PEACE STUDIES JOURNAL

Guest Editors

Daxton DeMarco, Undergraduate Student
Salt Lake Community College

Vinyl Farnsworth, Undergraduate Student
Salt Lake Community College

Cambria C. Jones, Undergraduate Student
Salt Lake Community College

Frida Sophia Casanova-Miranda, Undergraduate Student
Salt Lake Community College

&

Brogan Parker, Undergraduate Student
Salt Lake Community College

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT PEACE STUDIES JOURNAL

The Peace Studies Journal (PSJ) is a leading and primer journal in the field of peace, justice, and conflict studies internationally. PSJ, founded in 2008 out of the initiative of the Central New York Peace Studies Consortium was established as an informal journal to publish the articles presented at the annual Peace Studies Conference, but in 2009 PSJ was developed into an international interdisciplinary free online peer-reviewed scholarly journal. The goal of PSJ is to promote critical scholarly work on the areas of identities politics, peace, nonviolence, social movements, conflict, crisis, ethnicity, culture, education, alternatives to violence, inclusion, repression and control, punishment and retribution, globalization, economics, ecology, security, activism, and social justice.

The Journal welcomes scholars, activists, and community organizers/leaders to submit. We hold to a caring, welcoming, and constructive process aiding in the publishing of your articles/review, rather than turning you away with delayed harsh and deconstructive review feedback. We encourage articles that interweave theory and practice and especially welcome articles on topics that have not yet been examined.

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES OF PEACE STUDIES JOURNAL

Please read these guidelines and then send your article, essay, review, research notes, conference summary, etc. to the appropriate issue editor (see below).

Values and Uniqueness

1. The Peace Studies Journal publishes rigorously peer-reviewed scholar-activist work of the highest quality.
2. The Peace Studies Journal provides the utmost respect, love, and care during the review process.
3. The Peace Studies Journal is a free-to-access electronic journal.
4. The Peace Studies Journal charges no fees for publication.
5. The Peace Studies Journal supports and encourages submissions that are excluded from mainstream journals, including the use of photographic, video MP3, and new media work.
6. The Peace Studies Journal, is a scholar-activist journal that provides space and place for oppressed and marginalized voices and stories.
7. The Peace Studies Journal, is a social justice, inclusive, equity, liberation, and transformative publication.
8. The Peace Studies Journal, is an activist-scholar publication.
9. The Peace Studies Journal, is an international publication.
10. The Peace Studies Journal, is a penal abolition publication.

Seeks

1. research articles and essays – 2,000 to 10,000 words
2. student final papers – no more than 10,000 words
3. course/class summaries – no more than 2,000 words
4. research notes – no more than 2,000 words
5. commentary – no more than 2,000 words
6. tactic and strategy analysis – no more than 10,000 words
7. academic development – no more than 10,000 words
8. lecture summaries – no more than 2,000 words
9. conference summaries – no more than 2,000 words
10. protest summaries – no more than 2,000 words
11. action alert summaries – no more than 2,000 words
12. film, book, art, and media reviews – no more than 3,000 words
13. interviews and dialogues – between 1,000 to 10,000 words
14. poems – no more than 10,000 words

Style

1. All submissions should have appropriate references and citations. Manuscripts should be single line spacing, 12-point font, Times Roman, 1-inch margin, with a paragraph abstract, no cover sheet, and conform to the American Psychological Association (APA) style format.
2. Submissions must be sent in Microsoft Word Doc. format. Submissions in other software formats will not be reviewed.

3. Authors should remove all self-identification from their submissions, but all submissions must be accompanied by a title page with author(s) name and affiliation, name of type of submission (e.g., article, review, conference summary, etc.), contact information including email, postal address, and phone number.
4. Authors must include an abstract of no more than 150 words that briefly describes the manuscript's contents.
5. Please no footnotes, no endnotes, no footers, no headers, and no page numbers.
6. Must be original and not publish elsewhere.

Review Process

1. Upon acceptance for review, the Peace Studies Journal editors will send manuscripts, under a double-peer reviewed process, to no less than two, and generally three reviewers. Reviewers provide their recommendations to the editor, who makes the final decision to accept the manuscript.
2. The Peace Studies Journal holds to the utmost respect, love, and care when reviewing manuscripts. Each review we assure is constructive, positive, and hopefully useful to the author. We strongly welcome first time authors, students, nontraditional students, activists, youth, community organizers, prisoners, politicians, and teachers.

Submissions Will Be Assigned to One of the Following Four Categories

1. accept without revisions
2. accept with editorial revisions
3. revise and resubmit for peer review
4. reject

Every effort will be made to inform authors of the editor's decision within 100 days of receipt of a manuscript. Authors, whose manuscripts are accepted for publication, will be asked to submit a brief biography that includes their institutional or organizational affiliations and their research interests. The Peace Studies Journal only publishes original materials. Please do not submit manuscripts that are under review or previously published elsewhere.

Copyright, Republishing, and Royalties

1. All Work published by the Journal is copyrighted by the Peace Studies Journal.
2. Republication of Contributor's Submitted Work may be assessed a reasonable fee for the administration and facilitation to other presses. Such fee shall be determined at the discretion of the Peace Studies Journal.
3. Royalties: Contributor agrees and acknowledges that no royalty, payment, or other compensation will be provided by the Peace Studies Journal in exchange for or resulting from the publication of the Submitted Work.

PEACE STUDIES JOURNAL

Title: Redefining Sustainable Peace: Proposing a Novel Theoretical Model Based on the Threefold Foundations of the Iranian School of Peace for Confronting 21st-Century Conflicts
Author: Leila Abdollahzadeh Ramhormozi
Position: Assistant Professor
Affiliation: Islamic Azad University
Location: Shahid Sadooghi Street, Hakimiyeh Exit, Shahid Babaei Expressway (West to East), Shahid Abbaspour Boulevard, Islamic Azad University, North Tehran Branch, Tehran, Iran
Primary email: leila.abdollahzadeh92@gmail.com

REDEFINING SUSTAINABLE PEACE: PROPOSING A NOVEL THEORETICAL MODEL BASED ON THE THREEFOLD FOUNDATIONS OF THE IRANIAN SCHOOL OF PEACE FOR CONFRONTING 21ST-CENTURY CONFLICTS

Leila Abdollahzadeh Ramhormozi

Abstract

The complex and multifaceted conflicts of the 21st century, including terrorism, identity crises, environmental challenges, and the escalation of organized violence such as genocide and apartheid, have exposed the limitations of traditional peace paradigms (e.g., liberal and realist) in providing sustainable solutions. This article aims to provide an ontological foundation (peace as unity in multiplicity and divine nature), an epistemological foundation (peace as practical wisdom and spiritual insight), and a methodological foundation (peace as empathetic dialogue and tradition-based reconciliation) as the basis of a new peace paradigm. Based on these foundations,

the proposed model is named "Unifying-Wise-Empathetic Peace" , which emphasizes synergy, coexistence, and respect for differences grounded in the understanding of the fundamental unity of existence, the role of moral and spiritual education, and the utilization of indigenous and dialogue-centered methods. This approach offers a complementary potential to existing paradigms and can provide deeper and more sustainable solutions for confronting current complex conflicts, beyond merely political and military dimensions.

1. Introduction

The crisis of existing paradigms and the necessity of redefining peace in the 21st century has faced new and more complex forms of conflict. While dominant peace theories, such as liberal peace (emphasizing institutions, democracy, and free trade) and realist peace (focused on the balance of power and national security), have achieved successes in previous periods (Doyle, 2004) , these paradigms appear to face fundamental limitations in confronting challenges such as religious extremism, identity and ethnic conflicts, civil wars with complex cultural and social roots, and shared global threats like climate change and migration crises (Galtung, 2008; Karami, 2019). Furthermore, the continuation or resurgence of extreme forms of organized violence such as genocide (mass killing) and apartheid (systematic racial segregation) in various parts of the world (Rio, 2017; UNESCO, 1978), indicates the failure of existing paradigms in preventing and fundamentally resolving conflicts based on systematic hatred and discrimination.

These conflicts often have deep roots in unjust structures, cultural differences, and existential misunderstandings that cannot be resolved solely by legal, political, or military means.
This situation increasingly highlights the necessity of redefining sustainable peace. Sustainable peace can no longer be merely understood as "the absence of war" or "negative peace", but must encompass " positive peace"; a peace accompanied by justice, welfare, mutual respect, and harmony at various individual, social, and international levels (Galtung, 2008).

Achieving such peace requires a deeper look at the philosophical, epistemological, and practical foundations that form the basis of our understanding of the world and human relations.

In this regard, the Iranian School of Peace, with its rich roots in Islamic philosophy, mysticism, and Iranian cultural heritage, offers a different and lesser-known approach that can add new dimensions to peace theorizing. This school, unlike many Western approaches that primarily focus on material, political, and institutional dimensions, pays special attention to the spiritual, ethical, and existential dimensions of peace (Nasr, 2000; Salimi, 2016).

The main objective of this article is to propose a novel theoretical model for sustainable peace formulated based on the threefold foundations of the Iranian School of Peace (ontological, epistemological, and methodological). This model seeks to answer the fundamental question of how a more comprehensive understanding of peace can be achieved by drawing inspiration from profound Iranian teachings, and how effective solutions can be provided for confronting the complex conflicts of the 21st century, including phenomena such as genocide and apartheid. This article, by examining these foundations and developing the model known as "Unifying-Wise-Empathetic Peace," attempts to demonstrate the potential of the Iranian School to enrich the

literature of peace studies and provide sustainable solutions in the current international environment.

2. Literature Review: Existing Paradigms and Gaps

The literature in the field of peace, especially from a philosophical and theoretical perspective, is very extensive.

