

## Applying Track three diplomacy to Kenyan Conflicts

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### **Abstract**

*Since the Cold War, the world has been multifaceted by both intra and interstate conflicts. This in turn has impacted immensely on the security within territories and even beyond their borders since states' policies have paid relatively little attention to the broader perspective of conflict management. It is increasingly important to sort out new mechanisms and institutions to manage these conflicts and resolve them productively. In the current international arena, the interest in conflict management is rapidly increasing since this is a way to reunite divided communities. Many diplomatic approaches are now being employed. The traditional approach to diplomacy where the state was considered as the sole actor to conflict resolution has been complemented by other forms of diplomacy such as Track two diplomacy which basically involves non-state actors who have played a key role in making decisions that concern conflict management. In addition Track one and half diplomacy, which involves both state and non state actors has also been vital in managing some conflicts in the world. This paper presents another type of diplomacy, that is, Track Three diplomacy which has been overlooked by most governments as a conflict management strategy. The paper specifically demonstrates how this Track of diplomacy has been quite instrumental in resolving conflicts in some selected regions in Kenya. The paper further recommends that this diplomatic approach be adopted by most governments as a way of averting, managing or even resolving conflicts.*

**Keywords:** Track Three diplomacy, Diplomacy, Conflicts, conflict management, Security, Grass root

## **1.0 Introduction**

Traditionally, the term diplomacy referred to the interaction between nation-states. More recently, however, scholars have delineated several levels of diplomacy. Diplomacy is often characterized as running along three tracks. Track One involves interactions between high-level representatives of national governments. It is characterized by formal negotiations and rather rigid national positions. Track Two Diplomacy on the other hand involves policy analysts and academics who engage in unofficial dialogue, conceptual discussions and problem-solving activities (Ropers, 2002).

Track Three diplomacy is the people-to-people diplomacy undertaken by individuals and private groups to encourage interaction and understanding between hostile communities and involving awareness raising and empowerment within these communities. It is normally focused at the grassroots level. This type of diplomacy often involves organizing meetings and conferences, generating media exposure, and political and legal advocacy for marginalized people and communities (United States Institute of Peace, 2011). The Track Three process involves popular segments like workers, artists, poets, musicians. The exclusion of semi-elite from Track Three diplomacy gives a credible image of activities launched under its ambit. Besides, in Track Three diplomacy, vested interests do not matter. Moreover, the fact that there is a wide participation from different segments of the society is ensured, which makes it easier to remove mistrust and suspicion at the grass root level (Moonis, 2003).

The work of Track Three diplomacy is aimed at building or rebuilding broken relationships across the lines of division among ordinary citizens in communities, in a range of sectors. The premise of Track Three Diplomacy is that peace can and must be built from the bottom up as well as from the top down. For any negotiation or settlement to be achieved, a 'peace constituency' must exist. Likewise, for any settlement that is eventually reached, there must be support and capacity for its implementation. Some interventions at this level have national scope and influence (Chigas, 2003).

Most Track Three interventions are directed at rebuilding 'social capital' in local communities that have been fractured by conflict. In many instances, the local level is a microcosm of the larger conflict. Lines of identity in the conflict are usually drawn through local communities, dividing them into hostile groups. People at this level experience the day to day consequences of those divisions and of the decisions of the political elite (Chigas, 2003). This Track further offers an opportunity for people to work at the community or local level, away from the political negotiation, on issues of peace and conflict resolution. This approach thus requires restraint on the part of governments but it would have a far greater chance of success than would direct methods (Ibrahim, 2013).

The track thus entails bringing together representatives of conflicting groups to interact purposefully in a safe space. It addresses divisions within a community that may be rooted in group differences such as ethnicity or religion or status as a returning ex combatant and

displaced persons or refugees. It addresses the prejudice and demonizing that reinforces the perceived differences between groups and hinders the development of relationships between conflict parties. The aim is to create opportunities for a series of interactions between conflicting groups in the community to promote mutual understanding, trust, empathy and resilient social ties (USAID, 2011).

In the UK, Northern Ireland, it was only once the government realized that communities and community groups, far from being a distraction to peacemaking, were in fact central to its success, that they were finally able to see the light at the end of the tunnel (Briggs, *et al.* 2006). Northern Ireland was experiencing many problems. The peace initiative that ended these problems involved listening to what people had to say and disseminating these views to pressure recalcitrant politicians into more non violent solutions. This was very successful and softened the edges of the conflict (Oliver, 2002). In Cyprus, on the other hand, numerous joint projects from a bi-communal choir to an EU Study Group and a lawyers group identifying areas of divergence between the two communities' legal developments since the division of the island have been a model of cross-conflict cooperation. In Tajikistan dialogue participants have founded and become active in new civil society organizations that organize roundtable seminars on subjects important for peace-building development projects to foster dialogue in public forums at the regional level (Chigas, 2003). Radio Macedonia, Search for Common Ground's Project in Macedonia, runs programming depicting inter-ethnic cooperation and dialogue. Through public education, through opportunities for people at all levels of society to engage in dialogue and through promotion of tangible benefits of cooperation across conflict lines, these projects contribute to the development of a peace constituency to support negotiations (Chigas, 2003).

