

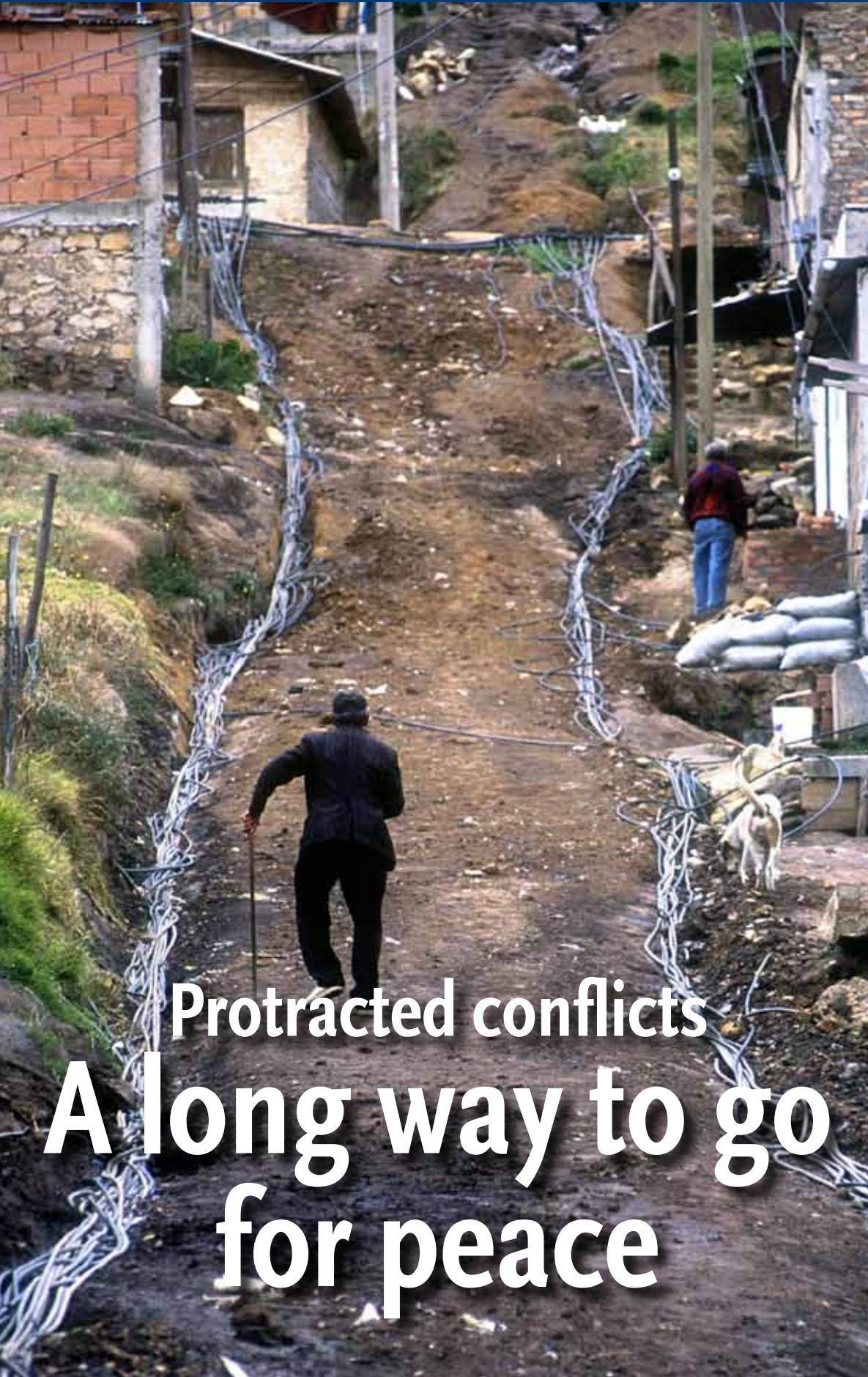
VOLUME 15

# *New Routes*

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A journal of  
peace research  
and action



## Protracted conflicts A long way to go for peace

PROTRACTED CONFLICTS:

**Issues or dynamics  
at stake?**

AFGHANISTAN:

**An extended struggle  
for state power**

**Western Sahara**

**– status and resources**

SUDAN AT THE POINT OF NO RETURN:

**Fears and hope for a  
conflict-ridden country**

ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE:

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civil war?**

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war – protracted,  
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**Active non-cooperation  
rather than passive  
acquiescence**

**Inspiring citizens'  
initiative for peace-  
building in Kenya**

**The road to Jaffna**



# Contents

- 3** PROTRACTED CONFLICTS:  
**Issues or dynamics at stake?**  
*Marcus Nilsson and Joakim Kreutz*
- 7** AFGHANISTAN:  
**An extended struggle for state power**  
*Anders Fänge*
- 10** Western Sahara  
– status and resources  
*Hans Corell*
- 14** SUDAN AT THE POINT OF NO RETURN:  
**Fears and hope for a conflict-ridden country**  
*Kristina Lundqvist*
- 17** ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE:  
**Honeymoon after civil war?**  
*Florian Krampe and Henning Melber*
- 21** The northern Uganda war  
– protracted, devastating and spreading  
*Ronald Atkinson*
- 24** COLOMBIAN PEACE COMMUNITIES:  
**Active non-cooperation rather than passive acquiescence**  
*Pedro Valenzuela*
- 27** Inspiring citizens' initiative for peacebuilding in Kenya  
*Paul van Tongeren*
- 30** The road to Jaffna  
*Anna Åkerlund*
- 31** News, Reviews and Resources

## NewRoutes

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## Protracted conflicts

**CAN YOU GET USED** to living with war? Probably, in the same way that you can somehow get used to living with physical pain, with constant stress, with disturbing noises. You get used to it, you bear with it in silence, because you have no other choice. You don't know of any alternative.

One thing is for sure: the surrounding world can "get used" to protracted conflict. The international community, the media, the aid organisations – they can all turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to suffering that does not have any news value. Protracted conflicts are often forgotten conflicts. In this issue of *New Routes* we throw light upon different types of protracted conflicts in different stages and in various parts of the world.

According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 13 of the 243 conflicts in the world since World War II have been active for at least 32 years. Marcus Nilsson and Joakim Kreutz in their analysis present the theory of "conflict issues" and "conflict dynamics".

One of the most forgotten conflicts in the world is that of Western Sahara, ongoing for 35 years between the same conflicting parties. The war in Afghanistan is of another character: much observed by the surrounding world and with shifting actors throughout the decades. Hans Corell and Anders Fänge, respectively, share their views and deep knowledge of these seats of war.

The majority of the wars in modern time are complex intrastate wars, fought between two or more conflicting parties, often across the borders to neighbouring countries. In his article, Ronald R. Atkinson describes the consequences of the propagation of the Lord's Resistance Army's attacks beyond northern Uganda, which thus is becoming a regional, rather than national, concern.

Eventually also protracted wars come to an end, in a cease-fire or peace agreement. Henning Melber and Florian Krampe picture the post-war situation in Angola and Mozambique, which both suffered from brutal civil wars with a complicated net of conflicting parties and power relations. Anna Åkerlund describes an everyday situation in Sri Lanka 18 months after the end of 26 years of war.

As you see, *New Routes* now takes the step into the four-colour world. On the back cover you can read more about the plans for technical renewal of the journal. Welcome with your comments on both the contents and appearance of *New Routes*!

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*Data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program shows that, out of the 243 conflicts in the world 1946-2010, 13 have been active for at least half of the time period. The academic discussion presents two approaches to the driving forces in protracted conflicts: conflict issues and conflict dynamics. Bearing in mind the devastating consequences and cost of these conflicts, it is of great interest to find means to define, prevent and settle them.*

Protracted conflicts:

## Issues or dynamics at stake?

Marcus Nilsson and Joakim Kreutz

Yet another attempt of ending the violence between Israelis and Palestinians seems to have hit a serious bump. The US initiative launched soon after President Obama's inauguration is in serious jeopardy, not least because of continued construction of Israeli settlements on the occupied territories. At the same time, the Palestinians are represented by a president whose term has elapsed, but where new elections have been repeatedly postponed. To further complicate matters, the winners of the latest Palestinian elections, Hamas, are excluded from the negotiations by the other involved parties due to their reluctance to recognise the state of Israel.

According to data from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), the conflict over the territory of Palestine has involved active combat in 58 of the 61 years since the state of Israel was proclaimed in 1948. Every false dawn of progress towards settling the dispute has suffered almost immediate setbacks. The two sides are divided along ethnic, religious, linguistic and economic lines, while the scarcity of water in the region adds an additional geostrategic challenge for peacemaking.

While Jews have for centuries ritually proclaimed "next year in Jerusalem" at Yom Kippur and Passover, Palestinians have defended their claims to the land since the League of Nations in 1922 encouraged the formation of a Jewish state in the region. Violence from both sides has targeted the civilian population, creating hundreds of thousands of refugees, with generations of Palestinians growing up in refugee camps as stateless citizens. Another effect of the violence has been the perception of security between the two sides as a zero-sum game, with Israeli and Arab communities currently physically divided

by the Israeli-constructed security wall. The Palestine situation, most will say, is the archetypical protracted conflict.

But what is 'protracted conflict'? Some claim that it is the issues at stake that make some conflicts protracted and more difficult to settle, while others suggest that it is conflict dynamics that makes some conflicts more challenging to resolve. These differences may seem cosmetic, but provide different insights for understanding how protracted conflicts can be identified, prevented, or settled.

### Characteristics and classification

Despite having been regularly used both in the academic and policy communities for decades, there is no consensus about how to define 'protracted conflict'. This concept usually labels conflicts that are particularly difficult to settle, but it is rarely specified why this is the case and how these cases differ from other, non-protracted, conflicts. Aspects commonly mentioned can be classified into two broad approaches: those that emphasise *conflict issues* and those that argue that *conflict dynamics* create protracted relations between the parties.

The approach emphasising issues focuses on whether the participants are willing to accept a compromise settlement, or if their aims are mutually exclusive. Rationalist argumentation suggests that the value of the issue at stake will determine the willingness of the parties to pay the costs of warfare and the reluctance to cede control to the competitors. This line of thought suggests that conflicts over, for example, resource-rich or geostrategically

important territories will become protracted, as the parties will be unwilling to back down. Geostrategic importance can include areas considered important for security concern, such as the Golan Heights at the Israel-Syria border, and of economic value, like ports and trade routes. Many long-lasting international disputes have this type of security-economic dimension, including for example Argentina-Chile, Iran-Iraq, and Russia-Georgia.

A similar view suggests that it is not the material aspects that specify when conflicts are protracted but the function that the conflict serves in the society it impacts. This approach argues that human interaction is a key issue for identifying protracted conflicts. In the words of Azar et al. (1978:50), these conflicts "involve whole societies and act as agents for defining the scope of



***The Israel/Palestine situation, most will say, is the archetypical protracted conflict.***

national identity and social solidarity". In effect, members of the opposing sides are perceived as incapable of having contact with one another. Evident examples here can be drawn from the perception of the right to land between migrants and the original population, such as tribal resistance to Bengali migration in North-East India.

A corresponding dynamic can be found in other types of identity-based segregation, including the perceived necessity for certain ethnic or regional communities to control the state appa-

ratus. An example of the latter is Chad, where “northerners” and “southerners” have competed for the presidency and dominance within the armed forces since the country became independent in 1960. Both these aspects, identity

like the IRA in Northern Ireland and the LTTE in Sri Lanka received important support from diasporas that generally were less open to compromise than local members of the respective society. Similarly, parties that depend on external support for the war effort will be more sensitive to demands from their backers. The parties of the Nicaraguan civil war in the 1980s, for example, were reluctant to open negotiations out of concern that this could be unpopular with their superpower allies.

