5-1-2010

Localizing Peace: An Agenda for Sustainable Peacebuilding

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Abstract

The sophistication of peace operations and complex humanitarian missions has increased in recent decades, resulting in increased international capacity to mitigate organized violence and provide relief to suffering populations. With respect to other indicators of success, however, international peace strategies still leave much to be desired. By their very nature, externally driven efforts tend to leave local actors feeling marginalized and disempowered, and unable to fulfill aspirations for cumulative and sustainable transformations in the quality of life. The peace that local populations genuinely hope for may fail to take root, and dynamics associated with interventionism may replace one set of problems with another. To address such problems within existing peace processes and to provide a framework for broader preventive action, this paper identifies "localizing peace" as a central challenge for twenty-first century peacebuilding efforts. International and cross-cultural cooperation remain vital for tackling border-spanning problems and structural inequalities, yet the advancement of global peace depends in no small part on the enhancement of local peace capacities. Ultimately, peace must be defined and constructed locally, and peacebuilding efforts become energetic and sustainable only to the extent that they tap local resources, empower local constituencies, and achieve legitimacy within particular cultural and religious contexts. By appreciating these realities, international actors can discover more effective means of partnering with local organizations and movements, while also deriving new insights into the unity and diversity of peacemaking.

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Abstract

The sophistication of peace operations and complex humanitarian missions has increased in recent decades, resulting in increased international capacity to mitigate organized violence and provide relief to suffering populations. With respect to other indicators of success, however, international peace strategies still leave much to be desired. By their very nature, externally driven efforts tend to leave local actors feeling marginalized and disempowered, and unable to fulfill aspirations for cumulative and sustainable transformations in the quality of life. The peace that local populations genuinely hope for may fail to take root, and dynamics associated with interventionism may replace one set of problems with another. To address such problems within existing peace processes and to provide a framework for broader preventive action, this paper identifies "localizing peace" as a central challenge for twenty-first century peacebuilding efforts. International and cross-cultural cooperation remain vital for tackling border-spanning problems and structural inequalities, yet the advancement of global peace depends in no small part on the enhancement of local peace capacities. Ultimately, peace must be defined and constructed locally, and peacebuilding efforts become energetic and sustainable only to the extent that they tap local resources, empower local constituencies, and achieve legitimacy within particular cultural and religious contexts. By appreciating these

realities, international actors can discover more effective means of partnering with local organizations and movements, while also deriving new insights into the unity and diversity of peacemaking.

Introduction

It has become commonplace for commentators on world affairs to observe that we are entering a period of profound social stress and of extreme pressures on often ineffective national as well as international governance systems. Globalized patterns of inequality, economic volatility, and resource scarcity are exacerbating localized social cleavages among ethnocultural groups, in ways that often outstrip the capacities of already-weak states to preserve social peace and stability. In some world regions, local and national conflicts increasingly spill over borders, presenting severe challenges to multilateral initiatives charged with containing violence and establishing security.

While ambitious and multi-faceted peace operations have helped stabilize deeply fractured societies and reduce direct violence (Bellamy and Williams, 2010), few have proved capable of addressing root causes of conflict or sustainably empowering the local population. Critics of contemporary stabilization and reconstruction missions have observed that the top-down nature of major international missions mirrors imbalances within the larger world order, and frequently results in a low-quality or "stalled" peace (Mac Ginty, 2006). The introduction of a large foreign presence to a conflict zone tends to engender dependence on outsiders, friction between "internationals" and "locals," and ambivalence about the trajectory of political change. Because the psychological residues

as well as social and economic correlates of violent conflict persist despite the brokering of accords by external actors and the initiation of standardized institutional reforms, contemporary peace processes often suffer from deficits in the areas of local empowerment, ownership, and legitimacy (Donais, 2009). Peace becomes a series of events that happen *to* the general population rather than a participatory initiative that enables members of a divided society to tap local resources, rediscover their own vernacular language for peacebuilding, and become active agents in the construction of a new reality.

To meet the peacebuilding needs of the 21st century and create a more sound and equitable basis for addressing global governance challenges, genuinely empowering forms of grassroots mobilization and local-international partnership are needed. Though humanitarian missions endorsed by the United Nations and backed by leading states are likely to remain necessary, practitioners and scholars of peacebuilding must be careful not to resign themselves to a "trouble-shooter" role within a largely Western, "liberal peace" (Richmond, 2008) framework that narrows discussion of international conflict issues and under-represents actual as well as potential contributions to peace from non-Western cultures. Instead, they must explore ways of broadening and deepening international dialogue about the nature and sources of peace, and underscore the value of context-sensitive peacebuilding efforts that seek to activate local resources and revitalize indigenous peacemaking capacities.

As global conversations about peace, governance, and human security move forward, there is a vital need to reassert the value of local solutions. In a world of diverse, non-interchangeable cultural and religious contexts, there can be no singular, formulaic

approach to sustainable international peacebuilding. Where homogenizing, generic approaches are at best indifferent to local culture and are premised on the need for a clean break with the conflict-afflicted past, newer approaches must adopt a humbler attitude which regards conflict resolution as a cultural activity and seeks forms of partnership that energize and support local efforts. This means rethinking the role of context in shaping peacemaking practice, balancing the need for innovation with the necessity of historical continuity, and emphasizing the renewable and potentially dynamic nature of local cultural resources.

Etic and *Emic* Approaches to Peace

During the last two decades, increasing numbers of researchers have recognized that theories and practices of conflict resolution are culturally constructed and, to some extent, context specific. Although modes of training that presuppose universally applicable techniques and methods persist, many scholars and practitioners have come to appreciate the reality that there are no culture-free approaches to conflict mediation (Abu-Nimer, 1996; Augsburger, 1992), international negotiation (Cohen, 1991), problem solving (Avruch, 1998), or peacebuilding capacity development (Lederach, 1995). Emergent, self-critical voices within the field have sought to reframe conflict resolution as a cultural activity rather than a technical specialization that transcends culture, and have recognized that cultural assumptions are present even in basic constructs of the field. Implicit in much of this critical analysis is the notion that, while disciplined inquiry may succeed in identifying general principles that apply in multiple contexts, specific

applications are not culturally neutral (Avruch and Black, 1994). In the domain of international peacebuilding practice, the call to take culture seriously has helped open the door to reconsideration of traditional and indigenous methods of peacemaking (MacGinty, 2008; Malan, 2005)—forms of peacemaking that generally predate modern North American methods of conflict resolution, and that are often present in the living memory of populations experiencing protracted social conflict.

