TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO PEACEMAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

THE CASE OF WUNLIT, SOUTH SUDAN

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DECLARATION

I declare that the contents of the Research Article is my own work, except where acknowledged in the text, and that it has not been submitted towards a qualification at any other university.

Mariam Ayoti Kundu

ABSTRACT

This study explores how traditional conflict resolution mechanisms were used to transform the conflict between the Dinka and Nuer communities in Wunlit, south Sudan in 1999. Various people perceived, experienced and played different roles in the process. Through story telling and the sacrifice of a white bull, the two communities entered a covenant which still holds four years later. The merger of previously antagonistic liberation movements with strong Dinka and Nuer constituencies, respectively, two years after Wunlit is seen by some as a dividend of Wunlit. People-centred peacemaking processes can be credited for contributing to enduring peace.

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I trust that this is just the beginning of real learning.

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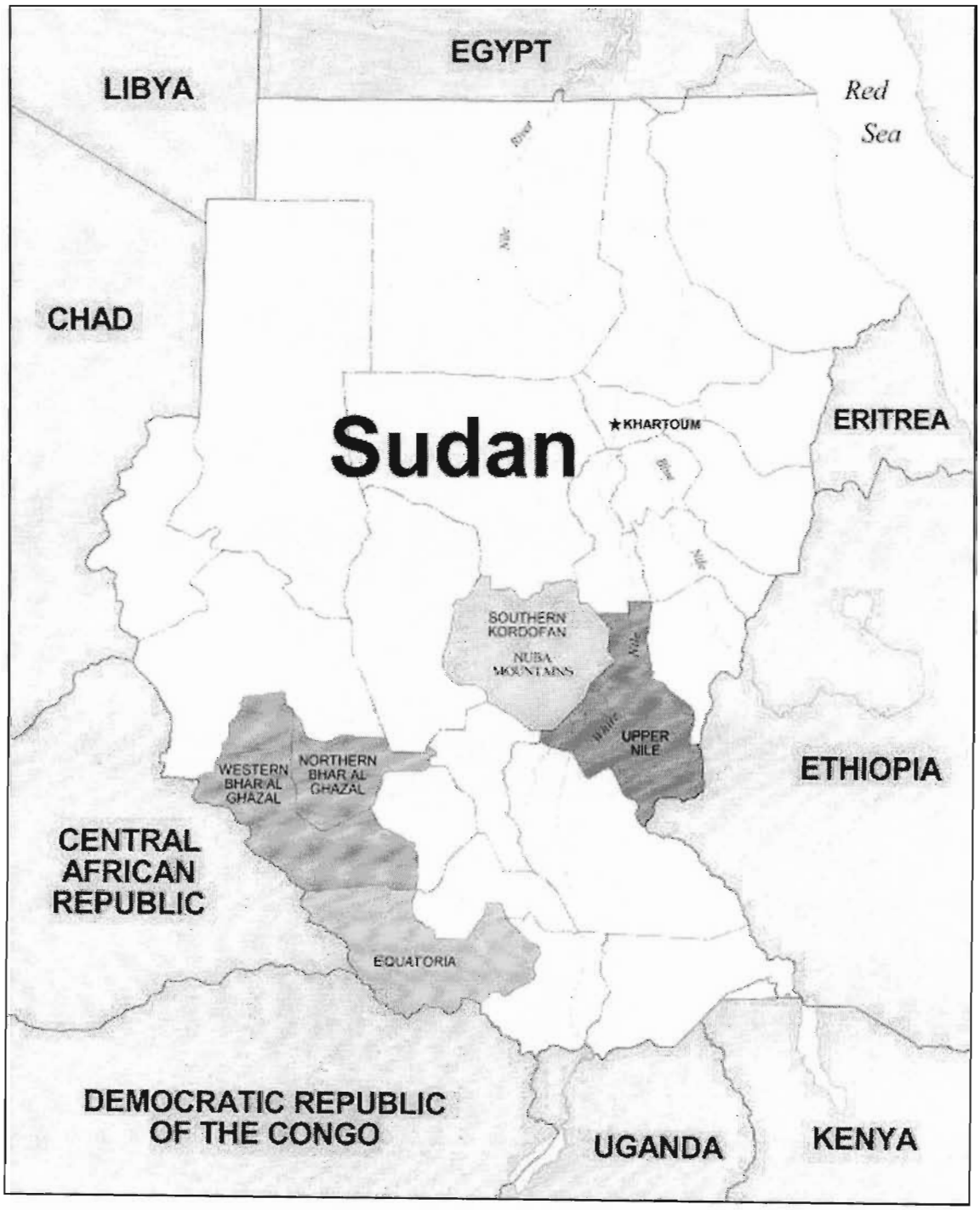
MAP OF SUDAN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OF THE CONGO
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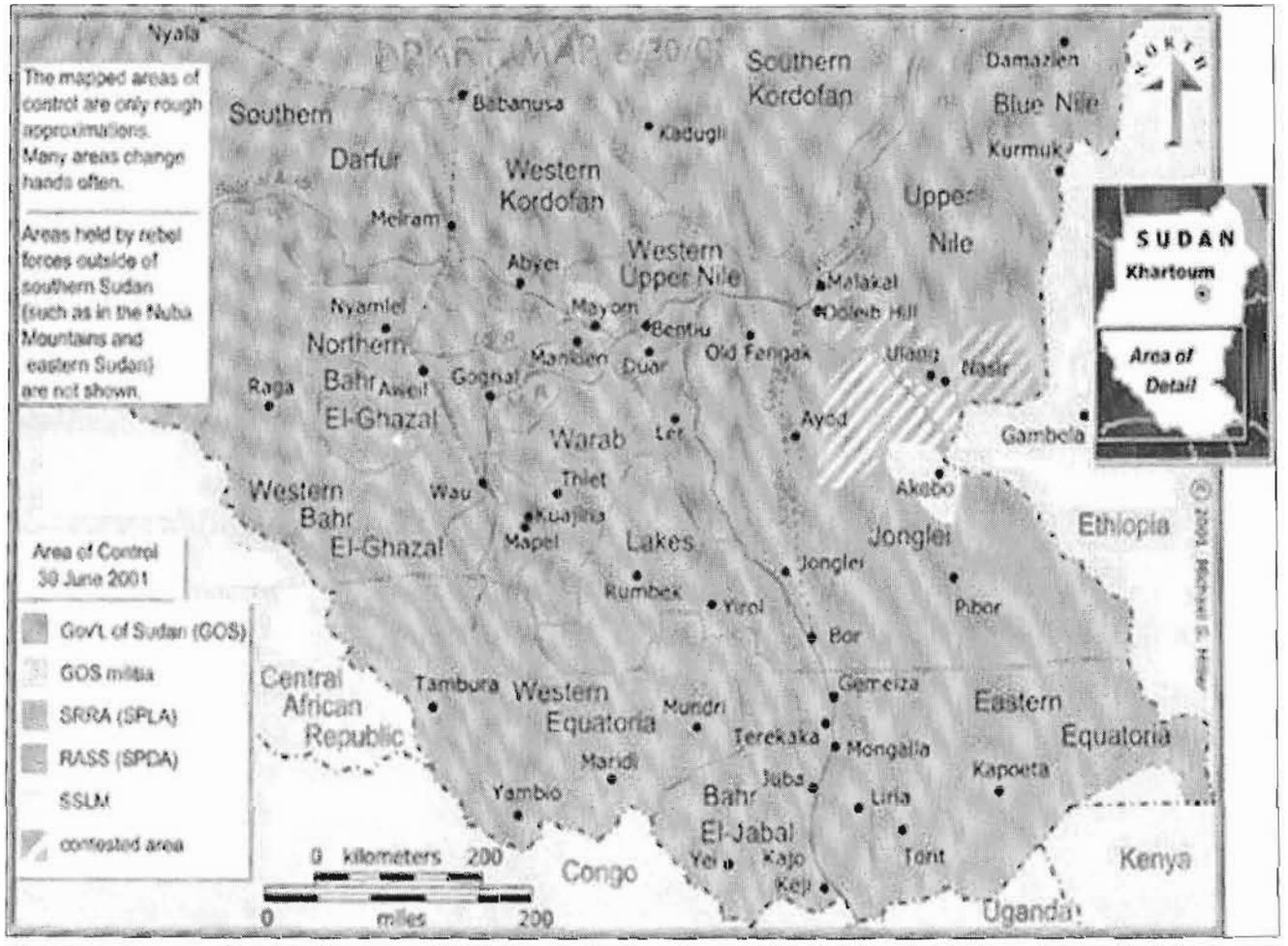
MAP SHOWING THIET (WUNLIT IS IN THIET/TONJ COUNTY)



Source: http://www.rghtsmaps.com/html/sudanmap5.html.

