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Political accommodation: Theory and practice for peacemaking and peacebuilding

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Abstract

Peace requires active conciliation, or accommodation, of people's political interests and perspectives, especially in divided societies. When people's interests are not accommodated through governance arrangements and dialogue processes they turn, sooner or later, to other means to fulfil their interests. All too often the recourse is to armed conflict. This paper introduces, in outline form, a theory of political accommodation which is oriented towards peacemaking and peacebuilding. Building on theories of consociational democracy, consensus democracy and power sharing, this evolved theory focuses on how people can achieve conciliation of their different political interests. The theory offers advantages over existing approaches to peace practice; for example, it puts people at the center of peace by focusing on their interests, it goes beyond a narrow focus on power sharing, and it also expands the areas of opportunity for accommodation by encouraging conciliation of interests across multiple "strands" of governance and dialogue processes. The paper describes how the theory can be applied to design arrangements for political accommodation, and thus contribute to peace. Drawing on the author's many years of experience – including in the Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia – the paper presents experiences from application of the political accommodation approach in these contexts.

1. Introduction

When people are unable to express or fulfil their political interests, or believe they are unable to do so, whether in the arrangements for governance or through political dialogue, they are significantly more likely, over time, to seek other means and avenues to realize their interests. Those other means can include non-violent actions such as public demonstrations, as well as violent means, including armed conflict.

The ways in which people's differing political interests and perspectives can exist together, can be expressed freely, and can ultimately be reconciled and fulfilled in a balanced way is an essential consideration in the art and science of how people govern themselves. While there is a constant need to achieve conciliation of – or accommodate – others' political interests in all societies, that need becomes particularly acute in divided or segmented societies, in societies experiencing political transitions, or societies experiencing or that have experienced violent conflict.¹ In all these situations effective accommodation of political interests can be essential to making and building peace and to fostering political stability.

Because of the crucial role effective political accommodation can play in supporting peace, this paper focuses on the theory and practice of political accommodation specifically for that purpose, namely, making and building peace. Political accommodation is by no means a new construct or term, however this paper builds on previous theory and approaches from the body of literature on political accommodation, consociational democracy, power-sharing and consensus democracy to increase explanatory and predictive power as well as to provide for creative application of the theoretical framework in practice. In addition to building on previous theory development, the approach presented here has benefited from testing and refinement in a number of contemporary armed conflicts, including in Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan and Syria.²

This paper is organized in six sections. Section 2 focuses on the meaning of political accommodation in scholarly literature and in practice and presents an updated working definition of political accommodation. Section 3 focuses on the theory of political accommodation, briefly reviewing past approaches and then presenting an evolved theory focusing on mutual conciliation of people's political

¹ The term "segmented societies" has been used by McRae (1974) and others in presenting the types of challenges in such societies that they assert political accommodation and consociational democracy can address. In this usage, the "segmented" nature of the society refers to "... socio-economic differences, cleavages founded on broad ideological or religious foundations ..." and distinct from societies that exhibit "... overlapping and cross-cutting memberships." See: Kenneth D. McRae Ed., *Consociational Democracy: Political Accommodation in Segmented Societies* (Toronto: The Carleton Library, 1974) : pp. 3 – 4.

² The current paper does not include description of experience of using the political accommodation approach in the context of Syria.

interests. Section 4 presents a method for applying the political accommodation approach in practice. The method consists of three components: a framework for political accommodation through governance arrangements, a framework for political accommodation through political dialogue processes, and a three-step technique to apply these frameworks. Section 5 presents experiences from using the political accommodation approach in practice, while Section 6 presents some concluding remarks and highlights areas for further research.

2. The meaning of political accommodation

Different meanings of “political accommodation”

Much has been written on the various meanings and interpretations of the term “political accommodation” (Lijphart 1968; McRae 1974; Barry 1975) and the related term “consociational democracy” (Lijphart 1969; Andeweg 2000; Lijphart 2008). The purpose of this section is not to repeat these previous expositions nor to divert to an abstract discourse on the meanings of these terms, but rather to identify some of the opportunities and challenges associated with these terms, and how they have been addressed through a modified definition of political accommodation.

The term *political accommodation* is related to the meaning of consociationalism and has been related in the literature also to the term *consociational democracy*. In his early, seminal works on political accommodation, Lijphart (1968) used the term accommodation to mean, “... *settlements of divisive issues and conflicts where only a minimal consensus exists.*” Lijphart (1969) went on to use the terminology of consociational democracy to refer to, “*government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy.*” Later, in a review article on political accommodation and consociational democracy, Barry (1975) focused on the core meaning of political accommodation as referring to, “... *the process, the outcome or the spirit of mutual conciliation.*” Taking Barry’s emphasis, if accommodation is to involve conciliation, the question beckons: conciliation of what?

