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RESEARCH ARTICLE

HYBRID PEACE ARCHITECTURE: INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIATION FOR SUSTAINABLE CONFLICT RESOLUTION

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Abstract

Conflict is typically portrayed as a struggle for resources, power, or institutions, reducing complex arguments to transactional terms and neglecting underlying moral and social ruptures. This study investigates how traditional and international mediation approaches might be integrated to address both relationship and structural aspects of conflict. Using a comparative case study of South Sudan, Rwanda, and Northern Ireland, the author demonstrates that traditional mechanisms—such as elders' councils, Gacaca courts, and community restorative initiatives—are effective at repairing moral harm, rebuilding trust, and fostering social cohesion. In contrast, international mediation provides enforceable agreements, institutional stability, and political power-sharing. When used alone, each approach has limitations: Formal frameworks risk cosmetic compliance, whereas relational methods lack enforceability. To address these deficiencies, the study proposes the Hybrid Peace Architecture (HPA). This layered framework blends relational repair with structural authority via pre negotiation engagement, formal negotiation, post-agreement reconciliation, co-mediation teams, and iterative feedback loops. The findings suggest that synchronising relational and structural interventions boosts legitimacy, heals social and moral ruptures, and creates long-lasting, context-sensitive peace. This study bridges the epistemic gap between restorative and revolutionary logics, providing policymakers, mediators, and practitioners with a realistic model for long-term conflict resolution across diverse cultural and political contexts.

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Introduction: -

Conflict is typically defined as a struggle over material resources, political positions, or control of state machinery. Conventional framing in political science and international affairs often reduces conflict to a transactional dispute, ignoring its social and moral dimensions (Bjarnøe, 2022; Vogel, 2022). In reality, conflict disrupts the relational fabric of communities, families, and societies, eroding trust, social cohesiveness, and shared standards. According to anthropology and peace studies, conflict is more than just a disagreement over interests; it also threatens the moral and social relationships that sustain collective life (Galtung, 1969; Lederach, 2010). Traditional mediation systems in

various societies recognise this relationship dimension. In Africa, elders or councils assemble to resolve disagreements through rituals, apologies, and restitution, restoring confidence and communal cohesion. Indigenous North American societies use talking circles and ritualised discussion to create platforms for relational repair, allowing participants to express complaints, admit harm, and work together to restore social equilibrium. Similarly, in many Asian village communities, mediation takes precedence over official adjudication to achieve consensus, save face, and promote social cohesion. Despite differences in practice, these systems share common principles: authority stems from moral legitimacy and communal recognition, conflict is viewed as relational rather than adversarial, and the goal is restoration rather than legal resolution (Galtung, 1969; Lederach, 2010). Similarly, Rwanda's Arusha Accords addressed political arrangements without integrating local justice mechanisms, leaving relational ruptures unresolved and paving the way for the 1994 genocide against Tutsi. In Northern Ireland, the Good Friday Agreement secured political stability at the national level, yet community-level reconciliation and trust-building processes were necessary to ensure lasting peace (Lederach, 2010; Mamdani & Mamdani, 2018). This divergence between traditional and international mediation approaches reveals an essential epistemological and practical divide. Traditional mediation focuses on relational legitimacy, moral rehabilitation, and community recognition, whereas international mediation prioritises structural authority, institutional enforcement, and formal agreements. The absence of integration between these elements frequently leads to a fragile peace, in which formal conformity conceals persistent grievances and relational distrust. Understanding and bridging this divide is critical for building long-term, viable, and effective peace procedures.

The core thesis of this study is that long-term peace involves combining the relational legitimacy of conventional mediation with the structural authority of international mediation. While formal agreements can avert immediate violence, they are insufficient for long-term peace because they fail to address the moral, relational, and cultural components of conflict. To address this difficulty, this study proposes the concept of Hybrid Peace Architecture (HPA), which combines restorative and revolutionary logics. HPA focuses on layered integration, co-mediation by traditional and international actors, and iterative feedback loops to ensure that agreements are not only legally enforceable but also socially and morally legitimate. By reconciling epistemic divergences, increasing legitimacy, and addressing both structural and relational dimensions of conflict, HPA presents a paradigm for long-term conflict resolution that may be applied in a variety of cultural and political settings.

This work adds to the field of conflict resolution in three critical ways. First, it creates the Hybrid Peace Architecture (HPA) framework, which combines relational legitimacy from traditional mediation with structural authority from international mediation, thereby bridging a fundamental gap in both theory and practice. Second, through a comparative analysis of South Sudan, Rwanda, and Northern Ireland, it offers empirical insights into how layered mediation processes might reconcile moral and social ruptures while producing legally binding accords. Third, the study provides practical guidelines for mediators and policymakers, emphasising the need for co-mediation teams, legitimacy feedback loops, and culturally sensitive approaches in ensuring long-term peace. In brief, this study argues that effective conflict resolution requires an understanding of both the structural elements of power and governance and the relational dimensions of trust, legitimacy, and moral restoration. By including these components, the Hybrid Peace Architecture framework seeks to overcome the limits of systems that rely primarily on traditional or international mediation. The following sections provide a methodological explanation, a comparative examination of mediation systems, and a complete description of HPA as a practical and theoretical contribution to peacebuilding scholarship.

Methodology: -

This study adopts a qualitative, theory-building research design to develop and implement the Hybrid Peace Architecture (HPA) model. The methodological direction is analytical-inductive, which means that conceptual discoveries emerge from the comparative interpretation of empirical situations rather than being imposed a priori. The purpose is not only to explain the interaction between traditional and international mediation systems theoretically, but also to develop a model that can be applied in real-world dispute resolution situations. Unlike conventional manuscript designs, which place the literature review before the method of analysis, this study presents the methodological approach first because the HPA model serves as the conceptual foundation for interpreting the literature. The material is thus not in a strictly descriptive fashion, but rather through the growing analytical categories of relational legitimacy, structural authority, and layered peace sequencing. Setting out the process first defines the interpretative lens that will drive the literature review and subsequent case studies. In this respect, the study is neither purely basic nor purely empirical; rather, it is a theory-building, applied-analytical study that develops an integrated mediation framework and assesses its applicability to practice. The research takes a

comparative case study approach. Three scenarios were chosen for their differences in the balance between local moral power and external institutional authority in peace efforts. South Sudan presents a situation in which foreign mediation dominated, and local legitimacy was weak.