ABBREVIATIONS

ACCORD	African Centre for the Constructive Resolutions of Disputes
AU	African Union
IGAD	Inter Governmental Authority on Development
INGO	International Non governmental Organisations
NIF	National Islamic Front
NSCC	New Sudan Council of Churches
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
SIM/A	Sudan Independence Movement/Army
SINGO	Sudanese Indigenous Non governmental Organisations
SPLA/M	Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement
SSDF	South Sudan Defence Force
UNICEF	United Nations Childrens Fund
SSDF	South Sudan Defence Force

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Sudan is the largest country in Africa covering at least 2.5 million square kilometers. Its historical, geographical and cultural diversity is equally expansive; reflected in the hundreds of ethnic groups and languages spoken by the more than 25 million inhabitants. Race, religion and the country's vast resources (which include oil, water, minerals and expansive farmland) have become thorny issues in the ongoing conflict. Armed conflict in Sudan has been going on for two decades

Conflict is defined as a form of competitive behaviour between people or groups. It occurs when two or more people compete over perceived or actual incompatible goals or limited resources (Boulding 1962). Mwagiru (2002:3) says there exists a conflict when people have incompatible views about how to achieve their goals. This incompatibility is the basis for the conflict. The incompatible views can either be real or apparent, but in either case there is the perception of difference, which is the basis for conflict.

Weeks (1994:7) defines a conflict as "an outgrowth of the diversity that characterises our thoughts, our attitudes, our beliefs, our perceptions, and our social systems and structures. It is as much a part of our existence as is evolution. Rupesinghe (1998:27) points out that ...(W)hile individual people continue to relate to each other, but in pursuit of differing goals, there will always be conflicts of one kind or another.

Reychler & Paffenholz (2001:7) point out that the outcome of a conflict is determined by the dynamics of the interaction between the parties. In their view, some conflicts transform constructively; others end up in violent confrontation. Some are transformed in a mutually satisfactory way (win-win); others end up frustrating one or all parties involved (win-lose, lose-lose). Reychler & Paffenholz argue that in analysing conflict, one should not only make a static analysis but also a diagnosis of the conflict's dynamics.

Referring to the Sudan conflict, on one level is the broader, much known conflict between north and south between the minority National Islamic Front (NIF) regime against the Sudan

People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A). Though widely reported as a religious war between the Muslim north and Christian/animist south, the war in Sudan is highly complex. The economic and political angles to the conflict; as well as the domination of all other cultures by the Arabised culture of the north are at the root of the problem. The conflicts are at several levels: north-south, north-north, south-south and intra/inter tribal conflicts; the latter mainly in the south. There are also other groupings opposed to the NIF regime like in Darfur who, lately, have posed significant threat to the government. The communal conflicts largely have ethnicity as the underlying cause. The proximate causes of some of the conflict include scarce resources like water, food (at communal level) and skewed resource exploitation (e.g. oil exploitation at national level) which benefit a small constituency in the country (especially in the north).

Some conflicts are value based – in which values that embody culture, ideology and religion are misused by some leaders to gain political mileage. Underlying causes of conflicts are power interests according to Mwagiru (2000:3). The political elite in the north invokes Islam to justify or perpetuate their grip on power and material resources. Sudan is rich with vast resources (which include oil, minerals, fresh water of the Nile and expansive farmland). Broader issues of contention throughout the years of violent conflict between south and north include: call for recognition and acceptance (or lack of it) of racial, cultural, religious, historical and geographical diversities; call for fair and equitable sharing of power, resources and, more recently, wealth. Previous non-implementation of agreements has progressively heightened suspicion and mistrust between north and south.

Underlying causes of conflicts in general are often structural as Makumi Mwagiru (2000:23) argues. This is because the arrangements underlying relationships in society act "as the soil in which a conflict takes roots and grows". The causes often include governance, poverty, culture, ethnicity and religion. In the case of Sudan, they include all of the above as well as the issue of inequity in sharing of the country's natural resources. While distinctions can be made about the levels of conflict in the Sudan, broader questions of justice, lack of equity, freedoms and rights are central to the overall conflict.

Mwagiru distinguishes between conflicts and disputes. A conflict is about values while a dispute is about interests. Values are very deep-seated and affect our very humanity and even define our existence. Values, therefore, cannot be bargained about. Interests on the other hand

are bargainable, which is what makes value-based conflicts harder to resolve in comparison to resolving interest-based conflicts. That distinction has a bearing on the approaches that are used to manage conflict.

Cultural, geographical and linguistic diversity of the Sudan is diverse. Anthropologically and historically, people within Sudan adhere to many different traditions, each varying with unique cultural, historical and tribal orientations. It is claimed that there are at least 500 to 600 tribal groups in southern Sudan and more than 100 different languages.

Deng (cited in the *Journal of Emerging Areas*, Vol. 18 No.1 1997: 177) argues that the core of the Sudanese conflict is not so much what groups perceive themselves to be, but the projection of those self-perceptions by the ruling elite to the collective framework of the state, which thereby becomes inherently discriminatory. What therefore is contested in the Sudanese case is the definition of the country as Arab, African, Islamic or secular, in light of the implications for its political, economic, social and cultural life. Deng further argues that slavery, the policies of the colonial and administration of Britain, the christianisation of the south vis-à-vis a predominantly Muslim north, and the suppression of pan-southern identity by successive northern governments are behind the north-south conflict in Sudan.

Others like Frerichs & Bowman (2001:1) categorise the conflicts in Sudan into three: the north fighting the south, southerners fighting among themselves, and ruling clans vying for power in the north.

The catastrophic conflict has resulted in displacement of almost 4.5 million people within Sudan itself and more than 350 000 living as refugees outside Sudan according to Amnesty International (2000). Three million are estimated to have died in the fighting that has lasted two decades after a brief 10-11 year peaceful reprieve since the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972.

1.2 The research problem

Many peacemaking initiatives have ignored traditional mechanisms of peacemaking and conflict resolution. Those facilitating such initiatives have opted for models from Europe, Asia and the Americas, often sidelining cultural and value-based issues that are so critical to some of the conflicts being resolved. Barnes (2002) points to the fact that peacemaking goes

far beyond reaching a political agreement between the main parties. It is important to establish a 'pragmatic peace' between those who live side by side. By involving people at a local level in developing strategies to tackle issues that are within their capacity to address, it is possible to transform many of the factors that generate the conflict.

Malan (2000:16) notes that the current methods of conflict resolution from the West may be impressive in terms of their professional quality and their scientific foundation. However, he argues we should not allow the appeal of such contemporary material to make us forget the time-proven methods which originated on the African soil. In his view, when an overly analytical type of thinking about peacemaking and conflict resolution is used, practicality may be treated as almost isolated from theory. There may even be a tendency to regard the down-to-earth approach as inferior when compared to the high-flown intricacies of theory. When life as a comprehensive whole is taken into account, however, theory and practice are seen as correlatives, and special importance is attached to the practical implementation of theoretical insights.

The effectiveness of traditional approaches, he notes, stems from the fact that family and neighbourhood negotiation is an excellent example of "practical wisdom" which adopts a less "philosophising and more phenomenological approach". Effectiveness of traditional methods of conflict resolution is inherent in its style which emphasises sustainability of peace. This is partly because of the focus of restoration of relationships.

People have deeply rooted cultural commitments and values which have direct relevance to their lives. These should never be ignored, according to Malan, especially in Africa where people's cultural heritage forms a big part of the conflicts. The co-relation between culture and conflict is worth noting; hence the attempt to promote homegrown solutions to conflict resolution. In the case of Wunlit, two conflicting tribes, the Dinka and the Nuer, reconciled after close to 8 years of deadly conflict between them. It is from this case that this research aims to establish the extent to which traditional approaches to peacemaking and conflict resolution have a role in transforming conflict.

Malan (1997:94) notes that another constructive way of preventing and countering conflict is to promote socio-economic development. He adds that Africa's experience of imposed, foreign types of development has led to an important change in perspective and that a home-

grown version of people-centred development is being advocated, and is apparently gaining support.

1.3 The overall objective and specific aims

This research article focuses on traditional approaches to peacemaking and conflict resolution in the above context with reference to two communities. It specifically examines the case of Wunlit conference, which involved the Dinka and Nuer communities of south Sudan; and how they resolved their conflict of over eight years.

The aims of the research are as follows:

1. To briefly review the literature to provide an outline of western conflict resolution models.
2. To outline underlying values of traditional African conflict resolution and the methods used.
3. Using a case study of community conflict from South Sudan,
    (a) to describe how conflict was resolved using traditional conflict resolution approaches.
    (b) to investigate how the agreements reached were implemented and maintained.
    (c) to assess the effectiveness of traditional conflict resolution in this case study.
    (d) to investigate how the external actors who are helping to resolve the conflict have accepted/used traditional approaches compared with the Western approaches.
    (e) to consider whether the traditional approach could be replicated and/or used on a wider scale.