Another aspect of limited human interaction in conflict focuses on the effect of geography. Mountains, forests and rivers can form natural borders between communities involved in conflict, and violence is likely to exacerbate these divisions. Existing interaction is likely to decrease when cross-communal contact becomes dangerous, and conflicts are often accompanied by forced or voluntary migration to make these communities more homogenous. Dur-

ing the India-Pakistan partition in 1947, millions of people migrated across the new borders to avoid inter-communal attacks. The current conflict in Iraq has changed the demographic distribution of Sunni and Shiite Muslims within the city of Baghdad into largely exclusive neighbourhoods.

Thus, conflict dynamics can by themselves increase societal divisions and this can, of course, also be used instrumentally by the belligerents. Conflict actors can claim ethnic discrimination or exaggerate the likelihood that the other party will attack civilians, thus making it easier to mobilise and keep fighters committed to the group. This makes them more likely to pursue extreme tactics such as suicide bombings, something that creates increased fear and further strengthens the division between the opposing sides.

### Identifying protracted conflicts

What do the empirics say about these claims? If issues are the main determining feature of a protracted conflict, we should expect different patterns in conflicts where parties are divided along

**Conflict actors can claim ethnic discrimination or exaggerate the likelihood that the other party will attack civilians.**

and strong differences in issue orientation, are commonly argued to be underlying factors for conflicts to become protracted.

The other approach to what makes conflicts protracted emphasises the role of conflict events in shaping societal divisions. It has been suggested that violence against civilians, long-term fighting, and subsequent large-scale refugee or exile communities make continued or renewed conflict more likely. Groups

PHOTO: P. RAYMOND/EAPPI



*The situation in Israel/Palestine is one of the most evident examples of protracted conflicts. Can there be peace in a country where the conflicting parties are separated by an eight meter tall concrete wall?*



identity lines or have indivisible goals. If dynamics of violence is what make a conflict protracted, we should expect to see a specific behaviour in the most long-lasting cases.

At present, UCDP has identified 243 different conflicts around the globe since the end of World War II. The majority of these are intrastate conflicts, almost equally divided between conflict over government power (89 cases) and separatist goals (88). There have also been 45 interstate conflicts and 21 so-called extrastate (colonial) conflicts. Figure 1 shows the characteristics of duration for these different conflict types.

Most of the protracted conflicts in the world since World War II have been intrastate. Such conflicts last on average three times as long as wars between states and three to four years longer than colonial wars. When interpreting the duration of colonial wars, there are reasons to be somewhat cautious. As the data covers the post-1945 period there is a risk that early years of anti-colonial struggle are missed. There is, however, no reason to assume that colonial wars are systematically longer than civil wars. Most early anti-colonial movements consisted of short-lived local uprisings rather than long-running warfare. A more devastating effect of colonialism is how many of the longest civil wars, such as in Angola, Cambodia, Laos, and Mozambique, were fought between actors that had cooperated during a preceding colonial conflict. This suggests that their goals extended beyond ousting the colonial power and also included defeating domestic rivals.

In order to get a more nuanced view of how issues and dynamics influence the protraction of conflicts, it is beneficial to start looking at individual conflicts and their characteristics.

Table 1 lists conflicts that have been active for at least 50 per cent of the years

Figure 1 Active years; types of conflict, 1946-2009

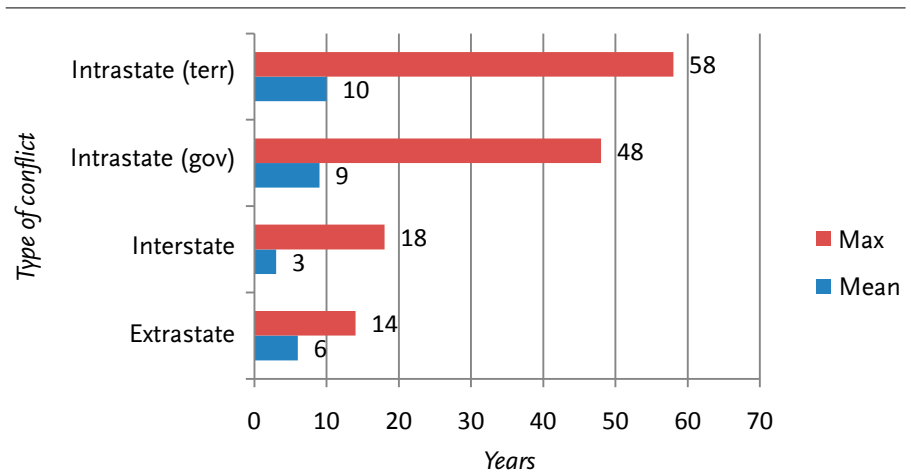


Table 1 Conflicts with most conflict-years 1946-2009

	Conflict	Total Conflict years	First year	Last year
1	Israel (Palestine)	58	1949	2009
2	Burma (Karen)	56	1949	2009
3	Philippines (gov)	48	1946	2009
4	Colombia (gov)	46	1964	2009
5	Burma (gov)	45	1948	1994
6	Burma (Shan)	42	1959	2009
7	Philippines (Mindanao)	38	1970	2009
8	Chad (gov)	35	1966	2009
9	Guatemala (gov)	34	1949	1995
10	Burma (Kachin)	34	1949	1992
11	Uganda (gov)	33	1971	2009
12	Burma (Arakan)	32	1948	1994
13	Iraq (Kurdistan)	32	1961	1996
36	India-Pakistan	18	1948	2003
50	Portugal (Angola)	14	1961	1974

be located within eight different countries. Furthermore, all cases in the list, except Colombia and the Philippines (Mindanao), have experienced at least one temporary period of peace, suggesting that it is possible to terminate armed activity even in long-running conflicts.

Drawing on the information presented here, what can be deducted regarding the importance of issues for identifying protracted conflicts? We can see that one issue that supposedly would provide strong incentives to fight, independence from colonialism, has not substantially led to longer conflicts. Among intrastate conflicts, a similar finding

can be identified. Even though seven of the worst conflicts are separatist by nature, the other six are about competition over government. This is surprising, given that claims for independence

or autonomy are often linked with identity factors, such as historical, ethnic, or linguistic differences in a country. It is, of course, possible that conflicts over government power take place between competing identity groups. This has been a prominent feature in the civil wars in Chad, Uganda, Afghanistan, and to some extent, Guatemala.

Most of these conflicts can also be viewed through the ideological prism of the Cold War. The wars in Burma, the Philippines, Colombia, Guatemala and Cambodia involved communist rebels, who in some form received support from the Soviet Union or China, while the governments received US support. In fact, the Cold War rivalry influenced several territorial conflicts as well, including Iraq, Palestine and in several Burmese conflicts. The PLO was in its early years influenced by socialism and argued for the "unification of all revolutionary movements".

It is possible that actors made ideological claims in their goals because of



**Members of the opposing sides are perceived as incapable of having contact with one another.**

since the end of World War II, as well as the longest interstate and extrastate conflicts. It is worth noting that there have not been more than thirteen conflicts of such long duration, and that these can

the willingness of the Cold War superpowers to support ideological allies. As the support made the belligerents better equipped to fight long wars and rewarded uncompromising positions, the protracted nature of these conflicts can be a consequence of the ways these wars were fought. A common denominator for all wars listed in Table 1 is that the government side, and often the rebel side as well, engaged in widespread abuses of the civilian population. This has of course accentuated the number of refugees, hardened the attitudes of survivors, and created difficulties for former victims to reconcile with their opponents in cases where a settlement has been reached.

### **What's hidden in snow ...**

The end of the Cold War in the early 1990s had a profound effect on the global prevalence of armed conflict. Even though many observers were shocked by the new conflicts that erupted during this process, including in Europe, they were relatively quickly settled. The peacemaking did not end there. 19 of the 50 longest lasting conflicts since World War II ended between 1988 and 1998. In comparison, only one ended before this decade (Portugal/Angola), and six other conflicts have ended since then.

What does this increase in peacemaking tell us about the issues and dynamics of protracted conflicts? A pertinent observation is that hardly any of these conflicts ended with a military

and rebels involved in conflict, making them less able to continue warfare. One example of this is the conflict in Guatemala that was settled in the mid-1990s after more than three decades of fighting. The rebel movement URNG was a coalition of leftist guerrillas with a strong indigenous Mayan support base. As external support dwindled, the move towards a peaceful resolution of the conflict progressed through talks on human rights, indigenous rights, and socio-economic and agrarian reforms. As the US, having been the main supporter of the government, provided support for the negotiations together with the UN and several European and American states, the peace process gained the necessary momentum to overcome minor setbacks. A UN mission helped observe the demobilisation of the former guerrillas during the implementation of the settlement in the late 1990s.

### **The future generation of protracted conflicts**

After successful settlement of many new conflicts during the 1990s as well as many protracted disputes, the first decade of the 21st century shows a somewhat different picture. Of the 36 conflicts active in the world in 2009, 25 have already been ongoing for a relatively long period of time. Indeed, 8 of the 13 longest conflicts from Table 1 are still active with few signs of settlement. Is it impossible to end these conflicts and is there a risk that newly started conflicts will continue for the coming 50 years, like the violence in Israel/Palestine?


Depending on whether the protraction of conflicts is considered as issue-based or a consequence of conflict dynamics, different aspects of conflict resolution will be relevant. If issues are the key, then the growing involvement of many countries in the so-called "war on terror" is worrying. The conflicts generally considered part of this campaign all include issues that are commonly seen as causes of protracted conflict. In Afghanistan, Algeria, Iraq and Philippines (Mindanao), belligerents are divided along ethnic and religious

identity lines with limited interaction across communities. Previous experience indicates that solely military means will not provide a long-term solution of these conflicts.

If, on the other hand, conflict dynamics are the key to why conflicts become



***Existing interaction is likely to decrease when cross-communal contact becomes dangerous.***

protracted, there is a need to focus particularly on the more recent outbreaks of violence. Active peace efforts in, for example, Pakistan and Yemen can end conflicts before a dynamic of revenge and repression has been established, thereby preventing the development of a new generation of protracted conflicts in the 21st century. 



***Of the 36 conflicts active in the world in 2009, 25 have already been ongoing for a relatively long period of time.***

victory but through negotiations, suggesting that even seemingly indivisible issues could be open for compromise. This was made possible because of the change in the global context that created opportunities for negotiations rather than continued warfare. The international community and the United Nations were willing and able to become more involved in peacemaking efforts, including as mediators and through post-conflict assistance.

A second observation is that the Soviet Union, the US and China became less willing to support governments

1 A Swedish diplomat, who during 1987-1994 was head of what was then called the War Equipment Inspection (now the Inspection for strategic products), the Swedish agency that controls all arms export.

2 The quotations in this paragraph are free translations of Hirdman's text in the publication from the Foreign Ministry.

*In many countries that are ravaged by protracted conflict, there is one war ongoing for years, or even decades, between two opposing parties. They might be equal or unequal in strength, but it is the same combatants, locked in a seemingly never-ending struggle.*

*Another type of protracted conflict is a lengthy period of fighting but with different actors in the arena. Periods of relative calm are more or less certain to be interrupted by new outbreaks of violence. What may seem to be one extended war tends in reality to be a series of violent conflicts around a number of complicated issues. An example of the latter is Afghanistan, where an understanding of the background and underlying factors is of vital importance in order to comprehend the present situation.*

Afghanistan:

## An extended struggle for state power

Anders Fänge

The wars in Afghanistan appear to have no end. The present cycle started in 1978 and has since then gone through several stages. First there was the mujahedin war against the communist regime in Kabul and the Soviet occupation up to 1992, followed by a short but devastating civil war between the different victorious mujahedin groups. Then, in the mid 1990s, came the Taliban and the war between them and the remaining mujahedin factions, the so called Northern Alliance.

For a while, it looked as if the Taliban would conquer the whole country, but in a dramatic turn after the events in New York on 11 September 2001, the United States, supported by a coalition of mainly other western governments, intervened, and the Taliban collapsed and was replaced by the Karzai government. A large international assistance effort got underway and a short period of relative peace followed. Then again, in 2006, it became clear that the Taliban had regrouped and was waging an increasingly efficient insurgency war, first in the southern and eastern provinces and in the subsequent years expanding across the west and the north. The number of international military troops, mainly US, supporting the Karzai government was increased and by 2010 has reached a total of approximately 140,000.