To date, discussion concerning the diversity of peacemaking processes has progressed somewhat more rapidly than reflection on cultural variations in the way in which peace itself can be understood. Given the extent to which the field of peace research derives intellectual coherence and a normative mandate from foundational "negative" and "positive" peace concepts, this is not altogether surprising. The field of peace and conflict studies has developed a compelling vocabulary for reflecting on the substantive as well as value-laden dimensions of peace, contributing a vital distinction between formulations of peace as a mere *absence* of overt violence ("negative peace") and peace concepts that are linked to the *presence* of conditions for human flourishing ("positive peace"). Through such distinctions, peace researchers have begun to develop what anthropologists call an *etic* language for the diagnosis and evaluation of large-scale patterns of human behaviour. In contrast to the *emic*, ethnographic language of "thick description," which privileges the local, vernacular terminology used by "insiders" over exogenous analytical concepts, *etic* language aspires to provide a basis for comparative analysis and theoretical generalization (Avruch, 1998, pp. 57–72; Harris, 1968; Headland and others, 1990). The relatively new and specialized *etic* language of peace research has

added greater intellectual discipline to academic discussions of topics pertaining to "war and peace" while also opening space for the evaluation of existing practices.

By highlighting the possibility of deliberate efforts to advance a "positive" peace among nations and systematically analyzing ways in which the contemporary international system falls short of this standard, peace researchers have helped expose a common dynamic of power politics, according to which dominant powers attribute universal validity to their own conceptions of peace, and invoke these conceptions to validate the order over which they have come to preside. As Mac Ginty (2006) notes,

> [P]eace is universal in the sense that virtually all social communities profess a notion of peace, but these notions of peace do not comprise a discrete and coherent set of ideas that can claim unanimous allegiance. Yet, the view that there is just one universal peace is persistent, particularly among hegemonic states and organizations (p. 17).

Although the language of strategists and statesmen often presents peace as a mere absence of war secured through the robust deterrence of military preparedness (a useful stance for deflecting calls to demilitarize politics or move towards a more collaboratively governed international order), this "minimalist," status quo peace discourse tends to exist symbiotically with other notions that equate "real peace" with "our way of life," conceived in positive and substantive (if also idealized or ideological) terms. While this latter tendency may be as commonplace among politically marginalized communities as it is among the powerful, the temptation for those who wield great influence is to equate

peace with predominance—a stance which excludes alternative perspectives on the existing world order, and readily legitimizes war to defend, secure, or extend a hegemonic peace. By highlighting the normative shortcomings of "negative," militarized understandings of international peacekeeping and issuing a cosmopolitan rather than nationalistic call for cooperative efforts to establish peace as a *presence* (for example, inclusive security, equitable international development, social justice, cultural coexistence, and participatory politics), academically based peace advocates have mounted a challenge to traditional security politics. They have sought to discipline self-referential and self-serving notions of peace, and reorganize thought and practice to meet the needs of an increasingly interdependent world rendered insecure by the steady advance of technological capacities for destruction.

Given the urgent nature of peace and security debates throughout the Cold War era, most peace researchers devoted only limited attention to the cultural foundations and resonances of "positive peace" concepts, emphasizing the universal significance of their transnational enterprise rather than the underlying diversity of peace constructs among the world's manifold cultural and religious communities. By highlighting the shortcomings of militarized approaches to peacemaking and calling for transnational commitment to more holistic ways of understanding and advancing peace, modern peace researchers have sought to bypass ethnocentric nationalism and foster consensus on the bases of a more just, stable, and humane international order. In the process, they have provided globally engaged activists and leaders with a genuinely new language for talking about peace as something more than the "peace for us" of bounded cultural communities and the "peace our way" of hegemonic orders ancient and modern, from

Pax Romana and the Chinese Middle Kingdom to Pax Britannica and Pax Americana.

While peace researchers' contributions are considerable and there is a need for a further refinement and diffusion of the *etic* language of peace and conflict studies, recent developments in international affairs suggest a concomitant need to revisit the *emic* dimension of peacemaking. Although past tendencies to analytically bypass *emic* peace concepts have been ameliorated by the decline of Cold War ideological polarization and the concomitant rise in awareness of conflict as well as peacebuilding potential inherent in ethnic and communal identities, the rich and subtle diversity of cultural and religious peace concepts remains an open area for further inquiry.

The Limits of Interventionism

In a world plagued by new identity conflict formations and persistent divides between world regions, a search for the universals of peacemaking is no longer sufficient. For a growing number of thinkers, the current salience of ethnic and religious identity in disputes and the uneven results of international interventions signal a need to abandon simplistic dichotomies that oppose the "universal" to the "particular," and to more fully embrace the challenges posed by human diversity. As perceptive observers of indigenous as well as religious peacemaking have argued, identities that appear to divide can also provide wellsprings of motivation for building bridges (ter Haar and Busuttil, 2005); every boundary between people provides a potential line of conflict, yet the character of particularistic identities can vary profoundly and there is no inevitability to destructive intercommunal strife.

To encourage a proper stance of cultural humility and underscore the importance of local empowerment and sustainability as well as cross-cultural learning, peace research needs to highlight both the unity and diversity of peace and peacemaking. The field's overriding normative aspirations and evolving *etic* constructs can continue to provide a sense of unity, even as researchers more fully engage the diversity of *emic* approaches— that is, the vernacular languages through which particular communities discuss and comprehend peace, and the local resources through which they might more sustainably ground it in their lived environments and immediate contexts of experience.

Immersion in local, *emic* conceptions of peace heightens awareness of the extent to which peace is and always has been a contested concept with manifold cultural, political, and indeed religious resonances. If we engage in dialogue and listen closely for substantive peace constructs with which diverse cultural communities feel a sense of historical affinity, it quickly becomes apparent that people in most parts of the world intuitively associate peace with their own idealized forms of everyday life, in a manner consistent with a larger cultural cosmology (Galtung, 1996). Substantively, peace is often equated with "our civilization," or "our cultural norms, rightly understood." As a culture-specific, *emic* concept expressed in vernacular languages, peace is inextricably tied to ideas about sacred values, time-honoured institutions, exemplary individuals, and ideal ways of handling differences within a context of shared community. Taken together, such elements constitute "local common sense" about peace. This "local common sense" can often be instrumentalized within a context of conflict, and transformed into a symbolic "way of life" that needs to be defended or propagated throughout the larger world. Nonetheless, the "received wisdom" that constitutes a group of people's implicit

knowledge (Lederach, 1995, pp. 44–45) about peace is also a seedbed for creative and empowering responses to social strain, inequality, and traumatic historical events.

