TRACK II DIPLOMACY: A REVIEW OF COMMUNITY-BASED ACTORS' ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING IN THE RWENZORI SUB-REGION OF UGANDA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the application of multi-track diplomacy in conflict management. Specifically, it examined the role and contribution of community-based actors in managing the conflict in Rwenzori sub-region of Uganda. A descriptive research design, and a mixed method approach were employed in data collection. A sample size of 384 respondents derived from a population of 1,022,029 using Krejie and Morgan's sample size table, participated in the study. In addition, 15 key informants that were purposively selected by the researchers provided qualitative data. The study was anchored on the Theory of Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) propounded by Thomas Azar in the 1970s. The study concludes that community-based actors (traditional leaders, religious leaders, women and youths) contributed significantly to managing the conflict and restoring peace in Rwenzori sub-region and restoring peace. They did this by engaging their subjects through dialogue meetings, where they encouraged them to de-escalate the use of violence. It was equally observed, that a segment of the community-based actors, specifically the male community leaders were involved more in the conflict management and peace building process. The government preferred to dialogue with male community leaders' instead of engaging all the community-based actors. By so doing, some actors, women and youth, were not sufficiently engaged in the conflict management and peace building process, despite by disproportionately affected by the conflict.

INTRODUCTION

The traditional notion of diplomacy centered on states relationship, whereby states were the only recognized actors at the global stage. The past decades have seen a growing quest for sustainable peace and security among different stakeholders other than the state, including international organizations, security agencies, NGOs, Community Based Organizations among other stakeholders (McDonald, 2012). This challenge assumed higher momentum in the post-Cold War era, which led to major changes in global balance of power and the mechanisms of attaining global peace. The Post-Cold war ushered in new players in the global stage of conflict management and peacebuilding, particularly NGOs that have now become part and parcel of peacebuilding and policy formulation. This development is not surprising, given the fact that conflict has various interrelated impacts on all levels of society ranging from micro- to macro-levels (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000). It has become apparent that the dynamics and impacts of contemporary conflicts goes beyond the jurisdiction of the state as the only key player: thus, necessitating a holistic approach to conflict management and peacebuilding often referred to as multi-track diplomacy (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000).

Community-based actors are a segment of multi-track diplomacy and comprises of civic associations at community level, community-based organizations, village leadership including chiefs, religious leaders, women and youth. The above categories are involved in conflict management and peacebuilding in different ways, but mainly through rebuilding structural relationships and coexistence apparatus within the society (Diamond and McDonald, 1996). Community-based actors seek to empower local community groups and institutions by giving the community direct control over conflict management, through mediation, project initiation, execution and monitoring - a process that emphasizes inclusive participation in conflict management. The basic premise of the Community-based actors' approach is that local communities are better placed to identify their shared needs and the actions necessary to achieve them. Also, by taking charge of the conflict management processes, communities develop a sense of ownership of the peace process, which apparently contributes to the attainment of sustainable conflict management interventions.

As noted by Haider (2009), community-based actors can be used to re-connect the state with its citizens and to strengthen local governance, since state actors and public institutions are usually weak in conflict management due to the fact that their interventions are interest focused. Community-based actors serve as a medium to build social capital in divided societies by providing safe spaces for interaction, communication, joint decision-making, reconciliation and healing. Such processes help to overcome mistrust and set a precedent for peaceful and constructive management of conflicts.

Statement of the problem

Violent conflicts usually produce devastating effect, which may be tangible or intangible. The tangible impacts comprise of acts of violence that results in killing and injuring civilians,