For the purposes of the approach presented in this paper, the term political accommodation *encompasses the objectives, arrangements and outcomes of mutual conciliation of people’s competing political interests and perspectives.*

This working definition draws on elements of the various interpretations of the term political accommodation (described above). It takes as a starting point the original meaning of consociationalism,

referring to people and groups associating together in society.³ It uses the emphasis of mutual conciliation proposed by Barry (1975) to give practical meaning to the way in which divisive issues and conflicts can be settled, an objective inherent in Lijphart's (1968) presentation of political accommodation. However, this working definition goes further to make explicit that the conciliation is between *people's* political interests and those of their representatives and the groups to which they may affiliate themselves.

This definition distinguishes itself from the terminology of "power sharing" which has in practice and in theory also come to be connoted with sharing of political (and sometimes military) power between individuals and elites (Lijphart 2008; Norris 2008). In practice power sharing deals between influential individuals and representatives generally set a low bar in terms of requiring a link back from those sharing power to their purported constituencies.

The explicit statement in the above definition that what is being accommodated are *people's* political interests marks an important and necessary distinction from the interests of States, for example. The working definition includes in the elements of political accommodation its objectives; this is critically important because it recognizes that political accommodation requires that the people and groups who are engaged in mutual conciliation must share a desire to accommodate the interests of others.⁴ Often when there is a mis-alignment of objectives among people and groups and/or a reluctance to fully "buy in" to the objectives of genuine political accommodation it manifests itself as a lack of political will.

The arrangements referred to in this definition include primarily governance arrangements and arrangements for political dialogue processes, so there are governance and process dimensions to the definition. Lastly, the definition reflects an orientation to specific outcomes that can accommodate political interests and perspectives.

Separate from its focus on people over elites and on mutual conciliation through specific arrangements, the working definition and terminology of *political accommodation* has some other, very practical benefits. In many situations people may initially shy away from using the terminology of *consociational democracy* because it can be viewed as abstract, theoretical and difficult to explain to a general

³ The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines a consociation as, "[a] group or association of a distinctive type, in particular" and "[a] political system formed by the cooperation of different, especially antagonistic, social groups on the basis of shared power." It identifies the origin of the word as derived from a combination of "associate" and "together."

⁴ In his presentation of political accommodation, Lijphart (1968) identified two key requirements: (i) "a minimum of agreement of fundamentals"; and (ii) the leaders of the different groups or blocs must be convinced of the desirability of preserving the political system.

audience.⁵ Political accommodation offers an alternate and untainted terminology, particularly in contexts where “democratic governance” and similar terms have come to be understood by some groups as inferring a so-called “Western-style” democracy.

Lastly, as used here, political accommodation does not in any way infer or relate to appeasement or “buying off” opponents through political largesse.

The essence of political accommodation

In addition to the working definition of political accommodation presented above, it is also useful to explore the essence of, as some have referred to it previously, the spirit (Lijphart 1968) of political accommodation. The feel of political accommodation rests in conciliation of political interests as a means of bringing people together, in association, around a common set of objectives. The spirit of political accommodation is important as it relates to people’s values and their perceptions, attitudes and beliefs, especially towards other people and groups. The emphasis in this approach is not only on conciliation, but on *mutual* conciliation because it is for the people and their representatives to achieve conciliation themselves for their respective interests.

An important aspect of political accommodation is that people and their representatives have to want to accommodate the interests of others. Political accommodation is about taking fair account of the views of others and meeting the interests of as broad a segment of society as possible, in a balanced way, while still ensuring effective arrangements for governance and for political dialogue processes.

3. Theory of political accommodation

Theoretical foundations

As a body of theory political accommodation has deep foundations and has evolved over several decades through development of the core tenets of the theory, through application across a number of comparative cases and through scholarly critique. Several authors have published reviews on the theory of political accommodation (Barry 1975) and consociational democracy (Andeweg 2000; Lijphart 2008). As a theory of political interaction, political accommodation has been closely related to consociational democracy, consensus democracy and power sharing.

⁵ The author’s experience in using the political accommodation approach in Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan has reflected the experience of previous scholar practitioners in this regard. For example, in introducing the compilation of his work over thirty-five years, Arend Lijphart noted that he found the term “consociational” to be “... *an obstacle in communicating with policymakers who found it too esoteric ...*”. See: Arend Lijphart, “Introduction: Developments in power-sharing theory”, Chapter 1 in *Thinking about democracy: Power sharing and majority rule in theory and practice* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

The purpose of this section is not to provide another such review of previous scholarship on political accommodation, but rather to identify some of the most important elements of existing theories of political accommodation, consociational democracy, power sharing, and consensus democracy, as well as other theories, and how they provide foundations for and relate to the current theory.

