

## An Analysis of the Influence of Ubuntu Principle on the South Africa Peace Building Process

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### Abstract

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Sustainable peace building demands that we move beyond the spirit of revenge and to open our world-view to include others. This paper explores how *Ubuntu*, a South African tacit principle helps in the peace building process in South Africa. It also examines how *Ubuntu* is essential for unity of humanity and emphasizes the importance of constantly referring to the principles of empathy, forgiveness, sharing in a conscious effort to resolving common problems. The discussion critiqued the western approach to peace building and focused on how Desmond Tutu used the principle of *Ubuntu* to promote peace building during the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) process. Using the secondary data for the analysis, the paper identified five stages of the peace building process including; acknowledgement of guilt, showing remorse and repenting, asking for and giving forgiveness, and payment of compensation or reparation as building blocks of reconciliation and peace building in South Africa.

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**Keywords:** Liberal peace building, Indigenous conflict resolution, Principle of *Ubuntu*

### Introduction

Violent conflicts have been the major critical issues in the global politics. As Sadowski (1998) puts it, many of violent conflicts occurring along the political and ethnic lines are common phenomena in sub-Saharan Africa.

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He asserts that in the past four decades, there have been numerous instances of violent conflicts which have their roots from ethnicity, politics and governance, territory or boundary as witnessed in South Africa, Nigeria, Mozambique, Angola, Liberia, Ivory Coast, DR Congo, Burundi, Somalia, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Uganda, Mali and the Hutus against Tutsis in Rwanda which is tagged worst ever genocide in the world. In his view, in most parts of the conflict torn countries in the Africa continent, these conflicts tend to have negative repercussions on women, children and socio- economic activities of the state.

According to Choundree (1999), Africa unlike the developed world, uses the indigenous mechanisms in resolving conflicts as part of their post-conflicts peace building processes. Choundree posits that, almost all the indigenous conflict resolution strategies employed by these war shattered states have worked effectively to ensure some level of sustainable peace and community development. As Choundreenoted, the prominence and key utility of these indigenous practices is that, the conflict resolution mechanisms endeavour to restore a balance, to settle conflict and ensure peace process. In support of this view, Marfo (2014) notes that, Africa, for that matter Ghana, has a peculiar culture and mechanisms for peace building which cannot be substituted in the name of 'modernity'. In congruence, Murithi (2009) also points out that, Africans have indigenous traditions for peace building which are instructive for healing and reconciling the people. Drawing an inspiration from Murithi (2009) and Marfo (2014), Issifu (2015) notes that, African nations have applied local conflict resolution mechanisms in managing and resolving ethnic, religious, chieftaincy and resource based conflicts. According to him, war victimised countries including Rwanda, Mozambique and Nigeria have all used local conflict resolution methods of *Gacaca*, *Amnesia*, *Aye* and *Mbiam* respectively to resolve conflicts to ensure sustainable peace after years of warfare.

Following the preceding arguments, this paper seeks to examine the South African's *Ubuntu* moral principle in the resolution of conflicts, and how *Ubuntu* principle has helped in ensuring peace in the aftermath of the apartheid/conflicts in South Africa. To achieve the central objective of the study, the paper is structured into six broad sections. Section one looks at the introduction to the study. The second section focuses on the overview of the apartheid and post-apartheid regime in South Africa. Section three concentrates on the review of the relevant literature. The fourth part of the paper examines the methodology of the study. The fifth section centers on findings and discussions, and the last section is devoted for conclusion.

### **Overview of the Apartheid Regime in South Africa**

South Africa is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the west and by the Indian Ocean on the south and east.