This research also explores the place of relationships in conflict resolution and whether or not restoration of broken relationships is addressed when traditional approaches to conflict resolution are used. Further, it argues that local capacities for peace should be promoted to sustain peace initiatives in local contexts.

1.4 Over-view of the research article

Chapter one gives general background to the Sudan context, statement of problem and objectives of the research. Sudan, the largest country in Africa with close to 25 million inhabitants has been at war for the last twenty years. Besides the north-south conflict, there

are other intra and inter-tribal conflicts as well as ideological conflicts which negate the simplification of the war in Sudan as being a north-south conflict.

The problem is that many peacemaking initiatives have ignored traditional mechanisms of peacemaking and conflict resolution. Those facilitating such initiatives have opted for models from Europe, Asia and the Americas, often sidelining cultural and value-based issues that are so critical to some of the conflicts being resolved. It is necessary to involve people at the local level in developing strategies for peace. That way, it is possible to transform many of the factors that generate the conflict. The three objectives of the research include: reviewing literature on western conflict resolution models; outlining the underlying values and methods of traditional African conflict resolution; and using the case of Wunlit in south Sudan, to describe the process of Wunlit in detail and to investigate various issues around it including: how conflict was resolved, agreement reached, effectiveness of Wunlit and consideration for replication. The place of rebuilding of relationships is explored at length.

Chapter two is largely on literature review outlining conflict models both traditional and western and the overlap between the two. Chapter three briefly outlines the research method used and how data was acquired. It also briefly outlines the limitations of the research. Chapter four details the Dinka-Nuer case. Besides highlighting a gender dimension to the process, this chapter explains about the process followed to develop resolutions that translated into a covenant between the two communities. It outlines the covenant itself and the implication of it. It is followed by Chapter five which has recommendations.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

According to Lederach (2003:23) conflict "is normal" and it is continuously present in human relationships. He further argues that "conflict impacts situations and changes things in many different ways" and those changes may be analysed in four broad categories namely personal, relational, structural and cultural. The personal aspect of conflict refers to changes affected in and desired for the individual. This involves the full person including the cognitive, emotional, perceptual and spiritual dimensions. The relational dimension represents changes in face-to-face relationships. Transformation of these kinds of conflicts refer to how patterns of communication and interaction are affected by conflict. It looks beyond the tension around the visible issues to the underlying changes produced by conflict; including patterns of how people perceive, what they desire, what they pursue and how they structure their relationships interpersonally as well as inter and intra-group.

The structural dimension highlights the underlying causes of conflict and the patterns and changes it brings about in social, political and economic structures. This aspects focus attention on how physical structures, organisations, and institutions are built, sustained, and changed by conflict. It is about the ways people build and organize social, economic, political, and institutional relationships to meet basic human needs, provide access to resources, and make decisions that affect groups, communities, and whole societies.

Lederach (2003:25) says that the descriptive level of this kind of conflict involves analysing the social conditions that give rise to conflict and the way that conflict affects change in the existing social structures and patterns of making decisions...Pursuing such change promotes developing structures that meet basic human needs (substantive justice) while maximising the involvement of people in decisions that affect them (procedural justice).

The cultural dimension refers to changes produced by conflict in the broadest patterns of group life, including identity, and the ways that culture affects patterns of response and conflict. Transformation attempts to understand how conflict affects and changes the cultural patterns of a group, and how those accumulated and shared patterns affect the way people in a given setting understand and respond to conflict. As an analytical framework, then, transformation seeks to understand social conflict as it emerges from and produces changes in the personal, relational, structural, and cultural dimensions of human experience.

2.2 Conflict models

Lederach (1999:64) observes that since the collapse of the Berlin Wall...the world community has lived through phenomenal changes...witness(ing) ongoing war and peace. Some countries have had peace accords. In those countries, governments, and the civilian population search for concepts and mechanisms to guide the process of reconstructing the torn social fabric of peoples' lives and communities.

He also adds that "there are few if any effective models of action and frameworks of thinking that emerge from the disciplines of international relations and political or social sciences. Politicians and humanitarians alike turn toward religious, philosophical, and biblically based concepts. They try to make those concepts works at a social and political level. In general, he adds that different contexts have connected reconciliation and time in distinct ways. Each culture has its strengths, and each has its challenges.

According to Getui & Kanyandago (1999:171) there is no one 'best' model to follow for peacemaking or reconciliation. The model will depend on the nature of the violence or conflict, the context and the goals. However, generally it is best to know the traditional models of mediation, problem solving or peacemaking, and, where possible, to combine aspects of these with modern ways of peacemaking and reconciliation. At least, we must be aware of the underlying values expressed in traditional rituals and call upon them where opportune. It also ensures a united front against those who used violence to promote their cause or position.

2.3 Western models: an outline

According to ACCORD (2002:36) there are different approaches to deal with conflict. The approach that is selected is usually based on the stage and type of conflict and, more

importantly, on the outcome that is required. Four ways of dealing with conflict are outlined: conflict prevention, conflict management, conflict resolution and conflict transformation.

Conflict prevention is a broad term which includes many actions that can be taken to prevent conflict from escalating into a violent outbreak. It includes: preventive diplomacy, deployment, disarmament, humanitarian action, peace building, training, policymaking and early warning systems. On the other hand, conflict management aims to manage and control an existing conflict, and prevent it from worsening and from spreading to other regions. Peacekeeping is part of this.

Conflict resolution and conflict transformation, on the other hand, attempt to address the root causes of a conflict. Conflict resolution is a shorter-term process that focuses specifically on the issues of a particular conflict. Conflict resolution implies "finding a solution to a problem" according to Lederach (2003:29). It guides our thinking toward bringing some set of events or issues, usually experienced as very painful, to an end. It focuses our attention on the presenting problems and tends to concentrate on the substance and content of the problem.

Conflict transformation connotes "the change process" and centres its attention on the context of relationship patterns. It sees conflict as embedded in the web and system of relational patterns. Transformation addresses both the episode and the epicentre of conflict. It focuses on changing the structures and institutions that keep injustice entrenched in a society and prevent peace and stability. It is closely linked to peace building in that it involves systemic transformation with a view to increasing justice and equality in the social system as a whole. Reconstruction and reconciliation are often part of conflict transformation.

David Baharvar (OJPCR:2001) highlights the insufficiency of third parties as peacemakers; where governments are finally responsible for negotiating, signing, and ratifying treaties and other agreements that may be necessary to seal a peace deal between adversaries. Yet in most cases of ethnic or sectarian conflict, track one (the official process) alone will not necessarily identify, include, or allow a full and fair hearing for all of the antagonists in a conflict according to Berkovitch (1996:167). This is because in ethnic conflicts in particular, one side or another often denies the legitimacy of the other side's existence, especially if the other side is a non-state actor such as a rebel or seceding group. Ethnic conflicts frequently centre on

"dissensual" issues over values according to Berkovitch (1996:222). Conflict resolution processes should therefore make room for intervention by others, particularly those involved in the conflict. According to Lederach (2003), you do not build a bridge starting in the middle. You start with a strong foundation on each shore and build toward the middle. When solid, others can walk across. Elsewhere, Lederach (1998) argues that there is need for comprehensive lenses to understand the complexity of cross-cutting relationships within a divided society. People in conflict know the causes of their conflict better and the nature of relationship between the conflict parties. They understand best how to resolve the conflicts and make peace between themselves, with externals only acting as facilitators.

2.4 Traditional African models of conflict Resolution

Traditional conflict resolution approaches emphasis the restoration of relationships. On the other hand, according to Malan (2000), wherever kinship or social relations in African communities are disturbed by a dispute, priority is given to restoring relations. When there are disputing parties, their supporters and the elders concerned engage in talking a matter through, it is usually the issue of relationships, which receives attention. The relationships of the past are reviewed, the tense relationships of the current conflict are investigated, and the success of any settlement is often based on whether or not it would improve future relations. Not only direct and obvious relationships are taken into account, but also the more indirect relationship that may have a cross-stitching potential (cf. Witty 1980:6, Deng 1996:15).

This is corroborated by Amoo (1992), who adds that whenever an elder from a family, village or clan becomes involved in the talks, the traditional objectives are to move away from accusations and counter accusations, to soothe hurt feelings and to reach a compromise that may help improve future relations. The talks take place in the open, and not behind closed doors, which signifies that frank, transparent negotiating is expected and that hidden agendas are discouraged. People meet in their living environment in order to talk, listen, think, discuss and plan. Special provision is not made for lots of paper work or for high technology gadgets.

Elsewhere, Lederach (1999:63) notes that experience of deep pain, broken relationships, victimisation, and violence leaves within us a sense of void, anger and powerlessness. People experience deep pain, turmoil, and loss. In response, they build layers of protection and insulation. They do this to deal internally with their experience and to defend themselves

externally from further anguish and violence. However the work of reconciliation calls for relationships and a journey through those layers of isolation.