In contrast, Rwanda's post-genocide reconciliation was mainly based on indigenous moral and cultural institutions. Northern Ireland exemplifies a mixed environment in which community-based procedures of relational restoration followed formal international discussions. Examining these distinct settings enables a systematic assessment of how different configurations of legitimacy and authority affect long-term peace outcomes. The study uses a variety of secondary sources, including academic scholarship, peace process documentation, policy and evaluation studies, and, where applicable, truth and reconciliation records. These materials provide a more comprehensive grasp of both the procedural and relational aspects of social repair.

The analysis proceeded in three iterative stages. First, fundamental conceptual elements of mediation, particularly relational legitimacy and structural authority, were combined to form a preliminary theoretical framework. Second, each example was analysed separately to determine how these factors functioned in practice, and then compared to identify larger patterns of convergence and divergence. Third, the findings of this comparative research were incorporated into the final Hybrid Peace Architecture model, which emphasises role-sharing, sequential layering, and continuous legitimacy reinforcement across traditional and international mediation systems. This methodological approach allows the study to both expound on the Hybrid Peace Architecture as a unique conceptual model and illustrate its practical value in designing more legitimate and long-lasting peace processes.

Conceptual Contrast: Traditional vs. International Mediation: -

Conflict mediation takes on many logics that reflect different epistemologies, social norms, and institutional agendas. Traditional mediation systems, anchored in local cultures and moral frameworks, function fundamentally differently from modern international mediation, which prioritises formal agreements, institutional authority, and structural enforcement. Understanding these contrasts is critical to developing hybrid techniques that leverage the strengths of both systems while mitigating their drawbacks.

Traditional Mediation:-

Across cultures, traditional mediation prioritises relationship restoration over contractual compliance or legal formalities. In African communities, elders or councils hold palaver circles in which disputing parties express their concerns, acknowledge harm, and negotiate restitution or reconciliation. Ritualised apologies, compensatory gifts, and symbolic acts of reconciliation help to re-establish community trust, social equilibrium, and moral order. These traditions have significant moral authority because they integrate settlements into broader social commitments and communal standards. To heal relationship ruptures, Indigenous North American societies use talking circles, ceremonial dialogues, and restorative rituals that emphasise shared responsibility, acknowledgement of harm, and offender reintegration (Haluska, 2023; Reed, 2023). Similarly, in Asian village settings, elders and respected figures support consensus-driven outcomes, valuing face-saving, social cohesiveness, and peace over adversarial adjudication (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Despite differences in practice, these systems share three key characteristics. First, authority derives from moral legitimacy and communal recognition, not from formal legal or political power. Mediators are valued for their wisdom, experience, and integrity, rather than their institutional position. Second, conflict is viewed as a relational rupture—a breakdown in trust, social ties, and moral order—rather than a disagreement over resources or interests. Third, peace is achieved through restorative processes, which are frequently ritualised and aim to mend relationships, restore social balance, and reintegrate individuals into society (Galtung, 1969; Lederach, 2010). These traits ensure that resolutions are socially accepted, ethically legitimate, and long-lasting at the local level.

International Mediation:-

Modern international mediation takes place inside formal, institutionalised structures that prioritise structural stability, political agreements, and enforcement measures. Mediators are appointed by nations, intergovernmental organisations, or international entities such as the United Nations (UN) and derive their power from legislative mandates, diplomatic representation, or organisational status rather than communal recognition. Formal agreements, cessation of hostilities, governance systems, and institutional conformity are the primary indicators of success. Mechanisms include negotiation tables, treaty drafting, formal treaties, and monitoring systems implemented by the United Nations, the African Union, or regional organisations. While these procedures are necessary for disputes between nations or factions, they frequently overlook the relational and moral aspects of conflict at the community

level. For example, Intergovernmental Authority on Development(IGAD)-mediated peace deals in South Sudan established elite power-sharing but did not address localised communal issues, leading to periodic conflict. Similarly, Rwanda's Arusha Accords addressed formal political power arrangements but failed to prevent genocide, in part because they failed to adequately integrate local justice, reconciliation, and moral repair systems (Mamdani & Mamdani, 2018).The Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement demonstrates a supplementary lesson: while institutional frameworks stabilised government institutions, long-term peace required concurrent community-level reconciliation, trust-building, and social reintegration programs (Byrne et al., 2023). International mediation specialises in structuring disputes, codifying agreements, and ensuring compliance. However, without consideration for relational legitimacy, formal institutions may remain unstable, prone to noncompliance or relapse, and incapable of fostering moral reconciliation.

Epistemic Divergence: -

Traditional and international mediation represent fundamentally different epistemologies. Traditional mediation views conflict as a disruption of the relational and moral order that must be addressed through communal rituals, moral healing, and social acknowledgement. Success is judged by restored trust, social cohesion, and communal legitimacy, not by the signing of formal documents. On the other hand, international mediation views conflict as a political or structural problem, focusing on legal enforcement, signed agreements, and institutional compliance (Zhomartkyzy, 2023).This discrepancy has the potential to cause misalignments. Formal agreements that fail to recognise local relational dynamics risk being externally imposed while remaining inwardly weak. Traditional systems may lack mechanisms to constrain elites or enforce agreements beyond moral responsibility, leaving them vulnerable in high-stakes political conflicts. Recognising these epistemic differences highlights the importance of hybrid mediation approaches that combine relational legitimacy and structural authority to achieve long-term, culturally grounded, and enforced peace.