Of course there are immediate reasons for the wars. Political actors in Afghanistan, the neighbouring countries and world powers, have taken decisions, based on ideology, political beliefs, and a perception of being threatened or simply an urge for might and money. Actions have been pursued, often in a

violent and biased fashion that have resulted, not only in deaths and anguish, but also in other political actors deciding to take counter-measures in an equally violent and one-sided manner, and thus the wars have raged. However, looking back in history beyond 1978 and behind the games of politics and vested interests, it is possible to distinguish a few primary factors as to why Afghanistan is and has been so victimised by conflict.

### Obstacles to state power

The fundamental issue is about the state, or rather, the attempts to build a state. Since the birth of Afghanistan as a nation in the mid 18th century, Afghan rulers have tried to extend their control over the whole country and its people. In short, the rulers have tried to build a state in a more or less convincing way. A few of them made some progress, most of them failed, and all of them had to deal with several very severe hurdles.

First of all, Afghanistan is a poor country. The climate is arid, arable land covers only roughly 12 per cent of the country, mostly situated in narrow valleys, irrigated by streams running from the melting snow on the high peaks, and the rest is mountains and deserts. The great majority of the population are farmers, earning their living from subsistence farming. Even today, it is estimated that around 80 per cent of the Afghan people earn their income from activities related to agriculture.

Secondly, the country is landlocked, with a difficult topography and few roads, leaving vast tracts of the country almost inaccessible, resulting in serious obstacles for communication, trade and

economic development – as well as for the establishment of a national state administration.

Thirdly, the multitude of ethnic groups that inhabit the country, religious and tribal leaders, large land owners and other local and regional power groups have a tradition of autonomy and resistance against anything that can be perceived as a central authority, especially if the emerging state is perceived as being imposed or supported by foreign non-Afghan, and even worse, non-Muslim, powers. Historically, this has been particularly noticeable among the Pashtun tribes that not only constitute the largest minority (estimated to around 45 per cent of the population), but also are the group that, with a few exceptions, has delivered the amirs, the kings and later the presidents of Afghanistan.

Religion has an important part in this aversion against central control in that the politics of state building have been seen by the conservative and mainly rural ulema (clergy) as imported from western countries and thus portrayed as being against Islam. In many ways this tension can be described as a confrontation between modernism and traditionalism, between an increasingly educated mainly urban elite and a more conservative, mainly rural, population. The result has been a number of civil wars, often with one or several of the warring parties supported by foreign powers.

Fourthly, Afghanistan is situated south of Central Asia, west of the Indian sub-continent and east of the Persian Gulf, Iran and the Levant. It is a strategic location which has been

called “a cross-road of cultures”, but which equally could be described as a cross-road of armies. In earlier historical times, the area was traversed and temporarily ruled by conquerors like Alexander, the Arabs who brought Islam, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane. And in the 17th and 18th centuries, the region was squeezed between the Moghuls in India, the Saffavids in Persia, and the Uzbek emirate in Central Asia, while in the 19th century the European imperialist powers entered the scene in and around Afghanistan.

Russia pressed southwards over the Central Asian steppes, and the British Empire moved up towards the north-western parts of the Indian sub-continent, and in between was Afghanistan. It was named “the Great Game” and was essentially about the British perception of the Russian advance as a threat against its supremacy in India. With the intention of stalling the Russians, Great Britain adopted a “forward policy” and made two attempts to conquer Afghanistan. The first war, 1839-1842, ended in a catastrophic British defeat, while the second war, 1878-1880, resulted in a military stalemate and yet another British political setback in the sense that they did not succeed in conquering Afghanistan.

Thus, looking back over history, the conclusion is that Afghanistan simply has not been able to afford a state like the ones that were developed in Europe. The poverty and the difficult terrain of the closed in country, the independent-minded ethnic groups and tribes with their repugnance against any central authority, and the wars against foreign invaders that ruined the country meant that the Afghan rulers were not able to muster the needed resources and capital. Historical records as well as the statistics from more modern times show clearly that the revenue collected by the Afghan amirs and governments was not enough to cover the costs even for an essential civil administration, not to mention judiciary, law enforcement and armed forces.

### **The state of Abdul Rahman**

However, a turning point occurred after the second British-Afghan war, when Great Britain abandoned its “forward policy” and decided to support the Afghan amir, Abdul Rahman (1880-1901), with financial subsidies and weapons in order to enable him to extend his control over the country. Russia tacitly

agreed, and hence Afghanistan became a buffer between the two empires and, furthermore, it became possible for the Afghan ruler to seriously begin a state building process.

The British subsidies are estimated to have been to close to 40 per cent of Abdul Rahman’s income, and they allowed him, contrary to previous Afghan rulers, to build a strong army and police force which he used ruthlessly to subdue the unruly Pashtun tribes, other ethnic groups and rural power holders. During his roughly 20 years reign, Rahman’s strive for absolute power caused forty violent conflicts, including ten major rebellions, all of which he crushed, partly through brutal force and partly through applying “divide and rule” tactics. In addition, he brought the ulema under control and established a rudimentary but efficient state administration.

Abdul Rahman laid the foundation for a modern Afghan state, but he never finished the task. No efforts were made to build an educational system, nor infrastructure, since the amir was of the opinion that any such improvements would threaten the independence of Afghanistan. Regrettably, it also meant continued isolation, less possibilities for trade and economic development, and consequently less domestic income for the emerging state. When Abdul Rahman died in 1901, the Pashtun tribes, the ulema and other rural power groups were weakened but still representing forces to be taken into account.

In the 20th century, the struggle between the state and the mainly rural power groups, between modernism and traditionalism continued. The Afghan rulers never succeeded in establishing a state that was independently based on domestic revenues. Instead, it became a client state reliant on foreign support in the form of subsidies, military assistance and development aid, with the rulers adopting a policy of using the tension between the different powers on the international stage to their own advantage. The foreign support – easy money as it was – also contributed to the fact that Afghan governments never made any serious efforts to increase taxes and other internal income. The result was a highly centralised state that was satisfied with advancing modernity in urban centres, where an educated middle class slowly started to emerge, while the presence of a central authority in the rural areas was largely nominal. The great majority of Afghans in the countryside continued to live with almost the same mind-set and the same semi-independent local power structures as in previous centuries.

The 20th century saw altogether thirteen heads of state in Afghanistan. Of these, seven were murdered and five were forced to leave their post and flee as a result of rebellions, coups d’état or foreign interventions. During the same time period, Afghan governments on three different occasions tried to radically extend the authority of the state through introducing ambitious and wide-



PHOTO: CHRISTIAN AID/ACT INTERNATIONAL

*The most severe drought in a decade struck Afghanistan in 2009, thus fuelling a grave food crisis. Since 2001, consecutive years of drought have led to a significant impoverishment of the poorest families.*





*Afghanistan is a multiethnic society. The largest group, the Pashtuns, comprise somewhat less than two-fifths of the population, followed by the Tajiks that account for some one-fourth and Hazara nearly one-fifth.*

ranging national reform programmes. The motivations, politics and ideologies behind these undertakings were diverse, but they have a couple of factors in common. Firstly, they tried to convert Afghanistan into a more modern country within a short time period and, secondly, the reform programmes caused armed rebellions among the rural population. The first attempt took place in 1928, when a popular rebellion against King Amanullah's reform programme led to his abdication. The second was the war 1978-1992 against the communist government and the Soviet occupation that ended with the collapse of the Najib regime and the mujahedin take-over of Kabul. The third is the present war between the Taliban insurgency and the Afghan government, headed by Hamid Karzai and supported by an international coalition led by the USA.

The motivation, politics and loyalties behind these three uprisings are not identical. The revolt against King Amanullah in 1928 was mainly carried through by the eastern Pashtun tribes and the traditional ulema, while the mujahedin war in the 1980s had more of its political leadership among the modern radical Islamist movement, which emerged at the universities in Afghanistan in the 1960s and 70s. Finally, the Taliban also represents a radical Islamic ideology, but of a more rudimentary and traditional kind.

However, all three insurgencies have shared the common thread that they

have been led mainly by groups and individuals claiming religious and, to some extent, national credentials and that the reform attempts by the state have been seen as foreign intrusions threatening Islamic values. The governments pushing for reforms, and their allies, have been branded as un-believers and traitors with the ultimate goal to destroy the religion of Islam and the independence of Afghanistan. It was only during the reign of King Zahir Shah, and then especially in the 1950s and 60s, that the government succeeded with a number of reforms without causing strong reactions, most probably because they were carried out in a limited and careful manner, mainly focusing on urban centres and at a slow pace.

### **The present conflict**

The most fundamental problem in the present conflict lies with the Afghan government and its international allies, or more precisely, in the failure of the state building process that started after the US intervention in 2001.

Immediately after the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001, the international community or rather the US, made two fundamental mistakes that would have far-reaching damaging consequences in the following years. The first was its ethnocentric decision to impose a western state model and political organisation on Afghanistan, ignoring the fact that it took the nation-states in Europe centuries of economic,

social and political development to reach a democratic system with functioning institutions, and that Afghanistan is a predominantly traditional society where a more down-to-earth and less complicated political system would have been more appropriate and sustainable.

The second fundamental mistake was that warlords, commanders and other local strongmen, who were widely unpopular and who had been chased off by the Taliban in the 1990s, were brought back in by the US military to be the boots on the ground in the war against the Taliban and Al Qaida. They were given huge amounts of dollars yet without any accountability whatsoever, and then allowed to continue in official positions both in the central government and in the regions, often supported by the international military forces. Thus, the basis was laid for a weak and corrupted political and administrative system – especially with regard to local governance, judiciary and law enforcement – which in turn facilitated the return of the Taliban.

At the time of writing, in October 2010, the debate centres mainly around two issues: firstly, the Karzai government's attempt to start peace talks with the Taliban and, secondly, the transition of the responsibility for the war against the insurgents from the international military to the Afghan security forces. The latter appears to be taking place as President Obama, who is nervously judging his prospect in the next US presidential elections in 2012 and who sees that the war is not going his way, has announced that the US military will start to withdraw from Afghanistan in July 2011. Consequently, the dominant perception among Afghans is that the international military will have left in a few years time and the government of Hamid Karzai will be left on its own. And no one, except possibly Karzai himself, really believes that he will manage that.

One should not try to predict the future in a country like Afghanistan, mainly because most prophecies in the past have proven to be wrong. However, it is clear that the conflict between state and traditional society in Afghanistan is far from over, and the way things seem to go, it might be useful to remember the Taliban commander who some years ago said: "You westerners have your watches, but we Taliban have the time." 🌿

*One of the most forgotten and protracted conflicts in the world is the situation in Western Sahara, sometimes referred to as Africa's last colony. The issue has been dealt with in numerous resolutions by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council. The parties involved must find a solution. But they need the support of other actors. The international community, and particularly the European Commission, must live up to their responsibility and support the UN efforts towards a solution to the dispute.*

## Western Sahara — status and resources

*Hans Corell*

### **The United Nations Trusteeship system and Western Sahara**

The United Nations Trusteeship system was established through the UN Charter in 1945. Article 73 of the Charter lays down the fundamental principles applicable to Non-Self-Governing Territories. Members of the United Nations (UN) who assumed responsibilities for the administration of these territories have thereby recognised the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount, and have accepted as a sacred trust the obligation to promote to the utmost the well-being of the inhabitants of these territories.

One such Non-Self-Governing Territory is Western Sahara in north-west Africa, bordered by Morocco, Mauritania and Algeria. Western Sahara was administered by Spain until 1976. In that year Spain relinquished its duties as administering power, and Morocco and Mauritania affirmed their claim to the territory. This claim was opposed by the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente Polisario). In 1979, Mauritania renounced all claims to Western Sahara.

The United Nations has been seeking a settlement in Western Sahara since the withdrawal of Spain in 1976 and the ensuing fighting between Morocco and the Frente Polisario. In 1979, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) also became active in seeking a peaceful solution of the conflict.