In a very real sense, the history of international politics is not merely a struggle for power, but also a process of intercultural communication. In the past, this process has too often been characterized by open rejection of the value syntheses and peace constructs of other cultures, combined with an attempt to supplant or subordinate alternative modes of life. As noted previously, there is a tendency for the most politically influential states and peoples of every era to assume their own worldview is (or ought to be) universal. This perception is linked to a further assumption that "we" have arrived at an understanding of peace and social virtue that is superior to competing conceptions, and which provides a basis for pacifying as well as "civilizing" missions.

Differences of time, space, and underlying political motivation notwithstanding, similar patterns of self-justification have informed the conquests of imperial Rome, earnest nineteenth century belief in the "white man's burden" or *mission civilisatrice*, and native residential school policies in North America and Australia (Bond, 2008). Despite the fact that most of these ventures did not go exactly as planned, there is a valid sense in which they were nonetheless "about peace"—at least for their leading protagonists. A fairly consistent theme of imperial ventures ancient and modern is the assumption that the values which make possible a decent way of life—the peaceful life, understood in particularistic terms—are scarce and unevenly distributed rather than abundant and accessible to all. The historical prevalence of this perspective on cultural diversity, which corresponds with the lower rungs on contemporary instruments to assess cultural competence (Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman, 2003), provides an understandable sense

of self-justification to many contemporary thinkers who would rather avoid the subject of culture altogether than seek to open up dialogue about similarities and differences between ways of life and conceptions of peace.

If deliberate effort to supplant, subordinate, or repel competing worldviews has long been the staple of international politics, less egregious but nonetheless problematic efforts to universalize the particular are still commonplace. While the era of open and intentional colonialism has passed, the early twenty-first century world order remains rather starkly differentiated into zones of affluence and zones of scarcity, with most ongoing armed conflicts transpiring in the latter areas. Contemporary forms of global governance are underpinned by normative models of development and democratization that have been informed primarily by the historical experiences of industrialized countries, and multilateral interventions intended to stabilize and reconstruct countries afflicted by protracted social conflict that now offer a standardized package of authoritative prescriptions linked to democratization, free market reform, human rights, civil society promotion, and the rule of law (Richmond and Franks, 2009).

Despite credible claims that international capacity for complex humanitarian missions has increased in recent decades (Human Security Centre, 2006), there are also compelling reasons to subject the current formulas for "liberal peacebuilding" to critical scrutiny. The difficulties faced by international missions in contexts as diverse as Bosnia, Cambodia, Congo, Somalia, and Sudan raise profound questions about the limits of "outside-in" or "top-down" approaches to peace consolidation and reconstruction. Noting that efforts to "export" peace from one context to another can make things worse or merely replace one problem with another, scholars such as Mac Ginty (2006, 2008) and

Donais (2009) have called for critical re-examination of new, "one-size-fits-all"

prescriptions that seek to introduce the same technical, institutional, political, and

economic solutions in every context, without tapping local social capital and cultural

imagination, or responding to authentically local priorities. MacGinty and Donais suggest

that current peacebuilding orthodoxies prevent more flexible responses to local

conditions and perpetuate the historical dialogue deficit between North and South, West

and non-West. They liken the liberal peace to an inflexible regimen of reforms and

institutional fixes that are exported to areas of conflict and implanted without local roots,

in ways that reflect a serious power imbalance between outsiders and insiders,

accompanied by paternalism and dependency. Only in the face of setbacks, including

serious problems pertaining to a lack of local ownership, legitimacy, fit, and

empowerment (Donais, 2009), have sponsors of international interventions and peace

support operations begun to consider more focused engagement with existing cultural

resources, including indigenous approaches to peacemaking, that were hitherto ignored or

regarded as obstacles (Mac Ginty, 2008).

Tensions between Western and Indigenous Practices

Critiques of current international peacebuilding practice suggest the existence of

serious and abiding tensions between prevalent, largely Western modes of operation and

the indigenous norms of societies grappling with protracted conflict, poverty, and

unfavorable structural positions in the global economy. Not all of the attendant problems

are amendable to a "quick fix," but possible solutions and remedial measures are more

likely to be effective and sustainable if they relate to local visions and priorities and draw upon capacities embedded in indigenous culture. Unfortunately, current predominant approaches to peacebuilding and reconstruction often fail to develop dynamic partnerships between local and international actors. Awareness of cultural differences and sensitivity to power imbalances is necessary to create space for approaches that foster genuine intercultural collaboration and complementarity rather than a one-way transfer of expertise and prescriptions.

Western approaches to peace are by no means monolithic, yet exhibit a number of characteristics that are distinct from traditional approaches to peace in many non-Western societies. In academic thought, a preponderant emphasis has traditionally been placed on states and institutions. The end of the Cold War prompted partial intellectual retooling to address an apparent resurgence of intrastate conflict organized around ethnic identity, but the solutions to problems posed by armed violence are still presumed to be largely institutional in nature. Particularly in the American context, peace has generally been conceptualized in narrow terms as an absence of war or violence secured largely through deterrence, albeit with strong conflict mitigating functions attributed to economic liberalism, constitutionalism, and political pluralism. Peacemaking has more often than not been approached through an analytical mode of problem solving that seeks to disaggregate and isolate different elements of a conflict so as to deal with them separately from one another.

The Western peace research and conflict resolution traditions have never been fully integrated into official thinking about international conflict, yet these traditions also manifest some recognizable features that differ from common patterns in Asia, Africa,

Latin America, and minority North American settings (Abu-Nimer, 1996; Augsburger, 1992; Keashly and Warters, 2008, pp. 58–61). In approaches to applied conflict resolution, the instrumental dimension of conflict receives far more analytical attention and applied consideration than relational and identity dimensions. Ideally, conflict resolution efforts are intended to foster direct communication between the disputants, if necessary with the assistance of a neutral and professional third party. Constructive communication is characterized by self-disclosure of underlying interests and needs as well as by problem solving that seeks to "separate the person from the problem." Whereas emotional ventilation is acknowledged as a potentially useful prelude to conciliatory behaviour, emotion is largely viewed as a distorting factor that must be controlled or reduced. Solutions to conflict are sought through abstractive, analytical thinking, leading to the rational and perhaps also imaginative formulation of cooperative mutual gains ("win-win") agreements that advance or integrate the most important individual interests and needs of the disputants. It is acknowledged that there may be multiple stakeholders, but preserving the autonomy and self-determination of the principal parties takes priority over more diffuse notions of community interest or social harmony. Mutual satisfaction with an agreement is understood to be the most important factor determining sustainability, and the needs driving conflict behaviour are presumed to be universal and culturally invariant rather than culturally conditioned or prioritized (Burton, 1990).