2.5 Overlaps between modern and traditional models of conflict resolution

In spite of all the experience and expertise within Africa, people of Africa have shown, and are still showing, a remarkable willingness to learn from people in the rest of the world, according to Malan (1997:99). This has already happened during the colonial period (cf Omotoseo 1994:16-20), but after the liberation from colonialism, and after experiments with various versions of independent state formations, there seems to be a growing openness and receptiveness to input from abroad. On some occasions this has been clearly expressed (cf Moussa 1996:5), but mostly it becomes manifest when imported methods of conflict resolution are simply adopted, with or without adaptations, as useful and effective methods (cf pp16, 19).

Malan (1997:100) encourages "further searching and researching into all possible conflict resolution wisdom from Africa" as well as exploring ways in which wisdom from elsewhere can be appropriately integrated with Africa's own wisdom.

As observed by Nkiwane (cited in Boulding,1992:30), Africa needs to develop a philosophy of self-reliance to the point where it will no longer judge itself on the basis of images held by others. The one thing Africa needs most entering the twenty-first century is self-respect. That will not come about as long as Africa looks at itself through the eyes of other regions of the world. Only by learning to accept itself, and its problems, can Africa hope to renew its contributions to world civilization in the twenty first century.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Methodological justification

This is an ethnographic research, qualitative in nature and aims to provide an in-depth description of a particular case of peacemaking within a traditional context. It is also exploratory in nature and no hypothesis has been formulated. Instead, some general ideas and expectations have been used to guide the research. The research briefly reviews one case of a peacemaking process which brought together ordinary people to resolve their conflict is being used to contribute to the debate of whether it is possible (or useful) to use such a process to resolve other conflicts. The research aims to stimulate further research and discussion on this particular issue.

As pointed out by Mitchell (1989:10) there is no sense in which a single case can be used to generate an analytical framework or set of hypothesis. The two crucial questions to this research are (a) whether this case helps to provide a coherent account of a conflict resolution process that used traditional mechanisms and (b) whether the case helps to generate sufficient questions that can be used to generate a hypothesis that, can be used checked in relation to other cases, thus moving towards a general theory of peacemaking. Ideas in this research article are presented as a starting point for further investigation on the topic.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

Secondary data was sourced from reports, articles, conference notes on the people-to-people peace process, mostly found in the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) and the internet. Semi-structured interviewing, participant observation and feedback group discussion were used to collect data. A random sample was used to identify respondents for in-depth interviews while purposeful sampling was used to identify respondents in the feedback group discussion. Those interviewed for the feedback session were from International Non Governmental Organisations (INGO), Sudanese Indigenous Organisations (SINGOs) and a church institution. Eight respondents were interviewed individually. They were: two chiefs who were also elders, two women's representatives and a representative for the youth from both Dinka and Nuer communities. Six respondents were interviewed in the feedback session

representing the church, administration an NGO sector and an external actor/donor representative

Analytic induction (Znianiecki); and grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss) analysis were then applied, deriving some in-depth insights and establishing rapport with the respondents. Analysis took place simultaneously as data was collected, interpreted, cross-checked and verified.

Interpretation of the data

Out of the interviews, it is clear that people are very much in charge and also they realise their power even though it may seem unacknowledged by other actors such as the politicians and some external actors. What people seem to lack is a channel through which they can reflect their feeling to those that matter. They also indicated how important it is that they are involved in processes (whether development or peace-related) so that they can take responsibility and thus the possibility of their sustainability.

Limitation of the data

The results of this research cannot be generalised to apply to the whole of south Sudan or Sudan for that matter; partly due to non-standardisation of measurement and sampling. Data collection and analysis were also time consuming and due to the difficulty of accessing sites, the researcher had to make do with information sources that were accessible.

The researcher snatched whatever opportunity that was available to catch up with respondents, some in Nairobi while on other missions. While not diminishing the value of what was received from the respondents who kindly agreed to be interviewed, the research article would have been even more enriched had I had opportunity to interview a wider selection of respondents.

There were also limitations imposed by the physical distance of the research as well as time and logistical limitations. This impacted negatively on the number of people that could be interviewed. The other difficulty was the time warp; the case was based on a case that took place four years back. Due to some perceived limitations of Wunlit (like unfulfilled promises to provide service to the affected – one of the resolutions from the conference), in some cases, the mention of Wunlit evoked negative feelings. Besides, many other peacemaking

processes have taken place since Wunlit. Some of the people would have rather talked about the more recent peacemaking examples. In many ways, a lot about the recent processes was often compared to the Wunlit case.

It is worth highlighting here that this was not a funded study. The researcher depended on goodwill of organisations and individuals to facilitate the work. Travel in and out of south Sudan is largely by chartered flight and the cost is very high. Communication (both in terms of infrastructure and telecommunication) is difficult. Cost considerations therefore limited the researcher to go to more places than one as was the case. It was an expensive exercise. Due to some of those considerations, I started to collect material as early as July 2002 during internship since I already had settled on my research topic.

It is also worth noting that information sharing in the context of Sudan is restricted to a large extent. Being a war zone, there are several gate keeping strategies that are used by the authorities to keep a tab on people. As much as I shared with respondents the reason for collecting the information, a few were uneasy. In a sense, the information that was collected (through translation) may have some limitations.

Lastly, personal bias on the part of the researcher and lack of rigour in analysis are also, potentially, sources of error. By choosing to study this particular case (due to certain perceptions by myself) and by choosing what data to collect, observe or select and/or ignore (as designed in the questionnaire) contribute to potential errors. However, I should also underline that all due caution was taken to ensure that data was collected, coded and analysed as professionally as the circumstances would allow.

CHAPTER 4
TRADITIONAL PEACEMAKING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION: THE WUNLIT

4.1 Brief historical background of the Sudan conflict

The first civil war in Sudan (referred to as *Anya Nya* I) began in 1955, before independence after a mutiny. Both the military regime of 1958 and subsequent civilian successor of 1964 tried to quell the problem by military means. It only intensified the war. General Jaffer Nimeiri seized power in 1969 and three years later, the war ended with the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972. It promised a level of autonomy for the south with its own parliament, education system, religion and language. The period between 1972 and 1983 was calm but no real development went on in the south as had been promised. Due to lack of sufficient safeguards (apart from the personal assurances of Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia) the Agreement collapsed. After Selassie's overthrow, then Sudan's President Jaffer Nimeiri sought different alliances to remain in power.

In 1983, Nimeiri re-divided the south into three regions; later that year in September he imposed the "September Laws" based on Islamic *Shari'a*. The second civil war (referred to as *Anya Nya* II) began then. Various initiatives have since been going on to try and resolve this conflict which pits the Khartoum regime against rebel political forces like the SPLA/M, northern-based National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and others. The Inter Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) led initiative seems presently the most active negotiation framework of negotiating for a settlement.

The Dinka-Nuer conflict

On one level, the Sudan conflict that is known is that between north and south, between the minority National Islamic Front (NIF) regime against the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M). Though widely reported as a religious war between the Muslim north and Christian/animist south, the war in Sudan is more complex. The conflicts are at several levels: north-south, north-north, south-south and intra/inter tribal conflicts; the latter mainly in the south. There are also other groupings opposed to the NIF regime like in Darfur who lately are posing significant threat to the government. The Dinka-Nuer conflict would fall into the category of ethnic conflicts; some of which were encouraged by those in power.

The Dinka and Nuer people have for generations lived side by side as neighbours and shared common grazing grounds, water points and they even inter-married. They have a common history and follow similar norms, celebrations and community practices due to a shared ancestry and various aspects of their similar agro-pastoralist ways of life.

According to Nikkel (2001:23) "the Dinka comprise the largest ethnic group in the Republic of Sudan, their population estimated at between one and two million. Traditionally the Dinka say that, 'One does not ask a man the number of his cattle or the number of his children,' a factor which militates against accurate statistics. In 1961 Lienhardt used a figure of 900 000, based on *The Report of the Jonglei Investigation Team (Divinity, 1).* Deng (1978) estimated nearly three million while the 1956 census described a country with 14 million inhabitants comprising 572 ethnic groups of whom the Dinka numbered about two million. The 1983 census set the national population at 25 million with 2 million Dinka. Effects of civil war make precise estimates difficult.

While more than 24 tribal groupings may be distinguished among the people, they are more striking for their widespread cultural and linguistic homogeneity. They share their closest physical and cultural affinities with neighbouring Nilotic peoples, the Nuer and Shilluk, and like them, supplement pastoral pursuits with seasonal cultivation.

Cattle are integral to the economic, social and religious life of the Dinka, and provide the basic metaphors of self-understanding. The significance of cattle among the Dinka is described by Nikkel (2001:25) who say: The Dinka exist with their cattle in a virtually symbiotic relationship, neither able to survive, let alone flourish, in an inhospitable land apart from the other. With almost every aspect of material life derived from cattle, and the cycle of seasonal migration keeping man and beast in unbroken contact, cattle are in many ways perceived as a reflection of the human community. Each animal is known by name, according to such characteristics as sex, colour, markings, or the shape of its horns. Its lineage and previous owners are recalled and are often recited during negotiations. He also explains the blood sacrifice which he explains is "the central religious ceremony".