A natural starting point for illuminating these theoretical foundations rests in the work of Arend Lijphart on political accommodation and consociational democracy. In his early works Lijphart (1968) presented accommodation as focusing on settlement of divisive issues and conflicts where only a minimal consensus exists. The relevant elements from this formulation are those that relate to the focus on settlement of disputes and the fact that the arrangements can function in situations where consensus is incomplete but not fully lacking. Lijphart's (1969) work on consociational democracy focused on government by elite cartel. In that formulation Lijphart identified four requirements for successful consociational democracy: (i) the ability of the elites to accommodate the divergent demands of subcultures in society; (ii) the ability of the elites to transcend cleavages; (iii) elites' commitment to the maintenance of the system; and (iv) elites' understanding of the dangers of fragmentation. Lijphart (2004) later identified nine areas for constitutional choices around consociational democracy, and these areas are useful for defining the specific types of arrangements and the interplay between them that can achieve political accommodation.⁶

Closely related to consociational democracy, power-sharing theory generally focuses (Lijphart 2008; Norris 2008) on arrangements and rules that share political decision making between multiple political elites. With this focus on elites, power-sharing theory shares a key theoretical orientation with consociational democracy.

Recognizing the dichotomy presented by the focus of consociational democracy and power sharing theories on elite participation, Lijphart (1999) and others later turned to focus on consensus democracy, which emphasizes consensus and inclusion over opposition and exclusion. This affords a significant improvement over purely elite-focused arrangements, yet perhaps does not go far enough in explaining how best to nurture and achieve consensus and inclusion.

The prior theories of political accommodation and the theories of consociational democracy, power sharing and consensus democracy provide elements that can be useful and elements to be improved or discarded when developing a new theory of political accommodation. In addition, some elements from

⁶ The nine areas for constitutional choices are: (1) the legislative electoral system; (2) guidelines within PR; (3) parliamentary or presidential government; (4) power sharing in the executive; (5) cabinet stability; (6) selecting the head of state; (7) federalism and decentralization; (8) non-territorial autonomy; and (9) power sharing beyond the cabinet and parliament.

other theories – including decentralization, centripetalism and deliberative democracy – are also useful for the purposes of formulating a new theory of political accommodation, and are mentioned here briefly.⁷

Approaches to decentralization often seek to identify arrangements for governance that can accommodate political interests through an agreed combination of shared rule and self-rule in the arrangements for governance at different levels, and also using a combination of political, administrative and fiscal dimensions (Schneider 2003) for allocation of responsibilities across levels of governance.⁸

If decentralization is conceived of as focusing on political forces that may allocate more responsibilities away from “the center”, having a potential centrifugal effect, then centripetalism as a body of theory generally suggests (Gerring et al. 2005) that effective governance follows when the locus of political attention and interaction is at the center of the system. Centripetalism emphasizes the role of center-oriented institutional arrangements in contributing to good governance. Both of these theories are relevant to the theory of political accommodation presented here because they emphasize foci and arrangements for allocation of responsibilities, which can contribute to conciliation of interests.

Another relevant body of theory when considering how to improve previous theories of political accommodation is that of deliberative democracy (Dryzek 2005; O’Flynn 2010), in which proponents value reasoned argument and participation in governance over pure majoritarian politics. The emphasis on participation resonates well with the intent of consociationalism and certainly the interests of people can be reflected in their reasoned arguments, however, a fundamental assumption underlying this theory is that there exists a culture and space for such reasoned argument and constructive political interaction. This assumption does not always hold true in situations of conflict or post-conflict transition. Often in situations of political transition arrangements for political accommodation serve to provide the checks and balances, the stitching in the fabric of divided societies which can enable people to participate in governance and can facilitate over time spaces for reasoned debate.

The various elements of these different political theories – primarily consociational democracy, power sharing, consensus democracy but also decentralization and centripetalism, deliberative democracy – provide the foundations for the theory presented in the following section.

⁷ The relationship between deliberative democracy and the current theory of political accommodation was put forward initially by colleagues, including Ms. Sophia L.R. Dawkins, in internal working papers (within Conflict Dynamics International) during 2013 – 2015.

⁸ Some approaches to application of theories of federalism in practice focus on the *shared rule* <> *self rule* spectrum and choices for allocation of responsibilities within a political system.

Central hypothesis

The central hypothesis of the theory of political accommodation presented here can be stated as follows:

When the objectives, arrangements and outcomes for political interaction within societies facilitate effective mutual conciliation – or accommodation – of people’s political interests and perspectives, especially in divided societies and/or situations of political instability or transition, then people and groups will be less likely to pursue their political interests through other means.

The corollary is that if people’s political interests are not accommodated in the objectives, arrangements and outcomes for political interaction then sooner or later they will be more likely to pursue their interests through other means, including through armed conflict.

While people may have many interests – based on needs, ideas, dreams, aspirations etc. – this theory of political accommodation focuses on those interests related to how people govern themselves and debate and decide on issues of concern to them. These are the *political* interests to be accommodated.

The arrangements referred to in this hypothesis are primarily arrangements for governance and for political dialogue processes. Governance arrangements include those related to: political structure and decentralization; electoral systems; executive; legislative branch; public participation and traditional and customary arrangements.⁹ Arrangements related to political dialogue processes include: process design; participation; implementation modalities and confidence building measures.