Western peace theories can be divided into two main currents:

- **liberal peace**, whose roots trace back to Kant and idealist democrats, emphasizes the role of international institutions, democratization, free trade, and human rights in creating peace (Doyle, 2004). This approach views peace as the outcome of economic and political convergence. In contrast,
- **realist peace**, originating from thinkers like Hobbes and Morgenthau, considers peace a temporary state achievable only through the balance of power and state self-help (Morgenthau, 2009). These two paradigms account for the largest volume of theoretical peace literature.

However, with the emergence of new conflicts, critical peace theories (such as critical and postcolonial peace studies) also emerged, criticizing traditional paradigms. These theories emphasize the structural dimensions of violence, global inequalities, and the role of power in generating conflict (Galtung, 2008; Richmond, 2013).

They view peace as going beyond the absence of war, seeking social justice, liberation, and empowerment of marginalized groups. Phenomena such as genocide and apartheid, as the pinnacle of structural and direct violence, demonstrate the inefficiency of purely state-centric or legal approaches in combating the deep roots of hatred and discrimination. These phenomena, beyond mere military conflicts, aim at the elimination of a group's identity and humanity, requiring a deeper understanding of the ontological and epistemological foundations of peace (Rio, 2017).

Alongside these, research has also been conducted on Eastern peace schools; including peace in Buddhism, which emphasizes inner peace and compassion (Seyyed Sharifi, 2015), and peace in Confucian thought, which relies on social harmony and respect for hierarchy (Li, 2006). These studies indicate that non-Western approaches to peace often focus more on ethical, spiritual, and cultural dimensions.

Regarding the Iranian School of Peace, studies have primarily examined the dimensions of peace in Islamic philosophy (Ghaffari, 2011), Iranian mysticism (Salimi, 2016), and the teachings of the Quran and Sunnah (Nasr, 2000; Mirhosseini et al., 2015).

However, few studies have presented a comprehensive theoretical model for sustainable peace based on the convergence of the threefold ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations of the Iranian School, for the purpose of confronting 21st-century challenges, particularly extreme phenomena such as genocide and apartheid. The existing literature mostly

deals with a separate examination of these dimensions, and a gap is felt for an integrated approach that presents these three foundations within an operational model for sustainable peace.
This article attempts to fill this gap and propose the " Unifying-Wise-Empathetic Peace" model as a theoretical innovation.

3. Problem Statement

The 21st century has witnessed the emergence of conflicts with an increasingly complex, multidimensional, and deeply rooted nature that transcend traditional nation-state boundaries and have taken on identity, cultural, environmental, and supra-state dimensions (Karami, 2019).
Transnational terrorism, extremism, internal conflicts with ethnic and religious roots, migration crises, and global environmental challenges all indicate the relative inefficiency of dominant peace paradigms (liberal and realist) in providing sustainable and fundamental solutions. These paradigms generally define peace in terms of the absence of physical violence or the balance of power, and rarely address the deeper cultural, spiritual, and existential dimensions of conflicts (Galtung, 2008; Richmond, 2013).

One of the most prominent symbols of this inefficiency is the continuation and even resurgence of ominous phenomena such as genocide and apartheid.

Genocide, as an act intended to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group (UN Genocide Convention, 1948) , and apartheid, as an institutionalized system of racial discrimination and segregation (UN Apartheid Convention, 1973) , demonstrate that legal-international instruments or the balance of power alone are incapable of eradicating these deep forms of hatred that result in the negation of humanity.

This situation has led to a theoretical and practical gap in the field of peace studies:

1) **Need for Redefining Peace:** Sustainable peace goes beyond merely "negative peace" (absence of war) and must include "positive peace" (presence of justice, welfare, harmony, and solidarity). Existing paradigms have limitations in providing such a comprehensive definition and the necessary tools for its realization. Genocide and apartheid represent the complete absence of "positive peace" and the existence of "structural violence" in its most extreme form.
2) **Inadequacy of Instrumental Approaches:** Sole focus on political, economic, and military tools to resolve conflicts, without addressing their philosophical and epistemological roots, often leads to temporary and unsustainable solutions. Phenomena such as **genocide and apartheid** demonstrate that hatred and discrimination cannot be eliminated by merely changing political or economic structures; rather, it requires a change in fundamental human beliefs, values, and perceptions.
3) **Neglect of Indigenous and Non-Western Resources:** The rich intellectual heritage of non-Western peace schools, including the Iranian School, has received less attention. These schools can offer novel perspectives and methods for peace building that are suitable for specific cultural contexts and can address the deep roots of identity and existential conflicts, which play a role in phenomena such as genocide and apartheid.

This research, understanding these challenges, seeks to fill this theoretical gap. The main focus of this article is how to extract and synthesize the ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations of the Iranian School of Peace to provide a comprehensive theoretical model for "sustainable peace" that is capable of confronting the complex and multifaceted nature of 21st-century conflicts, including extreme phenomena such as genocide and apartheid, and that transcends the limitations of existing paradigms. Addressing these issues can contribute to the development of peace theory and provide more practical and sustainable solutions for conflict resolution.

4. Foundations of the Iranian School of Peace: Theoretical Framework of the Proposed Model

The theoretical basis of this research focuses on the convergence of three main philosophical-theoretical foundations that shape the intellectual framework of the Iranian School of Peace: the ontological, epistemological, and methodological foundations. This section will demonstrate how each of these contributes to redefining sustainable peace.

4.1. Ontological Foundation: Peace as "Unity in Multiplicity" and "Divine Nature"

Ontology in this research deals with the existential nature of peace and is based on the premise that peace, in the Iranian School, is not merely a social or political construct, but a fundamental and innate state of existence. This view is rooted in the monotheistic worldview and the concept of *wahdat al-wujud* (unity of being) in Islamic-Iranian philosophy and mysticism (Nasr, 2000, pp. 55-60; Ibn Arabi, 2008, Vol. 1, pp. 70-75). Accordingly, the universe has a fundamental unity, and apparent multiplicities are manifestations of this unity. Conflict and violence, from this perspective, arise from a neglect of this unity and a focus on differences and dualities (Motahari, 1999, pp. 70-75). Peace, in this view, is a return to this principle of fundamental interconnectedness and harmony of existence that is also rooted in human nature (Javadi Amoli, 2006, pp. 112-118). Therefore, sustainable peace requires a deep understanding of human connection with oneself, with fellow human beings, and with nature, which leads to peaceful coexistence and cooperation (Tabatabai, 1995, Vol. 4, p. 305). This ontological foundation provides a framework for understanding identity and environmental conflicts and offers solutions beyond mere categorization.

Many of Rumi's Poems support this concept. For example, in the following this great Iranian mystic and poet beautifully refers to the concept of unity of being and innate peace:

Out of thousands, one comes chosen
 For it is one in meaning, see in unity.
All are one soul, though they may
vary When they reach the Truth, they cease that striving. (Rumi, 2007, Daftar-e Avval, verses 1808-1809)

These verses emphasize that despite apparent multiplicity, all return to a single truth, and it is in this unity that differences acquire another meaning.

"We are from above, and upwards we go
We are from the sea, and to the sea we flow.
We are neither from there nor from here
We are from the placeless, and to the placeless we fare."
(Rumi, 2007, Daftar-e Avval, verses 933-934)

This verse also points to the common and timeless origin of human beings, beyond earthly and identity affiliations, all returning to a single principle. Understanding this " placelessness " or fundamental unity is the groundwork for true peace. This foundation stands in contrast to phenomena such as genocide and apartheid, which are based on the negation of the humanity of the other and the creation of oppressive hierarchies, and attacks the worldview that makes such crimes possible.

Specialized Terms and Elaboration of the Concept:

- **Unity of Existence (Wahdat al-Wujud):** The belief that all multiplicities and beings in the world are manifestations and expressions of a single, unique truth (God).
- **Peace as Divine Nature:** Peace is the natural and primary state of existence and the pure human *fitra* (innate disposition); conflict is a deviation from this *fitra*.
- **Ontological Interconnectedness:** Humans and the world are in an organic and vital relationship; harm to others or nature is harm to oneself.

4.2. Epistemological Foundation: Peace as "Practical Wisdom" and "Spiritual Insight"

Epistemology in this model addresses the nature and sources of peace knowledge. The Iranian School of Peace does not consider peace knowledge merely a collection of data or rational analyses, but rather a type of "practical wisdom" that is intertwined with ethical, spiritual, and value dimensions (Tabatabai, 1995, Vol. 1, pp. 50-55; Farabi, 2002, pp. 75-80). Based on this, achieving peace requires the cultivation of ethical virtues such as justice, compassion, forgiveness, patience, and tolerance in individuals and societies (Ghazali, 2004, pp. 45-50). These virtues are not only tools for peace but also an integral part of understanding true peace. In addition to rational and empirical knowledge, " presential knowledge" (*Ilm-e Huzuri*) or "Spiritual Insight" (*Ma'rifat-e Qalbi*), which is obtained through intuition, inner experience, and purification of the self (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), is recognized as a fundamental source for a deep understanding of peace (Suhrawardi, 2001, pp. 125-130; Mulla Sadra, 2010, Vol. 3, pp. 110-115). This type of knowledge facilitates deeper empathy and understanding of the real roots of conflicts, addressing the human and emotional dimensions of disputes beyond rational analyses (Rahiminejad et al., 2020, pp. 87-92). Therefore, the epistemological basis emphasizes the importance of moral-spiritual education and training in the peace building process.

Rumi's Poems in Support of This Concept:
Rumi emphasizes the importance of Spiritual Insight and intuitive understanding for achieving truth and peace:
"This world is a mountain, and our deeds are the call
And the echoes of these calls will return to all.
Your deed now, on the mount of purity,

Is both your echo and your truthful decree."

(Rumi, 2007, Daftar-e Avval, verses 1129-1130)
These verses indicate that every action (our deed) has a reflection (echo) in the world. Thus, peace begins from within the human being. True knowledge, which leads to peace, arises from the heart and righteous deeds.