In the eyes of the Dinka their oxen, selected according to colour symbolism, sex, and age, are perfectly suited as sacrificial victims. Ceremonies occur most frequently during autumn when life is more relaxed, the harvest is finished and grain plentiful for the brewing of beer. While

some sacrifices are performed annually for the welfare of an entire community, others are attached to immediate needs for purification, healing, absolution and the lifting of guilt, reconciliation and restoration of peace. Given the interdependence between human and cattle life, these rights generally seek the well being of both. In sacrifice an ox represents all of those who have assembled for these social relationships. Meat is apportioned to various groups according to status, sex, and age, a portion being reserved for the wider community as well. Not to be neglected are various divinities whose portions are placed at their shrines.

Nikkel (2001) further observes that ...the Dinka are broadly dismissive of other peoples and their cultures, particularly those who possess no cattle. Nevertheless, when aliens enter their land they are received with respect and hospitality, and if they persevere on Dinka terms, may ultimately be integrated into society.

This harmonious co-existence (in this case with the Nuer), however, has been destroyed by the ongoing war. For political survival, various political interests, both in the north and south of the country, exploited the ethnic diversity of the people, causing animosity between and among neighbours. Resulting divisions were used to manipulate one tribe against another for political survival of a few elite. Northerners dominate the politics in the Sudan and successive regimes, since the country's independence in 1956, have popularised Arabisation and Islamisation policies, a situation that has been resisted by the south. It is one of the reasons for armed resistance by the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M) against the government in Khartoum.

Before the clashes between the Dinka and Nuer took on a political angle, conflicts between the two communities initially revolved around competition over economic resources like cattle, land in relation to grazing grounds, fishing ponds and other communal points of interaction. Clashes over land rights and cattle seldom lasted for longer than a few days. But then, they were resolved using traditional conflict resolution mechanisms.

As the political rivalry between the two groups intensified, so did the conflict between the two communities. Neighbours turned into foe and traditional ways of life, values and customs counted for nothing as the rivalry and a bloody war erupted between the two factions and by extension to the two communities. Individuals, families and communities turned against each

other in a fight for survival, competing for the scarce resources and struggling for power and control.

The beneficiary of this infighting was the government, which began arming anti-SPLA/M commanders and warlords throughout the south in order to weaken it. The government also fuelled and exploited rivalries among Riak Machar's (then the undisputed leader of the Nuer) own forces, dividing them into different groupings. Law and order collapsed totally in Nuer areas as various factions turned against each other, killing, burning down whole villages and towns. There were also divisions and infighting within the SPLM/A and these had disastrous consequences. The 1997/8 famine that killed an estimated 50,000 people in south Sudan, especially in the West bank, was largely politically driven.

With such political manipulation, ethnicity has been a weapon conveniently used by elites to keep themselves in power. Cattle raids, in the traditional sense, between the Dinka and Nuer communities in the south were common but were mostly carried out to meet economic challenges like paying dowry, and restocking. This however changed especially as sophisticated weapons took over from arrows and bows. Ethnicity was (and to some extent still is) often used for political expediency. For example during early 1990s, the government of Sudan adopted "divide and conquer" tactics to incite and fuel the divisions that had resulted in a split of the main rebel movement, the SPLM and army. Unfortunately, the split was characterised as being between the two largest ethnic groups in the south: the Nuer aligned with Riak Machar and Kerubino Kwanyin Bol under Sudan Independence Movement/Army (SIM/A) and the Dinka under the leadership of John Garang under SPLM/A. The movements had significant numbers of other tribes though often, they were characterised as "Dinka" or "Nuer" –based. They have since merged.

> "In the last seven years of factional fighting with particularly intense conflict between Dinka and Nuer, the key chiefs and church leaders from both sides had never been able to come together and talk. The conflict has resulted in thousands of deaths, including women and children, and hundreds of cattle killed and raided. The destruction has been so great that on the west side of the Nile a 50-100 mile wide "no man's land" has developed all along the border of Dinkaland and Nuerland. It contains some of the richest grazing lands and the best fishing lakes which right now even with the famine, can't be fished

because of the danger of fighting...This is the most intense famine zone. In a strange twist, such incredible suffering has now created an opportunity for peacemaking between Dinka and Nuer. If they can resolve issues, reconcile their relationships and at times unite against outside attacks, it could transform the conflict that is the most critical root cause of the current famine."

Many initiatives took place to reconcile the various political groups in general and the SIM/A, SPLM/A and various other political groupings that emerged. It took close to eight years to get the two communities to resolve their conflict. This research is interested in the Wunlit initiative that restored cordial relationship between the two communities.

A gender dimension

According to Held in her article *Gender as an influence on cultural norms relating to war and the environment*, gender structures divide society more deeply and fundamentally than does class or race (Harding, 1983; Jaggar, 1983). She also argues that gender is a powerful influence on cultural norms of every kind...in virtually all known societies, men have been the dominant gender. They usually organize society in hierarchical ways such that some men have more power than others. The status of a woman depends upon that of the man with whom she is associated, but remains subordinate to his. All men appear to be united in a shared relationship of dominance over their women (Hartmann: 1981), which is the crux of a patriarchal society (Thorne:1982).

Malan (1997:93) notes that elders, of both genders, may make meaningful contributions to preventing conflicts. Their mature experience can enable them to observe early warning signals in their families or neighbourhoods, and respond tactfully, creatively and wisely. He adds that the interest and involvement if the people around the disputants are usually not regarded as unnecessary nuisances. In certain circumstances or at particular stages their participation may be less obvious, but in some way or another it is almost always implied or incorporated. It may clearly return to the foreground when the community takes part in affirming an agreement and monitoring its implementation.

Stiehm (1982:50) notes that women have long practised non-violent conflict resolution in their family lives and they have long been active, and outstandingly so, in a wide variety of peace activities according to Brock-Utne (1985). According to the two authors, it may well

turn out that gender structure is the single most relevant feature of social life to be changed in order to reduce the risks of war.

4.2 The process: Wunlit Dinka Nuer Conference[1]

The Wunlit Peace conference which was facilitated by the New Sudan Council of Churches, and supported by the SPLM/A brought together people from the six Dinka and Nuer counties bordering one another on the West Bank of the Nile River. Thirty delegates were invited from each county – making a total of 360 official delegates – 180 Dinka and 180 Nuer representatives. Each county selected delegates so that there were 15 chiefs and 15 other leading persons including representatives of traditional leaders, women and youth. All were crucial in the peacemaking process; playing different roles.

Each of the teams also came with an entourage of advisory and support persons – chiefs, elders, spear masters, women, youth, ethnic militias, church leaders – raising the total number to well over 1,000 persons. In addition, numerous observers were invited to the conference. Local authority officials were involved, including the SPLM County Commissioners and the Executive Directors from each county as well as the military and security personnel. External observers included church leaders, representatives of sponsors, donors and several reporters. In addition, six Nuer chiefs and two Murle chiefs from the East bank of the Nile were also invited with the hope of encouraging them to undertake similar peace initiatives in their respective areas.

> "The Wunlit Conference opened with the ceremonial sacrifice of a large white bull, provided by the chief of Wunlit, Gum Mading. The opening ceremony also included Christian worship led by Dinka and Nuer church leaders followed by words of blessings from traditional spiritual leaders. Welcoming speeches were made by NSCC Executive Secretary Dr. Haruun Ruun, Deputy Chairman of the SPLM/A Commander Salva Kiir Mayardit, Governor Nhial Deng Nhial of Baher el Ghazal, Commissioners of Tonj and Leer, and women leaders from Dinka and Nuer. The conference closed with the signing of the Wunlit Dinka-Nuer Covenant and Resolutions. Each person placed his or her thumb print on the final document

[1] Information on this section is largely sourced from documents, articles and archival materials from the New Sudan Council of Churches.

and some also chose to sign. The covenant was sealed with Christian worship, traditional sacrifice of a bull and festivities."[2]

Day one of the Wunlit conference begun with the sacrifice of *mabior,* the white bull, which is a sign of commitment to peace and communal reconciliation. It combined traditional reciprocates and influences in peacemaking, and used symbolism of tradition to the southern Sudanese people and Christian practices[3]. This is an important stage, for according to Barnes (2002), it can be disempowering and unproductive to invite people to attend meetings if they do not understand the operating procedures of the relevant mechanism.

The meeting hall held 400 people during the peacemaking sessions, with a multitude of up to 2,000 persons crowding and milling around outside, peering in and listening to the proceedings on a solar-powered sound system. In African worldview according to Getui & Kanyandago (1999), relationships, participation, and community are the larger and more important realities as exemplified by many different proverbs. For instance as Tswana saying goes, "a person is a person through other people". Everyone was, by extension, a participant.