Encounter, Tension, and Misrecognition: -

The intersection of traditional and international mediation often yields interactions marked by both significant opportunities and complex challenges. Traditional mediation is based on local moral codes, social standards, and relational authority, with a focus on reconciliation, trust building, and the repair of social and moral ruptures. In contrast, international mediation prioritises structural stability, enforceable agreements, and institutional legitimacy, with a focus on political settlements, power-sharing arrangements, and compliance procedures. Each paradigm has distinct characteristics that are critical for peacebuilding; however, their underlying epistemic divergence—relational vs. structural logic—can lead to misrecognition, misunderstandings, and unintended consequences if not carefully managed(Fontana & Masiero, 2023). Understanding these relationships is critical for developing hybrid techniques that are effective, legitimate, and culturally relevant. Furthermore, understanding these distinctions enables mediators to anticipate friction points, leverage complementarities, and devise strategies to avoid shallow or fragile peace agreements.

Points of Encounter: -

Encounters are widespread where formal institutions intersect with local social and cultural organisations. State representatives, foreign mediators, and local elders, chiefs, or spiritual leaders may all be present during peace talks. Such intersections offer potential for complementarity: traditional actors bring relational legitimacy, moral authority, and culturally relevant behaviours, whilst international mediators provide political recognition, legal frameworks, and formal enforcement mechanisms (Fontana & Masiero, 2023).These points of intersection enable hybrid designs to leverage the strengths of both systems. In South Sudan, for example, local chiefs actively participated in IGAD-mediated negotiations, providing insights into clan dynamics and the socioeconomic underpinnings of conflict that professional mediators alone could not completely comprehend. In Northern Ireland, community-based reconciliation forums coexisted alongside formal political negotiations, helping maintain trust, promote social cohesion, and encourage local support for the Good Friday Agreement. Beyond these examples, hybrid approaches in other contexts—such as Rwanda, Liberia, and post-conflict Aceh—show that incorporating local perspectives into international negotiation processes boosts both legitimacy and compliance, as mediators gain a more nuanced understanding of community priorities, grievances, and culturally embedded norms. Thus, points of encounter are more than just logistical junctions; they are also dynamic sites for negotiation, learning, and mutual reinforcement. When intentionally designed, they enable traditional and international actors to collaborate on solutions that are socially meaningful, ethically respectable, and institutionally enforced. However, without careful facilitation, these interactions can lead to friction, misinterpretation, and apparent competition for authority.

Sources of Tension:-

Despite the potential for complementarity, significant tensions often arise. These are due to differences in epistemologies, priorities, timescales, and definitions of success. Traditional mediation emphasises flexible, iterative timescales, with discourse, consensus, and moral rehabilitation taking months or even years. International mediation is frequently constrained by political deadlines, mandates, and the need to quickly halt hostilities, leading to a demand for formalised solutions. Legitimacy and authority continue to differ. Traditional mediators gain influence by communal acceptance, moral credibility, and experience, whereas international mediators rely on institutional mandates, legal authority, and political acknowledgement. Failure to accept these variations risks alienating local people, hindering agreement compliance, and decreasing trust among players (Fontana & Masiero, 2023). Priority misalignment can further intensify tensions: traditional actors prioritise repairing social relationships and restoring communal harmony, whereas international actors prioritise structural stability, governance, and legally binding political settlements. The Rwandan and South Sudanese situations starkly demonstrate these processes. In Rwanda, the Arusha Accords established formal political structures, but without local reconciliation processes, large-scale moral and social ruptures remained unsolved. In South Sudan, national agreements frequently neglected localised clan complaints, contributing to cycles of recurring violence. These examples demonstrate that tensions occur not from incompatibility between methodologies but from a lack of purposeful integration and sequencing.

Misrecognition and Its Consequences: -

Misrecognition occurs when one mediation logic fails to recognise or appreciate the other's epistemology, legitimacy, or methodology. International mediators may consider ritualised reconciliation ceremonies as symbolic, unnecessary, or peripheral, whilst traditional actors may regard formal agreements as shallow, externally imposed, or detached from local realities. Northern Ireland demonstrates the need to resolve misrecognition. While formal agreements stabilised governmental systems, ongoing community-based reconciliation programs were critical for restoring legitimacy, social cohesion, and moral restoration. In South Sudan, insufficient integration of local mediation mechanisms into IGAD-mediated accords exacerbated cycles of localised violence, highlighting how ignoring relational factors hinders structural solutions. Misrecognition can also have subtler repercussions, such as inhibiting communication, reducing community engagement, and undermining the perceived legitimacy of mediators on both sides, ultimately harming the long-term viability of peace initiatives.

Navigating Tensions:-

Successful hybrid mediation necessitates conscious techniques for navigating interactions, conflict, and misrecognition. Key features include:

1. Recognise epistemic variations between traditional and international logics, including varying assumptions, values, and success metrics.
2. Formal discussion systems enable actors to exchange viewpoints, clarify priorities, and co-design solutions.
3. Co-mediation teams bring together traditional and international mediators to strengthen credibility, improve communication, and balance authority.
4. Implementing iterative feedback loops involves monitoring outcomes, changing processes, and incorporating community input to ensure alignment and solve emergent issues.

Hybrid procedures should synchronise relational and structural logics rather than overlaying them sequentially, ensuring that agreements are culturally grounded, socially respectable, and politically enforced. Continuous community participation, participatory consultations, and adaptive monitoring allow each system's strengths to reinforce one another, transforming potential conflict into mutually reinforcing mechanisms for long-term peace. In conclusion, interactions between traditional and international mediation are full of potential but intrinsically complex. Tensions and misrecognition, if not handled, undermine the validity and longevity of agreements. Mediators can achieve long-term, locally resonant, and institutionally supported peace by consciously constructing hybrid mechanisms such as co-mediation, iterative procedures, and culturally sensitive integration, which bridge relational and structural logics for maximum effectiveness. Based on the literature, it is clear that traditional and international mediation approaches have complementary strengths (Fontana & Masiero, 2023) but are largely separated from one another, resulting in ongoing hurdles to permanent peace. Traditional institutions provide relational legitimacy, moral rehabilitation, and community cohesion, but they typically lack enforceable means to restrict elites or ensure compliance. In contrast, international mediation provides formal authority, structural enforcement, and institutional stability, but frequently overlooks the relational and moral qualities required for locally resonant peace. These gaps, notably those in epistemologies, temporal logics, and authority recognition, highlight the importance of an integrated framework.