the destruction of infrastructures such as water sources, health and educational facilities among others. The intangible effects include issues of mistrust among the parties and the government, the impairment of social relationships and structures, psychological trauma and pervasive fear (Haider, 2009). Observably, during conflict and also in post-conflict situations, priority is often bestowed on the tangible impacts of a conflict, which leaves a vacuum in the overall reconciliation and peacebuilding process. Community based actors has often proven to be resilient in managing intangible impacts of a violent conflict, by providing survival and coping mechanisms for insecurity and fragility (Haider, 2009). For example, Community based actors have the capacity to initiate community-based conflict management and peacebuilding measures such as dialogue, healing, forgiveness and reconciliation meetings to mend broken web of relationship (Lederach, 1995), as well, they can deploy elements of theatre and theatrics to transform conflict towards sustainable, peaceful relations and outcomes (Lederach, 1995). Given their capacity and participation in peacebuilding, there have been a growing attention in recent years to understudy the roles and potentials of community-based actors' roles and approaches to conflict management. Thus, the study examines the role of community-based actors in the management of the conflict in Rwenzori sub-region of Uganda.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study was guided by the Theory of Protracted Social Conflict (PSC) propounded by Thomas Azar in the 1970s. The theory contends that prolonged social conflicts characterized by sporadic violence occur when a communal group recognizes existence of wide spread deprivation of their basic necessities such as security, recognition, acceptance, fair access to political institutions, and economic participation, on the basis of their social collective identity (Azar, Jureidini & McLaurin, 1978). The theory denotes hostile interactions between communal groups that are based in deep-seated racial, ethnic, religious and cultural hatreds, and that persist over long periods of time with sporadic outbreaks of violence; when a group's identity is threatened or undermined (Fisher, 2001). The theory asserts that the denial of basic human needs, marginalization of a significant portion of the population and threat to group identity is usually a precursor to protracted social conflict. Four preconditions are isolated by the theory as the predominant sources of protracted social conflict:

I.   Communal content: when people who have constituted themselves in to a social group with shared ethnic, religious or cultural practices are denied distinct

II. Social identity and their need for self-determination becomes inevitable.

According to Azar,the colonial legacy through its divide and rule policy which was reinforced through the creation of physical boundaries, enhanced the social distinctions and created multi-communal groupings which were later defined as either superior or inferior depending on the level of collaboration (Azar, Jureidini & McLaurin, 1978). The Batoro ethnic group was defined by the colonial imperialists under the leadership of Captain Lugard as a superior tribe over the Bakonzo and the Bamba, marking the beginning of the conflict in the Rwenzori sub region (Bayanda, 2015).

III. Human needs: Azar recognizes that while keeping a live is a critical need for every
IV. individual /community, he notes that social well-being and survival of individual members of a communal group is highly premised on the rate at which their personal and communal basic needs are met. Perception of one group to have access to critical services meeting their basic needs while the other is deprived for one reason or another is a trigger of social conflicts and if the inequality is not addressed, the conflict will keep reoccurring with an increasing intensity thus becoming a protracted social conflict (Ramsbotham, Woodhouse & Miall, 2000). From the existing literature its apparent that the Bakonzo and the Bamba in 1954 under elite movements protested the level of social, economic and political inequalities, which had resulted to underdevelopment in their Rwenzori sub region (Lunyigo, 2013)

V. Government and state role: The cardinal role of any state is that of ensuring equity
VI. and inclusion for all its citizens in the policy formulation and implementation process, in the planning, budgeting and service delivery process. According to Azar (1978), governments in conflict susceptible countries tend to be dominated by one identity group, which will continue to disadvantage the other outer distinct communal group using state power and resources. The attempts by the outer communal group to participate in the state governance or access to resource will be perceived by the group in power as a threat to their continued stay in power and such efforts will be dealt with using lethal means thus setting ground for a continuous social conflict. These frequency and intensity of such conflicts will keep rising and metamorphosing to more violent armed struggles until power sharing agreements are reached or the ruling government is removed or social political and economic pro majority reforms as put in place.

VII. International linkages: Azar in his theory contends that the country's level of
VIII. economic, military and political reliance on international powerful countries has a strong bearing to its level of social stability. Countries which are more dependent on foreign states will have their decisions and actions dictated by the foreign powers and the reverse is true. While communal deprived groups continue

to make demands for social, economic and political reforms which will help in the improvement of their social well-being, the state will not have the capacity to meet these demands due to the dictated conditions from the foreign governments, thus favoring conflict

and the use of violence to attain goals (Azar, Jureidini & McLaurin, 1978).