Its neighbors are Namibia in the northwest, Zimbabwe and Botswana in the north and Mozambique and Swaziland in the northeast. The kingdom of Lesotho forms an enclave within the southeast part of South Africa. The first people to live in South Africa were black Africans who spoke the Bantu language, and raised cattle and sheep near the coast (Callinicos, 1996). In 1652, the Dutch migrated to settle in South Africa as the newfound state. According to Callinicos, although the Dutch were immigrants, yet they believed they were custodians to the tracts of land in South Africa. These Dutch immigrants defeated many South Africans and forced them to work as servants and slaves as they established a colony. In 1806, Great Britain captured the colony from the Dutch. The British and descendants of the Dutch settlers, known as the Boers, fought for control of the country for about 100 years. The British finally won in 1910. Afterwards, the British forced the indigenous Africans off the mineral rich territories into places they thought had little value, known as "reserves", and subsequently the British stayed in the areas with rich minerals in South Africa (Callinicos, 1996).

In 1948, the Racist Nationalist Party was elected to power by the citizens of the state. The Nationalist government combined all the poor treatments of blacks into an official policy called apartheid, meaning apartness in Afrikaans. Under apartheid regime, the government divided the citizens of South Africa into racial categories. Four major ethnic groups were considered in South Africa. The Dutch who were first known as Boers later came to be called Afrikaners. Their language was a mixture of Dutch and new words from other settlers, the indigenous black South Africans, the coloured South Africans (children of black South Africans born with the immigrants whites residing in South Africa), and the Asians who migrated to South African mainly in the 1860s (who are largely Indians). Among the ethnic groups, the largest ethnic group was the blacks who are the indigenous South Africans (Schaefer, 2008).

In 1958, the government separated white people by making the other groups, especially the blacks to live on "reserves" or homelands in South Africa. These "reserves" were only 13% of the land, even though the blacks constituted 68% of the population. Yet, the whites with a population of 17% owned 87% of the total landmass of South Africa (Callinicos, 1996). According to Ota (1997), the "reserves" had poor soil for farming, and did not have many schools, hospitals, running water or electricity. In most cases, many black men left their homelands to find work in the mines or factories in white communities in order to survive with their families. For example, Callinicos (1996) reiterates that, blacks could not stay in the white areas after dark, and had to return to the townships each night. During the Apartheid regime, many laws were made. For instance, people of different races (example blacks and whites) were not allowed to marry. Equally, blacks could not own land in white areas or vote (Cousins, 2007). Besides, public facilities such as shops, toilets, beaches, parks and restaurants were divided based on race (Callinicos, 1996).

As Callinicos notes, Asians who migrated to South Africa mainly in the 1860s (who are largely Indians) and the coloured South Africans were eligible to work in the civil service and also do businesses than their black counterparts in South Africa.

In support of this view, Dubow (2006) notes that, the Apartheid regime granted only the white people and the Asian counterparts (who are largely Indians) the leeway to utilize the best social facilities, with black people living below the social chain. According to Dubow (2006), the apartheid regime was so severe that black groups began resisted the white government. Many blacks frustrated by the Apartheid regime joined the Africa National Congress (ANC) to fight the government. For example, in the 1960s, many surrounding countries including Swaziland, Lesotho and Botswana in 1965 and Angola and Mozambique in 1975, regained independence. As more blacks gained their independence, they supported South Africa to protest against Apartheid regime. The government responded by enforcing its stringent laws which sought to segregate blacks with the view of discouraging the black culture. Subsequently, subjects in schools had to be taught in Afrikaans rather than the language of the homelands. For example, Afrikaans which for many of the blacks in South Africa schools considered as a difficult language to learn was officially used as medium of instructions in schools.

As Ota (1997) noted, English language was already a foreign language to the black students in schools, consequently, most of the students struggled with it, so when this law was passed, it became difficult for the black students to cope with the trends of the education system in South Africa. This situation therefore affected the academic performance of many of the black students in schools in South Africa. Beyond this, in 1986 the white South African government continued to try to destroy those who resisted the Apartheid regime. For three years, they arrested, tortured, discriminated and imprisoned over 20,000 people (Helliker, 2008). For instance, Nelson Mandela, who was the instrumental person in the protest against Apartheid regime in South Africa was kept in prison for twenty-seven years. Following this, there were series of struggles and protests against the regime. Several people around the globe who identified themselves with the cause of the black majority in South Africa supported it by taking part in demonstrations and consumer boycotts, and felt the ANC's triumph as theirs as well (Callinicos, 1996). As a result of the struggles and protests against the apartheid regime, many blacks in South Africa lost their lives especially in massacre in Sharpeville in 1960 (Haas, 2008), and Soweto in 1976 (Pieterse, 2001). Subsequently a number of international bodies who were not in total support of the Apartheid policies wanted South Africa to be removed from the United Nations (UN). However, France, the United States and Britain did not support the move initiated by the international bodies (Callinicos, 1996).