There are several sub-hypotheses that follow from this main hypothesis. First, when people believe that their voices are being heard, and that their interests are being taken into account, including through political dialogue processes and governance arrangements, they will be more likely to support or “buy in” to the processes and governance arrangements. This provides a self-reinforcing effect to strengthen the arrangements. Second, when people can realize their political interests through governance arrangements and political dialogue processes, it builds trust between them and in these arrangements and that further encourages participation and support. Third, people will be less likely to be drawn to polarizing leaders who may argue that a certain group is being marginalized, if indeed members of that group see that their legitimate interests are being accommodated. Fourth, when people and their

⁹ Elements of the judiciary that are concerned with accommodation of political interests through governance arrangements, such as a Constitutional Court, can be considered part of the overall political structure; however, the judiciary as a whole is not included in this typology of six Strands.

representatives have a high degree of mistrust of one another or there is a lack of trust between different groups and communities, arrangements for political accommodation can provide checks and balances to build confidence within and between groups. Fifth, if people do not share in the objectives of political accommodation it is unlikely that they will commit seriously to implementing the associated arrangements and outcomes. However, the arrangements themselves can help in building trust and that can positively motivate change in people's views the objectives of political accommodation.

The theory posits that effective political accommodation can be realized through arrangements across multiple dimensions of governance and political dialogue processes. Rather than focusing on one or two main avenues for accommodation of political interests, for example through elections alone, the approach presented here encourages pursuit of accommodation across various avenues or strands (described in more detail below).

Based on these hypotheses, the theory facilitates several predictions, including:

- For political leaders and elites that fail to ensure effective accommodation of political interests, they are living on borrowed time, as sooner or later people will turn to other means to fulfill their interests.
- If governance arrangements are put in place that may accommodate political interests in their design, but that are implemented in a manner counter to the intent of the design, then these arrangements will quickly lose the confidence of the very people whose interests the arrangements are intended to accommodate. That is, the design and implementation of governance arrangements are equally important for political accommodation.
- If arrangements for governance focus narrowly on one dimension or strand of governance (e.g. the nature of the electoral system) and not on others, it will be less likely that the governance arrangements as a whole will effectively accommodate political interests and perspectives, as the dimensions interlink and choices in them can reinforce or undermine one another.

This theory of political accommodation represents a modest yet important evolution over previous theories; it focuses squarely on people's political interests and perspectives, and emphasizes the intent and willingness of people to accommodate each other's interests. It also provides clarity regarding what types of arrangements can achieve accommodation of political interests and perspectives and this provides a link to the method presented below for applying the theory in practice.

Evolution of the theory

The theory of political accommodation presented has evolved over twelve years of research, conceptual development and practical application. The initial conceptual development came from research, observation and practice related to the situations in Northern Ireland in the late 1990s, Iraq in the early 2000s, Burundi in the early 2000s and a number of other contexts. Experiences in these situations invited the question of how arrangements for political accommodation could serve as enablers and could achieve outcomes towards peace and stability in situations of conflict and transition.

During the mid-2000s the approach was formulated to include a number of initial “strands” to explore governance arrangements. Over the period from 2007 to 2012 the theory was tested in practice and the methodology developed based on further research and practice in Sudan (Mc Hugh 2009; Mc Hugh 2010; Hilal et al. 2014), South Sudan (Dawkins and Gaere 2012), and Somalia (Tamaru et al. 2014). During 2012 to 2013 the theory and methodology was further refined to add additional strands and sub-strands for governance arrangements and to include strands for arrangements related to political dialogue processes. These various components of the approach have been additionally applied in the context of the conflict in Syria since 2014.

Indicators of political accommodation

Since the essence of political accommodation is mutual conciliation of political interests, it follows that, at least at a macroscopic level, one of the most significant measures of political accommodation is the degree of mutual conciliation of people’s political interests. How can the degree of mutual conciliation be measured? This is an important consideration if people want to assess the effectiveness of political accommodation in a system.

A number of indicators can assist in evaluating the degree of mutual conciliation and therefore of political accommodation:

- **Equity of political representation:** Equity, rather than equality, of political representation can be a useful but not sufficient measure of the degree of political accommodation in a particular system of governance. It may not be sufficient because even if people are well represented (whether in a proportionate manner or other equitable basis) it does not mean that such equity will extend into decision making influence. Hence, people may be represented but may still not be able to achieve conciliation of their political interests.

- **Equity of political decision-making influence:** Equity of political decision-making influence combined with equitable representation in systems of governance and in political dialogue processes can help to ensure more effective accommodation of people's political interests. Through direct and equitable influence in decision making concerning issues that affect their lives, people and their representatives will be more easily able to decide on measures that can accommodate their interests.
- **Public participation:** People's participation in debate and decisions around issues that concern them can contribute to political accommodation but is generally not sufficient in and of itself. Providing a means of public participation is important, helping to improve the quality of the arrangements for accommodation developed and ensuring widespread understanding and buy in to any proposed governance arrangements.
- **Individual and group behavior change:** An important indicator of political accommodation is change in people's or a groups' positions in response to engagement with other people and groups. This can be evaluated through review of the statements of influential individuals and groups and the options they present in political dialogue processes, for example.
- **Institutional, legislative and policy changes:** When people's political interests are effectively accommodated in the arrangements for governance and political dialogue processes, the institutions of governance and the outcomes of political discourse – such as laws and policies – will reflect the interests of the people. Therefore, changes in laws, policies and institutions towards more accommodating measures can provide a clear indication of the degree of political accommodation.