The question of Western Sahara has been dealt with both by the General Assembly, as a question of decolonisation, and by the Security Council, as a ques-

tion of peace and security. The Council was first seized of the matter in 1975, and in its resolutions 377 (1975) of 22 October 1975 and 379 (1975) of 2 November 1975 it requested the Secretary-General to enter into consultations with the parties. Since 1988, in particular, when Morocco and Frente Polisario agreed, in principle, to the settlement proposals that the Secretary-General of the UN and the Chairman of the OAU had elaborated,<sup>1</sup> the political process aiming at a peaceful settlement of the question of Western Sahara has been on the agenda of the Council.

On 29 April 1991, the Security Council decided to establish the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).<sup>2</sup> The implementation plan provided for a transitional period during which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General would have sole and exclusive responsibility over all matters relating to the referendum in which the people of Western Sahara would choose between independence and integration with Morocco. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees would carry out a repatriation programme for eligible Western Saharan voters living outside the territory. The transitional period was to begin with the coming into effect of a ceasefire on 6 September 1991 and end with the proclamation of the results of the referendum.

According to the settlement plan, the referendum should have taken place

in January 1992. However, it was not possible to proceed in keeping with the original timetable because of resumed hostilities.

Since then efforts have been made over the years to implement the agreement. The Secretary-General and his Special Representatives have continued efforts to find compromise solutions acceptable to both parties. This



***The Secretary-General and his Special Representatives have continued efforts to find compromise solutions acceptable to both parties.***

process has required a number of revisions to the implementation plan and the timetable. The primary function of MINURSO at that time was limited to verifying the ceasefire and cessation of hostilities.

In early 1997, the Secretary-General intensified the examination of the main contentious issues, including in a series of direct talks between the parties, held under the auspices of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy. By September of the same year, the Secretary-General reported that all the agreements reached during the talks had taken effect.

In December 1997, the Secretary-General restarted the identification process which had been suspended. This process was completed, but the parties continued to hold divergent views on some crucial aspects of the implementation plan. The Secretary-Gen-

eral, through his Special Representative and later his Personal Envoy, continued consultations with the parties to seek a reconciliation of these views and to explore ways and means to achieve an early, durable and agreed resolution of their dispute over Western Sahara.

There have been some positive developments in recent years, in particular following UN-sponsored talks since 2007. The latest meeting was held in February 2010, but there is still no solution of the core substantive issues.

### Status of Western Sahara under international law

In 1963 Spanish Sahara, which had been a Spanish protectorate since 1884, was included in the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories under Chapter XI of the UN Charter.<sup>3</sup> Spain assumed its role as administering power, and the General Assembly reaffirmed that the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples<sup>4</sup> was applicable to Spanish/Western Sahara.

On 14 November 1975, a Declaration of Principles on Western Sahara was concluded in Madrid between Spain, Morocco and Mauritania ("the Madrid Agreement"), whereby the powers and responsibilities of Spain, as the administering Power of the Territory, were transferred to a temporary tripartite administration. The Madrid Agreement did not transfer sovereignty over the territory, nor did it confer upon any of the signatories the status of an admin-

istering power; Spain alone could not transfer that authority unilaterally. The transfer of the administration of the territory to Morocco and Mauritania in 1975 did not affect the international status of Western Sahara as a Non-Self-Governing Territory.

On 26 February 1976, Spain informed the Secretary-General that as of that date it had terminated its presence in Western Sahara and relinquished its responsibilities over the territory, thus leaving it in fact under the administration of both Morocco and Mauritania in their respective controlled areas. Following the withdrawal of Mauritania from the territory in 1979, Morocco has been the sole administrator of the Territory of Western Sahara. Morocco, however, is not listed as the administering Power of the Territory in the United Nations list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. The argument can be made that Western Sahara in reality is occupied by Morocco.

### Mineral resources in Western Sahara

In January 2002, in my capacity as Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and the Legal Counsel of the UN, I delivered a legal opinion relating to mineral resources in Western Sahara. The opinion was transmitted to the President of the Security Council in a letter dated 29 January 2002.<sup>5</sup>



## A prominent renewable resource in Western Sahara is fishing.

What the members of the Council had asked for was my opinion on "the legality in the context of international law, including relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations, and

agreements concerning Western Sahara, of actions allegedly taken by the Moroccan authorities consisting in the offering and signing of contracts with foreign companies for the exploration of mineral resources in Western Sahara."

The Government of Morocco provided me with information pertaining to two contracts, concluded in October 2001. They concerned oil-reconnaissance and evaluation activities in areas offshore Western Sahara. One of the contracts was between the Moroccan Office National de Recherches et d'Exploitations Pétrolières (ONAREP) and the United States oil company Kerr McGee du Maroc Ltd. The other was between ONAREP and the French oil company TotalFinaElf E&P Maroc.

In order to be able to determine the legality of the contracts that were concluded by Morocco offshore Western Sahara it was necessary to analyse the status of the Territory of Western Sahara and the status of Morocco in relation to the Territory. Furthermore, it was necessary to analyse the principles of



PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARTINE PERRET

*A team from the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) pass camels as they conduct a ceasefire patrol and monitor for illegal movements near the border with Mauritania.*



international law governing mineral resource activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories. In this analysis, it was also necessary to examine provisions of the UN Charter, General Assembly resolutions pertaining to decolonisation in general, and economic activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories in particular. Needless to say, we also had to carefully analyse agreements concerning the status of Western Sahara.

With respect to the law applicable to mineral resource activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories, an analysis was made of Article 73 of the UN Charter. The conclusion was that the interests of the inhabitants of these territories are paramount.

Of particular interest were the General Assembly resolutions relating to the question of implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. These resolutions called upon the administering powers to ensure that all economic activities in the Non-Self-Governing Territories under

their administration did not adversely affect the interests of the peoples of such territories, but were instead directed towards assisting them in the exercise of their right to self-determination.

These resolutions also contained provisions designed to protect the “inalienable rights” of the peoples of those territories to their natural resources, and to establish and maintain control over the future development of those resources. The need to protect the peoples of Non-Self-Governing Territories from exploitation and plundering by foreign economic interests was also addressed. A distinction was made between economic activities that are detrimental to the peoples of these territories and those directed at benefiting them. The main issue identified was whether the principle of “permanent sovereignty” prohibits any activities related to natural resources undertaken by an administering power in a Non-Self-Governing Territory, or only those which are undertaken in disregard of

the needs, interests and benefits of the people of that territory.

The question became whether mineral resource activities in a Non-Self-Governing Territory by an administering power are illegal as such, or only if conducted in disregard of the needs and interests of the people of that territory. An examination of the relevant provisions of the Charter of the UN, General Assembly resolutions, the case law of the International Court of Justice and the practice of States led me to the conclusion that such activities would be illegal only in the latter situation.

Where resource exploitation activities are conducted in Non-Self-Governing Territories for the benefit of the peoples of those territories, they are considered compatible with the Charter obligations of the administering power and in conformity with the General Assembly resolutions and the principle of “permanent sovereignty over natural resources” enshrined therein.

The main clause of the final sentence of the legal opinion constitutes a very



PHOTO: UN PHOTO/EVAN SCHNEIDER

*Western Sahara is a neglected conflict. Humanitarian assistance is decreasing, there is little media attention, and lack of will on the part of the international community to find a solution along the lines that the UN has outlined.*

clear message with respect to the legality of the activities in question: “[I]f further exploration and exploitation activities were to proceed in disregard of the interests and wishes of the people of Western Sahara, they would be in violation of the principles of international law applicable to mineral resource activities in Non-Self-Governing Territories.” From this sentence follows that Morocco would have to engage in proper consultations with persons authorised to represent the people of Western Sahara before such activities would be allowed.<sup>6</sup>

### Other resources

As I observed in an address delivered in Pretoria in December 2008,<sup>7</sup> the material analysed in the process of preparing the legal opinion had led me to the conclusion that what is said in the legal opinion about mineral resources applies also to other resources, be they renewable or non-renewable.

A prominent renewable resource in Western Sahara is fishing. An important question is therefore how the revenues from the fishing in the waters off Western Sahara benefit the people of the territory.

In 2006, the European Commission concluded a Fisheries Partnership Agreement with Morocco. That agreement applies in the “Moroccan fishing zones”, which is said to mean the waters falling within “the sovereignty or jurisdiction of the Kingdom of Morocco” (Article 2). The expression “or jurisdiction” refers to the Moroccan Exclusive Economic Zone. It is obvious that it is also used to indicate the waters belonging to Western Sahara, as there is no distinction made in the agreement with respect to the waters adjacent to Western Sahara.

It is clear that any jurisdiction over those waters is subject to the limitations that follow from the rules on self-determination, which means that the Commission has an obligation to ascertain that the people of Western Sahara had been consulted, had accepted the agreement and the manner in which the profits from the activity was to benefit them. An examination of the Agreement actually leads to a different conclusion. Let me reiterate what I said in this context in Pretoria:

“The Protocol to the Agreement refers to ‘Morocco’s resources’ (Article 4). With respect to the financial contribution, the Protocol says that subject to

Article 6 of the Protocol ‘the Moroccan authorities shall have full discretion regarding the use to which this financial contribution is put’. [...]

The protocol also mentions ‘the Moroccan fishing industry’ (Article 8). The Annex mentions the ‘Moroccan Atlantic zone’ (Chapter III), ‘Moroccan seamen’ (Chapter VII) and ‘Moroccan ports’ (Chapters VIII B and X). In Appendix 4 the limits of Moroccan fishing zones are indicated. Apart from some small-scale fishing between 34° 18’ N and 35° 48’ N off the coast of Morocco, the rest is indicated by ‘The entire Atlantic’ (apart from a limited area) for tuna fishing and ‘South of 29° 00’ for demersal fishing and industrial pelagic fishing. What does ‘South of 29° 00’ mean? A tiny area southwards to 27°-28° N where the waters of Western Sahara commence, or all the waters southwards to where the waters of Mauretania meet at about 21° N?”<sup>8</sup>

In all the pages of the agreement there is not one word about the fact that Morocco’s “jurisdiction” is limited by the international rules on self-determination. It is obvious that an agreement of this kind that does not make a distinction between the waters adjacent to Western Sahara and the waters adjacent to the territory of Morocco violates international law.


The fisheries agreement is now (October 2010) up for a renewal. It has been suggested to me that the European Commission is of the opinion that it is for Morocco to see to it that the agreement is implemented in a manner that the interests of the Saharawi are taken into consideration. In view of the circumstances, in particular the political dispute over many years between Morocco and the Frente Polisario, this position is simply not acceptable. An honourable actor in the international arena must demonstrate a higher standard. This applies in particular to Europe where actions by States should be based on the Charter of the UN and modern treaties on human rights, such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

As it appears from the foregoing, some of the provisions of the existing fisheries agreement do not meet the legal standards that one would expect from Europe of today.

### Concluding remarks

It is important that a solution to the dispute over Western Sahara can be found. The talks will hopefully bear fruit. But in order to find a solution it is imperative that other actors do not behave in a manner that in fact risks undermining the efforts by the UN to find a solution. A particular responsibility rests with the members of the European Commission and in particular Spain. By relinquishing its “sacred trust” in 1975 Spain bears a heavy responsibility for the existing situation.

As I suggested in Pretoria, the business community can also make a contribution to the search for a solution of the situation by acting in conformity with the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility.<sup>9</sup>

Finally, let me also in this context reiterate that I have no other interest in this matter than the rule of law and that the Member States of the United Nations respect the norms that the Organisation itself has established. The legal opinion and the views expressed in this article are the result of my siding with the law to the best of my understanding. 

1 UN Doc. S/21360.

2 Resolution 690 (1991) and UN Doc. S/22464, containing an implementation plan and a timetable.

3 UN Doc. A/5514, annex III.

4 General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV).

5 UN doc. S/2002/161.

6 As was done by the United Nations in East Timor with respect to the so-called Timor Gap Treaty. See UN Doc. S/2002/161, para. 20.