Process used to develop resolutions[4]

Issues were identified in four ways namely: storytelling and issue identification, working groups, synthesis and plenary presentations and consensus building and approval of covenant.

Storytelling and issue identification

"The Dinka and the Nuer people sit in a meeting hall talking... the room is buzzing with murmured words. Women come together their arms linked about one another. They stand on the stage. First a Dinka woman leads the singing then a Nuer woman begins another chant. The songs are traditional songs that are sung at the beginning of peace conferences. They are so familiar that translation is not necessary. The rhythm and melody communicate the intent. The second part is the part of the truth; starting usually on the second day, after a day of celebration and reflection, the people who are gathered at the conference begin to speak of the wrongs that have been committed

[2] Official brief at the end of the conference
[3] Inside Sudan: The story of People-to-people Peacemaking in Southern pg. 62
[4] Derived from notes on the Conference, NSCC archive

against them. The Nuer and the Dinka do this because they believe that reconciliation is possible only after the truth has been shared"[5].

In the peacemaking process, a little more than a full day was given to either side to tell their stories to the other. This phase involves story telling. First one side is given a chance to tell the stories of the atrocities committed against them. Then the other side is given a chance to do the same and to respond. It is a painful time, when each speaker recalls their loss and pain. It is tense. Those telling stories will recount atrocities and name the people who committed them. Each tribe is given an equal amount of time to share their grievances.

A Nuer Woman by the name of Deborah stood to speak. "You the Nuer and the Dinka women, and even those from outside, I want to ask the men this question. What I ask is how come that since the creation of the earth, whether the whole history any man has died with a child in his womb. I am not asking for an answer, but I want you to think about it. Be quiet! And consider this question. Has any man ever felt the great pains of (going into) labour? Women, we alone know the pain of giving birth, and our words and our thoughts must be taken seriously. Do not ignore the importance of our words! You Dinka and Nuer, don't often consider the thoughts of women. But today hear us clearly, concerning all children that have died. I am saying this because while you are in discussion we will be watching you carefully. If you don't ultimately take our words seriously, then you must understand we will make a revolution, and we will stop giving birth. I know you men are laughing because you say you are married through payment of bride-price over which women have no power to make a revolution against you. However, we are speaking today, not as the women of the past." By the time this woman sat down, the men had stopped laughing and their faces were serious. The women faced them together now, and their words were to be taken seriously.[6]

At this point, the role of the moderator is extremely important so that s/he keeps the discussion as formal and peaceful as possible. There is the chance that it might break down into accusatory and personalised attacks. Despite the potential of anger and hatred, the talks

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[5 & 6] Inside Sudan: The story of People-to-people Peacemaking in Southern Sudan 64

continued peacefully. There are stories of raids, battles, abduction, rape and slavery. The old wounds of past are reopened. The meeting hall is awash with memories, tears, and sadness.

As noted by Getui & Kanyadango (1999), reconciliation is a spiritual exercise that takes place between the individual person and God through "storytelling", but because the story is shared with other members of the community, there is not only reconciliation with God and self, but also with neighbour. Each person tells their story in their own way, focusing on joys and sorrows, failures and successes, pardon and forgiveness, with no time limit. All the others listen carefully...refraining from interrupting, judging and giving advice. When the storyteller has finished, everyone gives thanks and praise to God, or bursts into song. Readings from the bible bring God's word to bear on the story telling and reconciliation.

According to Lederach (1999:3), Truth, in the context of conflict, is about remembering—what to remember and how to remember. Truth casts her eyes toward the past. Justice is about what can be done now to rebalance a broken relationship. For Getui & Kayandago (1999:174), both perpetrator and victim of violence must be involved in the difficult virtue of forgiveness, asking for it or giving it. If the victim cannot forgive, he or she can be a prisoner of fear or hate. It is as if one is chained, dragged down, burdened, restricted mentally and spiritually. Victims who forgive free themselves from the oppressor and reconnect with the larger community. They add, "granting forgiveness frees one from being haunted by the experience. It also enables someone to work for true justice and peace.

After this "confession session", a day was given for dialogue and rebuttal comments, from border chiefs and observations from chiefs who had come as observers from the east Bank of the Nile River. Thereafter, together the people identify the contentious issues between them and responses to issues raised. The three and half days of speaking generated a list of issues which was put to groups for further discussion.

Working groups and synthesis

Issues of conflict were identified and the facilitating team divided them into six key areas:

1. Missing persons and marriages (relating to those abducted during the conflict).
2. Reclaiming the land and rebuilding relationships.
3. Institutional arrangements.
4. Monitoring of borders.

5. Those not in the peace process – reaching out to the excluded (this related to other actors, who even though not at the conference, were viewed as crucial to the process if it was to succeed).
6. Extending the peace to other areas of Sudan (in particular to East Bank of the Nile and Equatoria).

With the help of a facilitator and rapporteur, the groups identified the critical concerns as listed above went ahead to propose ways of resolving them.

Plenary presentations and consensus building and approval of covenant

This is the phase when those participants commit themselves to resolve the conflict between them. On this basis, agreements on actions for peace were reached and a covenant signed. The participants also resolved to abide by the jointly agreed resolutions, roles and responsibilities identified.

Evans-Pritchard (cited in Ruun's paper, 1995:9) explains that the most important elements to the people of Southern Sudan tribal disputes are:

1. The desire of the disputants to settle their dispute.
2. The sanctity of the chief's person and his traditional role of mediator.
3. Full and free discussion leading to a high measure of agreement between all present. The feeling that a man can give way to the chief ad elders without loss of dignity where he would not have given way to his opponents.
4. Recognition by the losing party of the justice of the other party's case.

He adds, "...the rules and procedures of settling disputes tend to replace old, discredited relationships with new ones that are more conducive to cooperation. However, he adds, when traditional rules of conflict become outdated or are inadequate for resolving conflicts in a peaceful manner, most societal disputes tend to escalate, involving additional individuals, classes, and even the whole group. The result is confrontation and widespread violence. The society then begins to review all its old procedures and processes of conflict settlement. Dialogue and cooperation are sought, along with a framework for accountability. Signs of genuine desire for reconciliation are looked into..."[7]

[7] Taken from a paper by Dr. Haruun Ruun: An Evaluation of past local efforts to settle conflicts and how exiled Sudanese can take the initiative. March/April, 1995:pp 3

Mugambi (as cited in Getui & Kanyandago, 1999:4-5) say African philosophers and theologians contrast the fragmented world-view of the west with that of Africa adding that the traditional worldview is holistic, blending the spiritual and material organically. In contrast, modernization has compartmentalized reality to the extent that morality and religion are divorced from politics, economics and aesthetics. He adds that while in the West justice is the over-riding umbrella under which peace, reconciliation and unity fit, peace is probably the major all-embracing value in Africa. Peace means life and the continuation of life. Peace means good relationships with the living, ... with God, with the dead and with the yet unborn. For Africans reconciliation aims at overcoming or healing brokenness.

The final phase – taking the peace home – come after a brief sermon. The discussions close with a prayer that God may bless the continued work of the participants returning home. The participants pray that the message of peace will be well received by all who hear it and that it might be sustainable. The closing blessing goes like "*May the peace of God that passes all understanding Go with us .... Amen*".

According to Getui & Kanyandago (ed. 1999:178), there are many different rituals and symbols of reconciliation, whether it is breaking a stick, green leaf, ... gathering at a reconciliation tree. Reconciliation according to the two usually ends up with a meal in which all those present share. John (1993:37) notes the similarity of an African reconciliation process and meal to that of the Christian Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist.

4.3 The Wunlit Dinka-Nuer Covenant/Agreement

Following is the Covenant that was agreed upon after the five days' conference:

Dinka and Nuer church, civil and community leaders, elders, women and youth have met in a peace and reconciliation meeting in Wunlit Bahr el Ghazal, Sudan under the auspices of the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC). We have established this Covenant of peace and reconciliation and declare an end to seven and half years of intense conflict.

We the participants hereby make and adopt the following Covenant and pledge ourselves to observe and implement it scrupulously and conscientiously in keeping with the solemn vows of peace, reconciliation and co-existence. We initiated our conference with the sacrifice of

the White bull (*Mabior Thon /Tu boh*) and have sealed the Covenant in Christian worship and traditional sacrifice.

We declare the following:

- All hostile acts shall cease between Dinka and Nuer whether between their respective military forces or armed civilians. A permanent cease-fire is hereby declared between the Dinka and the Nuer people with immediate effect.
- Amnesty is hereby declared for all offences against people and property committed prior to 1st September 1999 involving Dinka and Nuer on the West Bank of the Nile River.
- Freedom of movement is affirmed and inter-communal commerce, trade, development and services encouraged.
- Local cross border agreements and movement are encouraged and shall be respected.
- It is hereby declared that border grazing lands and fishing grounds shall be available immediately as shared resources.
- Displaced communities are encouraged to return to their original homes and rebuild relationships with their neighbours.
- The spirit of peace and reconciliation this covenant represents must be extended to all southern Sudan.