In the African context, in post apartheid South Africa, an explosion of political violence was avoided in part because of the process of open dialogue that had helped bring about democracy and a culture of peaceful negotiation and coexistence. Peoples' participation through mass organization, public debate and direct participation at local and regional levels created a sense of legitimacy and public ownership of the process that fostered a culture of cooperation and compromise (De Klerk, 2002). The effort to end persistent violent conflict in northern Mali in the mid 1990s also provides another good example. As in Darfur, negotiated agreements between government representatives and the armed factions were unable to bring the conflict to a conclusion, and in fact exacerbated the most affected. It was only when thousands of people were engaged directly in inter-community peacemaking that the path to national reconciliation opened. The involvement of those most affected by the conflict in open and inclusive dialogue was able to achieve what the official political negotiations could not (Lode, 2002).

In Burundi for instance, radio Ijambo an independent radio station established in 1995 by the U.S-based NGO Search for Common Ground produces programs dedicated to peace and national reconciliation and dialogue among polarized groups (Chigas, 2003). In the wider East African region, there have been several security issues. The insecurity within the East African region is mainly due to cross-border pastoralist natural resource-use conflicts, influx

of refugees especially in the refugee camps such as Kakuma and Dadaab and terrorism caused by al Shabaab from Somalia (Thenmer and Peter, 2011). In either case, the main Tracks that have been used in order to build peace have been basically Tracks One by use of the military and Two by employing NGOs and IGOs such as IGAD.

## **2.0 Intra-State Conflicts**

According to Juma (2000), conflict destroys the ability of the affected communities to carry on normally, but it also presents special opportunities. If these opportunities are seized, they can help communities transform violent situations into peaceful coexistence. Conflict is a situation with at least two identifiable groups in conscious opposition to each other as they pursue incompatible goals (Dougherty and Pfltzgraft, 1990. 187).

Every conflict involves a struggle over values and claims to scarce resources, power and status. Most of the intrastate conflicts do involve competition for limited resources, but they are driven by ethnic, religious and inter communal issues rather than a clear ideological predisposition (Cutts, 1998). They are also marked by intense brutality and disregard for the rules of war. Finally, the distinctions between civilians and combatants are fading (Roberts, 1999). A combination of these factors leads to deeply fractured societies and humanitarian dilemmas (Weiss and Collins, 1996).

Intrastate conflicts carry several implications for peace processes. Such conflicts undermine the states within which they occur and by extension the statesystem that is based on the integrity of national sovereignty. Effective intervention in internal conflicts requires understanding the different elements of the community and how they are related to the current situation. Internal conflicts violate human rights. Only well-focused efforts that address the root causes of the abuses can stop such violations. Affected communities must be involved through the cycle of peace building.

Conflicts in Kenya can be classified in four broad categories. That is, conflicts within pastoral communities, conflicts between pastoral and agricultural communities, conflicts linked to the presence of refugees and ethnic clashes.

## **3.0 Actors in conflict management in Kenya**

Kenyans need to realize that peace building practice is not a single solution to resolve violent conflicts. The government has ignored the social structures that generate grievances. Laws, institutions and traditions have failed to change individual motivations for violence. Conflicts are normally as a result of a complex of grievances, such as behavior of key mobilizers and leaders, institutions. Therefore, both the attitudinal and institutional dimension of a dispute must be addressed. This requires negotiation, social mobilization and economic and political development and this requires people from different groups to interact.

Religion is a significant factor in the identity of one or both parties to the conflict. Religious leaders on both sides of the conflict can be mobilized to facilitate peace. They can promote peace and reconciliation through credibility as a trusted institution, a respected set of values, moral warrants for opposing injustice on the part of governments, unique leverage for promoting reconciliation among conflicting parties, including an ability to rehumanize situations that have become dehumanized over the course of protracted conflict, a capability to mobilize community, nation and international support for a peace process, an ability to follow through locally in the wake of a political settlement and a sense of calling that often inspires perseverance in the face of major, otherwise, debilitating obstacles. They are effective in working together for peace when they are from different faith communities (USIP, 2006)

Women are a principal driving force in peace initiatives (Sorensen et al. 1998). Women show a keen interest in peace processes. Women represent a vital resource for sustaining peace efforts at all levels.