As an extension of these indicators, the political accommodation methodology uses a number of statistical tools to quantify and assess the degree of equality/inequality in political representation and political decision-making influence, both for case studies and for new options generated for the specific context. These tools include distribution and equality curves (including the Lorenz Curve) and indices of equality/inequality in distributions of political representation/decision making.¹⁰

¹⁰ The indices of equality/inequality used include the GINI Index, which provides a quantitative representation of the level of equality/inequality in a system and has been used by the author to assess the degree of political accommodation in various configurations.

4. Political accommodation methodology

Orientation

The preceding section presented an evolved theory of political accommodation. This section presents a method to apply the theory in practice. The orientation of the theory and method is towards the specific purpose of presenting and resolving violent conflict and building peace. The method is intended to be used by people and their representatives actively engaged in or seeking to participate in political dialogue processes and shaping of governance arrangements as well as by mediators and other peace practitioners. Furthermore, the methodology is oriented towards design and implementation of options for political accommodation, whether they are options for political dialogue processes or options for governance arrangements. This focus on options is important as it provides people and their representatives with more possibilities for agreement around arrangements for political accommodation and also, crucially, it avoids the potential for prescriptive recommendations coming from peace practitioners.

A method with three components

The political accommodation methodology consists of three core components:

- A framework of six Strands or focal areas for political accommodation through technical governance arrangements (see Figure 1). [GOVERNANCE component]
- A framework of four Strands of process arrangements for political accommodation (see Figure 2). [PROCESS component]
- A series of three steps to apply these frameworks to the development of options.

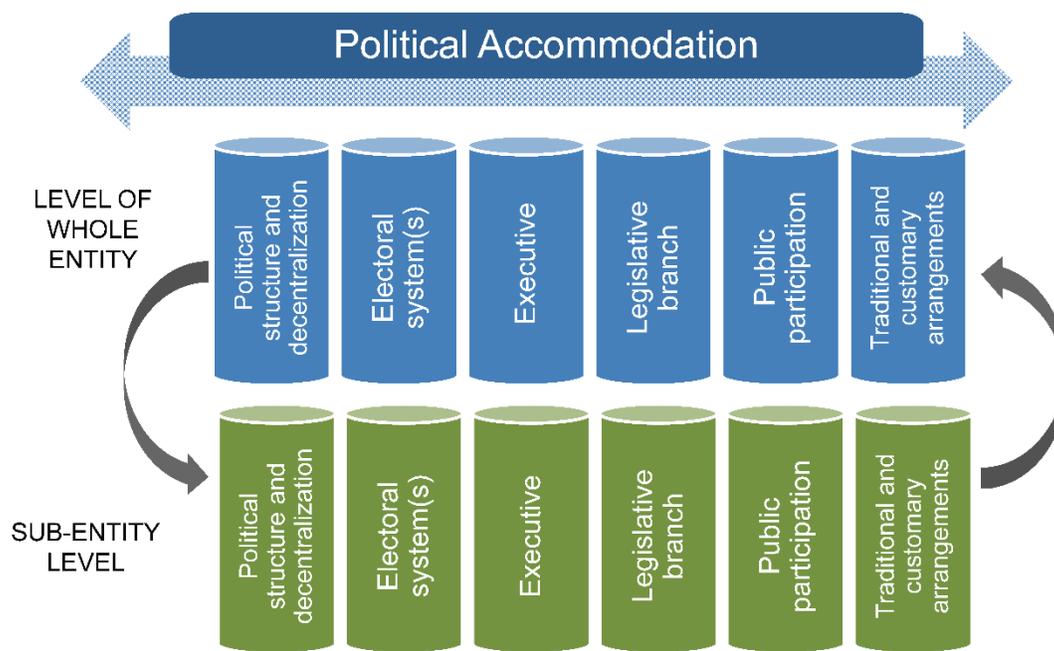
The governance and process components of the methodology follow naturally from the fact that political accommodation encompasses arrangements for mutual conciliation (as well as objectives, outcomes) in each of these areas. The governance and process components of the methodology are closely interlinked and reinforce each other.

GOVERNANCE component of the methodology

The governance component of the methodology consists of a framework of six Strands for political accommodation. These strands can be thought of as clusters of practical arrangements by which to accommodate political interests. The six Strands, shown in Figure 1, are: (1) Political structure and

decentralization; (2) Electoral system(s); (3) Executive; (4) Legislative branch; (5) Public participation; and (6) Traditional and customary arrangements.