This study's suggested Hybrid Peace Architecture addresses these weaknesses directly by intentionally merging relational and structural logics through co-mediation, culturally sensitive practices, and iterative feedback loops. By combining traditional and international approaches, HPA not only improves legitimacy and compliance but also builds trust, fosters moral repair, and delivers enforceable outcomes, providing a practical and theoretically sound path to long-term, context-sensitive peace.

Hybrid Peace Architecture (HPA): -

The HPA is a structured and multilayered peacebuilding framework that combines the relational legitimacy of conventional mediation systems with the structural authority of international mediation. The concept divides peace processes into three consecutive layers: pre-negotiation relationship repair, formal negotiation and agreement, and post-agreement reconciliation, all linked by iterative feedback loops and co-mediation arrangements. Unlike descriptive concepts of "hybrid peace," HPA provides a practical, operational method for coordinated role-sharing among local and international actors, ensuring that political solutions are both socially legitimate and institutionally sustainable. HPA develops as a synthesis of traditional and international mediation logics, bridging relational restoration and structural resolution. It establishes a framework that is both culturally relevant, morally respectable, and institutionally enforceable. HPA addresses the shortcomings of single-mediator systems, ensuring that peace processes are both durable and acceptable to the communities they affect.

Core Principles:-

HPA is based on numerous interconnected key ideas that influence its design and implementation. First, it acknowledges that the restoration and resolution logics are mutually reinforcing rather than mutually incompatible. Relational repair promotes trust, social cohesiveness, and moral legitimacy, whereas structural agreements give enforced frameworks, political stability, and protection from imminent violence. Second, mediators working within HPA must appreciate both relational and structural perspectives on conflict. Traditional authorities, elders, spiritual leaders, and community representatives offer perspectives on the moral and social dimensions of disputes. In contrast, foreign mediators are knowledgeable about legal frameworks, institutional systems, and political leverage. Third, mediation should proceed in a sequential, tiered manner, with pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-agreement reconciliation, allowing each stage to operate at the appropriate level while remaining interrelated. Finally, inclusion is critical: communities must be active participants, with their views influencing both local and formal decision-making processes, ensuring that outcomes are locally based rather than externally imposed.

Components:-

HPA operates through multiple, interrelated layers, each with a specialised role. The Traditional Layer focuses on relationship healing and moral legitimacy. It consists of elders' councils, apology ceremonies, compensation rituals, and other culturally rooted procedures. These methods re-establish trust, rebuild relationships, and repair the moral fabric disturbed by conflict. Conflict mapping at the community level identifies complaints and structural vulnerabilities, ensuring that the pre-negotiation process accounts for local realities. International Layer: This layer works in tandem to secure structural settlement through ceasefire treaties, power-sharing frameworks, formal agreements, and institutional enforcement measures. It establishes the political and legal frameworks required to avert further violence and maintain stability. HPA unifies various layers using joint committees, co-mediation tables, and coordinated planning structures. Integration guarantees that local relational mending and international structural accords complement rather than contradict one another. Legitimacy feedback loops are present throughout: community consultations, post-agreement rituals, and recurrent reconciliation processes constantly review whether the outcomes are socially, morally, and politically legitimate.

Dynamics:-

HPA's operational dynamics emphasise the ongoing interaction of relational and structural logics. Co-mediation teams establish dual legitimacy by leaning on both moral acceptances within communities and formal institutional mandates. Iterative reconciliation strategies resolve outstanding grievances and prevent relationship ruptures from recurring. Cultural sensitivity guidelines guarantee that international mediators respect local customs, rituals, and social structures, reducing misalignment and increasing trust. Monitoring measures go beyond formal agreement compliance to include relational health, social cohesiveness, and community satisfaction, ensuring the long-term viability of peace on both moral and structural levels.

Case Applications:-

HPA's practical relevance is demonstrated in a variety of circumstances, highlighting the significance of combining relational legitimacy from traditional processes with structural authority from formal institutions. South Sudan's violence stems from both national political power struggles and localised intercommunal divisions. Traditional elder councils adjudicate clan-level disputes using discourse, apology ceremonies, and recompense rituals to restore confidence, moral order, and social cohesiveness. These pre-negotiation initiatives are crucial for uncovering local issues and preparing communities to actively participate in official discussions. IGAD-mediated national peace agreements prioritise formal power-sharing, institutional frameworks, and the enforcement of ceasefires, while also providing structural scaffolding to prevent escalation. Post-agreement reconciliation rituals, continuous dialogue forums, and community-led monitoring all help to maintain compliance and ensure that formal institutions are socially accepted. South Sudan demonstrates HPA's layered, iterative strategy, showing that relationship mending and structural enforcement work together to achieve long-term peace.

Rwanda: Following the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, Rwanda had the dual challenge of government stabilisation and rebuilding damaged community bonds. The Gacaca court system, a community-based judicial mechanism, dealt with mass atrocities while also promoting relationship repair through acknowledgement of guilt, communal participation, and reconciliation ceremonies. These local mechanisms worked with formal political settlements, institutional changes, legal oversight, and accountability systems to lay the groundwork for governance and the rule of law. Rwanda exemplifies HPA's notion of synchronising restoration and resolution logics, guaranteeing that moral mending and institutional stability complement one another.