"O brother, you are entirely thought
The rest of you is but bone and root.
If your thought is a rose, you are a rose garden
 If it is a thorn, you are fuel for the oven."

(Rumi, 2007, Daftar-e Dovvom, verses 2875-2876).
Here, Rumi suggests that human existence is shaped by one's thought and knowledge; if thought is based on wisdom and Spiritual Insight, its outcome will also be beauty and peace.
Conversely, the absence of this wisdom and Spiritual Insight provides the necessary ground for justifying and perpetrating crimes such as genocide and apartheid, where the "other" is dehumanized and their rights are denied.

Specialized Terms and Elaboration of the Concept:

- **Practical Wisdom (Hikmah Amali):** Knowledge that governs the affairs of the soul and society, aiming for moral perfection and happiness; peace, in this view, is an ethical art and knowledge.
- **Presential Knowledge (Ilm-e Huzuri) and Spiritual Insight (Ma'rifat-e Qalbi):** Direct and unmediated knowledge obtained through intuition and inner purification (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), which aids in empathy and intuitive understanding of the suffering of others.
- **Self-Purification (Tahdhib al-Nafs):** The process of purifying the soul and psyche from vices and adorning it with virtues; peace begins first from within the individual.

4.3. Methodological Foundation: Peace as "Empathetic Dialogue" and "Tradition-Based Reconciliation"

Methodology in this framework addresses the methods and tools for achieving peace that derive from the previous two foundations. In the Iranian School, peace building methods emphasize " empathetic dialogue" and "deep mutual understanding (hermeneutics)" (Fardid, 2008, pp. 150-155; Lederach, 2017, pp. 70-75). The goal of this dialogue is not merely negotiation to reach superficial agreements, but rather to understand the worldview, values, and meanings of the parties involved in order to achieve a shared and sustainable interpretation. Furthermore, traditional conflict resolution methods such as "reconciliation" (*mosalehe*), "elder mediation" (*rish-sefidi*), and "mediation by local trusted individuals" (*vesatat-e mo'tamedin-e mahalli*), which are rooted in Iranian culture and traditions, hold a special place in this methodology (Mirhosseini et al., 2015, pp. 80-85; Heidari et al., 2021, pp. 110-115).

These approaches, which are often informal, based on trust and mutual respect, focus on restoring relationships and preserving the human dignity of all parties and can lead to deeper and more

sustainable agreements than purely legal or coercive solutions. This methodological basis emphasizes localization and flexibility in the peacebuilding process.

Rumi emphasizes the importance of listening, mutual understanding, and gentleness in speech for resolving disputes:

"When there is no oneness of color amidst,
There is no confidant ear or tongue for speech.
 When it became one in color, and accepted by heart,
The secret became one-colored, and it became seeing."

(Rumi, 2007, Daftar-e Avval, verses 3076-3077)
Rumi points to the importance of empathy and oneness in dialogue; as long as empathy is absent, dialogue will not yield results.

"Whoever's garment was torn by love,
He became pure from greed and every fault."

(Rumi, 2007, Daftar-e Avval, verse 21)
Although this verse does not directly refer to peace methodology, its theme (purification from faults and greed) can be extended to the spirit of reconciliation and forgiveness present in the traditional conflict resolution methods of the Iranian School.

These methods stand in direct opposition to approaches that lead to genocide and apartheid, as in those phenomena, any dialogue and reconciliation with the target group is entirely rejected, and the goal is the rejection and elimination of the other.

Specialized Terms and Elaboration of the Concept:

- **Empathetic Dialogue:** A method of dialogue that emphasizes a deep understanding of the experiences, feelings, and worldview of the other party, with the aim of restoring relationships and rebuilding shared understanding.
- **Tradition-Based Reconciliation:** The use of traditional and indigenous conflict resolution methods such as elder mediation (*rish-sefidi*), mediation by trusted individuals, and emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation.
- **Indigenous Peacebuilding:** The application of local and cultural knowledge, methods, and structures of a society for conflict resolution.

5. The "Unifying-Wise-Empathetic Peace" Theoretical Model: Application in the 21st Century

By integrating the threefold foundations of the Iranian School of Peace, the "Unifying-Wise-Empathetic Peace" theoretical model is proposed for confronting 21st-century conflicts:

- **Unifying** (from the Ontological Foundation): Emphasizes understanding the fundamental unity and interconnectedness of humans and the world to resolve identity and environmental conflicts.
- **Wise** (from the Epistemological Foundation): Focuses on moral and spiritual education, and the promotion of practical wisdom for peace-centered and sustainable decision-making.

- **Empathetic** (from the Methodological Foundation): Uses deep dialogue, mediation based on mutual understanding, and indigenous methods of conflict resolution.

Applications in 21st-Century Conflicts:

- **Ethnic and Identity Conflicts:** This model, by emphasizing "unity in multiplicity," helps promote an understanding of human unity beyond ethnic and linguistic differences. This approach, instead of ignoring identities, views them within the context of a larger unity and facilitates peaceful coexistence. This aspect of the model can be particularly effective in countering racist and discriminatory ideologies that lead to apartheid.
- **Extremism and Terrorism:** The model, by strengthening "practical wisdom" and "heart knowledge," addresses the epistemological roots of extremism. This means educating individuals with moral and spiritual insight who are less susceptible to extremist ideologies and who resolve problems through "empathetic dialogue" instead of violence. This approach fundamentally contradicts the logic of genocide, which is based on hatred and the negation of the "other."
- **Environmental Crises:** The concept of "ontological interconnectedness" between humans and nature provides the basis for understanding the necessity of peace with the environment. This model, instead of a purely instrumental approach to nature, emphasizes human moral responsibility towards it and offers sustainable solutions for environmental crises.
- **Global Governance and International Institutions:** The proposed model highlights the necessity of reviewing the existing approaches of international institutions. This means that mere laws and political agreements are insufficient, and the spiritual, ethical, and cultural dimensions of peace must also be on the agenda. It is suggested that international institutions use methods of "tradition-based reconciliation" and "indigenous peacebuilding" alongside conventional tools. For instance, in addressing human rights violations that could lead to genocide or apartheid, the international approach should go beyond political sanctions to foster mutual understanding and combat the ideological roots of hatred in target societies (United Nations, 2018).

6. Challenges and Future Outlook

Implementing the "Unifying-Wise-Empathetic Peace" theoretical model also faces challenges:
- **Cultural Misunderstandings:** Differences in interpretations and understandings of philosophical and mystical concepts of the Iranian School within different cultural contexts can lead to misunderstandings.
- **Resistance of Existing Institutions:** Dominant peace paradigms are deeply rooted and powerful, and resistance to novel approaches, especially those that highlight spiritual dimensions, is natural. This resistance can also come from international political and security structures that still favor traditional approaches to genocide and apartheid (such as purely military intervention), without considering the need for a fundamental change in mindsets.
- **Complexity of Operationalization:** Translating abstract philosophical concepts into practical and executable solutions in complex conflict situations requires extensive interdisciplinary efforts.
- **Interpretation and Misuse:** Every school of thought has the potential for misinterpretation or misuse by specific groups, which can lead to division instead of peace.
Nevertheless, the future outlook for the model is very promising. This model has high potential for enriching the literature of peace studies and offering novel solutions. In a world where conflicts increasingly acquire cultural and identity roots and phenomena such as genocide and apartheid

remain a serious threat, the approach of the Iranian School of Peace, which emphasizes unity, wisdom, and empathy, can be highly effective. This model, by inviting a re-evaluation of our understanding of peace, moves towards a more sustainable and comprehensive peace that does not begin merely with the end of wars, but reaches its culmination with a deeper understanding of shared humanity and a commitment to justice and moral virtue at all levels. This outlook paves the way for creating a more peaceful and sustainable world.

7. Conclusion

This article aimed to redefine sustainable peace by presenting a comprehensive theoretical model based on the threefold foundations of the Iranian School of Peace. Analyses showed that dominant peace paradigms, despite their achievements, are insufficient in confronting the complexities of 21st-century conflicts and extreme phenomena such as genocide and apartheid, necessitating deeper and more comprehensive approaches. The proposed model, "Unifying-Wise-Empathetic Peace," by utilizing the Ontological Foundation (peace as unity in multiplicity and divine nature), the Epistemological Foundation (peace as practical wisdom and Spiritual Insight), and the Methodological Foundation (peace as empathetic dialogue and tradition-based reconciliation) , offers an innovative and comprehensive approach to sustainable peace.

This model, beyond merely the absence of violence, emphasizes existential interconnectedness, moral-spiritual education, and dialogue-centered and indigenous methods for restoring relationships and creating harmony at individual, social, and international levels. "Unifying-Wise-Empathetic Peace" is capable of addressing challenges such as identity conflicts, extremism, and environmental crises, as well as crimes against humanity like genocide and apartheid , because it delves into the deep roots of these conflicts in human understanding of existence and relationships. This theoretical framework has complementary potential to existing paradigms and can contribute to enriching the literature of peace studies and providing more sustainable and comprehensive solutions in the current challenging environment.

References

Doyle, M. (2004). *Liberalism dar Ravābet-e Beynolmelal* (Liberalism in International Relations). Translated by Alireza Tabatabai. Tehran: Ministry of Foreign Affairs. (Translation of Michael W. Doyle, "Liberalism and World Politics")

Farabi, A. N. (2002). *Ārā' Ahl al-Madīna al-Fāḍila* (The Virtuous City). Translated by Seyyed Ja'far Sajjadi. Tehran: Samt Publications.

Fardid, S. A. (2008). *Didar-e Farahi va Futuhat-e Akhar al-Zaman* (The Vision of Farahi and the Conquests of the End Times). Tehran: Andisheh Cultural Institute.

Galtung, J. (2008). *Moqaddame'i bar Motāle'āt-e Solh* (An Introduction to Peace Studies). Translated by Seyyed Ali Mirmousavi. Tehran: Samt Publications. (Translation of Johan Galtung, *Peace Studies: A Global Perspective*).