Figure 1 – Six Strands for GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS component



This framework for political accommodation is equally applicable to political accommodation within single entities with international personality (e.g. States) and to political interactions between people and their representatives in multiple-entity configurations (e.g. formations of independent States interacting politically, economically and in other ways). That is, the framework is agnostic as regards the overall type of system in which it is applied.¹¹ The framework facilitates development of options for political accommodation at two levels:

- at **the level of the whole entity** (e.g. in the case of a State this is the national level), and
- At **the sub-entity level**; e.g. at the level of the constituent units that make up the whole entity.

¹¹ This is an important attribute of the political accommodation approach given that some other approaches generally focus on specific types of entities. For example, approaches to federalism generally focus on States as the primary political entity. This can cause a challenge when the interests to be accommodated are those of people and groups in non-State entities or in other types of configuration, such as unions or other combinations of States.

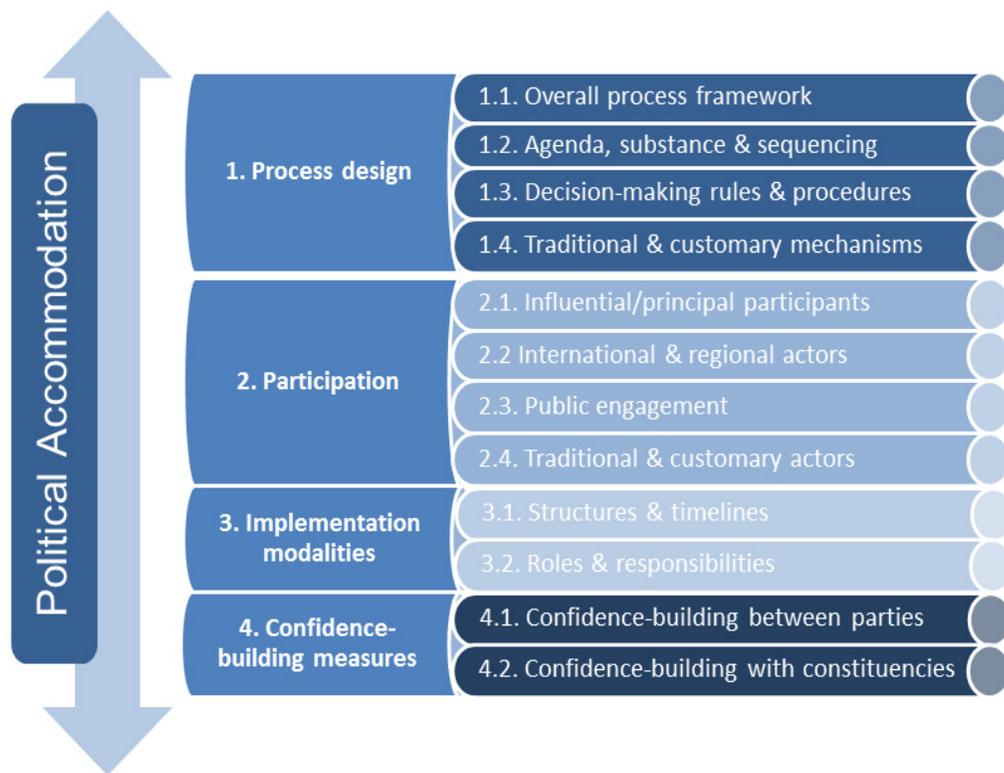
Using this two-level approach provides more opportunities for making sure that arrangements for political accommodation that are developed and implemented at the whole entity level are consistent and fit with arrangements developed at the sub-entity level.

This framework can be used to analyze existing governance arrangements, map political interests, design options for political accommodation and support implementation of agreed options.

PROCESS component of the methodology

The process component of the methodology complements that focusing on governance arrangements presented above. It consists of a typology of four Strands for political accommodation. The four Strands, shown in Figure 2, are: (1) process design; (2) participation; (3) implementation modalities and (4) confidence-building measures.