From the above, the theory provides a clear background that explains the persistent conflict in the Rwenzori sub-region of Uganda. The key proposal of the theory is that protracted social conflict is inevitable if there are issues of recognition, acceptance, fair access to political institutions among people living in a specific society. Historically, the conflict in the Rwenzori sub-region started due to the feeling of marginalization by some of the ethnic nationalities that make up the Rwenzori sub-region. The Bamba and Bakonzo felt marginalized, as well, they claim to have limited access to the political institution, which in this case was the kingdom's leadership. All these put together are responsible for the conflict that has lasted for more than 200 years, even though the dynamics of the conflict has changed over time from being solely an ethnic conflict to involve the state.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The traditional notion of diplomacy centered on states relationship, whereby states were the only recognized actors at the global stage. The recent past decades has seen a growing quest for sustainable peace and security among different stakeholders other than the state, including international organizations, security agencies, NGOs, Community Based Organizations among other stakeholders (McDonald, 2012). This role of actors other than the state in conflict management assumed higher momentum in the post-Cold War era, which led to major changes in global balance of power and the mechanisms of attaining global peace. The Post-Cold war ushered in new players in the global stage of peacebuilding and conflict transformation, particularly NGOs, who are now part and parcel of peacebuilding and policy formulation. This development is not surprising, given the fact that conflict has various interrelated impacts on all levels of society, ranging from micro-to- macro levels (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000). It has become apparent that the impact of conflicts goes beyond the jurisdiction of a particular state: thus, necessitating a holistic approach to conflict management and peacebuilding (Deutsch and Coleman, 2000).

The desired end game of conflict management is to achieve peace, however as simple as the word "peace" may seem, providing a clear-cut definition of the concept has proved demanding as historic events, ideologies and peculiar regional circumstances have shaped the meaning and understanding of peace (Richmond, 2008). One of the foremost peace scholars

Johan Galtung (1967: 12) describes it as an "umbrella concept". To Galtung, peace is a state of mind felt as a consequence of the actualization of certain stated human desires. In essence, peace is a feeling of internal serenity as a result of external stability.

Galtung describes peace as a concept that should be achieved by touching the concept of law and order, which is an anticipated social order achievable through the instrumentality of force and the threat of it (Olanrewaju, 2013).

Our observation is that peace is a fluid concept, associated with all sorts of laudable goals and embedded in visions of a good society, but the specific meaning of peace, or its constituent components, is rarely analytically clear. Indeed, scholars in the field of peace and conflict studies have tended to focus more attention to conflict than to peace, and peace has long been grossly mis-conceptualized (Gleditsch et al. 2014; Mac Ginty 2006). Ever since Galtung postulated the binary divide of peace into negative and positive peace, these have constituted the primary categorization of peace (Galtung 1969).

Positive peace is a condition of order that arises due to respect for human socio cultural diversity. It is a social condition where multi culture is respected; multi ethnic is loved; multi idea is welcomed; multi religion in embraced; minorities are protected; equality of rights, equity, justice, guided liberty and freedom are guaranteed (Galtung, 1967; Scherrer, 2007). It is a true, lasting, and sustainable peace built on justice for all peoples. It emphasize establishing peace through world order by supporting international law, compliance with multilateral treaties, use of international courts, and the adoption of nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution, establishing social fairness and justice, economic equity, environmental balance; defending citizens from attack, and meeting their basic human needs, creating civil peace that provides the legitimate and   means required to settle differences through peaceful means, removing indirect violence, that shortens people's life span, sustains inadequate life chances, or reduces quality of life for any citizen (Olanrewaju, 2013). The concept of positive peace involves the removal of the root causes of war, violence, and injustice and the cognizant attempt to build a society that reflects th ese commitments.

Negative peace is a queer version of peace. It is a false sense of "peace" that often comes at the cost of justice. In a negative peace situation there is absence of any mutually agreed hostility, but the feeling of distrust is preeminence in the underlying relationships (Galtung, 1969). The concept of negative peace focusses on addressing the immediate symptoms, the conditions of war, and the use and effects of force and weapons. It relates to the "absence of war" and other forms of large scale violent conflict (Galtung, 1969). Peace, whether negative or positive, does not necessarily mean the absence of conflict. Conflict itself is not an

inherently negative occurrence, as through conflict, positive change and transformation may occur. What is important is that conflict is handled non-violently and constructively (Turay and English, 2008).