## **South Africa in the Post-Apartheid Era**

The Apartheid regime in South Africa ended in 1994. After the Apartheid regime, equal rights were granted by South African Constitution to both blacks and whites in the state. Although black South Africans were granted equal rights by law, since 1994, ninety percent (90%) of the country's poor people are non-white, and so inequality remains a big problem in the state (Callinicos, 1996). In 1994, multi-party elections were sanctioned by the Constitution to allow political parties to contest for elections. Nelson Mandela was released from prison, who subsequently contested the 1994 presidential election and won the election with sixty three percent (63%) of the total votes cast in the general elections on the ticket of the ANC. Nelson Mandela then became the new president in South Africa in 1994. As Callinicos notes, the sweeping victory secured by the ANC in the elections marked the climax of a struggle that had been going on since the movement's foundation in 1912.

## **Review of the Relevant Literature**

### **Western Approach to Peace building; Liberal Peace Building**

Peace building began as a key focus of international attention beginning in the 1990s as a relief for war devastated states, with the UN playing a central leading role. Since then the concept of peace building and its agenda have developed remarkably in the international politics. Peace building is defined by Boutros-Ghali (1992) as "the process by which an achieved peace is placed on durable foundations and which prevents violent conflict from recurring by dealing with the underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems responsible for the conflict". Boutros-Ghali further emphasizes that, peace-building is the actions undertaken by national or international actors to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. As Boutros- Ghali puts it, the international community in the post-Cold war era is primarily concerned with widespread problems of civil wars and violent conflicts which do not only affects individuals human security but also, community development. This has been the basis of liberal approach to peace building.

One of the critics of the western approach to peace building Paris (1997), has pointed out that, the liberal peace-building has not been an effective model for establishing effective peace in war shattered states in the world. According to Paris, the very process of political and economic liberalization has generated destabilizing side effects in war-shattered states, hindering the consolidation of peace, and in some cases even sparking renewed violent conflicts.

Paris reiterates that in Angola for instance, political liberalization contributed to the resurgence of violence and in Mozambique, the effect of economic liberalization has threatened to reignite the conflict. Angola illustrates the potential dangers of political liberalization in war shattered states. International negotiators secured a cease fire in 1991 between the warring Angola political parties through agreement to hold multi-party elections in late September 1992 after several years of political turmoil. The elections took place on schedule under international supervision and were judged to be free and fair. As Paris (1997) notes, in January 1993, there was a full-scale civil war which has been described as bloody as anything seen since independence. Seen in this light, Paris reveals that, Angolan elections did not serve as the basis for reconciliation, but rather helped rekindled war.

As a follow-up to the preceding contributions, Paris (1997) pinpoints that, a peace agreement in Mozambique on October 1992 between the Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique and the Resistencia Nacional Mocambique sought to end seventeen years of intermitted warfare through democratic elections appeared to have made life more difficult for ordinary citizens, increasing absolute levels of poverty, sharpening inequalities between the rich and poor and restricting government efforts to rebuild schools, health clinics, roads, and other social infrastructure by Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) conditions. In his view, the worsening living condition contributed to the spread of rural bandit and has increased fears that a growing sense of frustration, anger, and desperations will spark a new uprising.

Seen in this light, Paris (1997) observes that, the prevailing paradigm of western approach to peace-building; liberal internationalism, or the assumption that the best way to consolidate peace is to transform war shattered states into market democracy, has been more problematic than anticipated. Paris re-emphasizes that, political policies and economic liberalization seem to have generated unforeseen instabilities in most of the states hosting such operations. In his viewpoint, the indigenous approaches to peace-building and conflict resolution have been more effective than the western approach in the context of the African societies in many respects and have to be critically considered.