7 The legality of exploring and exploiting natural resources in Western Sahara. Address at a Conference in Pretoria in 2008 hosted by the South African Department of Foreign Affairs and the University of Pretoria. In: Multilateralism and International Law with Western Sahara as a Case Study. Ed. N. Botha, M. Olivier and D. van Tonder. University of South Africa Press (2010) (p. 231-247).

8 In the FAO Statistics the minimum latitude for Western Sahara is 20° N and the maximum latitude is 27° N. Correspondingly, the minimum latitude for Morocco is 27° N. The fact that fishing takes place in the waters off Western Sahara was confirmed by Commissioner Borg in an answer to Parliamentary questions on 9 April 2008. E-1073/2008. See <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getAllAnswers.do?reference=E-2008-1073&language=IT>

9 Op. cit. in note 7, pages 243-245.

*In September of this year, Dr. Francis M. Deng visited Uppsala, Sweden, at the invitation of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, to give the Dag Hammarskjöld Lecture 2010 on the theme Genocide Prevention – A Challenge of Constructive Management of Diversity. New Routes had the opportunity to interview Dr. Deng, who gave a background to and analysis of the present situation and also shared his views on Sudan's future after the upcoming referenda.*

## Sudan at the point of no return: **Fears and hopes for a conflict-ridden country**

*Kristina Lundqvist*

The history of Sudan, Dr. Francis M. Deng's native country, is, tragically, to a large extent the history of violent conflict. The complexity of today has deep roots in antagonism and injustice between different groups in the country. Dr Deng shares his view of the historic background:

– The single word that would define the root causes to the very complex situation in Sudan today is the marginalisation by the centre of the periphery. The centre and the peripheral regions happen to coincide with certain identity symbols. They reflect myths that have become reality. The centre is identified as primarily Arab, and also linked to Islam. The peripheral regions are mostly non-Arab and the northern regions Muslim but not Arab. The division is, or has been seen, largely as north and south, the north oversimplified as all Arab and Muslim – despite the fact that there are areas that were not Arab – and the south as African, adherents of Christianity and traditional beliefs. The south had the identity of resistance, which meant that they were fighting invaders from the north, who were hunting for slaves. This goes back to beginning of recorded history, but it was particularly intensified in the 19th century, just before colonialism came.

According to Dr Deng, the divide between north and south was strengthened with the colonisation at the end of the 19th century.

– When the British came, they recognised the northern and the southern identities, and they made both sides see the negative side in the other. These two identities were kept separate by the British almost up until independence. The south, mindful of the negative history, rebelled, and a war of secession,

of independence, was fought in 1955-72. This war ended with a compromise in the Addis Ababa agreement, which gave the south a certain degree of autonomy.

Ten years later, when that agreement was abrogated, the war resumed. Francis M. Deng explains the evolvement of events.

– The goal for this war was no longer secession but, according to John Garang, the leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement (SPLA/M), to free the whole country from discrimination and to promote full equality, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, culture and gender. To begin with, people were sceptical of his vision, but gradually he won acceptance among both southerners and northerners. So the huge country is now rising up to rediscover itself, and to try to free itself from the domination of a minority group at the centre. In this process, two factors are worth special notice: The first is the self-perception of the Arabised groups at the centre, who, despite having blended African-Arab roots identify themselves as Arabs and Muslims. The second factor is that this view is then projected over the very diverse nation as the overall framework for national identity, which then by definition becomes discriminatory.

### **Transformation or exception?**

Francis M. Deng considers it likely that, if Garang had lived, and if he had run for the presidency, he would have won throughout the country. But the question is, if his presidency would have transformed Sudan, or would he have been taken just as an exception? According to Dr Deng, he would probably have forged alliances across the north

south divide and introduced policies that would have created a New Sudan. Asked whether Garang had no followers to take up this role, Dr Deng reflects:

– A problem with powerful leaders like John Garang is that they don't prepare successors. What is interesting though is that his legacy has become even more powerful than when he was alive. But he had enemies, with whom he did not compromise too much. His leadership was strong but also divisive. Salva Kiir, the president of south Sudan, is less threatening, he is more of a man who brings people together. His priorities are really for the south, while Garang had a vision for the whole nation.



***The huge country is  
now rising up to  
rediscover itself.***

Concerning relations between tribes at local levels, according to Francis M. Deng, there are always two versions of history. One is that 'we have always cooperated very well, shared our sad and happy occasions; we don't know what has happened, where this conflict has come from'. The other version is to see history as one of repeating conflicts. Both are right, he thinks, because when people live next to one another, they inevitably come into conflict, but they also find ways of managing their differences, to find ways, to live in relative peace.

– In the Sudan, tribal groups at all levels have indeed been involved in conflicts, but they have also developed ways of managing their differences. What is different now, says Dr Deng, is the models of power that used to exist



among tribes are influenced by politics of the centre pitting groups against each other. Mutual interest in living together no longer exists if one side is so much stronger than the other. This negative intervention from the centre is causing crisis all over the country.

He develops his thoughts:

– The problem is that leaders see themselves predominantly as leaders of factions instead of as leaders of the nation. Unfortunately, Sudan has been so torn apart by crises of identity that it has not enjoyed that kind of visionary leadership that would unify the nation.

### **A comprehensive agreement?**

The second war in Sudan, 1983-2005, ended with the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA). Francis M. Deng emphasises the absolute necessity to implement the agreement. In his view, if it would be dishonoured, then you can safely say that no other agreement is going to be possible between north and south.

– That would mean that people go back to war, and the war can be very devastating, because large parts of the country are already in arms. But think of what happened in South Africa, he says, where people were even more acutely divided, where genocide could have taken place. They found some solution where all South Africans, irrespective of race, colour, ethnicity, religion, were able to identify as South Africans.

Continues Dr Deng:

– It is important to notice that what Nelson Mandela did was not only to stand up for the majority, it was also to assure the minority of protection. He persuaded de Klerk that the new situation would not be one of vengeance against the whites but that the whites were guaranteed a soft landing. Today's leaders in Sudan also need some kind of guarantee that all would not be lost in a democratic transformation.

About the peace agreement, Francis M. Deng explains that it is comprehensive in the sense that it refers to the issues in the north-south negotiations. It is comprehensive in the sense that it tries to deal with all issues comprehensively. It is also comprehensive in the sense that it laid the foundation for what could be a democratic transformation of the country. But, he says, it is not comprehensive in the sense that it deals only with the two warring parties. It does not include opposition parties

in the north, or other regions in the north that were already in rebellion.

Dr Deng means that the support of the international community for a peaceful development in Sudan is essential. But also within Sudan there is hope to find forces that could stand up for reconciliatory discussions.

– Sometimes leaders spring up, although we don't always see them rising. There are a lot of intelligent people in both the south and in the north. There are southerners in the SPLM who have been influenced by Garang and share his vision, and more and more their voices are being heard. In the north there are also people who see the vision of New Sudan as the only viable one, and who either believe in the vision, whether or not they have participated in the CPA, or who actually negotiated the CPA and therefore have a vested interest in its success.

### **Emerging forces**

Francis M. Deng describes himself as an optimist and sees some hopeful signs in today's Sudan:

– There is a great deal of activity going on that we are not entirely aware of. There is a very strong civil society that has emerged in Sudan, both in the north and in the south. There is a very strong movement by women, there is a very strong movement by young intellectuals and university professors, who are quite well organised in generating the debate over national issues. There are religious groups that at the moment are not working together but are getting more actively involved in politics. One has to have faith that some of these elements could emerge to have an impact on the country. Think of South Africa, where people like Bishop Tutu for instance, who were not into politics but represented a spiritual and religious point of view have made a big difference.

According to Dr Deng the whole peace process is at stake with the upcoming referenda.

– Unfortunately, the situation in Sudan seems to be filled with contradiction. We talk about a CPA that everybody was excited about. The implementation has been flawed. But with all its flaws people should do the best they can to go ahead with the referendum and to be diligent in dealing with the obstacles.

He stresses the importance to remember that there are two referenda planned to take place on 9 January 2011:

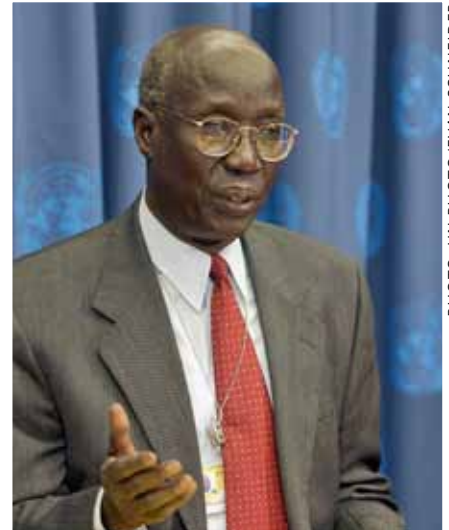


PHOTO: UN PHOTO/EVAN SCHNEIDER

### **About Dr Francis M. Deng**

Since May 2007, Dr Francis M. Deng of the Sudan is Special Adviser for the Prevention of Genocide, a position he holds at the level of Under-Secretary General, appointed by United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

Among Dr Deng's previous assignments are the following: From 2006 to 2007, he served as Director of the Sudan Peace Support Project based at the United States Institute of Peace. Dr Deng served as Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons from 1992 to 2004. In 1967-1972 he served as Human Rights Officer in the UN Secretariat and as the Ambassador of the Sudan to Canada, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the United States. He also served as the Sudan's Minister of State for Foreign Affairs.

Dr Deng holds a Bachelor of Laws [with honours] from Khartoum University and a Master of Laws and a Doctor of the Science of Law from Yale University. He has authored and edited 40 books in the fields of law, conflict resolution, internal displacement, human rights, anthropology, folklore, history and politics.

one where southern Sudan will vote whether or not it should remain as a part of Sudan, and one about the future status of the Abyei region on the border between north and south Sudan.

– Abyei is a small area but vitally important and very sensitive. There are some serious questions as to whether this referendum will be carried out

smoothly. The area of Abyei, which has historically played a very important positive role, is now facing even worse threats than the north-south relations, because the Abyei Protocol is not being implemented. There are lots

the international community to find a way forward.

### Unity or secession?

Francis M. Deng thinks that the overwhelming majority of people agree that the intention was that, during the interim period, unity would be made attractive so that the people of the south would opt for unity. But his impression is that this has not happened. The attitude in the south now is overwhelmingly for secession, as he sees it. He draws up different possible scenarios in the future.

– Secession and unity are degrees of ongoing relationship that can be weakened or strengthened depending on the will of the people and in particular of their leadership. People physically will not move from one another. People will continue to interact. If they interact in an atmosphere of peace, security and cooperative development instead of hostility, then there is a form of unity.

Dr Deng shares his view as to what could and should be done:

– If the south should secede, it should not be seen as cut off, where there are no ongoing relationships. People should negotiate some ongoing cooperative linkages, opportunities for residence, development, nationality, and sharing of resources like oil and water. What needs to be done is to address the grievances in the north, so that they become peaceful with the centre and work to-

wards a democratic transformation in a way that would assure the dominant minority of a soft landing. If that would happen in the north, it would also leave the opportunities open for a re-unification of the country in a second step on a new basis.

Francis M. Deng warns against too drastic thoughts about the possible secession of the south.

– Some people say that the south will be a failed state, that it will cause crisis in the south and in the north. It is a self-fulfilling prophecy to predict doom and almost wish it, because some people don't want the south to succeed. But it is not a matter of success or failure. We have to look for positives, to try to make the south succeed. This costly adversarial way of relating must be shifted to a more constructive, productive way of cooperating.

Dr Deng's deep commitment for his native country cannot be mistaken. He is open about the risks but also finds reasons for hope for the future.

– Things are going to move very fast, with strong dynamics, so that in a few months we'll see the development. The nearest future will be quite dramatic, whatever the outcome, he concludes.



## **Secession and unity are degrees of ongoing relationship that can be weakened or strengthened.**

of obstacles to the full comprehensive realisation of peace. This area has also historically been the one that has triggered a return to war when, after the first peace, the provisions evading to Abyei were not implemented. That resulted in a local rebellion that plunged the whole country back to war.

