential problem is that the courts could be used by individuals as an avenue for the manifestation of mob justice or blatant retribution. On the other hand, the judges could exhibit bias in favor of the accused thereby polarizing communities instead of bringing them together. These two disadvantages are directly related to the fact that gacaca judges are ill-trained, defendants are not represented by counsel, and there is no precedent to assure consistency of treatment of the accused. Nonetheless, the Rwandan peace-building efforts are unique because they emphasize the interdependence of retributive justice and community building.

5. Problems and Prospects of Indigenous Approaches to Peace-building

The rapid pace of globalization and/or westernization is seriously eroding the respect by the youth for the elders and traditional hierarchy of authority that are necessary for maintaining the hegemony of indigenous approaches to peace-building. Communalism, and the primacy of elders in maintaining, traditional ceremonies, are rapidly giving way to individualism and private accumulation. The pastoral communities and many traditional societies are in a state of transition, as a result of their incorporation into the market economy and commercialization. The consequences are that communal societies are experiencing a serious challenge to their societal structure, security, survival as well as traditional moral foundations. Because traditional moral foundations are disintegrating, warfare has become more vicious and waged with more sophisticated firearms, with little or no regard for women, children, or the elderly.

In indigenous approaches to peace-building there is an emphasis on both individuals and groups in the process of reconciliation. The elders defuse conflicts within and between societies. Conflict is viewed as a communal concern reconciliation is therefore embedded in the norms and customs of the community affected. The reconciliation process, in particular, emphasizes “healing of emotional wounds created by conflict and restoration of social relationships.”³¹ Public or open acts of reconciliation served to remind community members of their shared unity. The African philosopher, John Mbiti summarized the communal spirit when he stated that African philosophy is based on the “I am because we are ... because we are therefore I am” principle.³² Thus, much of peace-building could be enhanced, facilitated, and improved by the incorporation of indigenous approaches and cultural values in post-conflict societies.

In sum, a solution to the peace-building and human security activities regarding rehabilitation, reintegration/ethnic reconciliation, or democracy enhancement, is for peace-builders to turn to indigenous sources for sanctioning authority, power, and legitimacy. Another alternative could be for indigenous communities to attempt to find an appropriate and effective blend of traditional institutional norms and external-type institutions that would guarantee stable and effective leadership while at the same time

enhancing democratic norms within the context of the variable economy. Peace-builders could fail because of a discrepancy between the policies of the postwar incumbent regime and the values adhered to by the society at large. Threats or challenges against the political establishment have ranged from protests, demonstrations, riots and civil wars. Moreover, the diffusionist effects of external cultural and other influences tend to encourage the growth of formal practices and the gradual shift toward participatory democracy. The result is the exposure of the incumbent postwar regime to new forms of competition for which it is not prepared. Groups that are still at the political periphery begin clamoring for more prominence in the struggle for political control. The usual intransigence of the political establishment, coupled with the underdeveloped postwar political institutions could result in a political conflict.

6. A “Real People” Perspective on Peace-building and Human Security

Since human security is a tri-level (individual, institutional, and structural/cultural) phenomenon, what is needed is to base peace-building/human security efforts in the lives of “marginalized people,” often women, frustrated youth, or simply “common people.” These are the people from whom the state has been relatively removed because they are not empowered and therefore suffer the worst forms of human insecurity. Peace-building needs another discourse, other voices, in particular the voices of the non-state informal sectors of society. In order to arrive at a peace-building strategy that enhances human security, the following factors should form its basis: (a) integrate the views, activities and experiences of the marginalized/common folk in processes of reconciliation, political will-formation, and in the rebuilding of reflexive structures of governance; (b) along the lines of the first factor, for an effective peace-building/human security strategy, it is necessary to identify and underscore a set of psycho-social experiences, activities, modes of behavior and thinking which are characteristic of the “marginalized/common folk”: individuals, groups, and communities; and (c) the objective of peace-building for human security should be to bring to the level of national and sub-national consciousness the implicit, tacit, informal and unarticulated experiences, behaviors, and activities of common folk.

The focus on the articulation of ideational, cultural, and non-state factors in

peace-building is in itself a critique of the dominance of state-centric peace-building which contributes to the process of giving voice and legitimacy to the bedrock of sustainable peace and human security: ideas, norms, knowledge, culture, intersubjective ideas and understandings of social life, and non-state actors.