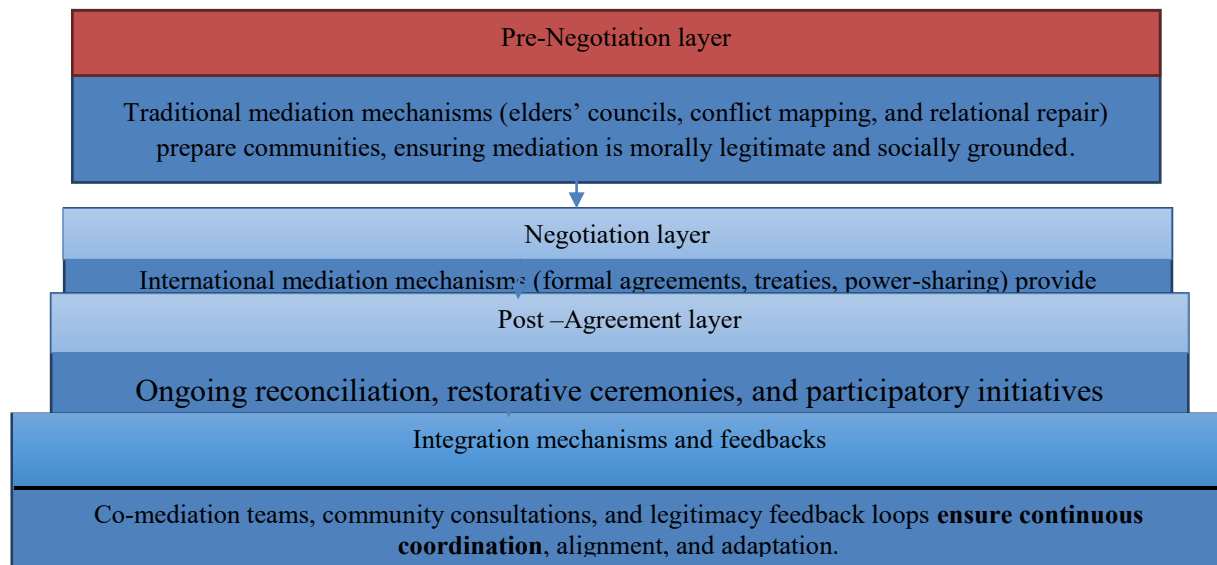
In sharp contrast, the Arusha Accords of 1993 sought a formal political settlement before the genocide, focusing on power-sharing, institutional accords, and elite-level negotiations, to which all parties to the conflict had ostensibly subscribed, while largely ignoring local relational and moral ruptures. Despite their structural sophistication, these accords failed to prevent mass bloodshed because they did not engage with the social fabric of communities, leaving long-standing grievances unresolved (Stettenheim, 2000; Storey, 2012). The juxtaposition of the Arusha Accords and the post-genocide Gacaca courts demonstrates an essential lesson for Hybrid Peace Architecture: formal agreements alone cannot secure long-term peace without parallel processes that repair trust, rebuild social cohesion, and restore moral legitimacy at the community level.

Northern Ireland: The violence was fueled by sectarian tensions as well as disagreements over institutional governance. The Good Friday Agreement established formal political structures, power-sharing arrangements, and methods for implementing ceasefires while also addressing structural issues. Concurrent community-led restorative projects, discussion programs, and reconciliation forums aimed at repairing relationships, building trust, intergroup understanding, and establishing moral legitimacy (Byrne & O'Sullivan, 2016). These measures guaranteed that communities internalised formal political agreements. Youth, civic organisations, and community leaders participated in programs that helped preserve momentum for peace, minimise resentment, and reduce sectarian tensions. Northern Ireland exemplifies the value of HPA's inclusive, iterative, and multi-level strategy, demonstrating that formal agreements alone are insufficient.

Conceptual Diagram HPA:-

The architecture of HPA can be described as a layered, interconnected model in which relational and structural logics are coordinated through integration mechanisms and continuous feedback loops. The approach is both sequential and iterative, capturing the dynamic nature of peace processes. The diagram depicts the layered framework of the HPA, showing how traditional (relational) and international (structural) mediation methods are synchronised across three iterative phases: pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-agreement. These layers are linked by integration processes and constant feedback loops, which ensure that community legitimacy and institutional authority support one another, resulting in long-term, adaptable, and context-sensitive peace. Sustainable peace arises when the pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-agreement layers are interwoven, relational and structural logics are synchronised, and community and institutional legitimacy reinforce one another.

Conceptual Diagram of HPA



Challenges and Solutions: -

Integrating conventional mediation into international peace processes poses structural and institutional obstacles that reflect the underlying incentives of formalised mediation organisations.

Structural Constraints and Incentives: -

International mediation is frequently characterised as impartial, technical, or humanitarian. However, structural and institutional incentives within international peacekeeping systems may unintentionally hinder the integration of traditional tactics. Organisations, sponsors, and consultants frequently derive meaning, attention, and finance from continuous conflict, procedural outputs, or formal agreements, rather than the long-term viability of peace. This dynamic has the potential to marginalise traditional mediation, which focuses on relational repair, moral legitimacy, and community cohesiveness, pushing these processes to the periphery of peace operations. As a result, conflict can persist or even thrive in localised contexts while international actors continue to function within established procedural frameworks.

Incentive Alignment: Removing Constraints: -

The Hybrid Peace Architecture (HPA) resolves structural constraints by linking incentives to measurable, long-term peace outcomes. Both conventional and international mediators are evaluated and supported by quantifiable metrics, including post-agreement compliance, reductions in local-level violence, restoration of intergroup trust, and the perceived validity of agreements within impacted communities. Co-mediation teams can use iterative monitoring and feedback loops to measure both relational and structural progress in real time, enabling them to adjust techniques to strengthen trust, social cohesion, and compliance. By explicitly recognising and institutionalising traditional mediation alongside international agreements, HPA ensures that community-driven reconciliation takes precedence over tokenistic approaches, giving local processes equal weight in the operational calculus of peacebuilding. This approach lowers the likelihood of a "conflict industry" in which persistent instability benefits players rather than communities. Instead, HPA fosters an environment in which relational repair and structural enforcement mutually reinforce one another, creating a system in which all players are motivated to prioritise genuine, long-term peace.