According to Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, peacebuilding is the development of constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. The main focus of peacebuilding is to address injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the structural conditions that enables

deadly conflict. Peacebuilding comprises of different components that include conflict prevention; conflict management; conflict resolution and transformation, and post-conflict reconciliation. Thus, peacebuilding becomes strategic when it works over the long run and at all levels of society to establish and sustain relationships among people.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed a descriptive research design and a mixed method approach in data collection. Based on a study population of 1,022,029, a sample size of 384 respondents were determined using Krejie and Morgan's table, while an additional 15 key informants purposively selected were interviewed to provide qualitative data. Accordingly, the study findings and conclusions were reached based on the quantitative and qualitative dada gathered from the study participants. Data quality control was established through validity and reliability test. Validity of the data collection instrument was established through expert judgement, while reliability was established through a pilot study that involved a test-re-test method.

Table 1: Composition of survey respondents by district

Respondents' District		Questionnaires Returned	
	Questionnaires Distributed	Number	Percentage
Ntoroko	59	50	14.0
Bundibugyo	93	83	23.3
Kasese	232	222	62.5
Total	384	355	100.0

Table 2: Composition of key informants

SN	Portfolio	Sample	Sampling Method
1	Officials of Civil Society Organizations	2	Purposive Sampling
2	Leaders of Rwenzori sub region (men, women and youth leaders)	3	Purposive Sampling
3	Uganda Security Force Officials (Police and Army)	3	Purposive Sampling
4	Religious Leaders	2	Purposive Sampling
5	Media Practitioners	2	Purposive Sampling
6	Government Officials (including government representatives in previous peacebuilding initiatives)	3	Purposive Sampling
TATOL		15	

From the table 2 above, among the 384 respondents, 50 were from Ntoroko, 83 were from Bundibugyo, and 222 where from Kasese. Kasese had the highest number of respondents because the sampling was proportionally computed based on the population of each of the selected districts. Given that Kasese has a higher population compared to Ntoroko and Bundibugyo it has the highest number of participants in the study. Also, drawing participants from different districts provided a balanced, objective and diverse opinion that reflects the general position of the study population

The study objective was to examine the contribution of community-based actors in conflict management and peacebuilding in Rwenzori sub-region of Uganda.   The findings are presented in Table3 below:

Table 3: Contribution of community-based actors

Level of agreement/disagreement

Contribution of Community based actors	SD Freq (%)	D Freq (%)	N Freq (%)	A Freq (%)	SA Freq (%)	Mean μ	SD
The leaders made a positive impact in the management of the conflict through dialogue meetings with community members and other stakeholders	141(39.7%)	37(10%)	35(9.9%)	50(14.1%)	92(25.9%)	3.53	1.351
The religious leaders made a positive impact in the management of the conflict through dialogue meetings with community members and other stakeholders.	26(7.3%)	25(7.0%)	19(5.4%)	157(44.2%)	128(36.1%)	3.95	1.164
Women were significantly involved in the peace process	108(30.4%)	97(27.3%)	52(14.6%)	75(21.1%)	23(6.5%)	2.46	1.293
Youth were involved in the peace process.	134(37.)	90(25.4	34(9.6%)	65(18.3	32(9.0%)	3.0	77
Grand mean							1.29

The survey focused on the role of four key segments of community actors that include: community leaders, religious leaders, women and youths. The findings show that while 40% of the respondents agree that the community leaders made a positive impact in the management of the conflict and the peacebuilding process by engaging community members in dialogue meetings, 50% had a differing opinion. The majority (50.1%), were of the view that the leaders did not hold comprehensive community engagements with their communities. They suggest that the distrust between the leaders and their subjects disengaged the social cohesion and the local leader's ability to mobilize their communities for peace.