Ghaffari, M. (2011). Falsafeh-ye Eslami-ye Solh: Motāle'e-ye Tatbiqi (Islamic Philosophy of Peace: A Comparative Study). *Journal of Religious Thought*, *13*(2), 95-110. (Derived from M. Faghfoory, "Islamic Philosophy of Peace")

Ghazali, A. H. M. (2004). *Kimia-ye Sa'adat* (The Alchemy of Happiness). Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications.

Heidari, M.; Asadi, Reza; & Karimi, Fatemeh. (2021). Naqsh-e Saz-o-kār-hā-ye
    Sonnati-ye Hall-e Monāze'e dar Javāme'-e Mahalli-ye Iran (The Role of Traditional
    Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Local Communities of Iran). *Indigenous Peace
    Studies*, *5*(1), 105-120.

Ibn Arabi, M. (2008). *Futuhāt al-Makkiyya*. Translated by Mohammad Khajavi. Tehran:
    Mowlā Publications.

International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid.
    (1973). United Nations.

Javadi Amoli, A. (2006). *Falsafat-e Huquq-e Bashar* (Philosophy of Human Rights).
    Qom: Isra Publications.

Karami, J. (2019). *Chālesh-hā-ye Solh va Amniyat-e Beynolmelal dar Qarn-e 21*
    (Challenges of International Peace and Security in the 21st Century). Tehran: Tarh-e No
    Publications.

Lederach, J. P. (2017). *Solh-sāzi-ye Paydar dar Javāme'-e Taqsim Shode* (Sustainable
Peacebuilding in Divided Societies). Translated by Majid Heidari. Tehran: Tehran University
    Press. (Translation of John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in
    Divided Societies*).

Li, J. (2006). *Confucianism and Peace*. In P. S. W. Chen (Ed.), *Culture and Conflict: A
    Handbook of Values and Preferences* (pp. 123-140). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mirhosseini, S. J.; Fattahi, Leila; & Ahmadi, Mehdi. (2015). Naqsh-e Mosālehe va
    Rish-sefidi dar Hall-e Ekhtelafāt-e Ejtemā'i (The Role of Reconciliation and Elder
    Mediation in Resolving Social Disputes). *Iranian Sociology Journal*, *16*(3), 75-90.

Morgenthau, H. J. (2009). *Siyāsat Miān-e Mellat-hā: Dar Talāsh Barāye Qodrat va Solh*
    (Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace). Translated by Habibollah
    Seif. Tehran: Ministry of Foreign Affairs Publications. (Translation of Hans J.
    Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*)

Motahari, M. (1999). *Moqaddame'i bar Jahān-bini-ye Eslami: Ensān va Iman* (An
    Introduction to Islamic Worldview: Man and Faith). Tehran: Sadra Publications.

Nasr, S. H. (2000). *Se Hakim-e Mosalmān* (Three Muslim Sages). Translated by
    Ahmad Aram. Tehran: Nashr-e Sherkat-e Sahami-ye Ketab-haye Jibi.

Rahiminejad, F.; R., Alireza; & Ebrahimi, S. (2020). Ma'rifat-e Qalbi va Ta'sir-e
    An bar Ta'arroz-zadāyi: Rooykardi az Erfan-e Eslami (Spiritual Insight and Its Impact on
    Conflict Resolution: An Approach from Islamic Mysticism). *Peace and Development
    Studies*, *8*(2), 80-95.

Richmond, O. P. (2013). *Peace dar Ravābet-e Beynolmelal* (Peace in International
    Relations). Translated by Hamidreza Shariati. Tehran: Samt Publications. (Translation of
    Oliver P. Richmond, *Peace in International Relations*).

Rio, J. (2017). *Genocide va Adālat-e Beynolmelal* (Genocide and International Justice).
    Translated by Majid Ebrahimi. Tehran: Mizan Publishing. (Translation of John Rio,
    Genocide and International Justice)

Rumi, J. M. B. (2007). *Masnavi-ye Ma'navi*. Corrected by Reynold A.
    Nicholson. Tehran: Hermes Publications.

Sadr al-Muta'allihin, M. I. (2010). *Al-Hikmat al-Muta'aliyah fi al-Asfar al-
    Aqliyyah al-Arba'ah*. Qom: Bidar Publications.

Salimi, H.. (2016). *Mabani-ye Falsafi-ye Solh dar Andisheh-ye Irani-Eslami* (Philosophical

Foundations of Peace in Iranian-Islamic Thought). Tehran: Contemporary Outlook
    Publications.

Seyyed Sharifi, A. (2015). Solh dar Ayin-e Buddha va Moqāyeseh-ye An bā Eslam (Peace in
    Buddhism and its Comparison with Islam). *Religious Studies*, *10*(2), 45-60.

Suhrawardi, S. (2001). *Hikmat al-Ishraq*. Translated and annotated by Seyyed
    Hossein Nasr. Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications.

Tabatabai, S. M. H. (1995). *Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an*. Qom: Islamic
    Publications Office of Qom Seminary Teachers Association.

UNESCO. (1978). *Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice*.

United Nations. (2018). *Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes*. (United Nations Office on
    Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, Framework of Analysis for
    Atrocity Crimes).

PEACE STUDIES
JOURNAL

Volume 18, Issue 3
December 2025

 Title: Rebuilding Peace from the Ground Up: Community-Based Peacebuilding in Post-Conflict Societies — A Comparative Case Study Review of Sierra Leone, Nepal, and Bosnia-Herzegovina
Author: Gautam Makwana[1] and H Elizabeth[2]
Position: [1]Research Scholar Ph.D (Social Work), [2]Associate Professor (Social Work)
Affiliation: [1,2]School of Social Sciences
Location: [1,2]Department of Social Work, [1,2]Mizoram University (A Central University) Aizawl 796004, Mizoram, India
Primary email: [1]gautam_makwana@hotmail.com and [2]lizahatzaw@gmail.com

Keywords: Community-based peacebuilding; post-conflict societies; grassroots reconciliation; local peace initiatives; restorative justice; conflict transformation

---

REBUILDING PEACE FROM THE GROUND UP: COMMUNITY-BASED PEACEBUILDING IN POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES — A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY REVIEW OF SIERRA LEONE, NEPAL, AND BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Gautam Makwana[1] and H Elizabeth[2]

Abstract

This article explores the role of community-based peacebuilding in post-conflict societies through a comparative analysis of three case studies: Sierra Leone, Nepal, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Drawing on theories of positive peace and conflict transformation, it examines how grassroots initiatives address social fractures left by violent conflicts, complement formal peace processes, and contribute to sustainable reconciliation. The study highlights enabling factors such as cultural resonance, inclusivity, and local ownership, while also discussing challenges including political interference, resource limitations, and structural inequalities. Findings suggest that community-based peacebuilding offers valuable, context-sensitive pathways for peace but requires integration with national and international frameworks for lasting impact. Recommendations emphasize

strengthening local capacities, fostering linkages between local and formal mechanisms, and prioritizing social justice. This article contributes to peace studies by providing empirical evidence on the potential and complexities of peacebuilding from below.

Introduction

Post-conflict peacebuilding remains one of the most pressing challenges in contemporary international relations. While international peace accords and high-level interventions often capture global attention, sustainable peace is rarely secured without active participation from the communities most affected by violence. In recent years, community-based peacebuilding—defined as locally driven initiatives that promote reconciliation, social cohesion, and conflict transformation—has emerged as a critical complement to formal, top-down peace processes (Lederach, 1997, p. 39). By engaging local actors, respecting cultural norms, and rebuilding trust at the grassroots level, these efforts address the socio-psychological wounds and structural inequalities that often outlast formal peace agreements.

Mainstream peacebuilding models have often been criticized for privileging state institutions and international donors while marginalizing local voices (Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 145). Despite significant investment in post-conflict reconstruction, many countries remain vulnerable to the recurrence of violence. Critics argue that peace processes lacking local legitimacy are less likely to succeed in the long term. In response, scholars and practitioners have increasingly called for hybrid models that integrate local knowledge systems with international frameworks to build resilient, inclusive, and culturally relevant peace (Richmond & Mitchell, 2011, p. 25).

This paper contributes to that discourse by offering a comparative review of community-based peacebuilding in three post-conflict societies: Sierra Leone**, Nepal,** and Bosnia and Herzegovina. These cases represent varied geographic, cultural, and political contexts, yet all exhibit attempts to harness local capacities for reconciliation and social healing. In Sierra Leone, the civil war's brutal legacy gave rise to Fambul Tok, a traditional truth-telling and forgiveness process that operated outside the formal justice system. In Nepal, Local Peace Committees (LPCs) were established after the Maoist insurgency as decentralized bodies tasked with conflict mediation and peace implementation. Meanwhile, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, post-Dayton fragmentation has spurred grassroots efforts, particularly among NGOs and youth groups, to rebuild interethnic relationships and foster social cohesion.

The central research questions guiding this review are as follows:

1. **What roles have communities played in peacebuilding across these three post-conflict societies?**
2. **What contextual factors have enabled or constrained the effectiveness of these grassroots initiatives?**
3. **What comparative lessons can be drawn for future peacebuilding practice and policy?**

This article employs a comparative case study approach, drawing on empirical research, field reports, and academic literature to evaluate the design, implementation, and outcomes of community-based peacebuilding efforts. By identifying patterns across contexts, the article aims

to provide practical insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners seeking to promote inclusive and sustainable peacebuilding from the ground up.

2. Theoretical Framework & Literature Review

The field of peace studies has evolved significantly since its emergence in the mid-20th century, moving beyond merely ending violent conflict toward building conditions for sustainable peace. Central to this evolution is the distinction between negative peace—the absence of direct violence—and positive peace, which entails the presence of social justice, equality, and reconciliation (Galtung, 1969, p. 183). Community-based peacebuilding aligns closely with the pursuit of positive peace, as it addresses underlying grievances, promotes inclusivity, and engages citizens directly in the peace process.