Asked whether his optimism makes halt at the issue of Abyei, Dr Deng replies:

– For the south Sudan referendum, there is an established commission, and preparations are ongoing. On Abyei nothing is being done. It is a very dangerous situation. But we have to assume that forces of reason will somehow emerge with the support of

### **Abyei: North or south?**

Abyei is an area of oil-production and tribal overlapping between the indigenous south Sudanese tribe of Ngok Dinka and the Arab nomadic tribe of Misseriya, associated with north Sudan. Since the clashes in May 2008 between Sudan Armed Forces and Sudan People's Liberation Army, the Ngok Dinka population remains outside Abyei, dispersed as refugees and internally displaced people.

As drafters of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) could not reach an agreement on the boundaries of Abyei or on whether it was part of the north or the south, a separate protocol was established for the area. The protocol handed over the task of demarcating Abyei's borders to a commission, whose determination was supposed to be final but in practice was rejected by one of the parties to the CPA.

The protocol also gave the residents the right to vote in a separate referendum in January 2011 on whether to remain in the north or return to the south, from which they were moved

by the British in 1905. A burning issue, however, is that only a few months left until the vote, there is no agreement on who constitutes a resident of Abyei for voting purposes.

The Ngok Dinka fear that if the nomads are counted as residents, then the Abyei referendum will come out in favour of the north, separating them from their southern kin. The Misseriya nomads fear that if they are not counted as residents, then Abyei will go to the south and the seasonal access on which their livelihoods depend will be denied.

In October 2010, talks between north and south Sudan over the referendum on the future of Abyei failed to reach an agreement. As a consequence, the Abyei referendum might be postponed up to April 2011, the end of the CPA's timetable, in order to resolve north-south boundary demarcation, the appointment of members of the referendum commission, the question of voter eligibility and residency and issues of public security.

*When and how do protracted conflicts end? Does a ceasefire or peace accord put a halt to outbreaks of violence? For how long are people's minds affected by their experiences of war? What does it take to change, not only the rhetoric, but also the mindset of political leaders from agitation to dialogue?*

*Angola and Mozambique have both gone through a long-lasting struggle for colonial independence, followed by years of brutal civil war. Both countries seem to have a long way to go until real peace is established not only in the official documents but also in the daily life of their citizens.*

Angola and Mozambique:

## Honeymoon after civil war?

Florian Krampe and Henning Melber

The decades before the independence of Angola and Mozambique, two southern African societies previously under Portuguese colonial rule, were marred by a brutal degree of violence in long-lasting liberation wars. However, peace remained an elusive hope after both countries obtained formal state sovereignty in 1975. The long anti-colonial struggle, fought also by non-violent, but mostly military means, had a lasting effect on the mindset of those ultimately seizing legitimate political power. The internal structures and social beliefs, especially among the elites, remained and, thus, paved the way for continued fighting for control. New internal wars affected the already traumatised societies with new, horrific violence victimising the populations even further.

One of the most destructive factors during this period between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s was the South African apartheid regime, which played a crucial role in the regional destabilisation efforts.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the former liberation movements eventually maintained political power and control as governing parties, despite the concerted onslaught on their governments and rule.

Bearing in mind the decades of civil war and mutual atrocities against the population in both countries, it is of interest why and how they have seemingly achieved a relative socio-political stability 35 years after obtaining self-determination. Moreover, it is based on political contestation with the former rebel organisations that laid down arms and entered parliaments instead. The successful appeasement has seen the

political integration of the antagonistic rebel groups since the turn of the century. But despite moving towards becoming a player in a competitive democratic state, the liberation movements have actually managed to consolidate their hegemonic status. As dominant parties, they are not facing any serious political challenges through an increasingly weaker political opposition.

### Angola: MPLA and UNITA

In 1975, the Movimento Popular de Libertacao de Angola (MPLA) was the anti-colonial liberation movement, which in direct competition with other organisations emerged as the new political agency seizing power over the independent state. Its political rule remained contested and challenged, also through the barrel of the gun, land mines and other forms of warfare through means of terror.

The main opponent, resorting to such destructive rebel tactics mainly at the expense of the civilian population in large parts of southern, eastern and central Angola, was the Uniao Nacional para a Independencia Total de Angola (UNITA). As a sad irony, UNITA was initially supported by both South Africa and the People's Republic of China in a strange constellation of geo-political interests to undermine the Soviet backed regime in Luanda, which relied on heavy military presence and support by Cuban forces and logistic support from the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. As a result, UNITA and its rather illustrious, if not flamboyant, leader Jonas Savimbi, whose main base

was a state within the state, resonated positively among conservative western policy makers and their agencies despite all the horrific acts of violence committed. At that time Angola was probably the most contested African country during the late Cold War period.

UNITA had its main operational bases in the southern and eastern regions of Angola, where it was also rooted in the local population and had access to the diamond mines. These secured a massive income from trade in blood diamonds, which in turn allowed the purchase of arms and military technology to challenge the armed forces under the command of the state authorities.

For more than a quarter of a century UNITA was able to bring the MPLA government to the verge of collapse and controlled large parts of the country's territory. The MPLA government's initial survival was until the late 1980s a result of the massive presence of Cuban troops. However, control over considerable parts of the territory rested with the rebel armies under the unscrupulous, ruthless but intelligent command of Savimbi, whose headquarters was like a royal court.

### International efforts for peace

The New York Accords at the end of 1988, paving the way for a transition to independence in Namibia, included a withdrawal of Cuban troops (estimated at 50,000) from Angola and the end of South Africa's military occupation of Namibia and its operations in southern Angola. Several subsequent international efforts with the involvement of the United Nations to bring a peaceful



solution through power-sharing arrangements to the country and its suffering population failed, although these even included a political representation of the civilian wing of UNITA in a so-called unity government.

The civil war dragged on until the beginning of this century. The non-compliance of UNITA with internationally negotiated and mediated agreements throughout the 1990s provided the MPLA a relative legitimacy to begin another military offensive at the turn of the century, thereby seeking to achieve an end to the conflict on the battle field. The killing of the UNITA-leader Jonas Savim-

side (MPLA) and diamonds on the other side (UNITA) allowed investing in warfare. Half a million people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, and some four million people (a third of the population) were internally displaced.

### Unthreatened power

The last parliamentary elections in early September 2008 documented the further decline of UNITA, also brought about by the (ab)use of state power by the ruling MPLA. Its overwhelming victory (with almost 82 per cent of the votes and 191 out of 220 seats in the National Assembly) was achieved under anything but fair conditions and left the ruling party almost unchallenged. UNITA obtained only 16 seats, while three other smaller parties secured in total another 13 seats.<sup>2</sup>

This result also left President José Eduardo dos Santos (who has been in office

longer than Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe) confident in his prospects for the next presidential elections. In October 2008, the government dissolved the wartime government of national unity. It had been established as part of the 1994 Lusaka Protocol and had allocated several cabinet posts to political representatives of UNITA, without bringing the war to an end.

Angola's 'oilgarchy' remains a dubious case in point for a predatory elite, which bases its privileges on a self-enrichment strategy through an inner circle in control of the party, the government and the state. Their prevailing public legitimacy, however, is not based on the democratic system or good governance. Like so many former liberation movements also the ruling elite in Angola bases their legitimacy and rule on their historic role as liberators of the people.

The over-reliance of the people in their 'liberators' inhibits countries not just mentally, but also socially, to develop. Angola is statistically – due to its enormous revenue income generated mainly by the oil and to a lesser extent the diamonds – a higher middle-income country, but its Human Development Index remains appallingly low. According to the latest Index of African Governance sponsored by the businessman Mo Ibrahim and released in early October 2010, Angola's score (out of a maximum 100)

at least rose steadily from 31 to 39 over the four years since the index was introduced. This puts the country now in the 43rd place out of 53 countries surveyed.

However, the still even worse performance in the health and education sector is not included in this index, which puts its emphasis mainly on political governance related issues. Angola remains one of the worst places in this world for children below the age of five.<sup>3</sup> It is considered to have the highest density of land mines in the world and as a result the largest proportion of people, who, through mines and other forms of mutilation, are physically impaired.

### Mozambique: FRELIMO and RENAMO

In contrast, Mozambique ranks with 52 scores markedly above Angola in terms of the Ibrahim Index. For decades the much poorer country has been a primary recipient of external assistance and has in terms of natural resources hardly anything to offer of interest to the external agencies. Maybe also because of this relatively little attraction to foreign powers, Mozambique originally faced a less violent transition to independence. The main cause was, however, the status of the Frente de Libertacao de Mocambique (FRELIMO) as the only liberation movement fighting Portuguese colonial rule and hence entitled to taking political power as government at independence. Similar to the MPLA, it originally held a firm alliance with the Soviet bloc and a socialist political ideology, which by the late 1980s, however, was replaced by a much more pragmatic and far less ideological orientation.

The differences originally secured a more peaceful transition, since neighbouring South Africa was seeking a kind

## **The immense resource-based wealth through oil and diamonds seemed more of a curse than a blessing.**

bi in February 2002 in an ambush by the Angolan army, and the subsequent death of UNITA vice-president António Dembo – reportedly from diabetes and starvation – ended the chronic violence. The defeat of UNITA was partly also the result of a direct collaboration between the Angolan and Namibian armed forces, which allowed for efficient operations in the border region.

Already in April 2002 a new agreement regulated the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of the UNITA army. Some 85,000 soldiers with 350,000 family members surrendered within a few months. UNITA reconstituted itself as a purely civil political party.

In the meantime, the more isolated and small-scale war by the Frente para a Libertacao da Exclava de Cabinda (FLEC) for the autonomy of the oil-rich enclave Cabinda continues. It drew worldwide attention with the vicious attack on the football team of Togo during the African Nations Cup in 2009. The conflict hardly has any wider impact on most parts of Angola's territory, where relative stability prevails. But peace is more than the absence of war.

Angola's war-torn history never allowed any meaningful reconstruction of what used to be one of the breadbaskets of the continent. The immense resource-based wealth through oil and diamonds seemed more of a curse than a blessing, since the income from oil on the one



## **Angola remains one of the worst places in this world for children below the age of five.**

of 'peaceful coexistence'. FRELIMO's support to other liberation movements and the independence of Zimbabwe in 1980, however, changed the regional constellation and provoked South Africa's 'securocrats' in the army to pursue a more aggressive regional destabilisation strategy. It sponsored the externally created but internally operating

rebel movement Resistência Nacional Mocambicana (RENAMO), which was originally established as a counter insurgency force by the Rhodesian security apparatus after Mozambique's independence.

The terror brought to the civilian population lasted for more than a decade. The Nkomati Accord of 1984, mediated by the Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda between South Africa and Mozambique, did not bring an end to the internal war, and RENAMO's military operations reached even the outskirts of the capital Maputo.<sup>4</sup> But RENAMO's relative success was not the sole result of its military capacity. It was also based on parts of the country's population, who did not identify with FRELIMO. Even more than UNITA (which also had a local support base in the regions where it was firmly entrenched), RENAMO was at times able to operate efficiently due to local support.

Only when FRELIMO realised the degree of the internal RENAMO support and started to change its own policy, it gradually gained the upper hand politically. It benefited from the fact that in contrast to Angola, where UNITA received wide international support from western countries, the West generally tended to recognise FRELIMO as the legitimate government. While in Angola the changing international constellation with a regional appeasement strategy from the early 1990s onward resulted ultimately in the defeat of UNITA on the battlefield, not least through the physical elimination of its leader Savimbi, the downfall of RENAMO was more a result of the loss of its internal support base among the suffering population.