The task of a human security perspective in peace-building is to make the lived experiences, activities, and perspectives of specific groups (the marginalized, women, unemployed youth, or ordinary folk) the agenda of reintegration, rehabilitation, democracy-building, and inter-ethnic reconciliation. A post-war reconstruction effort that emphasizes security at the subnational level and deliberately cultivates/fosters mutuality, caring, empathy, and compassion among intersecting identity components of cultural, sexual, class, race, regional, gender and other identities is more desirable than the mere attainment of a “strong” national security state. In her critique of the role of women in conflict resolution, Louise Vincent articulates that:

So rather than the goal of a good politics being the creation of a neutral state which presides over perpetual conflict, the aim is unashamedly to give a particular content and meaning to the good life that is being proposed, unashamedly to avow a politics of mutual compassion rather than narrow self-interest. It is true that the virtues in question have at some points been associated with the “feminine,” while competition, aggression and violence have historically been associated with the “masculine,” but the idea here is to recognize that these are human virtues and human ills; they do not adhere timelessly, biologically or necessarily to any particular gender or to any particular type of man or woman. Rather, these are virtues which are always precarious, vulnerable to corruption and in need of our ongoing and dutiful attention so that they may be privileged in public life.³³

Similarly, in peace-building to enhance human security, what is even more important is the values that are affirmed and not necessarily a particular type of identity or person. Human security is only possible where all the different identities forge/foster a community of solidarity that sustains the individual identities through mutual support and recognition. This translates into what has been referred to as the creation of “an

enlarged mentality” as the primary voice in politics. In such a situation the nations of a common good, shared vision, and a we-feeling are reactivated.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, a constructivist focus on peace-building and human security is predicated on the argument that in order for peace-building to enhance human security it needs to make the views, activities and experiences of “real people”: average folk, “marginalized” ones, a bedrock of its deliberations and overall efforts. Along these lines, it could be argued that the dominant discourse of peace-building has consistently downplayed or totally failed to take into account the experiences of, say, women, the unemployed, the average, or marginalized youth. For example, when specifically applied to one group, women, their activities have often been relegated to the domestic/private or reproductive spheres. In peace they should also be an integral part of the public/political/production or war realms.

There is often a psychological and/or cultural dimension to the entire process of peace-building for human security oriented knowledge, ideas and norms should be the focus. The constant habitualization of positive intersubjective activities results in institutionalization of shared goals, understandings, and a common destiny. For instance, the promotion of reconciliation and accountability in Rwanda and Mozambique through “gacaca” and traditional healing rituals in Mozambique respectively are a small example of this process.

Peace-building is in other words, dependent on the prior conceptions “local people” as well as the powerful bring to the public experience. They must all together construct their collective meaning of peace-building which they are confident will enhance security at the personal, group, communal, or national levels. Effective international assistance either from the UN or other external actors involves understanding the cognitive structures of those who have experienced war-related violence/trauma and providing the appropriate peace-building activities to assist them. Members of the post-war society together invent the properties of the new society. Reality cannot be imposed from outside, or by the powerful, and it does not exist prior to its social (collective) invention. Moreover, the knowledge that is integral to the new

reality is socially and culturally constructed. The postwar individuals, groups, or communities whether in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Bosnia, or Rwanda, create meaning through their interactions with each other and with their common environment. Communications and interactions result in socially-agreed upon governance related to economic, political, cultural, educational, or military matters, among others. A blend of modern and traditional methods of peace-building are ongoing. In some countries the blend would be effective, in others not, depending on time and other factors. It would be worthwhile for local NGOs to encourage the process of blending the external and indigenous in order to ensure a more holistic approach to peace-building and human security.

Notes

¹ Among many other works on the subject see: Carlos L. Yourdin, "Society Building in Bosnia: A Critique of Post-Dayton Peace-building Efforts," *Seton Hall Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, vol. 4, no. 2, Summer/Fall 2003, pp. 59-74; Kumar Rupesinghe, *Civil Wars, Civil Peace: An Introduction to Conflict Resolution* (London: Pluto Press, 1998); Oliver P. Richmond, *Maintaining Order, Making Peace* (New York: Palgrave, 2002); and Ho-Won Jeong (ed.), *Approaches to Peace-building* (New York: Palgrave, 2002).

² Peace-building or post-war reconstruction efforts entail several core activities such as: demobilization and reintegration of combatants; rehabilitation of child soldiers and other traumatized members of society; democracy building; economic reconstruction; and societal reconciliation, among others. See for example Francis Kofi Abiew and Tom Keating, "Outside Agents and the Politics of Peace-building and Reconciliation," *International Journal*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1999-2000, pp. 80-106.