All Resolutions adopted by the conference are hereby incorporated into this covenant. We appeal to the SPLM/A and the USDF/SSDF to endorse, embrace and assist in implementation of this covenant and its Resolutions. We appeal to the international community to endorse, embrace and assist in implementation of this covenant and its resolutions.

An analysis of the covenant brings up the following critical points.

- Participation by as many people as possible irrespective of age, gender, background. Everyone has a role to play and everyone's contribution is important. They should be given a chance to say what they want to say.
- People are able to make decisions about critical issues concerning them. In this case, those at the conference made and adopted the covenant by themselves (with support of facilitators); declaring a ceasefire and cessation of hostilities, declaring amnesty for

past crimes and committing themselves to observe and implement the covenant that they had put together.

- Religion and tradition both had a role to play in the process. The sacrifice of the white bull or *mabior* at the beginning and sealing the covenant with traditional sacrifice and worship highlights this factor.
- The role of external actors (including the international community and donors) is highlighted as being supportive not substituting or replacing that of the local people. The role is that of assisting to implement the covenant.

4.4 Implications of the agreement: an assessment of the agreement

Ownership and participation

Majority of respondents said that the "success" of the Wunlit process was largely due to the fact that it was a "people's" process. According to Bishop of Yirol, Nathaniel Garang[8], the Wunlit conference involved everyone and this in itself was critical for the sustainability of the covenant. In his view, involvement of everyone is important. He singled out three categories of people: women, youth and elderly as being the most affected by the war and so spoke out without fear, calling for its end.

"The women are the most affected by the war; they feel the pain of losing their children, the are deserted by husbands who are away fighting in the war, they and their daughters are raped, they feel the pain of the war," he says. On the other hand, the youth are the ones who do the active fighting. They bear the brunt of the frontlines. The elders too suffer because when the villages are attacked, often the old people are left behind because they are not able to escape. They are also most affected in times of need because they are not able to go out and fend for themselves.

Sarah Yar Mabet from Yirol County attended the Wunlit conference. When I asked her[9] what differences she had observed regarding pre and post Wunlit and her feeling about relations between the Dinka and Nuer in the two periods, she was emphatic that the Wunlit Covenant "has saved the lives of many, especially women". She said that people from both sides now live in harmony and that the general population is "relieved" because they no longer live in

[8] Interview of 4th November 2003
[9] Interview of 10th November 2002

fear of imminent attacks. In her words, "reconciliation does not speak lies" which is why she feels that the covenant has lasted as long. Those who were at Wunlit were serious about what they committed themselves to.

Deborah is a Nuer who has been living in Pagarau, Yirol for a while. Pagarau is in Dinka territory. She applauded [10] Wunlit and what it has done for the people. "We have been welcome here and our hosts are very kind to us. They have given us a place to stay. We (the women) no longer fear going to fields for fear of attacks. It is because of Wunlit (agreement) which forbid fighting. Our children who had been abducted were returned, those from the other (Dinka) side were also returned. It has helped us a lot, this Wunlit"[11].

In Chief Agar's view[12], the unity between the Dinka and Nuer rebel movements (SSIM and SPLM/A) at the beginning of 2002 was largely a dividend of the Wunlit spirit. He observed that what is needed is for the political leaders to go back home to the elders to bless and sanction their intentions and agreements. Chief Agar explained that the two communities now live harmoniously alongside each other. "We share what we have and they (the Nuer) have no problems. If there are problems, they are between individuals, not the whole tribe as was the case before".

He also explained when the conflict between the two communities was at its peak, abduction of women, girls and children were common on both sides. After the reconciliation at Wunlit, he says that previously abducted children were given back to their fathers. A Dinka man does not easily leave his child to go away with the mother to another man's home. However, because some of the children were not their "legal" children, they had to let go out of respect for the covenant. Regarding girls who had married (some of them forcefully, some out of the circumstances of war), elders had facilitated the formalisation of their marriages and dowry paid to their parents according to custom. This gives the marriages and the women dignity. In Chief Agar's view, all these things were honoured by the people because the people themselves are the ones who proposed them.

Following Wunlit, some abductees and cattle were returned, violators of the covenant

[10] Interview of July 2002. Chief Agar is a Dinka from Yirol.
[11] Interview with displaced women from Nuer in July 2002
[12] Interview of July 2002.

arrested and punished, trading routes between the two communities were opened, some Nuer who had been displaced were peacefully received in Dinka area, and the two communities have been sharing fishing and grazing fields and opening inter-tribal schools[13].

Commenting on the issue of participation by the people in processes such as Wunlit, John Ashworth[14] points out that the traditional approach to resolving conflict is "process-oriented" and tends to involve as everyone. People are allowed to talk as long as they want; unlike in western type peacemaking processes where one is expected to make his/her point as concisely as possible. The apparent frustration and impatience that sometimes results on either side may be because of this difference in cultural backgrounds which is not often appreciated.

Decision making by the people

Nearly all respondents identified their own role in the peacemaking process and identified with it because of their own perceived commitment to make it work. Chief Agar of Yirol[15] is one of one of the elders who was at Wunlit in 1999 and actively participated. In his view, it is because people themselves proposed the contents of the covenant that they felt they were bound by it. "As chiefs, we have been active reinforcing what we passed at Wunlit. Anyone found violating what we agreed is dealt with by the laid down procedures in the community." It is easy to enforce the agreement because people discussed and reached the agreement. Implementing and enforcing therefore becomes a matter of duty. According to Chief Agar, "the people love the covenant that is why they don't destroy it. They partook in creating it, which is why they feel bound and responsible for it".[16]

Bishop Nathaniel Garang[17] spoke of the background meetings and discussions that church leaders and elders held with those in authority much earlier than Wunlit. It was the Chiefs' meeting that was held in Lokichoggio, Kenya in 1998 that laid the foundation for the bigger meeting. According to the Bishop, the elders' interest was to have wider participation and involvement of the people in finding a solution to eh conflicts that seemed to engulf them. In his view, people's participation is necessary because "without the support of the people, they

[13] NSCC documents.
[14] Interview on 6th November 2003. Mr. Ashworth is an analyst on Sudan with long work experience in Sudan.
[15] Interview with Chief Agar in July 2002.
[16] Interview of July 2002
[17] Interview on 4 November 2003.

(leaders) would be like fish out of water". He is emphatic that leaders should not make decisions alone; they should involve the people because when people are involved, decisions are made collectively and they are more likely to honour the decisions.

Sustainability

That peace has held between the Dinka and Nuer for three years now (even though occasionally a fight erupts – elders term this personal differences) is largely attributed to the fact that it was peace made by the people themselves and so they feel responsible for keeping the peace. When the fights erupt, even when they are bigger than "individual differences" there are mechanisms and trust/confidence for resolving the problem. There are mechanisms to keep such incidences localised and to prevent them from escalating to full-scale tribal conflict. Violators are punished according to procedures laid down by the people themselves (supplementary to the prevailing law and order procedures provided for under the judicial/traditional system).

Commenting on why the Wunlit covenant has largely stayed unbroken, Rev. Dr. Haruun Ruun[18] is of the view that "it was a covenant of the people" and because the people made it, they feel obliged to keep it. He also points out that as facilitators of the process, they were unable to fulfil all the agreed points partly because not everyone took up the roles apportioned to them after the conference. For instance, some of the services that were required were not set up. As a lesson, he proposes that every stakeholder in such a process should be committed to take up the responsibilities apportioned to them so that the efforts of keeping peace are sustained. It is a long-term process, not a one-off event.

Linkages

According to chief Agar of Yirol[19] the dividend of unity between SSIM and SPLM should receive the blessings of elders (which had not happened at the time of the interview). Some respondents (especially the elders), called on their "sons" to involve (read consult) them regarding the broader political/north-south issues. If consulted, they said, they would offer some "helpful" suggestions. Some even suggested that localised peace initiatives such as Wunlit, if sustained and supported, could be the foundation for real lasting peace in Sudan.

[18] Interview of 9 March 2003
[19] Interview of July 2002.

Respondents (especially the elderly ones) expressed their wish to see linkages being drawn from local peace processes, such as at Wunlit, and the positive aspects used to benefit the broader peace making efforts. All seemed to agree that such linkages were vital for sustaining peace. All pointed to the need for greater participation by the people.

4.5 External actors and traditional conflict resolution

Some of the external actors faulted the traditional process, saying it did not sufficiently provide for mechanisms to deal with the "raw truth" dug up. However, the chiefs defended this action by saying that true reconciliation also calls for forgiveness. After hearing the "raw truth" the two sides are meant to realised their folly, make amends and forgive each other. They attributed the honouring of the Wunlit covenant to realisation of their folly, and the role they had played in aggravating the conflict and their willingness to put an end to the conflict.