### Ceasefire at last

After intensive diplomatic negotiations from the late 1980s and a growing active involvement of western states, the Mozambican president Joaquim Chissano and the RENAMO president Afonso Dhlakama met for the first time eye to eye in Rome, where in October 1992, after almost three years of negotiations, an accord was signed and a ceasefire agreement implemented. At the end of October 1994 both parties contested for the votes in presidential and parliamentary elections. They resulted in a victory for president Chissano, who was re-elected with 53.2 per cent of the votes (with 33.7 per cent of the votes for Dhlakama documenting his relative support among the electorate). The result of the parliamen-



PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

*Old enemies: An Angolan government soldier (right) greets a UNITA. However, it takes more than a handshake to safeguard peace.*

tary elections was even closer, with 44.3 per cent of the votes and 129 out of 250 seats for FRELIMO and 37.8 per cent or 112 seats for RENAMO. Although reluctantly and against the reservations of his party, Dhlakama recognised the results and thereby – in contrast to the permanent sabotage exercised by Savimbi in Angola – contributed decisively to the end of violence and a lasting effect of the Rome accord.

FRELIMO did not co-opt the RENAMO leadership into the governance structures but used its hegemonic status and control over the state apparatus in the years to come to marginalise the political opposition. Notably, the RENAMO leadership never resorted to armed insurgence again. In the meantime the party has been in steady decline and Dhlakama's influence faded away, as the latest elections in late October 2009 for parliament, the president and new provincial parliaments documented. FRELIMO consolidated as the dominant party at all levels. President Armando Guebuza (who succeeded Chissano in 2005 in a smooth power transfer within the party) was re-elected with 75 per cent of the votes, while his party took 191 parliamentary seats, more than two thirds of the total of 250. It also won majorities in all the provincial assemblies, taking altogether 703 of the 812 seats.<sup>5</sup>

Since independence, FRELIMO has re-established firm control over the country, not without dubious practices.

Evidence of electoral manipulation provoked criticism among international observers. Despite the emergence of a new political alternative with the formation of the Mozambique Democratic Movement, which broke away from the declining RENAMO, like in Angola no short-term alternative is in sight.

### Happily ever after?

Certainly there are marked differences in the trajectories of both countries, but the parallels of the historical paths are overwhelming. In both cases the long period of internal strife and civil war has been replaced by a relative stability and an absence of warfare. This is, however, far from sustainable peace.<sup>6</sup>

The psychologist Daniel Bar-Tal argues that at the end of protracted violent conflicts it is the 'societal beliefs' – the shared beliefs of the own group, and of 'the other', the enemy – that need to change in a process of reconciliation.<sup>7</sup> In Angola and Mozambique, as in many post-colonial states, the long anti-colonial struggle has had a lasting effect on the mindsets of the elites. These elites have persisted and strengthened their conflictive beliefs during violent civil wars and still retain their protracted viewpoints, even years after fighting has ended.

In both states a former liberation movement stays in firm control of the domestic politics and the economy. Both ruling movements carry on their beliefs from the conflict period, because it helps





*The civil war in Mozambique lasted for ten years, thus affecting the whole childhood of children like these boys playing with toy guns in a suburb of Maputo.*

them to justify their own use of violence and atrocities, maintain their identity and constituency, and marginalise the opposition. As political parties these movements consolidated their rule by means of a clientelist, if not predatory, regime. Under pressure, these regimes tend to become even more impaired by their inability to form normal political relationships and to communicate than they were already as a result of the clandestine underground activities during the anti-colonial struggle. This is not a strong foundation for lasting peace and stability, but rather represents the impact of decades of intractable conflict on the political elites.

The rebel groups, whose military operations caused the suffering and death of an uncountable number of people in both countries, have lost their influence and seem to have gradually ended up in irrelevance for the political future. Nevertheless, the culture of impunity enables the persistence of conflictive attitudes also among the opposition's elite. With all former belligerents remaining in a mindset of confrontation, the situation in both states bears a latent potential for renewed conflict.

The former liberation movements remain in power and show little signs of securing legitimacy based on good

governance. Their style of politics suppresses any sort of reconciliation or serious democratic contestation. Moreover, it neglects an economically destitute population traumatised by decades of violence. Perhaps, in the absence of alternatives, the partocracy of the liberation movements is nonetheless the lesser evil to those rebels, whose onslaught they survived. Yet in both societies, the admirable people's struggle for freedom and lasting peace remains treated with carelessness. The losers in both cases have – as so often – been the people, who are still waiting for a happy ending.<sup>8</sup> 🌿

1 Classic accounts for the South African fuelled post-colonial war periods in both countries are Joseph Hanlon, *Beggar Your Neighbor. Apartheid Power in Southern Africa*. Bloomington. In: Indiana University Press 1986, and William Minter, *Apartheid's Contras: an inquiry into the roots of war in Angola and Mozambique*. London: Zed Books and Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press 1994.

2 Jon Schubert, Angola. In: *Africa Yearbook. Volume 5. Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara in 2008*. Edited by Andreas Mehler, Henning Melber and Klaas van Walraven. Leiden: Brill 2009.

3 The Humanitarian Action Report published by UNICEF for 2008 concluded that the war has had a profound impact on all aspects of social and eco-

nomic life in Angola, with the destruction of basic infrastructure and the disruption of educational provision leading to continuing poor service delivery. With 260 deaths per 1,000 live births Angola has the second highest under-five mortality rate after Sierra Leone and before Afghanistan.

4 The horrific brutality of the rebels and the traumatic consequences for the people of Mozambique have been movingly documented in the novel 'Comedia Infantil' by the Swedish author Henning Mankell, who spends part of the year in Maputo.

5 Joseph Hanlon, Mozambique. In: *Africa Yearbook. Volume 6. Politics, Economy and Society South of the Sahara in 2009*. Edited by Andreas Mehler, Henning Melber and Klaas van Walraven. Leiden: Brill 2010.

6 A remarkable effort to come to terms with the legacy of violence and destruction in both countries is presented in Christopher Cramer, *Civil War is not a Stupid Thing. Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries*. London: Hurst 2006. For Angola see the comprehensive summary by Michael G. Comerford, *The Peaceful Face of Angola. Biography of a Peace Process (1991 to 2002)*. Luanda 2005.

7 Daniel Bar-Tal, Societal beliefs in times of intractable conflict: The Israeli case. In: *International Journal of Conflict Management*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1998, pp. 22-50; Daniel Bar-Tal, *Shared Beliefs in a Society. Social Psychological Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi: Sage 2000.

8 Sobering analyses on the lack of delivery are presented in David Sogge, *Angola: Reinventing Pasts and Futures* (no. 2, June 2010) and John Saul, *Mozambique: Not Then But Now* (no. 3, July 2010) in the *Africa Files* series *At Issue* ezine, vol. 12, May-October 2010 (<http://www.africafil.es.org/atissueezine.asp>).



*The conflict between the Lord's Resistance Army and the Government of Uganda is no longer being fought in northern Uganda but in neighbouring countries. The atrocities inflicted on the civilian population are horrendous. However, the inability of the Ugandan and other national armies in the conflict areas to protect civilians is appalling and its consequences disastrous.*

# The northern Uganda war – protracted, devastating and spreading

Ronald R. Atkinson

Africa's longest current protracted conflict began in northern Uganda in 1986. By the mid-1990s the conflict had spilled over into neighbouring South Sudan, and has now spread into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR). The main adversaries are the Government of Uganda (GoU) and its army on one hand and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) on the other. But the main victims have been innocent civilians. Tens of thousands of people from across the region have been abducted, mutilated, raped, wounded, and killed. Until recently, the vast majority of these victims have come from the long-time epicenter of the war, the Acholi sub-region of northern Uganda.<sup>1</sup>

By 2005, nearly two million northern Ugandans had been driven from their homes and relocated into squalid, disease-ridden internally displaced persons' camps. In Acholi, this displacement was the result of a government policy of forced displacement that relocated more than a million people, 90 per cent of the sub-region, into camps, where people had no or limited means to farm and no or minimal protection. After visiting some of these camps, the former United Nations chief humanitarian officer, Jan Egeland, called the situation in northern Uganda 'the biggest neglected humanitarian emergency in the world'.<sup>2</sup>

'Humanitarian emergency', however, conveys only a partial sense of the long northern Uganda war. It also reflects a deep political crisis, rooted in part on a colonial pattern of inequality between the north and south of Uganda. Indeed, the war has heightened this inequality to such a degree that Uganda has become, as many have noted, essentially two separate countries. One includes

the peaceful western, southern, and central parts of Uganda, with a growing economy that has won Uganda's President Museveni praise from the World Bank, IMF, and other donors (including the US). The other is a war-torn, impoverished, isolated north.

But the dominant narrative of the war – promulgated by influential stakeholders including the GoU, media, and international human rights organisations – emphasises something different: the brutal violence and mass abduction of minors perpetrated by the LRA, an organisation (and leader, Joseph Kony) supposedly guided by an incomprehensible and primitive world view that excludes any meaningful political agenda or basis for rational negotiation. Domestically, Museveni has used this narrative to sow fear and cultivate political support from areas outside northern Uganda. Internationally, he has used the war (and its dominant narrative) to obtain diplomatic and budgetary support in general and for the military in particular.<sup>3</sup>

This narrative also influenced the US decision in 2001 to include the LRA in its list of international terrorist organisations, and helped ensure that the group was among the first investigated by the International Criminal Court (ICC), leading in 2005 to the Court's first public arrest warrants, issued against Kony and his top lieutenants.

There can be no doubt that the LRA, like almost all recent rebel movements, has used horrific tactics in order to terrify local populations and demonstrate that governments supposed to protect them cannot, or will not, do so. Such tactics – murder, mutilations, looting, burning, and, most notably with the LRA, their abduction of thousands of children and youth – are indefensible.

The LRA has done horrible, almost unspeakable things.

A dominant narrative that focuses so overwhelmingly on this single aspect, however, promotes a simplistic, black-and-white view of the war as essentially 'good' (the GoU and its army, the US, the ICC) versus 'evil' (the LRA). This ignores the fundamental complexity of the conflict and distorts the reality of those caught up in it. Indeed, for many of the people of northern Uganda, and Acholi in particular, there has been no black-and-white, no good choice from among the often gruesome violence of the LRA, the sometimes equally extensive and brutal violence of government troops, or the typically slower, quieter, but at least equally destructive structural violence of the camps.

In July 2006, peace talks mediated by the Government of South Sudan commenced in Juba. LRA fighters relocated to an assembly point in southwestern Sudan and to nearby camps in northeastern DRC. Guns fell silent across northern Uganda, setting the stage for a transition across the region from war to peace, marked most clearly by the gradual emptying of the camps. Even in Acholi, where the process was most hesitant, most people had left the camps by 2009 and are currently tackling – often with creativity and success – the myriad, arduous challenges of re-establishing their lives and livelihoods back on the land after years of war and encampment.<sup>4</sup>

## Operation Lightning Thunder

Even as this transition was occurring, however, peace talks faltered. In late November 2008, Kony failed for the third time to emerge from the bush to sign a Final Peace Agreement reached earlier that year between government

and rebel negotiators. Within weeks, the Ugandan army began an operation – code-named ‘Operation Lightning Thunder’ – against the LRA in the DRC and South Sudan, eventually extending into the CAR.<sup>5</sup>

Although the operation was proclaimed a joint venture with the armies of the DRC and South Sudan, it was an overwhelmingly UPDF (Ugandan People’s Defence Force) affair in fact, with

at soft targets seen as linked to those threatening them. In this case, those targets were local civilians whose governments assisted or condoned UPDF operation against the LRA.