Another strong emphasis of Western conflict resolution theory and practice is technique. Successful conflict resolution is presumed to be less a matter of character or personality than of acquired skill in using methods, procedures, and formal process steps

that are understood to be context neutral and potentially universal in application. Enhancing capacity for conflict resolution requires development of professional specialization and formal training or certification. Because mediator impartiality and process neutrality are vitally important, the third party is expected to be an outside professional, equally distanced from each disputant. Relatively little attention is typically devoted to the social identities (for example, status, ethnicity, race, class, caste) of disputants and mediators; the parties to the conflict meet as individuals, and evaluate the fairness of a process in terms of its more or less formal and symmetrical character. It is generally assumed that all parties have basically the same capacity to narrate their own story, without the need for extra facilitative effort or engagement to give voice to marginalized persons or vulnerable groups (Wing, 2008). The identity or worldview of the mediator (and its resonance or dissonance with the identities and worldviews of disputants) is not flagged as a key determinant of outcomes. Age, wisdom, and life experience are less important for effective peacemaking than good communication skills and creative, "outside the box" thinking; in principle, anyone can become a mediator.

While the emphases Western peacemakers place on institutional reform, multiple advocacy, analytical problem-solving, individual self-determination, formal procedure, and skill development are not altogether unwelcome in changing non-Western contexts (young urban professionals may be highly receptive), there are usually strong currents of countervailing opinion about the bases for social peace. Traditional non-Western coexistence models, for example, place considerably less emphasis on individual choice and political pluralism than on regulated forms of cultural pluralism – that is, on regimes for mutual accommodation among the particular, discrete identity groups to which

individuals in society are held accountable. Self-expression, direct communication, and personal authenticity are valued less than consideration for face saving in a context of long-term social relationship (Augsburger, 1992; Ting-Toomey, 1994). Criteria for selecting mediators are often strikingly different, and tend to value formal training far less than other qualities and characteristics (Abu-Nimer, 1996).

Although most cultures define contexts in which conflict is functional, positive, or necessary, preserving or restoring communal harmony is a central consideration in traditional dispute resolution processes throughout much of the world (Augsburger, 1992). Peacemaking is generally understood to be a highly communitarian process, in which trusted leaders or go-betweens are used rather than outsiders with whom disputants have no relational history. In cases of serious conflict, broader community involvement is typically deemed vital—not only to witness solemn oaths or contribute to deliberations, but also to bring appropriate social sanctions of disapproval/approval and pressure/support to bear on the situation, ensuring that the peace will be kept. The loss of face associated with publicly recognized wrongdoing serves as a key deterrent for misbehaviour, yet cooperation with communal processes of accountability, reparation, forgiveness, and reconciliation provides a powerful means of reintegrating offenders. Positive responses to appeals by mediators and the community to forgive or forgo retaliation may enhance honour and social prestige.

The worldviews within which traditional conflict resolution processes are embedded often attribute a central role to spirituality. Whereas in contemporary Western contexts spirituality is a largely private affair to which public discourse may at times allude (as in the "value talk" of North American politicians), non-Western cultures are

more likely to regard spirituality as a legitimate and even necessary aspect of public expression that applies quite directly to conflict resolution. Whether the process in question is a Middle Eastern *sulha* (reconciliation) ritual (Abu-Nimer, 2003, pp. 92–100; Funk and Said, 2009) or a South African truth commission inspired by theological precepts as well as a social solidarity ethic of *ubuntu* (Tutu, 1999), shared beliefs are readily invoked and traditional wisdom provides peacemakers with proverbs and other reference points for counselling disputants (Lederach, 1995, pp. 78–81). Peacemaking is not first and foremost a cerebral, analytical process; emotional engagement, symbolism, and ritual play a significant and openly acknowledged role. Relevant ceremonies, religious observances, and symbolic objects or actions create a context within which relational transformation becomes both possible and expected (Schirch, 2005).

Third-party roles vary in accordance with the severity of the conflict, but traditional cultures have "dispute resolution spectrums" that are similar in some respects to those present in industrialized societies. In simple disputes, effort to redress a wrong or resolve a conflict may start with an informal go-between (direct confrontation being less desirable than in individualistic cultures). For higher-stakes conflicts, mediation-arbitration hybrids are common; in many instances, religious, community, or political leaders act as judges. Large-scale conflicts require intervention by more distinguished and authoritative third parties, but at all levels of social organization and in virtually all processes certain basic qualifications for a would-be peacemaker tend to be similar, such as maturity in age, knowledge of precedents and traditions (oral as well as written), and reputation for good judgment. Agents of reconciliation make active use of narrative and storytelling as well as various forms of persuasion and emotional appeal, yet the idea of

"skills training" is less central to preparation for a third party role than emulation of exemplary figures and assimilation of collective wisdom.

Non-Western approaches, of course, are neither static nor monolithic. While traditional processes are still actively utilized in many contexts, indigenous peacemaking practices change over time and are in some cases rendered inoperative by social change. Whereas many tight-knit, communitarian cultures once relied heavily on systems of conflict management in which one of the greater penalties was banishment, the threat of being ostracized or expelled carries less weight in a context of rapid urbanization. In many world regions, the combined impacts of colonialism, cross-cultural encounter, modernization, and conflict have disrupted traditional social relations and corresponding modes of dispute resolution, creating an anomic situation in which old methods of conflict regulation have become attenuated but not fully displaced by functional and culturally valid alternatives. Quite frequently, "old" and "new" procedures for handling conflict coexist, with state legal institutions based on Western models developing alongside traditional and customary institutions.

The role that traditional and indigenous approaches to conflict resolution play in many societies is too important to either romanticize or discount. In some settings, such as the Acholi region of northern Uganda, tradition provides a framework for meeting grave new challenges such as the reintegration of child soldiers through a well-established ritual known as *mato oput* (Wasonga, 2009). In Somaliland, customary dispute resolution processes provided an indispensable means for mobilizing elders to restore dialogue and social order, even as the rest of Somalia fell into disarray (Yusuf and Le Mare, 2005). In many cases, however, emerging social strata regard traditional

methods as marginal to their modern, urban existence, and associate them with beliefs and forms of authority that are no longer embraced and trusted. Nonetheless, when the subject of reconciliation or "restorative justice" is broached, traditional approaches can provide powerful metaphors with authentic cultural resonance, together with a repertoire of principles and symbolic practices that might be adapted to new circumstances.