On the contribution of religious leaders towards conflict management and the peacebuilding process, 80.3% of the respondents were of the view that religious leaders made a positive impact in the management of the conflict through dialogue meetings with community members and other stakeholders, while 14.3% disagrees. On the participation of youths in the peacebuilding process, the findings show that 63.1% of the respondents disagree that the youths were

significantly involved in the peace process, while 27.3% of the respondents suggested that youths were engaged in the peace process. Additionally, 57.7% of the respondents disagree that women were significantly involved in the peacebuilding process. The above suggest that women were not properly engaged in conflict management and peacebuilding process in Rwenzori sub-region.

Overall, the study found that community leaders did not have proper conflict management and peacebuilding engagements with their communities. On the other hand, religious leaders were proactive in the peacebuilding process and were able to engage communities in dialogue meetings, thus encouraging a peaceful resolution of the conflict. However, the youths and women were significantly not engaged in the peacebuilding process. Neglecting the youth and women may be connected to the African traditional culture and beliefs, whereby women are considered to be highly emotional, while the youths are perceived to be inexperienced and as such they are rarely involved in culturally sensitive decisions, such as conflict management – a narrative that the application of multi-track diplomacy intends to address.

Given the fact that the study employed a mixed method approach in data collection, the collected from the key informants are represented below.

Item 9: Do you think that community actors (community leaders, religious leaders, women and youth) played a significant role in managing the conflict in Rwenzori sub-region?

A youth from Kasese noted, "the members of parliamentarians such as Hon. Winnie Kiiza and her husband Hon. Bwambale Yokasi Played a crucial role in the conflict management process. as a matter of fact, it was these two who convinced the king to come out of the palace during the shooting of 26th/ November 2016, That action by the King helped to curtail the violence" (KI12, Kasese April 2022).

A woman leader from Kasese noted that "government dealt a lot with the top leaders on issues of peace, the area Members of parliament (MPs), the Resident District Commissioners (RDCs) and the District chair persons are among the leaders who participated in the peace process. In that case, i will say that the leaders played an active role in managing the conflict, but the issue is that dealing with leaders alone will not bring a lasting peace, even though the conflict has stopped for now" (KI12, Kasese April 2022).

A traditional Chief from Bundibugyo noted, *"The leaders were visibly seen attending meetings and calling for peace in the public. However, we have also gotten report that some of them after speaking of peace in the public go back to their ethnic communities to have secret meetings and instigate violence, encouraging their youths to fight other ethnic communities. For me, I will say that the leaders advocated for peace during the conflict, but again the report we got about their secret meetings is unfortunate" (KI12, Bundibugyo April*

2022).

Another key informant noted that, "the community leaders called meetings at different times. Some were held publicly and others were held secretly. Also, the meetings were in different dimensions. Some of the meetings were with community members, others were with government officials. In all the leaders were busy looking for a solution and among the solutions was to embark on community engagement and an appeal for peace" (KI12, Bundibugyo April 2022).

One of the residents of Kasese said that, "the youth did a good job in managing the conflict. There were several meetings among the youths and other members of the community where the leaders informed them of the need to restore peace. However, the government representatives where dealt mainly with the traditional leaders, who then were assigned to reach out to the youths. That was an incompetent strategy on the side of the government because the youths were the main actors in the conflict and should have been dealt with directly by the government mediators. In my view, the youths were relegated to a secondary consideration in the conflict management and peacebuilding process" (KI12, Kasese May 2022).

A youth from Kasese had this to say, "Our leaders did what was unavoidable in that very circumstance, which was to call for dialogue meetings. Yes, they were fully engaged in the peace process and also they were active in attending both community dialogue meetings and official mediation meetings with other stakeholders" (KI12, Kasese May 2022).

One of the women leaders noted that, "the leaders participated in dialogue meetings aimed at stopping the violence and restore peace. The problem is that community leadership comprises of both men and women. During the peace process, only the men were actively involved while women were rarely carried along. Even though that majority of the youths that participated in the violence were male, it is still not enough not to give women a fair opportunity to be part of the peace process. On that note, I will say that male community leaders were more engaged in managing the conflict" (KI12, Bundibugyo May 2022).