#### **4.0 Track Three diplomacy in Kenya**

##### **4.1 North-Eastern Kenya (Wajir)**

Wajir experienced three incidents that were resolved through Track Three diplomacy. First, during a wedding, a woman reminded others of need to disperse early because of their safety. This spark off a discussion during which the idea of trying to stop violence was born. The women agreed to do something. However, before anything, a daytime raid caused some children to run away to safety. This incident became the defining moment. Five women who worked in government departments met to discuss ways of confronting the conflict before a fight broke out between women in a market. The five women decided to approach the market women to address the violence and find ways of dealing with it. This did not require much persuasion since they were tired of the prevailing situation. The idea of searching for peace provided a ray of hope to the economy.

After initial discussions, a committee of ten women, headed by an elderly woman leader was chosen to monitor the situation in the market on a daily basis. The committee ensured entry to the market and was free to share space and conduct business among themselves without discrimination. Soon they succeeded in stopping violence at the market and this encouraged women to pursue peace in the wider community. The group members constituted of civil servants, teachers, health workers, community workers, one local Oxfam staff and elders (Kathina, 2000)

##### **4.2 Western Kenya (Bungoma County)**

On the eve of Christmas in 1991, there were ethnic clashes in Bungoma County between Sabots and Iteso against the Bukusu communities. The conflict lasted for two years. The first approach that was employed in order to stop the conflict from escalating was Track

One diplomacy, through the use of government security forces. This intervention accentuated the conflict and shattered the peaceful coexistence between the communities of Bungoma. Track Two diplomacy was then employed through the involvement of the NGOs and the church, especially the Catholic church and the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK). This approach was initiated through the established networks and institutions of the church. However, they were unable to halt the conflict it was only when the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) through their representatives were involved to air views openly through peace meetings that tension between the communities reduced. The representatives also urged their constituents to participate in peace building activities. Dialogue was enhanced and this made the provincial administration to gain acceptability and legitimacy with IDPs. This also made it possible to organize and conduct peace and reconciliation workshops (Kathina and Oduor, 1995).

In addition, distribution of relief food was done in centres shared by all communities. This action increased interaction between members of different ethnic groups. This interaction provided a basis for mobilisation of populations through their own representatives. Besides, women were the ones to collect family food rations and this increased the chances for women to meet more frequently. The women began to get free with each other. They started visiting each other in their houses. Women became the only entry points to reconciliation and peace processes. Through public meetings and the church, peace teams called for forgiveness, reconciliation and encouraged family reunions.

#### **4.3 North Western Region (Turkana County)**

This is a region that experiences protracted conflicts. The community members are basically pastoralists the conflicts are due to cross border natural resource-use between the Turkana and the pastoral communities from Uganda; Matheniko, Jie, Toposa and Dodos. Both Track One and Track Two diplomacy have been ineffective in controlling these conflicts.

Track Three diplomacy has lessened the intensity and frequency of conflicts in the region. This has been through the community members, who include the elders of the community, women and youths. The elders deter or resolve conflicts by organizing peace dialogues between aggrieved parties. They listen to the warring parties state their cases without any interference. The conflicting parties do not address each other directly to avoid any form of confrontations. The verdict is then pronounced by the elders after assessing the available evidence. The verdict is always adhered to by both parties. They encourage individuals to deter conflicts through education and socialization whereby children are made to acknowledge the essence of maintaining peace with their neighbors. The elders use legends, songs, storytelling to pass across information on the adverse effects of conflicts to their communities. The elders also engage in peace making missions with their neighbors in order to allow accessibility of the natural resources without communities engaging in any form of conflict.

The women on the other hand use their social status in the community and plead with their peers to pacify their husbands. They make their peers see that they and their children are the greatest sufferers during times of conflict. The youths on their part have organized joint security patrols to manage security issues in the region. They also talk to their peers and request them to surrender their arms and prevent them from carrying out community raids or fights. The community members themselves also organize inter community peace activities such as peace dances, peace sports and peace choirs. These activities enhance interactions between different communities, thus averting possible conflicts. For instance between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2003, the Turkana and Matheniko community members staged a hilarious peace dance at Moroto stadium. In 2010 at Lokichoggio, youths from both Kenyan and Ugandan communities were involved in inter peace sports.

#### **4.4 Conclusion and recommendations**

Track Three diplomacy has proved to be effective in resolving conflicts since it involves the local people themselves understand better the causes of these conflicts. They are thus in a better position of resolving them. However, this is an approach that has widely been ignored by most leaders who basically rely on the traditional diplomatic approach of the use of military to resolve the conflicts. It is thus recommended that the leaders embrace Track Three approach to address conflicts. This approach is the best method of realizing peace in the new world order.

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