### **Indigenous Conflict Resolution in Africa**

The concept 'indigenous' as opposed 'contemporary' does not mean that the former is either bad or inferior to the latter. In present times, people usually use the word 'indigenous' loosely to denote origin or original inhabitants of a given community, or an idea which is appropriate to a given people. It could be a style of building, nature of a song or mode of doing something such as farming which has endured over the years (Marfo, 2014).

In support of this view, Zartman (2000) argues that, Africa is a heterogeneous society with diverse African culture, but there remain certain features of African culture such as traditional conflict resolution mechanism that survived the onslaught of colonialism. Thus, traditional conflict resolution strategies are therefore seen as those methods practiced for an extended period and have evolved from within African societies rather than being the product of external importation. For example, Zartman further contends that, post-conflict reconciliation often requires symbolic gestures and associated rituals such as the exchange of gifts, and slaughter of animals; fowls, goats, sheep, cows for partying and unity for building peace. In congruence, Ndumbe (2001) points out that, indigenous conflict resolution strategy is not only a healing of wound and psychological trauma, but also a product of consensus building, re-integration of ex-combatant back into the society and an avenue for promoting community development. According to Ndumbe, traditional system of conflict resolution promotes unity, community mobilization and creates a merry making; exchanging of gifts in the form of peace making. Buttressing the above arguments, Brock-Utne (2001) indicates that, indigenous conflict resolution enhances harmony through active involvement of all the stakeholders involved in the disputes.

Supporting the same viewpoints, Okrah (2003) opines that, traditional societies resolved conflicts through internal and external social control mechanism. As Okrah puts it, African societies have indigenous traditions for peace building process that can teach the African indigenes amicable means of healing and reconciling each of the parties in the post- conflict reconciliation. As Okrah puts it, the task of indigenous conflict resolution is to re-establish contacts between individuals, families and communities with the goal to rebuild social harmony. In his viewpoints, the indigenous strategy deploys both spiritual and physical practices with the former having the commonly used in Africa. The spiritual dimension of indigenous conflict resolution refers to creating and restoring impaired relationship with God, the spirits, ancestors, families and neighbors as the case might be. This is important primarily because, it is a method used to restoring broken relationships among and within the conflicting parties in the reconciliation process of peace-building.

Drawing an inspiration from the preceding scholars, Brock-Utne (2001) reveals that, the effectiveness of the process and sustainability of the outcomes of the traditional peace building in Africa cannot be overestimated. As Brock-Utne noted, this is generally attributed to such factors as simplicity, participatory in nature, flexibility, complete relevance, and compatibility with local settings. Added to the above argument, Murithi (2006) also asserted that, indigenous conflict resolution focuses on the principles of love, empathy, sharing, caring, forgiveness and cooperation in dealing with common problems which underline the essence of humanity. Consequently, indigenous conflict resolution strategies are sustainable, acceptable and endurable since it is from within African cultures.

In view of the preceding viewpoints, Issifu (2015) posits that, ingenuous conflict resolution gives perpetrator the unique opportunity not only to measure the impacts of their crimes, but also to apologise and show agenuine remorse before the victims and their relatives as a sign of peace making for a sustainable peace and community development.

Writing on indigenous Ghanaian conflict resolution and peace building mechanisms, Marfo (2014) for instance, notes that the advent of colonialism with its political institutions such as the police, military, court and its adjunct Christianity and Western education has largely reduced the fear of punishment, and sense of communalism and bond embedded in traditional beliefs and practices, which served as pillars of peace and security among the people. Yet, as Marfo (2014) puts it, in Ghana, most of the indigenous conflict resolution and peace building mechanisms including funerals and chieftaincy have withstood the test of time and are of much relevance in resolving conflicts and building peace especially in the local communities, notwithstanding the forces of social change. According to him, indigenous African conflict resolution and peace building mechanisms may not necessarily be a panacea to all conflict situations; nonetheless, they are important tools in resolving conflicts and building human-centered peace among fractured societies. Therefore, indigenous conflict resolution mechanisms cannot be discarded in the name of western liberal peace building approach.