A woman leader noted that, "if I am to give you a straight answer, I will say yes. But to explain further, I will say that the leaders that participated in the dialogue meetings were mainly men. As you may know that here in Rwenzori and other parts of Uganda, women are seen to be weak and not considered fit to participate in serious issues such as management of violent conflict. So, I will say that community leaders played a significant role in managing the conflict, but they undermined the women and that on itself is another type of war and discrimination against women. It is important that when a sensitive issue such as this conflict, which affects every member of the community, all stakeholders should be made to be part of the peace process" (KI12, Ntoroko July 2022).

The evidence provided above implies that community actors played a significant role in managing the conflict in Rwenzori sub-region. They engaged their subjects through dialogue meetings that damped the desire for violence. Although some of the respondents showed reservations in their answers, in general they agreed that community leaders engaged their communities in dialogue meetings, even though some interviewees suspect that some leaders play a double face in the conflict whereby the preach peace in public and encourage violence behind the scenes. Specifically, religious leaders were perceived to be proactive in managing the conflict by reaching out to their congregants and holding dialogue outreaches in communities. In essence, community based actors (traditional leaders, religious leaders, women and youths) were actively involved in resolving the conflict and restoring back peace in Rwenzori sub-region. However, it was observed that a segment of the community actors, specifically the community leaders were more involved in the conflict management. From the data gathered, the government preferred to dialogue with community leaders instead of involving all the community actors, by so doing some actors such as women and youth believed that they were not properly engaged in the conflict management and peacebuilding process despite being disproportionately affected by the conflict. Palace chiefs, influential politicians' members of the community were preferentially engaged in the conflict, which suggests that a wholesome approach was not adopted in managing the conflict.

CONCLUSIONS

Conflict management and peacebuilding are crucial elements for the growth and development of any society. Observably, governments and civil society organizations have been primarily responsible for conflict management and peacebuilding efforts for a long time, leaving out the crucial role that community actors can play in these processes. Community actors played a key role in managing the conflict in Rwenzori sub-region of Uganda. Specifically, the community leaders - chiefs and other title holders, including prominent politicians played a role in restoring peace, despite suggestions that some of them were compromised. Community leaders engaged members of their communities through peace dialogue meeting and dissuaded them from the use of violence. Similarly, religious leaders were central to the management of the conflict in Rwenzori sub-region. The role of the church and religious leaders in conflict management includes facilitating peace agreements, providing harmless spaces for discussion between opposing parties and direct mediation with the victims of conflict (Schreiter, Appleby, and Powers, 2010). Religions groups, predominantly those that enjoy cultural supremacy have the capacity to invest considerable resources for peace by employing their symbols and rituals, raising their sacred texts and using their influence to promote peace. On the participation of women in conflict management and peacebuilding in Rwenzori sub-region, the study concludes that women were not significantly engaged, despite their numerical strength and capacity to

shape the society. According to the United Nations, women constitute half of every community and their role and contribution in peacebuilding cannot be taken for granted.

Women are the central caretakers of families and everyone is affected when they are excluded from peacebuilding in their communities because they are natural advocates of peace, peacekeepers, and mediators. Despite their potentials and natural roles as conflict managers, women were relegated in the peacebuilding process in Rwenzori sub-region. On youth participation, the study concludes that youth were not adequately carried along in the peacebuilding process in Rwenzori sub-region as they were excluded from the dialogue and reconciliation meetings between the government representatives and the community chiefs and village heads. The fact that the youth were active participants in the conflict and accounted for the highest number of casualties of the conflict, it was pertinent that they were fully involved in all stages of the peacebuilding process, unfortunately this was not the case. The youth have immense potentials in conflict management and peacebuilding in various ways. Notably, they comprise of a significant segment of any society. The governments and other stakeholders can leverage on their energy and creativity in developing strategies for conflict prevention and peace promotion. The youth have the capacity to play a vital role in promoting social cohesion and tolerance, besides they possess a unique ability to mobilize communities and create positive change.

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