Even when authentically traditional methods cannot easily be applied, cultural realities often dictate locally grounded, indigenous responses to conflict that differ from Western and North American methods, and which fall beyond the purview of standard peacebuilding practices. In tight-knit societies accustomed to protracted intercommunal conflict and relational approaches to conflict resolution, injunctions to "separate the person from the problem" or focus on universal human needs often fail to resonate. Even if traditional methods must undergo considerable adaptation to meet new challenges, they nonetheless offer cultural resources that are familiar, and that give attention to affective issues such as trust and emotional transformation as well as to larger matters of group affiliation, shared values, social duty, and collective memory.

Emergent Themes

To truly privilege the local in international peacebuilding, a great deal of new thinking will be required. The challenges are both intellectual and practical, and will require innovative research and theoretical synthesis as well as reflection on the policy frameworks of governments, intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs. The idea of giving more weight to the local, however, is not altogether new, and has precedents in a

number of different strands of thought in peace research and development studies. It is even possible to speak of a number of emergent themes in the peacebuilding field that can contribute to a new agenda of "localizing peace," in which peace-promoting activities are conducted as much as possible with local materials and resources, in a manner that activates latent cultural energies, creates a genuine sense of ownership and empowerment, and heightens prospects for sustainability. These emergent themes include: (1) understanding peace as a locally constructed reality, (2) viewing culture as a resource rather than as a constraint or afterthought, and (3) recognizing that outsiders are most likely to make positive contributions when they act as facilitators rather than as directive, all-knowing headmasters.

Peace as a locally constructed reality

Since the publication of Lederach's *Preparing for Peace*, scholars and practitioners of international peacebuilding have demonstrated increasing appreciation for the premise that "understanding conflict and developing appropriate models of handling it will necessarily be rooted in, and must respect and draw from, the cultural knowledge of a people" (1995, p. 10). While this wisdom has by no means been integrated in all peace and reconstruction practices, analysts of grassroots social peacebuilding have increasingly recognized that peace has a cultural dimension and that commitments to peace take shape within the collective imagination and historical traditions of a people (Boulding, 2000; de Rivera, 2009). While ideas about peace and conflict need not be locally rooted and completely indigenous to be of use to individuals and groups in any given context, it remains true that every cultural community has its own vernacular language for conflict and conflict resolution, along with its own set of commonsense

values and standards which give the concept of peace substance and legitimacy (Oetzel, and others, 2006). Exogenous concepts must always be related to indigenous understandings and aspirations if peacebuilding is to become something more than a foreign enterprise implemented from the top down with little popular participation and buy-in.

In every language and culture, peace-related words take on distinctive meanings and overtones as a result of historical experiences, ongoing public conversations, and (in many if not most cases) associations with religious texts and traditions. Because this vocabulary supplies locally rooted understandings of what peace *is*, drawn from a cosmology or worldview with which people resonate, it is among the most basic of raw materials for peacebuilding. Fortunately for advocates of comprehensive approaches to peacebuilding, indigenous peace vocabulary often denotes far more than a mere absence of war or violence, by suggesting an existential condition characterized not just by basic physical security, but also a presence of factors conducive to human flourishing. In the Abrahamic religious context, for example, Semitic words such as *shalom* and *salam* embrace a range of meanings that includes safety as well as right relationship, well-being, and wholeness. In South Asia, the Sanskrit word *shanti* emphasizes the inward dimension of peace, while still evoking a presence of positive conditions associated with physical health, wellness, and sound action. Such terms do not determine the operative meaning of peace in political discourse, but they do provide the "deep context" for thinking about and generating commitment to peace at a grassroots as well as individual level. They establish potential connections between external processes and the deeper aspirations of a people, and may also provide a litmus test through which local populations evaluate the

authenticity and worthiness of a peace process.

A broad, intercultural approach to peacebuilding seeks to engage rather than bypass or ignore local meanings of peace. Far from being a distraction from applied work or an invitation to cultural stasis, exploring traditional peace vocabulary and its current significance for members of a society can provide a vital way of eliciting shared visions and value priorities, and relating them to realities of conflict in a manner that is conducive to action. Engaging *emic* peace concepts can be part of a larger process that involves tapping local knowledge (Lederach, 1995) and establishing collaborative local-international relationships that empower rather than impose (Donais, 2009).

Sound peacebuilding practice begins with recognition that there are limits to the extent to which any external cultural group or political entity can bring peace to another community or polity. While there are many ways in which external actors can and should provide needed support to societies emerging from violent conflict (Jeong, 2005), stable and lasting peace cannot be enforced on or built for others. Whatever role external coalitions may play in mitigating destructive conflict, sharing expertise, or reforming international policies that place strain on fragile social ecologies, peace must ultimately be constructed locally on a foundation that is recognized as legitimate. Ideally, peace ought to be built in accordance with a locally negotiated plan using as many local materials and skills as possible, so that the population in question acquires a sense of ownership, need satisfaction, and capacity for continued upkeep. In horticultural terms, a viable and sustainable peace in any given context is a peace with local roots that springs from its own native soil and receives care from skilled and committed local cultivators. While in some cases international support may be necessary to create a provisional

greenhouse or even to supply water and fertilizer to survive drought and soil depletion, long-term prospects for growth remain poor if the tree itself is not well-adapted to the climate and regarded as a desirable species.

In light of these considerations, agents of peacebuilding must guard against a culture-blind epistemology that over-generalizes from particular experiences (Walker, 2004), and against the unwitting cultural imperialism that inheres not only in "have technique will travel" approaches to conflict resolution practice but also in efforts to prescribe and export the same institutional solutions to all societies (Mac Ginty, 2006). Genuinely respectful and productive partnerships are likely to be informed by use of cultural empathy as a tool of analysis, and by efforts to use discussion of cultural particularities as a bridge to strategizing about appropriate ways and means. Such partnerships recognize that local actors must own the peace that is to be built, and are only likely to be committed to the result if it reflects their own priorities, meanings, and aspirations.

Culture as a Resource

Sophisticated analysts of culture recognize that, while it is the matrix within which peacebuilding practices take form, it is not a static, monolithic, or deterministic structure (Avruch, 1998). When people become self-aware with respect to their cultural inheritance, it can be understood and engaged as a resource rather than construed as an obstacle or as an unchanging whole to be defended at any cost (Lederach, 1995; Donais, 2009). Authenticity and continuity with the past can be maintained, even as some traditions are consciously maintained and others are subjected to critique or adaptation.