### **The Ubuntu Principle**

The *Ubuntu* principle has over the years been used in a general sense to refer to an African philosophy of life (Mokgoro, 1997). It originates from within African idioms, '*Mothokemothokabathobabangwe*' and '*Umuntungumuntungabantu*' which loosely translated means 'A person is a person through other persons', or, 'I am because we are; we are because I am' (Ramose, 1999; Goduka, 2000). Research reveals that the concept originates in pre-colonial African rural settings and is linked with indigenous ways of conflict resolution (Swanson, 2008). *Ubuntu* is a complex concept; therefore it has a diverse form of definition depending on the social context of which the concept is defined (Mokgoro, 1997; Anderson, 2003).

As defined by scholars, *Ubuntu* is an African philosophy of humanity and community (Skelton, 2002); an African cultural world-view (Murithi, 2006); a philosophy of becoming more humane (Swanson, 2008). An overarching presumption underlying all these characterization is that, in African regions, a person who possesses *Ubuntu* attitude is the one who is noted to be hospitable, friendly, generous, compassionate and caring for his fellow human being (Goduka, 2000).

Drawing an inspiration from the preceding scholars, Masina (2000) posits that, the drive for *Ubuntu* is intended to work toward a situation that promotes a mutually beneficial condition. As Masina notes, *Ubuntu* places emphasis on cooperation with one another for the common good as opposed to competition that could lead to grave instability within any community. Masina asserts that the secret behind *Ubuntu* is that, a person is considered rational human being if he or she participates and shares with his or her neighbour in spite of all ancient or past hatred. The principle of *Ubuntu* implies that we can create a healthy relationships based on the recognition that within the web of humanity, everyone is linked to everyone else (Marfo, 2015). In congruence, Faure's (2000) contends that, this is crucial, primarily because, the act of reconciliation symbolizes the willingness of the parties to move beyond the psychological bitterness that had prevailed in the minds of the parties during the conflict situation. This practice makes the *Ubuntu* system more of restorative justice than a retributive system of justice.

To collaborate the argument, Murithi (2006) notes that, *Ubuntu* is the traditional process of ascertaining wrong doing and finding a suitable resolution between family members in relation to the victims and perpetrators, including women and the young persons. The *Ubuntu* principle allows members of the public to share their views and generally make their opinions known during the process of reconciliation. Murithi argues the actual process of the *Ubuntu* involves five key stages; firstly, after a fact-finding process where the views of victims, perpetrators and witnesses were heard, the perpetrators, if considered to have done wrong, are encouraged, both by the Council of Elders and other community members in the *Inkundla/lekgotla* forum, to acknowledge responsibility or guilt. Secondly, the perpetrators are encouraged to demonstrate genuine remorse or to show a sign of true repentance. Thirdly, perpetrators are supported to plead for forgiveness and victims in their turn are also encouraged to show mercy to their offenders. Fourthly, where possible, at the suggestion of the Council of Elders, perpetrators are required to pay an appropriate compensation or reparation for the wrong done.

The payment was not in-kind, but a symbolic signs, with the primary function of reinforcing the remorse of the perpetrators. Finally, the fifth stage seeks to consolidate the whole process by encouraging the parties to commit themselves to reconciliation. This process of reconciliation normally involved the victims' and perpetrators' family members and friends, all together in a participatory manner. After the adjudication process, both groups are allowed to embrace coexistence and to work towards healing the broken relationship between them and thus contribute towards restoring harmony within the community, which was vital in ensuring the integrity and viability of the society. *Ubuntu* principle suggests that a society with sharp divisions and fractured relationships could commit itself to reconciliation towards a harmonious and all-encompassing community (Marfo: 2015).