Figure 2 – Four Strands for PROCESS arrangements

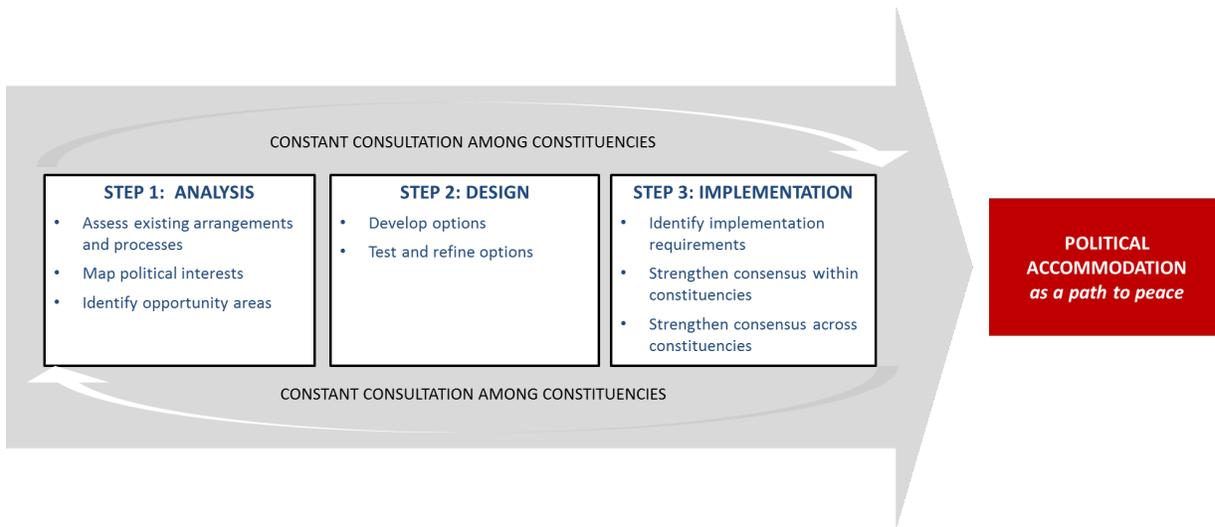


Similar to the governance framework, this process framework can be used to analyze existing process arrangements (e.g. an ongoing national dialogue), map political interests, design options for political accommodation and support implementation of agreed options.

Steps in applying the frameworks and tools for political accommodation

The third component of the political accommodation methodology is a series of steps to generate options for political accommodation. The three steps (Figure 3) are: analysis, design and implementation.

Figure 3 – Three steps to develop options for political accommodation



The first step in the process focuses on analysis of the context, people’s interests and the existing arrangements for political accommodation. In this step the governance and process frameworks are used to deconstruct existing arrangements and to identify how they have worked in practice. These frameworks also provide a template for gathering and mapping people’s political interests around specific strands or clusters of arrangements for political accommodation. This combined assessment of existing arrangements – including what has worked well or would need to be done differently – and the mapping of people’s interests provides a basis for exploring areas or opportunity for new arrangements for political accommodation. For example, many people may agree that some form of decentralization may assist in accommodating the interests of certain groups living in specific regions of the country; others may view changes in the executive as delivering the most promise for political accommodation.

Based on this analysis, the second step in the process is to develop options for political accommodation that include arrangements across several strands, whether that may be options for governance arrangements or options for political dialogue processes. This step is guided by the outcome of the analysis step. Here, the six- and four Strand frameworks provide a template for identifying arrangements

in different strands and, critically, the linkages between arrangements across strands. This step reflects one of the strong comparative advantages of the method: facilitating development of options for political accommodation that take into account the linkages *across* strands of governance arrangements or political dialogue processes.

The third step in using this method focuses on building consensus between people within specific constituencies and then also using common frameworks and sets of options to build consensus, where possible, between different constituencies. Here the options for political accommodation provide a range of possibilities for dialogue and potential agreement and moreover provide technical arrangements to guide dialogue away from polarized or rigid political positions. Importantly, the options developed and the process of discussion and consensus building can contribute to the political will which will be necessary for different people and their representatives to reach agreement on the ultimate arrangements for political accommodation.

5. Using the political accommodation approach in practice

Peacemaking and peacebuilding

The political accommodation approach presented here is designed to contribute to peacemaking and peacebuilding. There are several ways in which the approach can be used for these objectives.

First, the political accommodation approach provides the frameworks and tools to enable parties to armed conflict, political parties, civil society constituencies and peace practitioners to develop options for governance arrangements or for political dialogue processes. These options in turn can provide a more systematic and objective basis for dialogue and potential agreement. Second, the political accommodation approach can help mediators and other peace practitioners to illuminate areas of convergence and divergence between the interests of parties to peace negotiations or other dialogue processes. The governance and process frameworks of the methodology can help to summarize and communicate these areas of convergence and divergence. Third, by identifying potential opportunity areas and options for governance arrangements the political accommodation approach can provide incentives for parties to enter into dialogue as they will see the form future arrangements could take. Fourth, by helping to generate more options the political accommodation approach facilitates consensus building within and between constituencies. Fifth, in situations where there are multiple parts of a process or even separate political dialogue processes ongoing simultaneously the methodology can assist in identifying sequencing and linkages across the various processes or parts of the process.

Experiences from use in practice

The political accommodation approach as presented here has been used in practice in a number of contexts since 2007, including in Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan.

In Somalia the political accommodation approach has been used to support political and other representatives in exploring options for future relations between the Somali Federal Government and the emerging federal entities and interim administrations. It has also been used to illuminate options for future relations between the Government of Somaliland and the Somali Federal Government. In both instances the methodology and the resulting options opened a space for dialogue around technical arrangements which did not previously exist. The case of Somalia and Somaliland also highlighted the importance of approaches that can be used flexibly for different types of structure (and not only States) and that can provide the flexibility to develop asymmetric arrangements for governance across different levels.