In many respects, peacebuilding is a process of cultural introspection and reconstruction – a process of generating social dialogue that encourages critical reflection on existing realities, re-evaluation of present value priorities, and initiation of new, shared projects that reduce the gap between real and ideal. An essential part of peacebuilding projects, therefore, is balancing cultural innovation with cultural continuity. There is a need for change, but it must proceed on an authentic and locally valid basis or rationale. It must discover new meaning, relevance, and applicability in known values and beliefs (Richards and Swanger, 2009).

Utilizing culture as a resource can begin with recognition that cultural and religious heritages are multivalent, and provide complex sets of practices, values, and precedents that can be applied in divergent (including peaceful as well as combative) ways (Appleby, 2000). For example, any cultural community with deep historical roots is likely to discover multiple precedents for relations with outsiders or for processes of collective decision-making. Viewing culture as a resource provides the basis for a dynamic view, freeing groups of practitioners to "seek the best" within their heritage and thereby avoid the alienation that ensues when cultural traditions are either suppressed in the pursuit of forced modernization or not allowed to grow and change. It also creates scope for empowerment through critical reappraisal of the past, re-appropriation of life-affirming values, utilization of existing skill sets, and broad-based participation in communal dialogue.

When culture is understood as a resource and source of inspiration but not as a rigid mold or invariant template, the potential for genuinely sustainable, effective, and empowering peacebuilding initiatives increases dramatically. The sustainability of

contextually grounded peace efforts is a function of the fact that indigenous cultural and religious resources (in contrast to resources brought by intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations, or by development agencies from foreign nations) are intrinsically renewable through the application of local skills and knowledge. They have greater prospects for effectiveness, because local materials are more likely to be accepted and to have a multiplier effect than imports which are regarded as foreign. They are empowering because they enable local change agents to advance peace using tools and symbols that are immediately accessible, familiar, and culturally legitimate.

The pursuit of local solutions to the problems of peacebuilding need not exclude external involvement, resources, and support, nor does it presume that local traditions are not in need of refinement. Indeed, if local resources were fully developed and operational, the local peace would already be made. "Localizing peace" should not be confused with "turning back the clock" or fully restoring traditional institutions that no longer command a broad social consensus. Insofar as large-scale violent conflict has a destabilizing effect on social institutions, damaging the networks that were once responsible for conflict management, cultural resources may have to undergo considerable adaptation or revitalization before they can become operative in a changing social milieu (Jeong, 2005, pp. 182–184). Moreover, some local traditions may exclude or marginalize voices—for example, those of women, children, or members of outcaste groups— that are vital to the consolidation of a high-quality, sustainable peace (Anderlini, 2007). In such cases it is crucial for outside parties to become familiar with indigenous currents of dissent and proposals for change and renewal. No society is perfect or completely harmonious, to such an extent that it has nothing to learn from

others, or from internal critics. Culture is inherently contested, open-ended, and interpretive, and the pursuit of complete cultural autarky is no more the way to peace than narrowly focused efforts to implant standardized solutions from other societies.

Outsider as Facilitator

As Donais (2009) has observed, "outsiders too often take the legitimacy of themselves and their programs as self-evident without seriously considering the degree to which, for local actors, legitimacy must be rooted in their own history and political culture" (p. 20). While it is true that outsiders often possess knowledge and experience that has much potential value, it is also true that locals possess an expertise relative to their own situation that no outsider can fully encompass. Much of this expertise may be intuitive or based on "folk knowledge" (Boulding, 1978, p. 124) that is subject to bias, but it is nonetheless knowledge and it is not necessarily more fallible than academic or policy models derived from the experiences of foreign nations and cultures.

Given these realities, there is wisdom in Lederach's (1995) counsel to balance prescriptive and elicitive modes of training and to direct consultations organized by outsiders towards the identification and development of locally resonant models. The point is not to abolish the role of the outside expert or consultant, but rather to develop a humbler mode of operation in which the outsider functions as a facilitator or midwife whose overriding goal is to help local actors discover their own resources, abilities, and context-specific solutions. In this respect, the international peacebuilding practitioner can adopt elements of a maieutic or Socratic approach to pedagogy, in which dialogue is at the core of a mutual learning process and there is no assumption that the person speaking

is necessarily wiser or more capable of profound reflection on vital issues than those who are being engaged.

When outsiders share their own models for peace and peacebuilding, it is important to clarify also the historical experiences and cultural assumptions from which these models emerge, so as to better encourage discussion of how practices might be specially tailored to the given context. The experiences of reflective practitioners indicate that there is no set of conflict resolution practices that works equally well in every setting; while general principles may translate, methods and techniques are often culture-specific. Moreover, people are more likely to become empowered when drawing upon their own cultural vocabulary and discovering indigenous resources that can be applied to meet local needs. In this respect, the peacebuilding field can benefit from insights of the appropriate technology movement, which seeks to make development practice more innovatively responsive to the immediately experienced needs, available resources, and existing knowledge of people living in modest circumstances, and less centered around the transfer of gadgets and technologies from industrialized countries – technologies which often require an extensive support infrastructure and may offer little immediate benefit to the majority of people in a subsistence economy (Lederach, 1995, pp. 27–29; Schumacher, 1966, 1973). Similarly, the most appropriate peacebuilding methods in a given cultural context may be updates of traditional or indigenous methods rather than imported Western or North American models predicated on a number of culture-specific assumptions about social interaction.

By acting as a facilitator rather than as a headmaster, the international practitioner can create a space within which new applications of known principles might emerge.

Because these applications build upon that which is familiar, they stand a greater chance of being diffused throughout a social setting than foreign imports. Moreover, because the models being tapped and refined are of indigenous origin, they are more likely to be in harmony with local culture and to contribute to the strengthening of social capacity.

Activating Local Resources

At the core of the "localizing peace" agenda is concerted effort to activate local cultural resources in response to locally felt needs and aspirations. A key premise of the approach is that both international peacebuilders and local populations often underestimate or neglect local resources, and fail to appreciate ways in which capacity to deal with conflict constructively might be enhanced through a process of cultural introspection and renewal. While the principle of localism should not be applied with ideological purism or excessive rigidity—peacemakers in all parts of the world can benefit from cross-cultural learning—there is a need for further thinking about the nature of readily available "local materials" and resources, and for reflection on the many different types of resources that can be constructively utilized to enhance the vitality, sustainability, legitimacy, and resilience of peacebuilding efforts.