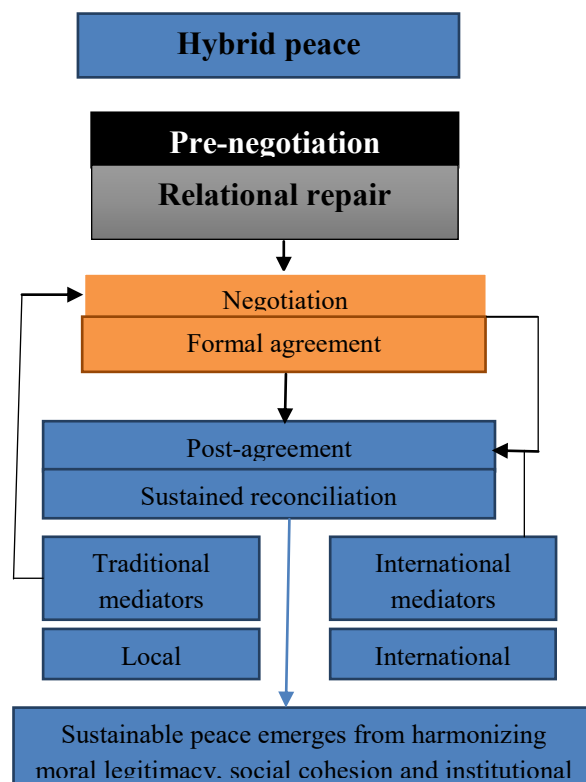
The HPA Implementation Roadmap: -

Building on the recognition of structural limits and the necessity for incentive alignment, the Hybrid Peace Architecture (HPA) offers a practical, operational blueprint for peacebuilding that balances relational legitimacy and structural authority. The roadmap divides mediation procedures into sequential yet iterative phases, ensuring that each supports the previous one while remaining culturally grounded, inclusive, and adaptable. The first phase, pre-negotiation community involvement, prioritises traditional mediation techniques. Elders' councils, community spokespeople, and local mediators map out conflict, identify relationship ruptures, and encourage discussion and restorative practices. Before formal negotiation, this step repairs trust, explains grievances, and builds moral

legitimacy, ensuring that later structural agreements take community opinions into account. By addressing relationship issues early, this phase minimises the risk of post-agreement disobedience, resistance, or the resurgence of localised violence.

The second phase, formal negotiation, focuses on structural settlement. International mediators work alongside traditional authorities to help draft treaties, power-sharing arrangements, and institutional accords. While this layer focuses on enforceable results, it is nevertheless informed by insights and relational data from the pre-negotiation phase. Co-mediation teams ensure dual legitimacy by combining moral acceptance within communities with formal institutional authority, avoiding the perception that agreements are externally imposed or culturally unconnected. The third phase, post-agreement reconciliation, strengthens both the relationship and structural gains. Ongoing discourse forums, restorative ceremonies, and community-led monitoring strengthen trust, restore moral injury, and maintain the credibility of formal agreements. Iterative feedback loops enable mediators to continuously analyse relational health, societal cohesiveness, and compliance, and to adapt techniques in response to new grievances or problems. Cultural awareness is woven throughout, ensuring that transnational actors follow local customs, traditions, and social hierarchies. Integration mechanisms are crucial to the roadmap. Co-mediation teams, made up of traditional and international actors, coordinate planning, implementation, and monitoring at various levels. Legitimacy feedback loops, which are implemented through community consultations, iterative assessment, and post-agreement rituals, enable continual evaluation of both procedural and substantive effectiveness. These strategies prevent a mismatch between relational and structural goals, strengthen compliance, and ensure that local reconciliation is not a gimmick but an essential component of long-term peace.

The HPA implementation pathway emphasises continual assessment, adaptive tactics, and incentive alignment. By linking mediator performance and institutional recognition to measurable improvements in long-term peace—such as trust restoration, intergroup cooperation, and adherence to formal agreements—HPA discourages the perpetuation of a "conflict industry" and promotes genuine conflict resolution outcomes. In conclusion, this roadmap puts HPA's theoretical ideas into tangible activities. HPA puts a culturally grounded, socially legitimate, and institutionally enforceable framework into action by sequencing mediation phases, encouraging co-mediation and community engagement, incorporating iterative feedback, and aligning incentives with peace results. It assures that peacebuilding is a dynamic, ongoing, and context-sensitive process capable of creating long-term, locally relevant, and internationally informed outcomes. Diagram 1 depicts the Hybrid Peace Architecture (HPA) implementation process, including pre-negotiation community involvement, formal negotiation, and post-agreement reconciliation. It focuses on integrating co-mediation teams, iterative legitimacy feedback loops, and culturally sensitive techniques, illustrating how relational repair and structural stabilisation work together to generate long-term, context-sensitive peace.



Appendix:-**Table: Comparative Case Analysis under Hybrid Peace Architecture (HPA)**

Case Study	Relational (Traditional) Elements	Structural (International) Elements	Successes	Gaps / Challenges	Key Lessons for HPA
South Sudan	Clan councils, elders' mediation, dialogue, apology ceremonies, and compensation rituals	IGAD-mediated agreements, power-sharing arrangements, and formal ceasefires	Strengthened local reconciliation and trust-building at the clan level; formal agreements stabilised national-level governance.	National agreements were often ignored, local grievances persisted, and there was a lack of alignment across layers.	Integration of local councils into formal negotiation improves legitimacy and compliance; continuous feedback loops are essential.
Rwanda	Gacaca courts for community-based justice, acknowledgement of wrongdoing, reintegration, and reconciliation	The Arusha Accords addressed political arrangements and institutional power-sharing	Moral repair and community cohesion were enhanced; offender reintegration supported local reconciliation.	The Arusha Accords alone could not prevent large-scale violence; relational processes were not always synchronised with political settlements.	Embedding relational practices within political agreements ensures holistic peace; sequencing and coordination are crucial.
Northern Ireland	Community-level restorative initiatives, trust-building exercises, and intergroup dialogues	Good Friday Agreement, institutionalised power-sharing, legal frameworks	Political stability achieved; intergroup trust strengthened; community reconciliation maintained over decades	Initial political agreements were insufficient to resolve lingering social tensions; reliance on formal structures alone risked a fragile peace	Combined relational and structural efforts create durable peace; culturally sensitive and iterative interventions are needed

The following table synthesises the three case studies under HPA logic, highlighting relational vs. structural elements, successes, gaps, and lessons:

Case Study	Relational (Traditional) Elements	Structural (International) Elements	Successes	Gaps / Challenges	Key Lessons for HPA
South Sudan	Clan councils, elders' mediation, dialogue, apology ceremonies, compensation rituals	IGAD-mediated agreements, power-sharing arrangements, and formal ceasefires	Strengthened local reconciliation and trust-building at the clan level; formal agreements stabilised national-level governance.	National agreements were often ignored, local grievances persisted, and there was a lack of alignment across layers.	Integration of local councils into formal negotiation improves legitimacy and compliance; continuous feedback loops are essential.
Rwanda	Gacaca courts for community-based justice,	The Arusha Accords addressed	Moral repair and community cohesion were	The Arusha Accords alone could not prevent	Embedding relational practices within

	acknowledgement of wrongdoing, reintegration, and reconciliation	political arrangements and institutional power-sharing	enhanced; offender reintegration supported local reconciliation.	large-scale violence; relational processes were not always synchronised with political settlements.	political agreements ensures holistic peace; sequencing and coordination are crucial.
Northern Ireland	Community-level restorative initiatives, trust-building exercises, and intergroup dialogues	Good Friday Agreement, institutionalised power-sharing, legal frameworks	Political stability achieved; intergroup trust strengthened; community reconciliation maintained over decades	Initial political agreements were insufficient to resolve lingering social tensions; reliance on formal structures alone risked a fragile peace	Combined relational and structural efforts create durable peace; culturally sensitive and iterative interventions are needed

Overall, the study confirms that durable and sustainable peace emerges from synergising relational legitimacy with structural authority, rather than relying solely on either approach. HPA offers a conceptual and practical framework for reconciling moral, social, and structural dimensions of conflict, providing guidance for policymakers, mediators, and peacebuilding organisations. By integrating these dimensions, HPA enhances legitimacy, fosters trust, repairs social and moral ruptures, and ensures enforceable outcomes, offering a robust model for conflict resolution in diverse cultural and political contexts. Why HPA is new, what gap it fills, and how the study moves beyond previous models.

The core uniqueness we identified is:

Feature	Earlier Hybrid Peace Approaches	HPA (Our Study)
Purpose	Described the coexistence of traditional & international actors	Provides an operational mechanism for structured coordination
Form	Theoretical, descriptive	Layered, procedural, implementable framework
Role-sharing	Implied	Formally defined (co-mediation, legitimacy loops)
Peace focus	Political settlement	Political + social + moral repair

So we incorporate these into the contribution section. Appendix A: Policy Recommendations and Practical Guidelines for HPA Implementation

#	Recommendation (Priority)	Practical Step
1	✂ Integrate Traditional and International Mediation Systems (High Priority) Formalise collaboration between local/traditional authorities (elders, community councils, restorative justice bodies) and international mediators (UN, AU, IGAD, or regional organisations).	Establish co-mediation teams with clearly defined roles and shared objectives to balance moral legitimacy with structural authority.
2	✂ Sequence Peace Processes in Layered Phases (High Priority) Adopt a phased approach: pre-negotiation (relational repair), negotiation (formal agreements), post-agreement (sustained reconciliation).	Conduct community conflict mapping before formal negotiations; integrate findings into the design of international agreements to ensure contextual relevance.
3	Embed Iterative Feedback Mechanisms, Continuously monitor social, moral, and structural dimensions of peace agreements.	Implement legitimacy feedback loops: post-agreement consultations, participatory monitoring forums, and adaptive adjustments to agreements based on community input.
4	Prioritise Cultural Sensitivity	Provide cultural orientation and training for

	Recognise and respect local norms, rituals, and social hierarchies in all stages of mediation.	international mediators; formally recognise local practices (e.g., apology ceremonies, restorative rituals) within agreements.
5	Strengthen Local Ownership and Inclusivity Empower communities to actively participate in all phases of peacebuilding to increase legitimacy and compliance.	Facilitate community representation in negotiation tables, include women and youth, and ensure marginalised groups have a voice in both traditional and formal processes.
6	✂ Address Both Relational and Structural Dimensions (High Priority) Recognise that sustainable peace requires repairing moral and social ruptures while maintaining enforceable political and institutional structures.	Integrate restorative practices (trust-building, reconciliation ceremonies) with formal legal frameworks and political power-sharing agreements.
7	Anticipate and Navigate Tensions Proactively manage potential friction between traditional and international actors.	Establish structured dialogue forums for mediators to clarify priorities, address epistemic differences, and negotiate collaborative solutions.
8	Invest in Long-Term Engagement Treat peacebuilding as a continuous process rather than a one-off negotiation.	Support ongoing post-agreement reconciliation initiatives, community dialogue programs, and institutional capacity-building to sustain peace over time.
9	Institutionalise HPA Principles Integrate HPA into national and regional peacebuilding frameworks and standard operating procedures.	Develop guidelines and protocols for co-mediation, iterative evaluation, and coordination between local and international actors for use in future conflicts.
10	Encourage Research and Adaptation Continuously evaluate and refine the HPA model to ensure effectiveness across different cultural, political, and conflict contexts.	Conduct longitudinal studies, comparative analyses, and operational research to improve hybrid peace strategies and adapt them to evolving challenges.

Discussion: -

The analysis of HPA shows that sustained peace necessitates the deliberate integration of relational legitimacy and structural authority. In the cases of South Sudan, Rwanda, and Northern Ireland, traditional mediation systems were critical in repairing social and moral ruptures through discourse, ritual, and restorative practices, thereby creating trust, social cohesion, and community legitimacy. Simultaneously, foreign mediation provided the structural framework to stabilise political institutions, enforce agreements, and prevent an imminent escalation of bloodshed. Neither strategy was sufficient; structural enforcement without relational legitimacy risks superficial compliance, while relational mending without formal authority lacks enforceability and protection against future conflict.

A key takeaway from the discussion is the ongoing epistemological and operational difference between traditional and international mediation. Traditional techniques emphasise moral rehabilitation, social recognition, and iterative relational processes that often unfold over long periods. International approaches prioritise enforceable agreements, institutional conformity, and political stability, usually under tight timeframes and with formalised procedural requirements. This divergence frequently results in misrecognition, tension, and competition for authority, as seen in South Sudan, where IGAD-mediated agreements ignored localised grievances (Carolan, 2021), and Rwanda, where the Arusha Accords addressed political structures but did not include local reconciliation mechanisms. Northern Ireland exemplifies the opposite scenario: formal accords provided structural stability, but community-led reconciliation programs were required to build confidence, internalise agreements, and sustain peace for decades.

