

BOOK REVIEW

PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Edited by:

Pontian Godfrey OKOTH

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REVIEWER:

Corporal (Rev'd) E.O.S ODHIAMBO

The editor of this book, **Professor Okoth Pontian Godfrey**, is the Vice Chancellor of Lugazi University in Uganda. He is a professor of History and International Relations and taught in Kenya both in Maseno and Masinde Muliro University. Chapters were contributed by professor Okoth's former doctoral students at Masinde Muliro University. There are fourteen chapters by the four Contributors including the editor's. **The chapters are arranged thematically: *peace and conflict, concepts of peace and conflict and strategies of conflict management.***

The continuum of peace and conflict studies (peace building, peacekeeping, peacemaking, diplomacy) and some associated terms like Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR), security, arbitration are clearly elucidated and explained in a non technical language in this book. The work is well researched and written and should be recommended for all scholars working in the field of peace and conflict studies. In my review, I give an overview and critique of each chapter.

In **Chapter One**, Okoth defines the term 'peace and conflict' and describes its origin and development. He define peace as concord, harmony

and tranquility but peace is also defined as a state of law or civil government, a state of justice or goodness, a balance or equilibrium of Powers.

In **Chapter Two**, Kamoet explains the concepts of peace and conflict as understood by different schools of thoughts including liberal and realist. Democratic Peace theory is mentioned briefly but not critiqued, “Democracies Don't Fight Democracies” which originated in the work of the eighteenth-century philosopher Immanuel Kant. R.J. Rummel in (Peace Magazine, May/June 1999) provided a thorough analysis of how Western democracies are not in the business of waging war with one another. This has not been the case for example the war between NATO and Yugoslavia and USA and Iraq.

Mwaniki in **Chapter Three** discusses the controversies regarding the definition of peace. She defines and gives a detailed account of several theories of peace like Game theory, Active Peace Theory, Integrative Theory, Feminist Theory and Economic Theory.

Matemba in **Chapter Four** contends that the central core of international diplomacy gravitates around security and securing the sanctity of life. Therefore, actions that threaten this life should be mitigated.

In **Chapter Five**, Kamoet agrees with John Paul Lederach, a conflict resolution scholar-practitioner at Eastern Mennonite University in Virginia, who has moved beyond the mere recognition of cultural factors impinging upon conflict resolution to the creation of a specific methodological framework; in it he argues that society interprets conflict from various perspectives; this view calls for clarity in the usage of the term conflict.

In **Chapter Six**, Kamoet examines ‘contextualisation’, which is the study of how people make sense of conflict situations and the appropriate (cultural), environmental and religious common-sense methods of resolving them.

In **Chapter Seven**, Kamoet examines indigenous actors who uses elicitive approach which is based on creating appropriate models from the cultural resources available in a given setting and external actors (external intervention) who uses prescriptive approach which is based on transferring conflict resolution techniques from one setting to another, primarily the transfer of Western methods to non-Western settings in conflict and conflict mapping at the national, regional and the international.

Chapter Eight is contributed by Mwaniki who discusses strategies of conflict management in detail.

In **Chapters Nine** and **Ten**, Matemba, describes the continuum of peace which includes; peacemaking, peace-keeping and peacebuilding. Peacemaking is the diplomatic effort to end violence between conflicting parties, move them towards nonviolent dialogue, and eventually reach a peace agreement. Peacekeeping is a third-party intervention (often, but not always done by military forces) to assist parties in transitioning from violent conflict to peace by separating the fighting parties and keeping them apart. These

peacekeeping operations not only provide security, but also facilitate other non-military initiatives. Peacebuilding is a long-term process that occurs after violent conflict has slowed down or come to a halt. Thus, it is the phase of the peace process that takes place after peacemaking and peacekeeping.

In **Chapter Eleven**, Mwaniki defines the concept of peace and analyses the theories of peace enforcement. United Nations operations in areas of crisis have mostly been established after violent conflict has occurred like the cases of Ethiopia and Eritrea war, Sierraleon, Liberia, Kuwait, Yugoslavia and Namibia. I argue that the United Nations should be proactive to plan for circumstances warranting preventive deployment, which could take place in a variety of instances and ways.

Okoth in **Chapter Twelve** discusses urban terrorism, where terrorists focus on targets that have financial, communication, and symbolic significance. A case in point for urban terrorism is the destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City (NYC) on 9/11 which led to a change in American foreign policy with implication for the African continent.

Okoth and Kamoet in **Chapter Thirteen** discuss the role of international actors in mediating the Post Kenyan election violence of late December 2007 to early 2008. Conflicts can occur at all levels of society; between individuals, in families, workgroups, in local and central decision making, and in society as a whole. Conflicts occur for many reasons: different goals, values or interests, misunderstanding of situations, unsatisfied needs. To live with unsolved conflicts takes energy and may cause people to feel burdened and divided.

In **Chapter Fourteen**, Matemba looks back on how after the Cold War peace has been managed. A new strategy like Globalization in the context of peace is discussed.

The field of peace and conflict studies has not received much attention in the past. The focus has now turned to it because peace as one of the pillars for development was at the periphery. This book is a resource for everyone who is interested in the fields of peace and conflict studies. It can be used by scholars in higher institutions of learning and a larger general audience because it is simple and understandable.

There are three international relations theory with a bearing on the ideas presented by this book. Realism assumes that nation-states are unitary, geographically-based actors in an anarchic international system with no authority above capable of regulating interactions between states as no true authoritative world government exists. Secondly, it assumes that sovereign states, rather than International Government Organizations, Non Government Organizations, are the primary actors in international affairs. Liberalism holds that state preferences, rather than state capabilities, are the primary determinant of state behavior. Unlike realism, where the state is seen as a unitary actor, liberalism allows for plurality in state actions while Constructivism or social

constructivism is concerned with how ideas define international structure, how this structure defines the interests and identities of states and how states and non-state actors reproduce this structure. The key tenet of constructivism is the belief that “International politics is shaped by persuasive ideas, collective values, culture, and social identities”. The healthy globalization is characterized by the rule of law which recognizes the sacredness of life and fundamental freedoms, the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of States within the established international system, and the principle of self-determination for peoples, both of great value and importance, must not be permitted to work against each other. Respect for democratic principles at all levels of social existence is crucial: in communities, within States and within the community of States.

In conclusion, I believe that a comprehensive definition of “peace” must include positive characteristics over and above the mere absence of belligerence. It must include those positive factors that foster cooperation among human groups with ostensibly different cultural patterns so that social justice can be done and human potential can freely develop within democratic political structures. A reading of the book reveals that the goal is obscure in that it is not clear whether the book is to offer theory of peace or to discuss theories of peace because there is no single definition of the term peace but only theories, this could only be appropriate if the aim was to discuss theories of peace. However conflict is fairly discussed and as Thomas Turay (2001:34) writes, “*understanding how people perceive conflict is fundamental to understanding the types of conflicts they deal with, their root causes and how they respond to them*”. This book is well researched and written in easy English to understand and therefore should be recommended for all in the field of peace and conflict studies as a resource book.

REVIEWER:

E.O.S ODHIAMBO

Dept. of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology and Kenya Military Academy (KMA), Ministry of State for Defence (MOSD)