## Methodology

The paper was an exploratory study which seeks to examine the influence of the indigenous *Ubuntu* principle on the peace building process of South Africa. To achieve this objective, a critical analysis of relevant data was needed for the study. Data for the study were collected between March 2014 and May 2015. The data were drawn from a wide range of secondary sources including textbooks, journals articles, magazines, newspapers, newsletters, occasional papers and internet worldwide web sites.

## Results and Discussions

The analysis of the paper was guided by the following; the story, full participation of the parties, joint problem solving approach, consensual decision-making, mutual respect, flexibility of process and empowerment.

### The Story

Story telling was a key activity in South African's *Ubuntu* traditional conflict resolution and peace building process. A person could not be judged on the basis of a perceived or alleged guilt which could be an affront to justice. In view of this, an opportunity was created for story-telling so that both the alleged perpetrators and the victims could be publicly heard. This implied that long before the concept of rule of law was instituted in modern legal system, traditional *Ubuntu* did not only possess an element of fairness but also, served as a building block for justice. During the South African peace-building process, the victims were allowed to give a detailed account of their experience; the agonies and pains, which they suffered. The aim was to restore hope and harmony among the former combatants through reconciliation, apology and forgiveness, communication and mutual respect of their needs. Through the victims' story-telling, the offenders appreciated the gravity of the atrocities or crime they committed during the apartheid regime.

### Full Participation of the Parties

Sustainable conflict resolution and peace building demands full participation of all parties involved. This helps prevent an imposition and premature resolution. Marfo (2013) has indicated that, a meaningful conflict resolution is the one which primarily perceives the parties as owners of the resolution process. If parties to a conflict are not included in the process, they are hardly likely to approve the product. Agreement becomes much easier if both parties feel ownership of the ideas.

According to Fisher and Ury (1991), *Ubuntu* traditional conflict resolution demanded that the parties' should be involved in the peace process so as to promote the spirit of fairness, openness, equitableness and justice. The parties through their involvement, helped to appreciate the root causes of the conflict and various ways to addressing the harm or crime committed against each other. In support of this view, Zartman (2000) and Issifu (2015) note that *Ubuntu* process enabled the parties to have a great influence over the peace process. Parties were empowered through their participation. As the scholars reveal, traditionally, *Ubuntu* principle of conflict mechanism expects each party to be accorded with power to establish a better communication relation with the other party through justice, restoration of harmony and healing of wounds. For example, according to the scholars, during the South African Truth and Reconciliation process, opportunities were given to all parties involved. The parties came to know themselves better and appreciated the enormity of harm caused to each other during the apartheid regime and the need for building a sound and all-inclusive society (ibid). This largely contributed to the peace building process which lends credence to the principle of *Ubuntu*. It is against these reasons that scholars have argued that, indigenous approaches to peacebuilding and conflict resolution are more effective in Africa (ibid).

### **Joint Problem Solving Approach**

South African's *Ubuntu* principle sought to focus on restitution rather than retribution; on restoration of friendship rather than fault finding, truth rather than fact, on dialogue rather than blame, an apology and forgiveness rather than zero sum game; on accommodating rather than avoiding; and on cooperativeness rather than assertiveness. The joint problem solving approach helped to address the underlying problems of the parties through the parties' commitment to reach an agreement in the interest of all the parties involved in the peace process. The *Ubuntu* principle process was not forced on the parties; it was a voluntary process, which enabled the parties to discuss their issues and areas of conflict freely (Zartman, 2000). Under the *Ubuntu* principle, the parties were encouraged to be in full charge of their decisions and agreements without any coercive interference by the other parties or the peace facilitator(s). According to Zartman, although, South Africa's peace building process is far from perfection, yet, it can be said that the openness of both perpetrators and victims to apologize and forgive respectively rather than resorting to revenge or purely retributive action, contributed to its success which has become a show case globally. The principle of *Ubuntu* has helped the peace process to work out effectively to meet the target of promoting peace and reconciliation after the several years of Apartheid regime (ibid). Seen in this light, Mani (2002) reiterates that, *Ubuntu* principle and the Bible teachings of Jesus Christ, which talk about "love and forgiveness", helped to ensure the current peaceful atmosphere in South Africa after the Apartheid regime.