HPA solves these problems via layered sequencing, co-mediation, and iterative feedback loops, which put the theoretical ideas mentioned in Sections 5 and 7 into practice. By intentionally blending relational and structural logics, HPA ensures that agreements are culturally anchored, socially respectable, and institutionally enforceable. In practice, co-mediation teams promote dual legitimacy by easing communication between conventional and international players, reducing misrecognition, and coordinating efforts to balance moral authority and structural power. Iterative monitoring and adaptive procedures enable interventions to respond to new complaints, align incentives, and prevent conflict from being used for institutional advantage, thereby opposing the "conflict industry" dynamics observed in some international mediation situations.

The case studies provide additional examples of how the HPA roadmap might be applied in practice. In South Sudan, pre-negotiation participation by local elders and councils revealed community concerns, enabling IGAD-mediated national agreements to reflect local realities. Post-agreement reconciliation rituals enhanced compliance and trust, highlighting the value of sequential layering and constant feedback. The Gacaca courts in Rwanda highlighted the integration of community-based restorative justice with official political changes, demonstrating how hybrid approaches can transform systemic atrocities into routes for moral rehabilitation and sustainable government. Northern Ireland emphasises the ongoing importance of community-level relationship healing alongside formal institutional settlements, reaffirming the concept that peace is a continuous, multilayered process rather than a one-time deal.

Furthermore, cultural sensitivity appears as an essential component. HPA's success depends on mediators' ability to recognise, respect, and incorporate local norms, rituals, and social hierarchies into formal processes. Ignoring these factors risks misalignment, diminished legitimacy, and decreased compliance. HPA operationalises cultural sensitivity through co-mediation, organised conversation, and legitimacy feedback mechanisms, ensuring that both traditional and foreign actors' strategies are aligned with community expectations while retaining structural enforcement. Overall, the discussion emphasises that long-term peace does not result from formal agreements alone, but rather from the alignment of moral legitimacy, social cohesion, and institutional power. HPA offers a practical and theoretically sound framework for accomplishing this integration, demonstrating that hybrid peace processes—sequenced, iterative, and culturally informed—can bridge the relational and structural difference. HPA operationalises a holistic approach to peacebuilding that is both locally and globally relevant by incorporating relational healing into enforceable frameworks and regularly adjusting techniques in response to community feedback.

Conclusion and Policy Implications: -

This study has shown that conflict is more than just a struggle for resources, political positions, or institutional power; it is also a rupture in society's social and moral fabric. Traditional mediation systems, common in Africa, Asia, and Indigenous societies, view disputes relationally, emphasising trust restoration, moral healing, and communal cohesiveness. In contrast, modern international mediation focuses on structural settlement through formal agreements, power-sharing frameworks, and institutional enforcement. Each system has distinct qualities, but neither alone is sufficient to achieve long-term, genuine, and culturally anchored peace. The study of epistemic divergence, encounters, and misrecognition demonstrates that traditional and international mediation frequently operate concurrently, with little integration. Misalignment of relational and structural logics results in unstable agreements, recurring violence, and eroding trust. Cases from South Sudan, Rwanda, and Northern Ireland demonstrate the costs of ignoring either dimension: formal agreements alone are ineffective in addressing local relational ruptures. At the same time, community-based reconciliation without institutional assistance lacks enforceability and scalability.

Hybrid Peace Architecture (HPA) bridges these gaps by integrating relational and structural logics at the pre-negotiation, negotiation, and post-agreement levels. HPA operationalises dual legitimacy, iterative reconciliation, and adaptive feedback loops to ensure that peace processes are both morally acceptable and institutionally enforced. By collaborating with international mediators, HPA establishes an inclusive, culturally sensitive architecture capable of addressing both the social and political dimensions of conflict. The implications for both theory and practice are significant. HPA theoretically challenges the conventional distinction between traditional and international mediation, suggesting that relational and structural techniques are complementary rather than competing logics. Peace practitioners are encouraged to create mediation methods that incorporate local knowledge, moral authority, and social norms into formal agreements and institutional enforcement. Policymakers must recognise that long-term peace requires investments not only in legal frameworks and ceasefire monitoring, but also in community healing, moral repair, and trust-building.

Furthermore, HPA emphasises the value of iterative, adaptable, and inclusive processes. Conflict resolution is not a linear process; it unfolds across several layers and time periods, necessitating ongoing assessment, adaptation to emerging challenges, and coordination among local and international players. By including feedback mechanisms and co-mediation teams, HPA ensures that both community relational health and agreement structural integrity are monitored and maintained throughout time. In terms of operations, HPA lays forth a strategy for successful peacebuilding. Pre-negotiation community participation identifies grievances and builds relational trust; formal negotiation layers codify agreements with legally binding frameworks; and post-agreement reconciliation

consolidates moral and social mending. Integration techniques, such as co-mediation teams and legitimacy feedback loops, provide ongoing alignment between relational and structural goals, limiting the creation of "conflict industry" tendencies that can jeopardise sustained peace.

Finally, the implementation of HPA has far-reaching consequences for global peacebuilding. HPA provides a reproducible, culturally grounded, and enforceable paradigm by recognising that long-term peace arises from the harmonisation of moral legitimacy, social cohesion, and institutional authority, rather than mere formal agreements. Future research should examine how HPA is implemented across different contexts, how effective it is over time, and how its components can be refined to respond to changing social, political, and cultural dynamics. HPA offers policymakers, mediators, and peacebuilding practitioners a solid framework for constructing long-term, inclusive, and legitimate peace processes that balance local and international logics.

Key Insight: Sustainable peace results from the deliberate alignment of relational legitimacy, moral restoration, and institutional authority. HPA puts this theory into practice by combining layered sequencing, co-mediation, iterative feedback, and culturally sensitive integration to provide a comprehensive pathway for long-term and context-sensitive conflict resolution.

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