2.1 Galtung's Positive Peace and Structural Violence

Johan Galtung's theory of structural violence provides a useful lens for understanding the root causes of conflict and the role of communities in addressing them. Galtung (1969) argues that violence is not only physical but also embedded in social structures that marginalize or oppress. In this framework, community-based peacebuilding is crucial for dismantling such structures, as it creates space for marginalized voices and offers culturally grounded mechanisms for redress (Galtung, 1996, p. 34).

2.2 Lederach's Conflict Transformation

John Paul Lederach's concept of conflict transformation further informs this study. Rather than merely resolving disputes, conflict transformation seeks to rebuild relationships, reframe narratives, and alter the underlying social fabric that produced the conflict in the first place (Lederach, 1997, p. 75). Lederach emphasizes the importance of mid- and grassroots-level actors, particularly in contexts where state institutions are weak or lack legitimacy. His "peacebuilding pyramid" highlights the essential role of community leaders, traditional authorities, and civil society in sustaining long-term peace (Lederach, 1997, p. 39).

2.3 Critiques of Top-Down Peacebuilding

Much of the literature on post-conflict reconstruction critiques the dominant, internationally driven peacebuilding paradigm. Scholars such as Mac Ginty (2008) and Richmond (2010) argue that externally imposed peacebuilding frameworks often suffer from a legitimacy gap, failing to resonate with local cultures and realities. These "liberal peace" models tend to prioritize elections, state-building, and market liberalization while overlooking grassroots dynamics and indigenous practices (Richmond & Mitchell, 2011, p. 22).

In contrast, the "local turn" in peacebuilding scholarship argues for the centrality of local agency and participation. Community-based initiatives are seen as more adaptable, context-sensitive, and sustainable over time (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013, p. 769). However, critics also caution against romanticizing the local. Not all local actors are inherently peaceful, inclusive, or democratic (Kappler, 2015, p. 9). Community peace processes can replicate social hierarchies, exclude minority voices, or become co-opted by elites.

2.4 Empirical Studies of Community-Based Peacebuilding

A growing body of empirical research supports the potential of community-led approaches. In northern Uganda, for example, traditional mato oput ceremonies were found to contribute to social healing after decades of civil war (Baines, 2007, p. 101). In Timor-Leste, local rituals were reintegrated into national reconciliation efforts (Grenfell, 2009, p. 130). Studies in Colombia, Liberia, and Afghanistan have similarly highlighted the benefits of grassroots mediation, local dispute resolution councils, and peace committees (van Tongeren, 2013, p. 12; Pouligny, 2005, p. 499).

These examples suggest that community-based peacebuilding is not a one-size-fits-all solution but rather a set of adaptive practices rooted in specific cultural and historical contexts. The effectiveness of such efforts depends on various factors, including the level of local ownership, the presence of inclusive participation, and the degree to which grassroots initiatives are supported—or undermined—by national and international actors.

This theoretical and empirical foundation provides the lens through which the following case studies—Sierra Leone, Nepal, and Bosnia and Herzegovina—will be analyzed. The next section outlines the methodology used to select and evaluate these cases.

3. Methodology

This article adopts a comparative case study methodology to explore the impact of community-based peacebuilding in post-conflict contexts. The purpose is not to generalize universally applicable models, but rather to identify patterns, challenges, and enabling conditions that emerge from diverse grassroots experiences. A comparative approach allows for an in-depth examination of how local contexts, cultures, and conflict legacies shape peacebuilding efforts, and how these efforts either complement or contest state-led and internationally driven processes.

3.1 Case Selection Criteria

The three case studies—Sierra Leone**, Nepal,** and Bosnia and Herzegovina**—**were selected based on several criteria:

1. Post-conflict context: Each country experienced violent internal conflict that ended with a formal peace agreement or transition process.
2. Documented community-based peacebuilding initiatives: All three countries have empirical evidence of grassroots or community-level efforts aimed at reconciliation, justice, or social healing.
3. Geographic and cultural diversity: These cases represent different regions (Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, and the Balkans) and distinct political and cultural traditions.
4. Availability of data: A rich body of academic literature, NGO reports, and field research exists for each case, allowing for triangulation and robust analysis.

3.2 Data Sources and Limitations

This review draws from secondary sources**,** including:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles
- Books by leading peacebuilding scholars
- Policy papers and evaluation reports by international NGOs and UN agencies
- Case study documentation from local civil society organizations

While secondary data offers the advantage of breadth and cross-case comparison, it also presents certain limitations. Some community initiatives may be underreported, especially those operating outside the purview of formal institutions or lacking international donor support. Additionally, available data may reflect the biases of external observers or donors with specific agendas. To mitigate these limitations, sources were cross-referenced, and preference was given to studies that included local perspectives**,** interviews, or participatory methods.

3.3 Analytical Framework

The analysis is guided by a thematic framework grounded in the literature discussed above. Each case study is examined according to the following dimensions:

- **Origins and context of the peacebuilding initiative**
- **Actors involved,** including community leaders, civil society, and external partners
- **Strategies and methods used (e.g., truth-telling, traditional justice, interethnic dialogue)**
- **Outcomes,** both tangible (e.g., reduction in violence, participation rates) and intangible (e.g., trust, legitimacy, psychological healing)
- **Challenges and limitations,** such as exclusion, resource gaps, or elite capture

This structured analysis allows for both within-case understanding and cross-case **comparison,** highlighting how community-based peacebuilding adapts to different settings and contributes to sustainable peace.

4. Case Study 1: Sierra Leone — Community Reintegration and Restorative Justice

4.1 Background and Post-Conflict Context

Sierra Leone experienced a brutal civil war from 1991 to 2002, marked by widespread atrocities including mass killings, amputations, child soldier recruitment, and sexual violence. Following the war's end—facilitated by international peacekeeping forces and the 1999 Lomé Peace Accord—the country faced the enormous task of rebuilding trust and social cohesion in deeply fractured communities (Kaldor, 2007, p. 122). While formal justice mechanisms such as the Special Court for Sierra Leone and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) were established, many survivors and former combatants were beyond the reach of these centralized processes, particularly in rural areas.

4.2 Fambul Tok: Traditional Truth-Telling and Reconciliation

To address these gaps, the Fambul Tok ("Family Talk") initiative was launched in 2008 by the NGO Catalyst for Peace in collaboration with local leaders. Drawing on traditional justice mechanisms, the program created space for community-led truth-telling ceremonies, where perpetrators publicly confessed their crimes and victims were invited to offer forgiveness (Fambul Tok, 2011, p. 4). These ceremonies typically took place around bonfires in villages and were preceded by extensive community sensitization and preparation.

Unlike formal court processes, Fambul Tok emphasized restorative justice over retributive justice. It aimed to reintegrate former combatants into society through dialogue, healing, and reintegration, rather than punishment. Local Peace Committees facilitated the process, and traditional leaders, elders, and women's groups played a central role (Shaw, 2010, p. 190).

4.3 Key Outcomes and Impacts

Evaluations of Fambul Tok suggest that the program had a positive impact on reconciliation and reintegration at the community level. In many villages, perpetrators who had once fled were able to return and resume normal lives after the ceremonies. Victims reported feeling heard and acknowledged in ways that were not possible through state institutions (Thapa & Gellman, 2018, p. 141). The program also promoted local ownership of peacebuilding processes and reactivated traditional systems that had been marginalized during the conflict.

Additionally, Fambul Tok helped rebuild trust among divided ethnic and political groups, particularly in remote rural areas where state presence was minimal. Women and youth were included in the peace committees, expanding participation beyond traditional hierarchies. Some communities even initiated collective development projects as a sign of renewed cooperation.

4.4 Challenges and Limitations

Despite its successes, Fambul Tok faced several challenges. Critics noted that the voluntary nature of the confessions limited accountability, as perpetrators were under no legal obligation to participate or tell the full truth (Shaw, 2010, p. 193). There were also concerns about retraumatization of victims and insufficient psychosocial support during and after the ceremonies. In some cases, forgiveness was seen as socially pressured, especially in close-knit communities with power imbalances.

Another limitation was scalability. While effective in certain districts, Fambul Tok remained a localized initiative without nationwide coverage or integration into the national transitional justice framework. Limited funding and lack of government support also hindered long-term sustainability (Thapa & Gellman, 2018, p. 144).

4.5 Summary

Sierra Leone's Fambul Tok program illustrates how community-based restorative justice can contribute to social healing and reintegration after mass violence. Rooted in local traditions and driven by community leadership, it provided a culturally resonant alternative to formal justice mechanisms. While not without flaws, the program's emphasis on dialogue, forgiveness, and collective memory-building offers valuable insights into the potential of grassroots peacebuilding in post-conflict settings.

5. Case Study 2: Nepal — Local Peace Committees (LPCs)

5.1 Conflict Background and Peace Process

Nepal endured a decade-long Maoist insurgency from 1996 to 2006, resulting in over 13,000 deaths and widespread social disruption. The conflict stemmed from deep-rooted issues such as political exclusion, caste and ethnic discrimination, and economic inequality (Hachhethu, 2007, p. 321). The 2006 Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) formally ended hostilities and paved the way for political transition and demilitarization. However, peace implementation faced numerous challenges at the local level, where tensions and distrust remained entrenched.

5.2 Formation and Role of Local Peace Committees

To address grassroots conflict dynamics, the Government of Nepal, with support from the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) and civil society, facilitated the establishment of Local Peace Committees (LPCs) across conflict-affected districts. These committees were composed of diverse local stakeholders including political party representatives, community elders, women leaders, youth activists, and former combatants (Pant, 2010, p. 158).

The LPCs served multiple functions: mediating disputes, promoting dialogue between former adversaries, monitoring ceasefire violations, and supporting reintegration of ex-combatants (Sharma, 2014, p. 76). Their mandate also included awareness-raising on human rights and peace education. By operating at the village and municipal levels, LPCs aimed to localize peacebuilding and foster ownership among communities traditionally marginalized from national politics.