In his viewpoints, the principles underpinning *Ubuntu* serve as guides and food for thoughts to some of the perpetrators and victims who came before the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to confess and later asked for forgiveness for damaged and pain caused to the human race in the apartheid era. Drawing on Mani's (2002) observation, Graybill (1998) was quick to add that, during the TRC process, perpetrators openly confessed and their sins were forgiven by their victims. He contends that, some group of people who raped women in the apartheid period, and then, narrated the story to the commission and showed remorse for various acts of atrocities to women, children and fellow friends were forgiven by the victims. Commenting on the conduct of the parties, Tutu (1999) emphasizes that a person with *Ubuntu* is the one who is open and live peacefully with one another, and does not feel threatened when others achieve success because he or she recognizes that they belong to a greater whole. At the end of the process, victims were given reparation (which has a symbolic value but not economic) while the perpetrators were given amnesty. According to Tutu, this reflects the willingness of both parties to live in harmony after several years of chaos in South Africa.

### **Mutual Respect**

*Ubuntu* principle emphasizes on mutual respect and dignity of persons. Parties in disputes are not enemies in the battlefield, but rather co-partners in a problem-solving process. Anstey (1991) indicates that, it is important that parties in a conflict accord each other legitimacy in the relationship. When one party refuses to acknowledge the other as a player or a representative in a resolution process, then it dooms the exchange to one of confrontation. No fruitful outcome would be achieved. In the process of the peace building in South Africa, the parties were encouraged to submit themselves to the ground rules of the restorative process by respecting the rights of each other. The aim was to do away with utterances and actions of the parties that could disturb the success of the peace process. As a result of deep psychological wound and pain inflicted to other parties, the process was often characterized by emotion. However, the tacit principle of mutual respect underlying *Ubuntu*, constrained the parties to conduct themselves more appropriately which guaranteed the success of the process.

### **Conclusion**

Generally, indigenous methods of conflict resolution stressed the need of fostering a spirit of peace and mutual respect for both individuals and groups, in times of peace and in times of conflict. Specifically, South African's *Ubuntu* traditional conflict resolution technique was effectively invoked by the TRC and the institution of the council of elders.

The chairman of the TRC Archbishop Desmond Tutu used Christian teaching of forgiveness together with the traditional *Ubuntu* principle to promote peace and helped resolved post-apartheid hatreds. This has helped to transform the conflict situation largely to harmony and reminded the groups of their shared unity. Thus, in the African setting there is no "private dispute" of any seriousness, since a dispute affects everyone in one way or another. As one African philosopher, Mbiti (1970), correctly says, the African philosophy is based on the "I am because we are because we are therefore I am" principle. For the Africans, therefore, there is recognition of the importance of relationship and harmony in the community.

Technically, traditional conflict resolutions surely are not panacea for all ills, nevertheless, they are approaches that so far have been underestimated by actors who were brought up and taught to think in a western mind set. Traditional approaches might give us important insights for conflict transformation processes more generally. What is proposed here is not a way back to the 'good old times' of traditional conflict resolution, but a way forward to mutual positive accommodation and constructive interaction of traditional ways on the one hand and western approach-strategic peace building and civil society ways on the other, taking into account that the revitalization of traditions "should not be confused with a return to the past"; rather, "it often involves explicitly future-oriented strategies albeit not always in line with 'western' ideals of democracy, human rights and emancipation, but rather with local discourses of identity, decision-making and equality" (Braeuchler&Widlok, 2007).

It is also important to note that, even though the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission was far from perfection, it is a showcase that, with the integration of modern peace building mechanisms and the traditional peace building mechanisms, the gains of a united and peaceful society can be re-enforced, while society with sharp divisions and fractured relationships could commit itself to reconciliation towards a harmonious and all-encompassing community without the recourse to violence or revenge.

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