Though religious and cultural identities often serve as markers of "difference" and are at least partially co-opted by the systems of confrontation that develop amidst protracted conflict, they are also sources of values, beliefs, and narratives that can be of profound importance for peacemaking (Coward and Smith, 2004). In many parts of the world, the vernacular language for speaking about peace and conflict is infused with

religious content, and conversations about aspirations toward peace and reconciliation almost inevitably lead toward discussion of religious values, texts, and traditions. Indigenous peacemaking events regularly feature references to religious scriptures and to the words of exemplary spiritual figures, and may also—like the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission—evoke a sense of religious symbolism and ritual (Shore, 2009).

The broader sweep of historical experience should also be recognized as a local peace resource. Mining this experience can bring to the surface not only memories of past conflicts and traumas, but also narratives of conflicts resolved, stories of peacemaking, and knowledge of indigenous (and often informal) processes of community dispute resolution. People's familiarity with traditional peacemaking stories and methods may provide a basis for rich dialogue with respect to the values, skills, and processes that are required to make peace, articulated in the cultural vernacular rather than in the vocabulary of international social science or diplomacy. In some settings, such dialogue may direct attention to past peacemaking methods that have been marginalized during a current conflict, but which nonetheless constitute a valuable frame of reference for renewed efforts. As Lederach (1995) notes, the language, metaphors, and proverbs people use to describe their reality can be an especially rich source of insight into implicit knowledge, and can provide a basis for surfacing local models of peacemaking.

Local social capital and commonsense knowledge should also be regarded as resources. When taking inventory of local assets, a wide variety of existing institutions, organizations, social movements, skilled individuals, and stakeholders merit recognition. On-the-ground experience with the dynamics of a unique political situation is also an

identifiable resource that newcomers do not possess, as is the detailed, fine-grained knowledge that people have of their own reality, needs, and immediately available means.

Awareness of the value inherent in local cultural resources has begun to increase in the conflict resolution and peacebuilding communities, yet there remains a profound need for research-backed efforts to develop practical frameworks for identifying, tapping, and harnessing these resources to enhance capacity for local solutions to challenges of social conflict and human security. Because every culture has unique strengths when compared to other cultures, attention to diverse peace traditions has the capacity to enrich peacemaking at a global level. Comparing the peace traditions of multiple societies can contribute to the discovery of cross-cutting themes as well as positive precedents that might help reinvigorate peace practices in other contexts (Fry and others, 2009).

In some cases local resources may need to be rediscovered or revalorized. The legacy of Egyptian architect Hassan Fathy (1900–1989) provides a powerful illustration of what is possible when a profound and dynamic concern for human needs—in particular the needs and dignity of the poorest—provides motivation for active partnerships grounded in respect for traditional materials, motifs, values, and skills (Serageldin, 1985). Fathy, now recognized for his considerable contributions to the appropriate technology movement and to forms of architecture that creatively synthesize traditional and modern elements, found motivation for his work in a learned scepticism of homogenizing tendencies within modernist architectural practices that sought to universalize Western styles of building, without regard to local culture, climate, and needs. Rather than follow a larger trend toward embracing imported, standardized forms

of design, Fathy sought inspiration in the "vernacular architecture" of his own society—architecture which was not only culturally authentic, but also uniquely adapted to environmental conditions and built with readily available, energy-efficient materials, such as mud brick. Entering into a mutually rewarding partnership with rural communities, Fathy endeavoured to update traditional designs to suit the needs of contemporary Egyptians, while continuing to draw upon traditional materials and existing skill sets that could be applied to the task at hand in a manner conducive to self-reliance. Amidst his creative efforts to make architecture serve human needs, restore cultural pride, and advance universally significant values, Fathy was fond of pointing out that "human beings are not interchangeable" (Serageldin, 1985, p. 17)—there is no single mode of design that can work for all societies and all individuals. In addition, he found significance in the fact that the word "tradition" comes from the Latin *tradere*, which literally means "to carry forward" or "to transfer," and suggests a "cyclical renewal of life" (Steele, 1997).

Examples such as Fathy's provide a compelling illustration of what might be gained by more consciously embracing diversity and the principle of localization in peace research and applied peacebuilding. Affirming the desirability of multiple "nodes" for theorizing and practice – and for non-identical yet mutually relevant ways of working for peace – holds potential for making the field more creatively responsive to peacebuilding challenges. It also opens space for new advancements in peacemaking knowledge: every cultural community arguably has values, insights, and practices that can contribute to the development of peace within their own cultural milieus, and which can arguably contribute to a larger, "mosaic" approach to international or global peace based on

inclusive intercultural dialogue. Different communities have the potential to contribute their own "local exceptionalisms"—that is, their own distinctive ways of operationalizing universally recognizable values such as peace, human dignity, communal solidarity, and harmony with the natural environment—to a shared and richly cosmopolitan inquiry into the unity and diversity of peacemaking.

Implications for Practice

The potential value of localized peacemaking approaches is already receiving recognition in the field of transitional justice, and is generating new conversations about possibilities for complementarity between Western and indigenous practices. As Mac Ginty (2008, pp. 128–129) has noted, traditional and indigenous approaches to peace have the potential to address deficiencies in "orthodox Western approaches," by engaging the "affective dimension of peacemaking" in a culturally appropriate manner, and by balancing the top-down, elite-focused aspect of conventional intervention programs with a more genuinely participatory and bottom-up dynamic. In settings as diverse as Rwanda, East Timor, and Afghanistan, many international missions have recognized limits to the reach and practicality of conventional methods, and have sought to learn about, create space for, and encourage adapted applications of traditional dispute resolution, mediation, and consensus building practices. To the extent that practices such as Rwanda's village-level *gacaca* courts (Villa-Vicencio, and others, 2005), East Timor's *Nahe Biti* community reconciliation process (Mac Ginty, 2008, pp. 127–128), and Afghanistan's *Loya Jirga* ("Grand Council") are now receiving recognition by Western diplomats and

policy thinkers, new conversations are emerging about the most appropriate way to tap the strengths of the indigenous without depriving it of authenticity and legitimacy through co-optation or contamination (Mac Ginty, 2008). The subject appears to defy simple, formulaic solutions, yet any prospectively fruitful effort to mainstream "the local" in peacebuilding practice must begin with an effort to identify guidelines and criteria. The following suggestions are necessarily preliminary and incomplete, and are offered in the hope that they will inspire further discussion about how best to advance the development of a "localizing peace" agenda for sustainable peacebuilding.