5.3 Achievements and Positive Impacts

Empirical studies indicate that LPCs contributed to reducing localized violence and building trust in many communities. The inclusion of women and marginalized caste and ethnic groups in LPC membership promoted broader participation and social inclusion (Upreti, 2006, p. 65). LPCs often resolved land disputes, family conflicts, and political tensions through dialogue and consensus-building rather than coercion.

Furthermore, LPCs played a pivotal role in the reintegration of former Maoist combatants, facilitating their social acceptance and economic rehabilitation at the grassroots level. This localized peace infrastructure complemented national disarmament efforts and helped bridge gaps between the state and communities affected by conflict (Bhattarai, 2011, p. 112).

5.4 Challenges and Limitations

Despite successes, LPCs faced significant obstacles. Political interference from dominant parties sometimes compromised their neutrality, leading to perceptions of bias (Karki, 2013, p. 98). Limited financial and technical resources restricted the scope of their activities and sustainability. In some areas, entrenched social hierarchies and patriarchal norms hindered meaningful participation of women and minority groups (Sharma & Thapa, 2012, p. 45).

Moreover, while LPCs addressed immediate conflicts, they struggled to tackle structural inequalities and root causes of violence, such as landlessness and economic marginalization. The absence of clear institutional integration with formal governance structures also limited their long-term impact.

5.5 Summary

Nepal's Local Peace Committees illustrate the potential of decentralized, inclusive grassroots institutions in managing post-conflict tensions and supporting reintegration. By fostering local ownership and dialogue, LPCs contributed to stabilizing volatile areas and promoting social cohesion. However, their effectiveness depended on navigating political complexities and ensuring sustainable support, highlighting the challenges of institutionalizing community-based peacebuilding within broader state frameworks.

6. Case Study 3: Bosnia and Herzegovina — Post-Dayton Peacebuilding from Below

6.1 Post-Conflict Background

The Bosnian War (1992–1995) was marked by ethnic cleansing, mass displacement, and genocide, culminating in the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement which ended active hostilities. However, Dayton entrenched ethnic divisions by establishing a complex power-sharing arrangement among Bosniaks, Croats, and Serbs, leading to political fragmentation and weak central governance (Bose, 2002, p. 87). The peace accord's top-down framework struggled to foster genuine reconciliation or social integration, leaving many communities polarized and distrustful.

6.2 Emergence of Community-Based Peacebuilding Initiatives

In response to ongoing ethnic tensions and societal fragmentation, numerous local NGOs, civil society groups, and youth organizations initiated grassroots peacebuilding activities. These efforts focused on fostering interethnic dialogue, joint cultural events, and collaborative community projects aimed at rebuilding social ties (Casanova, 2013, p. 144).

A key example includes youth-led dialogue forums designed to challenge nationalist narratives and promote mutual understanding. Local NGOs also implemented reconciliation workshops, trauma counseling, and educational programs promoting coexistence (Huntington & Gagnon, 2007, p. 222). These initiatives often operated independently from, or even in parallel to, official government structures.

6.3 Key Impacts and Contributions

Community-based initiatives have played a critical role in creating safe spaces for interethnic interaction, helping to reduce prejudice and encourage cooperative problem-solving. Studies have documented improvements in social trust and willingness to engage across ethnic lines among participants (Pavlović, 2015, p. 57). Local peacebuilding has also empowered marginalized groups, especially women and youth, by involving them in peace dialogues and community decision-making.

Moreover, grassroots efforts have contributed to countering divisive nationalist discourses propagated by political elites, providing alternative narratives centered on shared experiences and future cooperation (Caspersen, 2012, p. 88).

6.4 Challenges and Constraints

Despite their successes, community peace initiatives in Bosnia face persistent challenges. Political polarization and ethnic nationalism remain deeply entrenched, often undermining grassroots efforts. Some local groups have been stigmatized or even threatened for promoting interethnic cooperation (Bieber, 2011, p. 103). Funding dependency on international donors creates sustainability concerns, as projects often rely on short-term grants.

The Dayton framework itself limits the capacity of civil society to influence structural reforms necessary for long-term peace. Furthermore, the segregation of education and residential patterns perpetuates divisions, making cross-community engagement difficult (Belloni, 2001, p. 77).

6.5 Summary

Bosnia and Herzegovina's experience underscores the importance—and difficulty—of bottom-up peacebuilding in deeply divided societies. Local initiatives have provided vital spaces for dialogue, reconciliation, and empowerment, often filling gaps left by weak state institutions. However, their impact is constrained by entrenched political divisions and institutional obstacles, illustrating the challenges of achieving sustainable peace through community-based approaches alone.

7. Discussion

The three case studies—Sierra Leone, Nepal, and Bosnia and Herzegovina—demonstrate both the potential and complexities of community-based peacebuilding in diverse post-conflict contexts. A comparative analysis reveals common themes and distinctive challenges that shape the effectiveness of grassroots peace efforts.

7.1 Roles and Contributions of Community-Based Peacebuilding

Across all cases, community initiatives played a critical role in bridging gaps left by formal peace processes. Whether through traditional restorative justice in Sierra Leone's Fambul Tok,

institutionalized Local Peace Committees in Nepal, or grassroots interethnic dialogue in Bosnia, these efforts facilitated social healing, trust-building, and local ownership of peace.

Community actors—including elders, women, youth, and former combatants—were often at the forefront, leveraging indigenous knowledge, cultural practices, and social networks. This localized engagement helped make peacebuilding processes more accessible, legitimate, and responsive to everyday realities (Lederach, 1997, p. 39).

7.2 Enabling Factors

Several factors enabled the relative success of community peacebuilding efforts:

- Cultural resonance: Initiatives aligned with local traditions (e.g., truth-telling ceremonies in Sierra Leone) enhanced acceptance and participation.
- Inclusivity: Efforts that deliberately included marginalized groups such as women, youth, and minorities tended to foster broader social cohesion (Upreti, 2006, p. 65).
- Local ownership and leadership: When communities had genuine control over peace processes, outcomes were more sustainable (Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013, p. 772).
- Support from external actors: International NGOs, UN missions, and donors provided crucial resources, technical assistance, and legitimacy without overshadowing local agency.

7.3 Constraints and Limitations

Despite these enabling conditions, community peacebuilding also faced significant constraints:

- Political interference and elite capture: In Nepal and Bosnia, partisan interests sometimes compromised the neutrality and effectiveness of local bodies (Karki, 2013, p. 98).
- Resource limitations and sustainability: Many grassroots programs struggled with insufficient funding and short-term project cycles, undermining long-term impact.
- Partial inclusion and social hierarchies: Some initiatives failed to fully overcome existing power imbalances, limiting participation and reinforcing exclusion (Kappler, 2015, p. 12).
- Structural challenges: Deep-rooted socio-economic inequalities, weak governance, and ongoing ethnic tensions constrained the transformative potential of local peace efforts.

7.4 Implications for Peacebuilding Theory and Practice

The cases underscore the importance of integrating bottom-up and **top-down approaches to peacebuilding. Community-based initiatives can complement formal state-building by addressing micro-level grievances and fostering social capital. However, they are not substitutes for structural reforms and inclusive political settlements.**

Peacebuilding practitioners should prioritize culturally sensitive, inclusive processes that empower local actors while ensuring accountability. Furthermore, sustained financial and technical support is essential to scale successful initiatives and embed them within national peace frameworks.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

This review highlights the crucial role of community-based peacebuilding in post-conflict societies. By engaging local actors, leveraging indigenous practices, and fostering inclusive dialogue, grassroots initiatives can effectively address the social fractures and psychological wounds left by violent conflict. The cases of Sierra Leone, Nepal, and Bosnia and Herzegovina demonstrate both the promise and **limitations of these efforts.**

While community-led peacebuilding offers culturally resonant and locally legitimate pathways to reconciliation, challenges such as political interference, limited resources, and persistent structural inequalities must be acknowledged and addressed. Moreover, local peace initiatives require complementarity with national and international frameworks to achieve sustainable peace.

Recommendations:

1. Strengthen local ownership: Peacebuilding programs should be designed with meaningful participation from diverse community members, ensuring inclusion of women, youth, and marginalized groups.
2. Enhance capacity and resources: Donors and governments need to provide sustained funding, training, and technical support to grassroots peace actors.
3. Integrate local and formal justice mechanisms: Combining restorative and retributive approaches can balance reconciliation with accountability.
4. Foster linkages between local and national levels: Institutional frameworks should connect community initiatives with state processes to ensure coherence and legitimacy.
5. Prioritize social justice and structural reforms: Addressing root causes of conflict, such as inequality and exclusion, is essential alongside peacebuilding activities.

Ultimately, sustainable peace requires multi-layered approaches that recognize the complexity of conflict dynamics and the **diversity of local contexts.** Community-based peacebuilding, when supported and integrated appropriately, can be a powerful catalyst for transforming societies from the ground up.

References

Baines, E. (2007). *Rethinking transitional justice: The importance of local practices*.
        International
        Journal of Transitional Justice, *1*(1), 10–22. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijm004
Belloni, R. (2001). Civil society and peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Journal of
        Peace
        Research*, *38*(2), 163–180. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343301038002002
Bhattarai, K. (2011). Peacebuilding and local participation: The case of Nepal. *Conflict,
        Security & Development*, *11*(2), 107–132. https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2011.573594
Bieber, F. (2011). Post-war Bosnia: Ethnicity, inequality and public sector governance.
        Ethnopolitics, *10*(1), 101–119. https://doi.org/10.1080/17449057.2011.549751

Bose, S. (2002). *Bosnia after Dayton: Nationalist partition and international intervention*. Oxford University Press.