In South Sudan the political accommodation approach has been used to explore options for governance at the national level and also at the level of the constituent states in the country. In the period following the independence of South Sudan in 2011 and in the context of the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan (2011) the approach provided a framework for exploring options for governance arrangements to feed into the process of reviewing the Transitional Constitution. The approach has also been used in South Sudan to support participation of women in political discourse and accommodation of their specific political interests. In this application, the governance framework and three steps enabled women's groups to develop and communicate their own options for improvements to governance arrangements. Lastly, the approach provided a tool for exploring arrangements for political accommodation across levels of governance (Dawkins and Gaere 2012) focusing on the interplay between governance arrangements at the national level and those at the level of the constituent states.

Unfortunately, in South Sudan the predictive capabilities of the theory were validated when internal conflict erupted in December 2013. One of the primary causes of the conflict was the failure to effectively accommodate the interests of South Sudanese people and groups in the arrangements for governance at national and sub-national levels.

In Sudan the political accommodation approach has been used for several years, initially to support generation of options for political accommodation following the national elections in 2010 (Mc Hugh 2010) and later to support exploration of future governance arrangements for the Sudan (Hilal et al.

2014) and for political dialogue processes. In this context, the methodology has been used by specific groups to develop their own arrangements for political accommodation, and also has been used by mediators to shape political dialogue processes. In the Sudan as in other contexts at various times some of the parties have not possessed the political will to accommodate the interests of others. This is a recurring challenge in situations of conflict and post-conflict transition when trust can be lacking between opposing constituencies. By helping the various parties explore more options, the method has helped to build political will within specific constituencies in the Sudan.

Also, in Sudan the hypotheses of the theory have been proven and the predictive capability has also been accurate. The less than effective accommodation of political interests through a series of peace agreements since 2005, including as a result of the lack of interlinkages between strands of governance and the failure to effectively implement specific arrangements, has diminished trust between parties to armed conflict and has made it more difficult to reach agreement on governance arrangements.

Across these contexts the intended audience has expressed appreciation for the simplicity and flexibility of the approach and for its focus on options rather than prescriptive solutions.

Other uses of the approach

In addition to its primary purpose of supporting development of options for political accommodation through governance arrangements and political dialogue processes as a means of peacemaking and peacebuilding, the political accommodation approach can also be used to explore arrangements for political and economic cooperation between entities (e.g. States) and also to explore the interface between religion and governance in specific contexts.

By adding a further set of six strands describing modalities for economic interaction to those in the governance framework, an expanded “6 + 6” framework can be used to shape arrangements for political and economic cooperation between people and political entities (e.g. States). The additional six dimension of economic interaction that have been used for this purpose are: macroeconomic arrangements; trade; financial sector; private sector development and investment; infrastructure and natural resource management. The expanded framework for political and economic cooperation (PEC) was used by South Sudan and Sudanese representation to shape arrangements for interaction between the two peoples and States during the period 2012 – 2013.¹²

¹² The framework and its application are described in: Conflict Dynamics International, *Shaping the Future: Prospects for Economic and Political Cooperation between South Sudan and the Sudan* (Cambridge, MA: Conflict Dynamics International, August 2013).

A further exploratory use of the method has focused on the interface between the core tenets of Islam, including those focused on conciliation and consensus, and the arrangements for governance that can reflect this intent of conciliation and consensus. For this purpose the political accommodation approach provides a natural set of frameworks of tools to explore the linkages between conciliation in religious texts and teachings, in spirit and in practice. An initial application of the approach for this purpose has shown promise for its potential to focus on a common objective of conciliation and yet for its focus on how to realize that objective in practice.

6. Conclusion

This paper presented in outline form a theory and method for political accommodation oriented towards peacemaking and peacebuilding. The theory draws on elements of consociational democracy, power-sharing theory and consensus democracy, among other theoretical constructs, to provide a more precise theory focused on mutual conciliation of people's political interests through multiple strands of governance arrangements and political dialogue processes. In addition, the theory is complemented by a three part method which facilitates the design and implementation of options for political accommodation and in this way makes more likely the effective use of the theory in practice.

The theory and method have evolved through iterations of conceptual development and practical application and yet there remain several important areas where the theory and method can be further refined. These areas for further research and development include: further consideration of the interplay between the processes and governance arrangements that can ensure effective political accommodation; additional research on the sub-strands that can provide further definition to the clusters of arrangements for political accommodation; further analyses of cases which had successful and unsuccessful experiences with the design and implementation of arrangements for political accommodation; etc.

Central to the success of political accommodation is the willingness of the people and representatives involved to achieve conciliation with the interest of others. The method presented here can contribute to building political will by illuminating more possibilities for agreement and also by facilitating consensus building within and between constituencies.

Finally, as presented here the political accommodation approach marks a new interpretation and application of consociationalism, one which breaks with the elite-focused approach of consociational democracy and power sharing and which reflects the realities of seeking to achieve conciliation of interests not only in theory but in practice in situations of contemporary armed conflict.

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