Some of the interviewees were critical of external actors' role. They pointed out that the proposals made for follow-up to sustain the peace were not honoured, especially those that required external facilitation. External actors interviewed pointed to time lapse as one of the reasons and changing interests. However, the point not to be lost is that peacemaking is a process and all actors, local and external should get into such process with long-term commitment.

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Overview of findings

This research article focuses on traditional approaches to peacemaking and conflict resolution with specific reference on the case of Wunlit, which involved the Dinka and Nuer communities of south Sudan; and how they resolved their conflict of over eight years.

The aims of the research were as follows:

1. To briefly review the literature to provide an outline of western conflict resolution models.
2. To outline the underlying values of traditional African conflict resolution and the methods it uses.
3. Using a case study of community conflict from South Sudan,
    (a) to describe how conflict was resolved using traditional conflict resolution approaches.
    (b) to investigate how the agreements reached were implemented and maintained.
    (c) to assess the effectiveness of traditional conflict resolution in this case study.
    (d) to investigate how the external actors who are helping to resolve the conflict have accepted/used traditional approaches compared with the Western approaches.
    (e) to consider whether the traditional approach could be replicated and or used on a wider scale.

The article has tried to explore the place of relationships in conflict resolution and whether or not restoration of broken relationships is addressed when traditional approaches to conflict resolution are used. It is critical that reconciliation takes place between the parties in the conflict. The nature of protracted ethnic conflicts is society-wide and not, in essence, a matter between political antagonists. To borrow Kevin Avruch's words, such conflicts are fuelled by notions of identity, a concept of security, and a feeling of well being. In his view, the most appropriate "party" to deal with in protracted ethnic conflict situations is the identity group, not the even the "governing structure," where there is one. The primary goal of conflict resolution should be seen as changing the conditions of social intractability in communities. Unless dialogue and reconciliation with the "enemy" is part of antagonists'

experience at many levels of society, no official agreement will truly resolve an ethnic conflict. The emphasis on reconciliation during Wunlit seemed to recognise this premise.

From the interviews, it is clear that those involved in conflict should be involved in decision making processes that relate to that particular conflict. Any attempts made to resolve the conflict must involve them. Conflict resolution processes must be owned by those involved; they must participate and be actively involved in finding ways of resolving their conflict. The article tries to show how and why local capacities for peace are essential in order to promote and sustain peace initiatives. It is also clear that for peace processes to be sustainable and covenants reached to be honoured, all those parties that are signatory to the covenant/agreements must take up their roles and responsibilities as agreed.

Chief Agar reaffirms people power when he says: "The unity of Dinka and Nuer is strong because of Wunlit. Together we cannot be defeated. We (the people) love the (Wunlit) covenant that is why they don't destroy it. We partook (of it) which is why (we) feel bound and responsible for it. We are now living together, cattle fed in the same *toic* (cattle camp), fishing grounds are shared, we do many things together". Lasting peace can only be made by those affected. This supports Lederach's (2003) argument that "people closest to the conflict are often in the best position to build trust".

5.2 Replicability

The war in Sudan continues. The prospects for signing an agreement have been on and off in 2003, and all eyes and ears are on the IGAD-led initiative facilitating talks between the government of Sudan and rebel movement, SPLM/A. At micro-level, inter-ethnic conflicts have diminished considerably. Some analysts project that if the inter-tribal conflicts in the south are mitigated, southerners can face the broader conflict with the north united.

The "story telling sessions" and "confessions" helps those involved re-examine and re-orient their relationships. As Lederach points out, "it is in the ebb and flow of relationships that we find the birthplace and home of reconciliation". He distinguishes this from a focus on "issues," the shaping of substantive agreements, or cognitive and analytically based approaches to conflict resolution, as is the case with "intellectual" peacemaking processes. Lederach recommends that for true reconciliation to take place, one needs to enter the domain of the internal world, the inner understandings, fears and hopes, perceptions and interpretations of the

relationship itself." Truth laid bare and people having realized their own contribution to the breakdown of relationships, each individual takes responsibility for his actions and the covenant entered into is more binding.

Further, Lederach argues that reconciliation requires a practical focus on the building of trust in settings where it has been destroyed. The Wunlit case can be cited as an example of this. From the interviews, it is clear that tradition and culture play a role in peacemaking in this context. It is also apparent that involving those affected by conflict is one of the ways to ensure that the agreements reached are enduring.

The role of external actors, while necessary and facilitating in peacemaking, should remain facilitative and to provide guidance when needed. The commitment from external actors should also be over a long term so as to ensure that agreements made are followed through. The external actor should facilitate these (by providing resources, accompaniment, advice and a sense of solidarity to the process), as peace making is a long-term process.

Issues of power, politics, justice and equity are at the centre of both the micro- and macro-conflict in Sudan. Most interviewees identified these same issues at the micro- level (inter-clan/ethnic conflicts) and linked them to the macro level (north-south conflict). Majority were clear that restoring relationships (at the clan/tribe level) was only the first step towards presenting a united front in the north-south discussions.

5.3 Recommendations

Although the Wunlit conference was a one-time event, there have been peacemaking activities by various other actors in the context of south Sudan. Based on this study on the Wunlit case, the following recommendations are made:

1. Tradition and culture play a significant role in peacemaking and conflict resolution in communities. Greater research should be done to establish this role, more so in the case of south Sudan where tradition and culture are a significant part of people's everyday life. More resources should be allocated for researching into traditional conflict-resolution mechanisms in general and in south Sudan.

2. "Only the wearer knows where the shoe pinches" is a common proverb. It is the affected and afflicted communities that know best the issues around the conflicts that affect them. They should be given the opportunity to resolve those conflicts themselves. The complexity of authentic reconciliation emerges from the capacity of people to build an appropriate process, created and owned by them, rather than the application of preconceived processes. Peacemaking processes should draw from local traditions and culture instead of imposing "elitist" peacemaking processes on communities.

3. External actors play an important role to peacemaking processes. While they facilitate the process (es) by providing the financial, moral support and/or playing a mediation role, "they should be prepared to humble themselves, to understand that humility requires the sharing rather than the imposition of one's self and ideas. It requires the engagement with and understanding of another's journey without being caught in its swirl" According to Lederach (2003:2). External actors should re-evaluate their role in peacemaking processes; and be prepared to make a lifelong commitment to learning. Peace-making is not a one-off activity. Those entering into such activities should do so with long-term objectives.

4. Partly because of the multi-faceted and complex nature of most protracted ethnic conflicts and the societal fragmentation they engender, attempts at peacemaking by domestic organizations of the country are often sporadic, uncoordinated, and lacking in resources. As a result, outside parties are faced with the dilemma of lending a hand or ignoring the issue. Naturally, many times they will opt for the former over the latter, even if the help they can offer is minimal. Yet in trying to make up for shortages of domestic resources, a critical mistake that outsiders have made in internal conflicts is to contribute to the disempowerment of local communities. Those in such situations ought to be sensitive to this possibility and to actively work towards militating against aggravating the situation.

It is hoped that findings of this research will contribute to the debate on whether it is possible (or useful) to use traditional approaches to resolve other conflicts. The findings are also expected to stimulate further research and discussion on this particular issue. Even though Mitchell (1989:10) points out that there is no sense in which a single case can be used to generate an analytical framework or set of hypothesis; this article should be used judged on the basis of (a) whether this case helps to provide a coherent account of a conflict resolution

process that used traditional mechanisms and (b) whether the case helps to generate sufficient questions that can be used to generate a hypothesis that can help move the discussion towards a general "localised" theory of peacemaking. May I emphasise that ideas in this research article are presented as a starting point for further investigation on the topic.

As Morris[20] notes, there is increasing awareness of the need for post-conflict reconciliation, development of capacity for conflict resolution, and the building of sustainable peace. At this moment when hope is highest for a possible signing of a peace agreement for Sudan, one cannot help to call for building of capacity for peacemaking and peace building for post war Sudan.

One of the lessons from Wunlit was the lack of follow-up on agreed points of action leading to disillusion by the communities who felt that not every one had honoured their part of the agreement. Such lessons should actively inform future processes with the hope that future peace making processes should not end at the agreement stage. "We need development. We need to be accompanied on this journey. Even giving us opportunities to share among ourselves will contribute to understanding of each other," according to Bishop Nathaniel Garang. Accompaniment must continue even after an agreement.

Morris sums up on peace building using Lederach's metaphor of construction in which she explains peace building as involving long term commitment to a process that includes investments, gathering of resources and materials, architecture and planning, coordination of resources and labour, laying solid foundations, construction of walls and roofs, finish work and ongoing maintenance. The people are, and will remain a huge resource for peace builders to tap. The challenge is to those who ignore this resource as Sudan edges closer to a peace agreement.

[20] Catherine Morris in her article: *What is peace building? One Definition.*

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