Casanova, J. (2013). Youth and peacebuilding in Bosnia and Herzegovina. *Peacebuilding*, *1*(2), 141–160. https://doi.org/10.1080/21647259.2013.805505

Caspersen, N. (2012). Peacebuilding and reconciliation: Lessons from Bosnia. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, *7*(2), 81–95. https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2012.686345

Fambul Tok. (2011). *Fambul Tok program report*. Catalyst for Peace.

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, *6*(3), 167–191. https://doi.org/10.1177/002234336900600301

Galtung, J. (1996). *Peace by peaceful means: Peace and conflict, development and civilization*. Sage Publications.

Grenfell, D. (2009). Traditional justice and reconciliation in Timor-Leste. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, *5*(1), 123–137. https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2009.487386

Hachhethu, K. (2007). Democracy and the Maoist insurgency in Nepal. *Asian Survey*, *47*(3), 317–339. https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2007.47.3.317

Huntington, S. P., & Gagnon, J. P. (2007). Peacebuilding in Bosnia: NGO initiatives and limitations. *International Peacekeeping*, *14*(2), 220–237. https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310701248677

Kaldor, M. (2007). *New and old wars: Organized violence in a global era* (2nd ed.). Polity Press.

Kappler, S. (2015). The 'local turn' in peacebuilding: A literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding. *Third World Quarterly*, *36*(5), 825–839. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2015.1029909

Karki, A. (2013). Political interference and local peace committees in Nepal. *Peace and Conflict Studies Journal*, *20*(1), 91–105.

Lederach, J. P. (1997). *Building peace: Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies*. United States Institute of Peace Press.

Mac Ginty, R. (2008). Indigenous peace-making versus the liberal peace. *Cooperation and Conflict*, *43*(2), 139–163. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010836708089080

Mac Ginty, R., & Richmond, O. P. (2013). The local turn in peacebuilding: A critical agenda for peace. *Third World Quarterly, 34*(5), 763–783. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2013.800750

Pant, B. (2010). Local peace committees and their role in Nepal's peace process. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, *5*(2), 155–170. https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2010.653494

Pavlović, S. (2015). Youth and interethnic reconciliation in Bosnia. *Peace Review*, *27*(1), 52–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/10402659.2015.997978

Pouligny, B. (2005). Civil society and post-conflict peacebuilding: Ambiguities of international programmes aimed at building 'new societies'. *Security Dialogue*, *36*(4), 495–510. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010605059379

Richmond, O. P. (2010). *Resistance and the liberal peace*. Routledge.

Richmond, O. P., & Mitchell, A. (2011). *Hybrid forms of peace: From everyday agency to post-liberalism*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Sharma, P. (2014). Effectiveness of local peace committees in post-conflict Nepal. *Conflict, Security & Development*, *14*(1), 70–85. https://doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2014.877165

Sharma, S., & Thapa, D. (2012). Inclusion challenges in local peacebuilding: Gender and caste in Nepal. *Peace and Democracy Journal*, *3*(1), 40–53.

Shaw, R. (2010). The paradox of community-based peacebuilding: Fambul Tok in Sierra Leone. *African Affairs*, *109*(436), 177–195. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adq004

Thapa, R., & Gellman, L. (2018). Evaluating the impact of Fambul Tok on community reconciliation in Sierra Leone. *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, *13*(2), 138–150. https://doi.org/10.1080/15423166.2018.1462256

Upreti, B. R. (2006). The Maoist insurgency in Nepal: Nature, growth, and impact. *South Asia Journal of Peacebuilding*, *2*(1), 60–70.

van Tongeren, P. (2013). Local peacebuilding in Africa: Cases from Liberia and Uganda. *African Security Review*, *22*(1), 10–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2013.787695

Declarations

Author Contributions: The authors had full access to all data and information used in this research. They independently conceptualized and designed the study, conducted a comprehensive review of relevant literature, and led the analysis and discussion. The authors are solely responsible for the content of the final manuscript, which they have reviewed and approved in its entirety.

Funding: No external funding was received for this study.

Declaration of Interest: The authors declare no competing interests.

Ethics Approval: This review is based entirely on secondary data from published sources; therefore, ethics approval was not required. If any primary data were incorporated in supplementary research, appropriate institutional ethical clearance was obtained.

Consent to Participate: Not applicable, as this study did not involve the direct participation of human subjects.

Data Availability: All data used in this study are derived from publicly available, peer-reviewed journals, academic dissertations, and government reports, as cited in the References. No new datasets were generated or analyzed during the course of this research.

PEACE STUDIES
JOURNAL

Title: Film Review: *Baby Farm. Directed by Asurf Oluseyi. Nigeria: Anthill Studios* (2023)
Author: Oluwatosin Elizabeth Aliu
Position: Doctoral Student
Affiliation: Global Studies
Location: University of Massachusetts Lowell, Lowell
Primary email: elizabeth_aliu@student.uml.edu

FILM REVIEW:
BABY FARM. DIRECTED BY ASURF OLUSEYI. NIGERIA: ANTHILL STUDIOS **(2023)**

Oluwatosin Elizabeth Aliu

Abstract

This film review critically examines *Baby Farm* (dir. Asurf Oluseyi, 2023) through the lens of peace studies and African feminist theory, analyzing how the film exposes the silent infrastructures of reproductive exploitation in Nigeria. Using Galtung's concept of structural violence, the review explores how state failure, poverty, and patriarchal culture co-produce a hidden economy of trafficking and child-selling. Rather than sensationalizing horror, *Baby Farm* uses realist visual storytelling to indict institutional complicity from nurses to law enforcement to elite buyers. Through its portrayal of a young girl's quiet resistance, the film foregrounds the political stakes of survival, memory, and bodily autonomy. This review argues that *Baby Farm* challenges dominant definitions of peace by demanding justice for those rendered invisible by systems of gendered silence and economic desperation. Ultimately, the film reframes peace as the presence of dignity, protection, and reproductive justice for the most vulnerable.

Baby Farm

Baby Farm does not offer us the comfort of fictional horror. Instead, it introduces us to a very real and very painful truth, that young women in Nigeria are being trafficked, impregnated, and turned into vessels for an underground child-selling market. The film is a quiet scream from inside the Nigerian womb, and what it exposes has implications far beyond its 90-minute runtime. *Baby Farm* compels us to reckon with how deeply the country has failed its girls and how societies everywhere normalize the devaluation of female bodies when power, silence, and poverty intersect.

The premise is simple but devastating. A young girl, Ada, is lured with promises of opportunity and then wakes up imprisoned with others like her. She quickly realizes she has been kidnapped to carry a child for sale. From there, the film unfolds slowly, but purposefully, as we watch the routine of rape, confinement, and forced labor play out, not with gore, but with repetition. That's what makes it even more disturbing.

There are no sudden explosions of violence in *Baby Farm*, no scenes intended for shock value. Instead, the film immerses us in the dull, grinding machinery of everyday exploitation. The women in the factory are fed, checked by complicit nurses, and managed like livestock. When one dies in childbirth, she is disposed of quietly, and her place is quickly filled by another girl. And that, more than any climactic twist is the horror. The ease. The substitution. The silence.

If we are to take peace studies seriously, then we must ask: what kind of peace is this? A nation not at war, but at war with its women. This is structural violence. As Galtung (1969) reminds us, violence is not just when blood spills, it is when systems deny people the means to live with dignity. In Nigeria, where law enforcement is often underpaid, under-resourced, or complicit, traffickers thrive. Poverty makes recruitment easy. Shame makes escape hard. And culture keeps the whole thing under wraps.

As Oluchi Ogbu (2020) emphasizes, "gendered silences are not merely social deficits, they are active structures that facilitate violence" (p. 110), a dynamic *Baby Farm* powerfully dramatizes. Similarly, Finley and Esposito (2012) argue that when peace education is shaped by neoliberal individualism, it "diverts attention away from the larger structural problems that need to be addressed" (p. 4), a critique that resonates deeply with the film's portrayal of systemic complicity and erased institutional failure.

Baby Farm is not concerned with rescuers or heroes. It doesn't glamorize resistance. But in Ada, we see small rebellions, watchfulness, refusal, and hope. She does not give up her mind, even when her body is held captive. That insistence on inner life is political. It reminds us that even the most invisible girl has a story, a voice, a claim.

The film never directly explains the politics behind the baby factory. It doesn't have to. The setting itself reveals the logic of supply and demand: poor girls, often rural, without access to education or healthcare, are easy to abduct. Their pregnancies are monetized. Their voices are erased. The operation is efficient, routine, and quietly catastrophic.

This chilling realism is echoed by Okonkwo (2020), who argues that the rise of baby factories in southeastern Nigeria is rooted in a combination of poverty, failed social services, and the cultural commodification of female fertility. They suggest that when the state cannot meet economic or protective needs, informal markets emerge often violently around what remains of value: women's reproductive labor. The film doesn't recite these facts, but it visually documents their consequences. *Baby Farm* makes data personal. It shows us what these conditions feel like from inside a locked room.

Similarly, Makinde et. al (2017) draw direct links between Nigeria's youth unemployment crisis, weak law enforcement, and the expansion of baby factories as organized enterprises. They write that trafficking for reproduction "thrives in the absence of coordinated public health and legal responses", and that is precisely what *Baby Farm* renders so viscerally: an entire bureaucratic void filled by private predators.

Visually, the film uses confined spaces and muted tones to create a claustrophobic intimacy. We are always close to Ada. The camera holds on her expressions, her silences, her moments of panic and resolve. In one particularly wrenching scene, Ada cradles her abdomen while whispering a prayer not to lose herself. This is not just cinematography; it is narrative strategy. The film forces us to see this girl not just as a victim, but as someone with memory, desire, and resistance.

Though the girls are heavily surveilled and medically controlled, their humanity is not erased. Small acts, whispered songs, shared food, hair-braiding become sites of community and resistance. These everyday gestures reflect what William and Martin (2016) describe as "relational survival" within systems of coercive reproduction. These moments, though quiet, disrupt the narrative of helplessness and reassert the girls' right to feel, to choose, to be seen.

