



Conflict Transformation in Kenya: What Raila Odinga-Uhuru Kenyatta Handshake Should Mean

Executive Summary

This policy brief proposes full conflict transformation as an approach to sustainable peace in Kenya. Such a process will involve change of social relations from negative to positive through addressing root causes of conflict by changing attitudes, behaviours and contexts (structures) within which conflict occurs. It is also characteristically an inclusive process in terms of conflict actors. To this end, this policy brief refocuses the energy of conflict transformation in Kenya more importantly to the 2008 Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation (KNDR) agreement's *Agenda 4*. It recommends implementation of *Agenda 4* and operationalization of applicable instruments, an inclusive dialogue and official support to grass-root peace building campaigns and forums through civil society.

Background

Following a crisis-packed 2017 General Elections, Kenya's Opposition leader Raila Odinga, met with President Uhuru Kenyatta on 9 March 2018 to initiate dialogue. It has been dubbed 'the Golden Handshake.' This handshake bears hope amid social tension, economic strife and political division that have characterized Kenyan politics whose nadir came in 2007 post-election violence. The

violence was blamed on ethnic animosities and a disputed presidential election replete with rigging claims. African Union mediated a peace settlement (KNDR Project, 2012).

This settlement was guided by KNDR agreement outlined into four agendas: 1. Ending violence 2. Facilitating humanitarian response and protection of human rights 3. Finding a solution to the political crisis 4. Solving long-running issues such as constitutional, institutional and land reforms, corruption, youth unemployment, regional and ethnic inequality, national cohesion and integration, transparency and accountability, and unity (ibid).

The current political leadership in Kenya has been accused of hurling *Agenda 4* into abeyance thereby putting lasting peace to risk. The Chairlady of Kenya National Human Rights Commission said of it, "There is so much that remains to be done. People are more polarised than ever before. Institutional reforms have stalled due to lack of leadership and political commitment to the letter and spirit of the Constitution" (Menya, 2017). This rapprochement between Raila Odinga (Opposition leader) and Uhuru Kenyatta (President) should therefore point to need for full conflict transformation in Kenya.



Key Findings

Rupesinghe (1995) contends that conflict transformation involves conflict management which mainly ends violence (short-term), conflict resolution which addresses root causes of conflict and peace building which addresses long-term relationship building. Specht (2008) on the other hand states that conflict transformation involves changing attitudes, relations or behaviours and contexts of conflicting parties. This means from distrust to trust (attitudes), violent to peaceful (relations) and change in economic, social and political structures that cause conflict (context).

Lederach (1997) draws a schema of conflict transformation that proposes an inclusive process. He

suggests that the first level should involve key conflict parties (Track 1), then secondly mid-level players who have influence on both key players and grass-root population (Track 2) and finally grass-root level which includes the larger population and civil society through peace building and reconciliation and healing forums (Track 3). He proposes construction of long-term infrastructure for peace building by supporting reconciliation potential of societies.

Paffenholz (1998) argues that conflict transformation involves primarily comprehensive analysis of the conflict situation to understand root causes of conflict, strategies to solve them and efforts to build

long-lasting peace (relations). Diamond and McDonald (1996) propose a multi-track model that involves many actors working towards a common goal of lasting peace in the society. These actors range from government, civil society organizations, private citizens and local communities to research institutions. They refer to these actors as the peace constituency. Fisher (2000) fundamentally agrees with the foregoing works but talks about conflict transformation as peace building that goes beyond negative peace to positive peace. Negative peace connotes absence of visible violence while positive peace implies reduction of violence and improvement of attitudes and contexts of conflict parties.

Conclusion

Conflict transformation, therefore, focusses on root causes, inclusivity of all levels of actors and change in attitudes, behaviours and contexts (structures) within which conflict occurs. It has special emphasis on transforming negative relations to positive and peaceful relations. *Agenda 4* captures the root causes of conflict in Kenya. The journey of conflict transformation that started in 2008 should not stall. Kenya's political leadership has to bear the responsibility of creating long-lasting peace, national cohesion and integration. Already the new constitution of 2010 sets out an elaborate framework, responsibilities and safeguards for conflict transformation in Kenya. The Truth Justice and Reconciliation report is also out and certain institutional reforms are underway. This process just needs to be intensified.

Recommendations

To Parliament

- Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) report should be adopted and passed over to relevant bodies for implementation of its recommendations.
- Support and protect the constitution and constitutional bodies to entrench rule of law. This will transform social structures to promote justice, equity and equality in social relations.

To National and County governments

- Support full implementation of *Agenda 4* through progressive institutional reforms (in Parliament, Judiciary and Police Service) and land reforms (through National Land Commission).
- They should also create conditions for youth employment, reduction of corruption, accountability and transparency, ethnic and regional equality, reduction of poverty, security and safety, promotion of national cohesion and integration, and guaranteeing of human rights.

To Civil Society

- Carry out advocacy campaigns for non-discrimination, rule of law, equitable distribution of resources and gender equity.
- Carry out intense peace building initiatives among communities; promote reconciliation, trust building and unity.

To the President (Uhuru Kenyatta) and Opposition Leader (Raila Odinga)

- Ensure an inclusive dialogue that also brings to the table excluded opposition leaders (Kalonzo Musyoka, Musalia Mudavadi and Moses Wetangula) or their representative, local scholars, religious leaders, representatives of ordinary citizens and civil society.

References

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