Arguably the most important prerequisite for locally empowering peace practice is a compelling and dynamic vision. The operational implications of ideas such as "peace as a locally constructed reality," "culture as a resource," and "outsider as facilitator" need to be articulated in greater detail, in relation to the types of time commitment and results criteria that are appropriate to this type of engagement. Concepts such as sustainability, capacity building, appropriate technology, and local ownership are not alien to peacebuilding and development practice, yet pressure to show quick, measurable results often subverts efforts to pursue these goals through long-term relationship building and the pursuit of custom-built, context-specific solutions to local problems. Making the case for a "local-friendly" approach to international peace and development work, on the grounds that it genuinely is practical and effective, will no doubt require considerable effort by on the part of researchers, as well as political courage and communicative competence on the part of administrators. The fact that local resources are more "renewable" and predictably available than international resources bears repeating, as

does the commonsense insight that lasting cultural change is the work of viable grassroots movements and not a matter of short-term service delivery.

Localizing peace also requires considerable forethought about how international personnel—be they employees of intergovernmental organizations or NGOs— are trained and prepared for service in culturally diverse contexts. Working effectively within another cultural frame requires not just familiarity with models of cultural competence or incentives for learning local language and history, but also forms of training that utilize suitable case study materials. Organizations will also need to develop guidelines for work in the field that enumerate principles for localizing peace—for example, exploring local cultural and religious traditions with interest and respect, applying cultural empathy as a tool of analysis, using culture as a bridge by asking about how things would "normally" or "ideally" be done, linking localized needs assessments to elicitive exercises intended to access implicit cultural knowledge and promote empowerment, initiating a "cultural inventory" of resources for peacebuilding, fostering discussion about how to strengthen a local culture of peace by adapting and updating past practices; and so forth.

In addition to following such general principles of preparation for culturally competent and empowering peace practice, it is also important for international practitioners to carefully consider ways in which they might use *their own* resources— including culture, status, and networks as well as material assets—to bolster local efforts that already show promise. While there are certainly cases in which a local NGO's relationships with external parties create suspicion on the part of local and national governments, there are also cases in which the respect or concern shown by internationals can strengthen the hand of local organizations and create more space in which to move

and pursue peacebuilding, development, and social service activities. In such situations, the added visibility and profile associated with international partnerships can be enabling.

While it is crucial that local peace initiatives develop a genuinely local base of support, individuals and organizations from North America or Europe can nonetheless play a mediating role between local projects and international sources of project funding, assistance, and information. In addition to providing relevant contacts, internationals can consciously choose to redirect the media spotlight so that local efforts are illuminated for a larger audience. They can expedite access to international conferences and workshops, thereby creating opportunities to share local experiences and expertise with a larger audience, for the benefit of all. Helping local partners connect with or build regional and global networks is another valuable contribution. With respect to regionalism, local movements that operate within the same overarching cultural and political milieu can learn from and support one another over the long term, while also benefitting from contacts with regional intergovernmental organizations and with region-specific offices of the United Nations. At the global level, local movements can derive considerable inspiration from affiliations and communications with like-minded groups in other world regions. Some local organizations allow overseas partners to open "friends of" offices to share their story with a wider audience and provide various forms of assistance and solidarity.

Concern to tap authentic cultural resources should not distract international peacebuilders from opportunities to share varieties of expertise that are genuinely desired, in a spirit of cultural exchange (Donais, 2009). With respect to conflict resolution methods and approaches as well as other types of knowledge (for example,

communications and media strategy, fundraising, evaluation), models and experiences should be shared with the caveat that what works in one cultural milieu or organization probably will not apply in all contexts. Training in conflict resolution can be used as an opportunity for two-way learning, as can discussion of matters such as approaches to strategic planning and public education. Opportunities can also be sought to build bridges between local organizations and actors operating in different world regions. In the 1990s, for example, members of an emerging Lebanese Conflict Resolution Network (assisted at the time by the US-based NGO, Search for Common Ground) found great meaning in an opportunity to explore conflict resolution with a South African trainer.

Yet another way in which internationals can support local partners is by assisting with the publication of relevant materials. Expediting the printing of locally contextualized or produced training materials, for example, can be highly beneficial. In some cases, translations of materials from the local language into English or another major international language can also be helpful, as a means to sharing local experiences more widely and generating greater profile for distinctive peacemaking efforts. This can be part of a broader effort to help give voice to local partners in international as well as national forums.

Not all local practices, of course, are an aid to peace. Efforts to support the localization of peace must acknowledge that some local practices may no longer be experienced as positive, relevant, and life-giving. The local is not always better than the non-local, and workable solutions are often a result of cross-fertilization among cultures. In addition, the intrinsically interpretive nature of culture can present many opportunities for creativity and dynamism. Processes of reform in any culture almost always involve

sifting through traditions for foundational values that can be understood and applied in new ways, providing a bridge between past and future.

Conclusion

For internationally mobile peacebuilders from contexts such as North America and Europe, localizing peace means being willing to learn and to be enriched by what "the local" has to offer. This necessarily begins with cultural self-awareness, but leads towards an attitude of complementarity, within which there is recognition that there can be no generic solutions to conflict and development challenges. Even within the same world region, one locality's solutions may not transfer effectively another. Nonetheless, the sharing of one's own solutions can provide an impetus to creativity for others, and may even inspire a principled form of cultural eclecticism.

As an agenda for research and practice, localizing peace underscores the limits of standardized Western approaches to peacebuilding without negating the necessity of global engagement, responsibility, and collaboration. International and cross-cultural cooperation remain vital for addressing the border-spanning problems of the 21st century. However, the process of seeking greater consensus on the character of global peace cannot proceed independently from efforts to support the grounded construction of diverse "local peaces"—contextually viable peace capacities which reflect the cultural distinctiveness of lived human experience, and which will ultimately make up the foundation stones for a more genuinely inclusive and multicultural global peace project. Insofar as successful peacebuilding is rooted in shared meaning and purpose and not in

techniques and institutions alone, peacebuilding efforts are likely to become energetic and sustainable only to the extent that they tap local resources, build community, and respond directly to locally felt needs for dignity, authenticity, and well-being.

By more fully appreciating and engaging local resources for peace, practitioners of international conflict resolution stand not only to become more effective agents of cultural empowerment and to enhance the vitality of peace processes, but also to benefit from discoveries of resonance and complementarity among diverse peacemaking traditions. Rather than encouraging isolationism in the pursuit of peace, the aspiration to localize peace constitutes an effort to make peace real at the level of lived human experience as well as at a broader, more global level. It invites theorists and practitioners alike to broaden the cultural parameters of their field, with the understanding that bringing more voices to the table is itself a peace process—a process of acknowledging and respecting the many parts, without which a greater whole cannot be envisioned or realized.

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