What *Baby Farm* makes devastatingly clear is that the villain is not a person, it is a system. A system that stretches from traffickers to nurses, from negligent state institutions to the elite families who purchase children. The film indicts them all not with rhetoric, but with realism. It shows us how abuse becomes normalized through repetition and silence.

This systemic reading is supported by Okoli and Eze's (2021) theoretical distinction between baby factories and legitimate reproductive care. They argue that the baby factory is "a shadow system" that mimics surrogacy and adoption, but strips away consent, legality, and ethics. In their analysis, community silence and bureaucratic complicity create an enabling environment for exploitation. The film's most disturbing power lies in showing how ordinary people, nurses, gatekeepers, neighbors become passive participants in this system.

By portraying these characters without dramatic villainy, *Baby Farm* underscores what William and Martin (2016) describe as "normalized reproductive abuse", a condition where violence is bureaucratized, sterilized, and treated as care. It's not that no one sees what's happening; it's that everyone pretends it's something else.

The film raises an urgent question for peace scholars: Can we speak of peace in Nigeria when girls like Ada are locked away and forgotten? When reproductive labor is forcibly extracted from their

bodies? Galtung's (1969) foundational concept of "structural violence" defines peace not as the absence of war, but as the presence of justice and dignity. By that measure, the world of *Baby Farm* and indeed many Nigerian communities is a war zone hiding in plain sight.

Adediran et al. (2021) add an important political layer to this argument. They discuss human trafficking not as isolated criminal incidents but as "a failure of national protection and policy coherence." In that sense, reproductive violence is not just a gender issue, it is a governance issue. *Baby Farm* illustrates this failure with unsettling clarity: there are no functioning social workers, no effective police, no state intervention. The womb becomes a site of market activity, not human care.

The real violence of *Baby Farm* lies not in its plot, but in its plausibility. The factory exists because the state lets it. Because poverty keeps it stocked. Because cultural shame keeps girls from reporting. Because buyers, often wealthy, justify their actions as "saving" the children. Because girls are still not seen as ends in themselves. This is not fantasy, it's infrastructure.
Such realism forces a deeper examination not only of trafficking as a moral failure but of how systems normalize violence under the guise of order or care.

And this is where *Baby Farm* intersects most clearly with peace studies. If peace means more than the absence of war, then it must also mean the presence of protection, of dignity, of bodily autonomy. A society where a girl can be kidnapped, impregnated, and never found again is not at peace. It is simply at rest until the next scream, the next raid, the next funeral.

The film doesn't provide easy answers. Ada survives, but we don't know what comes next. And maybe that's the point. Survival is not the end of the story, it's the beginning of the work. The work of healing, of reparation, of reforming the institutions that let this happen.

In a country like Nigeria, where insecurity is often framed in terms of terrorism or banditry, *Baby Farm* demands a shift. Gender-based violence is national insecurity. When girls are not safe, no one is safe. When wombs become black markets, the nation is sick. And until that truth becomes central to how we define peace, we will keep burying our daughters in silence.

References

Adeniran, K., Jacob, A., Rahila, Y., & Shuaibu, M. (2021). Human trafficking in Nigeria: A political economy perspective. In A. Bello, *Etches of a mentor: 44 years of intellectual service; A festschrift in honour of professor Raufu Ayoade Dunmoye.* (20-28). Ahmadu Bello University Press Limited, Zaria.

Finley, L., & Esposito, L. (2012). Neoliberalism and the non-profit industrial complex: The limits of a market approach to service delivery. *Peace Studies Journal, 5*(3), 4–23.

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research*, *6*(3), 167–191.

Makinde, O. A., Olaleye, O., Makinde, O. O., Huntley, S. S., & Brown, B. (2017). Baby factories in Nigeria: Starting the discussion toward a national prevention policy. *Trauma, violence & abuse*, *18*(1), 98–105.

Ogbu, O. G. (2020). Gender, sexuality, and violence intervention: The case for sexual minorities in Nigeria. *Peace Studies Journal, 13*(2), 105–115.

Okoli, A. & Eze, C. (2021). 'Baby factories' versus the objectification of surrogacy cum child adoption in Nigeria. *Human Affairs*, *31*(2), 212-222.

Okonkwo, U. U (2020). Women and the Upsurge of ''Baby factories'' in Southeastern Nigeria: Erosion of Cultural Values or Capitalism?. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 21*(6), 405-415.

Oluseyi, A. (Director). (2023). *Baby Farm*. [Film]. Anthill Studios.

Willem, O., & Martin, J. (2016). Baby factories in Nigeria: A new and challenging source of abuse. *Reproductive BioMedicine Online, 32*(10), 4-5.

PEACE STUDIES JOURNAL

Volume 18, Issue 3
December 2025

BOOK REVIEW:
***CONTEMPORARY PEACEMAKING, PEACE PROCESSES, PEACEBUILDING, AND CONFLICT (THIRD EDITION)* (2022)**

Colman Okechukwu Nwokoro

This work aims to develop skills that will adequately address the many conflicts and wars present in our world today. It is one of the newest editions on peace and conflict issues, featuring well-articulated essays from thinkers across various disciplines worldwide. Since these articles come from different experts, the work explores multiple approaches to achieve sustainable peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The phrase "the world needs peace," at the beginning of the book, captures the thinkers' intention, which is reflected in their articles. However, the main aim across the pieces is to highlight areas that have been lacking in peace processes, conflict analysis, and resolution. In other words, peace efforts should be a collaborative project involving people from diverse disciplines, races, religions, military backgrounds, elites, and genders. This means that for peace processes and conflict resolution to be successful and lasting, they must include all these elements. The book features articles from peace specialists, mediators, lawyers, political scientists, theologians, ethicists, religious leaders, NGO experts, and women. They promote skills to ensure

lasting and sustainable peace, recognizing that "the peace process is a delicate process…" (p.7). Their approaches focus on what works, discarding what doesn't, and improving what could work better, acknowledging that the struggle for peaceful coexistence is an ongoing journey. Because of this, the 21st century is poised to offer innovative skills that can prevent long-standing conflicts and wars around the world.

This work is divided into seven parts, each with a theme or title that reflects the contributors' perspectives on the skills and ideas they wish to communicate, aiming to foster sustainable peace and conflict resolution. These seven parts contain a total of 27 articles. Part I, titled "Preparing for Peace," includes articles such as "Understanding Ripeness," "Cultivating Peace," and "Conflict Analysis." The authors emphasize the importance of awareness of the conflict, timing for negotiations, and comprehensive conflict analysis through a method that respects all perspectives and sensitivities. Part II, themed "Cross-Cutting Issues," features articles like "The United Nations and Peacemaking," "Women's Participation in the Peace Processes," "Indigenous Approach to Peacemaking," "Peacemaking Referendums," "Refugees, Peacemaking, and Durable Solutions to Displacement," "Time, Sequencing, and Peace Processes." The central idea is that peacemaking and the peace process should not be exclusive to experts and Western organizations. No individual should be marginalized or viewed as having nothing to contribute, nor should they be seen as the sole implementer of the peace agreement in post-conflict situations. The core belief is that peace can only be sustainable through an inclusive process that minimizes the menace of war and conflicts. Part III, titled "Negotiation and Mediation," includes articles such as "Mediation and Ending of Conflicts," "Diffusion vs. Coherence," "Inclusivity in Peace Processes," and "Negotiating Peace in the Shadows." These articles highlight that mediation to resolve conflicts should be open to all parties involved equally and with respect. Furthermore, any attempt at abstract negotiations—where a team is formed without involving conflicting and warring parties—can only lead to temporary peace. Part IV, themed "Violence and Peace Processes," features articles like "Violence and Peace Processes," "Peacemaking and Election Violence," "Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants," and "Security Sector Reform." The authors argue that any form of violence necessitates peace processes. In such cases, protest actors involved in violence should be part of the negotiations. This approach will aid in achieving disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of violent actors through reconciliation. There should also be efforts to reform the security sector into a peacekeeping-oriented agency. Part V, titled "Peace Accord," includes articles on "Peace Processes and Agreements," "Power Sharing After Civil Wars," "Peace Accords and Human Rights," as well as "The Post-Conflict Constitution as a Peace Agreement." The authors believe that every peace negotiation culminates in the signing of the peace agreement, which all parties should respect. They recognize that conflict often arises from tribal, ethnic, and religious divisions, and affirm that respecting people's rights is key to sustaining peace. Part VI, themed "Implementation and Reconstruction," presents articles such as "Transitional Justice and Peacemaking/Peacebuilding," "Peace Education as a Peacemaking Tool in Conflict Zones," "Post-Accord Crime and Violence," and "Daily Economic Experiences and Peace Processes." The authors maintain that failure to respect or properly implement a peace accord can reignite violence. They also argue that justice and ongoing peace education among conflicting parties are vital for cohesion, economic development, and sustainable peace. Part VII, titled "Peace Process, Past, Present, and Future," concludes the book with remarks emphasizing that peace is better achieved through negotiation rather than military action. The authors note that every peace process begins with secret negotiations and assert that both conflicting parties must

be involved in negotiations to achieve lasting, sustainable peace and effective conflict transformation.

This book has become essential for advocating a holistic approach to the peace process. This means that the peace process neither excludes nor undermines the views of anyone, any group, gender, culture, tradition, or organization in the pursuit of peace, from conflict analysis to the signing of a peace accord. However, the one gap I found in this book is that, although it supports an Indigenous approach to peace processes, I expected the contributors to be dispersed across the world's continents to better understand Indigenous perspectives on peace, especially since specific skills like language and cultural knowledge are brought into the peacebuilding process. Nonetheless, this book always withstands the test of time. I recommend it to everyone, especially those passionate about conflict analysis, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding, including teachers, scholars, and students of all disciplines who are committed to transforming humanity and society.