³ For details see J.T. Checkel, "International Norms and Domestic Politics: Bridging the Nationalist-Constructivist Divide," *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 3, pp. 473-95, 1997.

⁴ John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

⁵ For further details see John Ruggie, *Constructing the World Polity: Essays on International Institutionalization* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

⁶ For further discussion of these activities, see: Earl Conteh-Morgan, *Collective Political Violence - An Introduction to the Theories and Cases of Violent Conflicts* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

⁷ See for details, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, "Taking Stock: The Constructivist Research Program in International Relations and Comparative Politics," *Annual Review of Political Science*, June 2001, vol. 4, pp. 391-416.

⁸ For details see Alexander Wendt, "Constitution and Causation in International Relations," *Review of International Studies*, vol. 24, pp. 101-17, 1998.

⁹ See for example J.T. Checkel, "The Constructivist Turn in International Relations Theory," *World Politics*, vol. 50, pp. 324-48, 1998.

¹⁰ See for example, R. Price, and C. Reuss-Smit, "Dangerous Liaison?" "Critical International Relations Theory and Constructivism," *European Journal of International Relations*, vol. 4, pp. 259-941.

¹¹ See for example, Kathryn Sikkink, *Ideas and Institutions: Developmentalism in Brazil and Argentina* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1991).

¹² M. Bukovansky, *Ideas and Power Politics: The American and French Revolutions in International Political Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001).

¹³ C. Reus-Smit, *The Moral Purpose of the State: Culture, Social Identity, and Institutional Rationality in International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

¹⁴ See again, Finnemore and Sikkink, *op. cit.*

¹⁵ See, *Sierra Leone News Archives*, Jan. 1999 in <<http://www.sierra-leone.org/slnews.html>>.

¹⁶ In many war-torn societies, child soldiers were drugged and coerced into disobeying and even killing their own parents and members of their community. The sacrosanct nature of the community and its norms need to be reactivated in the minds of all, including combatants and especially child soldiers. For details on the role of child soldiers in Sierra Leone's conflict see *Sierra Leone—Child Soldiers* in <<http://www.rnw.nl/humanrights/html/choldsoldiers.html>>, pp. 1-3.

¹⁷ See Nat J. Colleta, Michelle Cullen, and Johanna Mendelson Forman, *Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Perspectives and Prospects*, Workshop Report (Washington: World Bank Post-conflict Reconstruction Unit, 1998).

¹⁸ For details see William Eckhardt, "Making and Breaking Negative Images," *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, no. 1, 1991, pp. 87-95.

¹⁹ See for example, Earl Conteh-Morgan and Mac Dixon-Fyle, *Sierra Leone at the End of the Twentieth Century: History, Politics, and Society* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), chapters 6 and 7.

²⁰ This argument is based on Claude Welch's work on African cultures and human rights. For details see: Claude Welch, "Human Rights as a Problem in Contemporary Africa" in Claude Welch and Ronald Meltzer, *Human Rights and Development in Africa* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

²¹ Josiah A.M. Cobbah, "African Values and the Human Rights Debate: An African Perspective," *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 9, no. 3, pp. 307-31, 320-21.

²² Josiah Osamba, "Peace-building and Transformation from below: Indigenous Approaches to Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation among the Pastoral Societies in the Borderlands of Eastern Africa," *Africa Journal in Conflict Resolution*, no. 1, 2001.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ John Burton, and Frank Dukes (eds.) *Conflict: Readings in Management and Resolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990).

²⁵ See for example, M. Fortes and E.E. Evans-Pritchard, *African Political Systems* (London: Oxford, 1940).

²⁶ B. Kiplagat, "Is Mediation Alien to Africa?" *Track Tow*, vol. 7, no. 1. (Cape Town: Centre for Conflict Resolution, 1998).

²⁷ Osamba, *op. cit.*

²⁸ D.W. Augsburger, *Conflict Mediation Across Cultures: Pathways and Patterns* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1992).

²⁹ William Ury, "Wandering Out To The Gods," *Track Two*, vol 8, no. 1 (Cape Town: Center for Conflict Resolution 1999), p. 28.

³⁰ Helena Cobban, "Healing Lessons from Another War-torn Society - Mozambique," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 8, 2003, p. 1.

³¹ Osamba, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

³² John Mbiti, *African Traditional Religion and Philosophy* (London: Longman, 1970).

³³ Louise Vincent, "Role of Women in Conflict Prevention and Conflict Transformation: A critique," *ACCORD*, 3/2003, pp. 5-10, p. 9.