And if the LRA escaped being hit hard by the UPDF, local civilians were hit very hard indeed by the LRA. A thousand or more were killed, hundreds abducted, and up to 200,000 displaced in the three months of Operation Lightning Thunder. This failure to protect civilians was almost universally con-

demned as an unmitigated disaster, criticism that stands in stark contrast to the (almost) equally wide-spread support of the operation in the early weeks after it began.<sup>6</sup>

### Displaced conflict drags on

In the eighteen months since the official end of Operation Lightning Thunder, the Ugandan army continues to pursue the LRA. The rebels meanwhile continue to wreak havoc across a wide swath of northeastern DRC, western South Sudan, and southeastern CAR, causing wide-spread international concern, even consternation.<sup>7</sup>

By late April 2010 the International Crisis Group (ICG) estimated that 5,000-7,000 UPDF troops were involved in this pursuit, with four main bases in Western Equatoria, South Sudan, and the CAR (although these forces by November have been drawn down by about half). During this time, the UPDF has had some success in killing, capturing, and enticing defections from the LRA, including some high-level commanders. The LRA seem more on the run than has usually been the case during the long years of the war. And after their initial disastrous failure in providing civilian security, the UPDF has subsequently taken such civilian protection at least somewhat more seriously. Both international NGOs in LRA-affected areas and local groups and individuals typically assess the Ugandan army’s recent performance in this regard as better than any of the national armies in the three affected countries – although this sets the standard at a very low bar.<sup>8</sup>

At the same time, it also needs to be noted that such improvement is often limited, as the UPDF – even given their thousands of troops – are spread thinly across a wide and remote area of diffi-

cult terrain. They are thus unable, even with the best intentions, to protect civilians effectively from the effects of the hornets’ nest that they stirred up. Not infrequently local people who have suffered LRA attacks report that the UPDF has not always responded in a timely manner, even when nearby.<sup>9</sup>

The bottom line is that civilians continue to lack protection. Over the period since the official end of Operation Lightning Thunder, up to another 2,000 civilians in the three affected countries have been abducted, 1,000 or more killed – over 300 in a series of attacks in northeastern DRC in December 2009 – and as many as 400,000 displaced. Such conditions, not surprisingly, provoke not only condemnation of the LRA by both locals and humanitarian organisations, but frustrated criticism of the UPDF and other forces that are supposed to provide protection from the rebels.<sup>10</sup>

### Insufficient efforts

The opening paragraph of the April 2010 ICG report (note 6) sums up in brief, bold terms its assessment of ‘the Ugandan army’s latest attempt to crush the one-time northern Uganda rebel group’. They write: ‘It has been a failure’.<sup>11</sup>

The remainder of the report’s Executive Summary and Recommendations makes four major points, all thoughtful and persuasive, even if the last two seem unlikely – given political realities – to be achieved.

First, ‘[w]hat was supposed to be a sudden, decisive strike has become a slow and very expensive campaign of attrition across three countries. It has also yielded unacceptably high human costs against local civilians with virtually no accountability for the failure to protect’. This failure, the report continues, has ‘left civilians no choice but to fend for themselves, which in many instances they have done well’.

Second, even as the UPDF has slowly killed and captured more and more LRA officers, threatening LRA cohesion and producing organisational stress, ‘LRA fighters continue to cause appalling suffering even in survival mode and would likely continue to do so even if Kony is caught or killed’.

Third, ‘a new strategy is required that prioritises civilian protection’, which in turn will require a “unity of effort among military and civilian actors within and across national boundaries;



***The LRA has done horrible, almost unspeakable things.***

the two ‘partner’ forces – and their governments – not even notified until the operation had begun, and then playing a minimal support role at most. Conversely, from at least June 2008, the US military (and government) was involved in planning the operation, and subsequently supplied training, sophisticated electronic equipment, and funding.

The offensive was to begin with surprise air attacks by jets and helicopter gunships on the camps. Special force troops (commanded by President Museveni’s son) were then to be flown in by helicopter gunships to secure the camps and carry out search and destroy operations against surviving LRA. Finally, a much larger ground offensive, of more than 4,000 troops (and perhaps many more), was to follow up these initial attacks against a rebel force that was already to have been hit hard.

What happened was something very different. There was no surprise. The LRA had learned of the operation, and their fighters had evacuated the camps before air strikes began. And – almost inconceivably – no UPDF troops were on the ground near the bombed camps until at least three days later. The rebels thus had days to divide into small groups and scatter widely, with control and command structures largely intact.

The most serious failure of Operation Lightning Thunder, however, was not its inability to crush the LRA, but its neglecting to provide civilian protection and security. Indeed, there seems to have been no UPDF planning for this, and they disclaimed any responsibility, blaming instead their faux-partners – the armies of the DRC and South Sudan, as well as UN forces in the Congo – for failing to do so. This failure to protect was an especially egregious oversight, as the UPDF knew that when the rebel group is threatened, they will retaliate

and national ownership' [a tall, if not impossible, order].

And fourth, 'even complete victory over the LRA would not guarantee an end to insecurity in northern Uganda. [...] To do that, the Kampala government must treat the root causes of trouble in that area from which the LRA sprang, namely northern perceptions of economic and political marginalisation, and ensure the social rehabilitation of the north' [again, a tall order, at least given the GoU's track record thus far].<sup>12</sup>

The fourteen specific recommendations that follow are similarly logical and sensible, although political realities again make it hard to imagine their implementation.<sup>13</sup>

The field work of both Resolve's Paul Ronan and Enough's Ledio Cakaj supplement the ICG report. Among their main conclusions are the following:

While LRA numbers remain unclear, contrary to public (and usually private) pronouncements by the GoU, US, and many others, the LRA is not a desperate force on its last legs. There is evidence that the LRA continues to function in an organised, strategic manner, with commanders periodically coming together for meetings, and with the LRA even carving out an area in DRC where they are relatively secure and in control. There is certainly no doubt that the rebels have the capacity to commit frequent attacks and even large-scale atrocities.<sup>14</sup>


UPDF operations are pushing the rebels into new areas, in turn affecting new communities and expanding the range of LRA killings, abductions, and displacements. Neither national armies nor UN peacekeeping forces deployed in LRA-affected areas have the manpower or resources to provide even close to adequate protection and security for civilians, and will continue to be unable to do so without huge inputs to increase capacity and major improvements in intelligence sharing and military coordination.

Even though UPDF-led operations are having some success in killing, capturing, or enticing the defection of LRA commanders and fighters, it is unclear if the rate of progress being achieved can actually succeed in slowing or stopping LRA violence and apprehending LRA leaders.

Given the severe constraints of the current UPDF-led operations, the US should work with the UN, international partners, and regional govern-

ments to facilitate the deployment of a military team capable of locating and apprehending Joseph Kony and other wanted LRA commanders, should they continue to reject a negotiated solution to the conflict.<sup>15</sup>

### Concluding Comments

A minority of voices, though across a wide range of individuals and organisations, have questioned the continuation of a UPDF-led effort to achieve a military solution to the long northern Uganda war. Given current circumstances of continuing violence by a remote, scattered, and isolated LRA, however, alternatives are difficult to promote as viable or realistic. And it might be possible – despite more than two decades of failure – for the LRA to be finally defeated militarily. But given those more than two decades, and the UPDF's limited successes since the launching of Operation Lightning Thunder, there are grounds for more than reasonable doubt that such a military solution will be achieved. Thus it would seem prudent for all those concerned – in the region and beyond – to consider ways that might reopen the door for another approach.<sup>16</sup> 

1 For recent broad syntheses of the war see: (1) Adam Branch, 'The Political Dilemmas of Global Justice: Anti-Civilian Violence and the Violence of Humanitarianism, the Case of Northern Uganda' (Columbia University Ph.D. dissertation, 2007) – with a revised version forthcoming from Oxford University Press; (2) Sverker Finnström, *Living with Bad Surroundings: War, History, and Everyday Moments in Northern Uganda* (Durham, NC, 2008); (3) Chris Dolan, *Social Torture: The Case of Northern Uganda, 1986-2006* (New York & Oxford, 2009); (4) Ronald R. Atkinson, 'Afterword: A Perspective on the Last Thirty Years', *The Evolution of Ethnicity: Origins of the Acholi of Uganda*, rev. ed. (Kampala, 2010); and (5) Tim Allen and Koen Vlassenroot, *The Lord's Resistance Army: Myth and Reality* (London & New York, 2010).

2 Egeland's comments following his visit to the camps were widely reported; see, for example, 'Northern Uganda "world's biggest neglected crisis"', *The Guardian* (22 Oct. 2004); access at [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk). Among the scores of NGO reports on the camps, see especially the World Health Organization, with the Ugandan Ministry of Health, *Health and Mortality Survey Among Internally Displaced Persons in Gulu, Kitgum and Pader Districts, Northern Uganda* (July 2005) – which estimated 1,000 excess deaths a week in the camps because of the horrendous conditions (that is, the structural violence) endemic in the camps.

3 See Andrew Mwenda, 'Uganda's Politics of Foreign Aid and Violent Conflict: The Political Uses of the LRA Rebellion', in Allen and Vlassenroot, pp. 45-58, 292-93.

4 The talks received wide-spread attention, within Uganda and the region and internationally. For a summary analysis of the talks, see Ronald R. Atkinson, 'The Realists in Juba?': An Analysis of the Juba Peace Talks', in Allen and Vlassenroot, pp. 205-22, 310-15.

5 The following section is based primarily on Ronald R. Atkinson, 'From Uganda to the Congo and Beyond: Pursuing the Lord's Resistance Army' (New York: International Peace Institute, Dec. 2009).

6 See *ibid.* for a listing of the five major reports on the operation, some more positive than others, except, as noted above, on the failure to protect civilians in the aftermath of the original attack, which was criticised by all.

7 This final section is based mainly on three sources, each grounded in extensive field work in LRA-affected areas: (1) International Crisis Group (ICG), *LRA: A Regional Strategy Beyond Killing Kony*, Africa Report No. 157 (Nairobi & Brussels, 28 April 2010); (2) field notes based on visits to LRA-affected areas of South Sudan, DRC, and CAR from January-March 2010 by Paul Ronan, Director of Advocacy for the US-based NGO, Resolve – I thank him for generously sharing these with me; and (3) a number of informed and insightful reports by the current field researcher on the LRA for the ENOUGH Project, Ledio Cakaj. And in September, in an attempt to inform the US administration's deliberations on a legislatively mandated policy statement on the LRA by the end of November 2010, Resolve published 'From Promise to Peace: A Blueprint for President Obama's LRA Strategy'.

8 This admittedly tentative UPDF troop estimates come from ICG, *LRA: A Regional Strategy*, p. 5, n. 32; a very useful map is on p. 26. The improved performance of the UPDF in civilian protection is made clear in all the sources cited in n. 7.

9 *Ibid.*

10 On the December 2009 killings, see Human Rights Watch, *Trail of Death: LRA Atrocities in Northeastern Congo* (New York, 2010). Overall figures and estimates of deaths, abductions, and killings come from ICG, *A Regional Strategy*, pp. 12-14, and the Resolve report, 'From Promise to Peace', p. 13.

11 See ICG, *LRA: A Regional Strategy*.

12 *Ibid.*, pp. i-ii.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. ii-iii.

14 They might even have inflicted serious losses on the UPDF. See 'Disturbing Developments in the Hunt for Kony as Ugandan Troops Suffer Important Losses', *Sudan Tribune* (1 July 2010), citing sources telling ENOUGH that as many as 53 UPDF were killed and five or more missing, probably at the hands of the LRA; the UPDF acknowledges only ten soldiers killed, but not by LRA.

15 This is really the only major point of Ronan's with which I strongly disagree. Given the long and inglorious track record of the UPDF, with respect to both their behavior in neighboring countries where they have been deployed and their long-term failure in defeating the LRA, it is hard to be confident about a UPDF-led successful military solution to the conflict. Nor can I imagine any realistic likelihood to any alternative to a UPDF lead role, or of the cooperation advocated here.

16 At the forefront of urging (peaceful) alternatives are the religious and cultural leaders of all four affected countries; see also Atkinson, 'From Uganda to the Congo and Beyond', pp. 16-20, for a discussion of such alternatives as of December 2009.



*The fifty year long civil war in Colombia has passed through many stages and levels of intensity and focused on different conflict issues. The devastating consequences of the war on people's everyday life are immeasurable, one example being the two million internally displaced persons. An example of the coping mechanisms among the population is the so-called peace communities that are developing a strategy of active non-cooperation.*

Colombian peace communities:

## Active non-cooperation rather than passive acquiescence

Pedro Valenzuela

In the eyes of many observers, Colombia is one of Latin America's oldest and most stable democracies. Others, however, prefer to highlight its violent history, pointing out that the Colombian internal armed conflict is the longest running of its kind and that the country experiences grave violations of human rights and a severe humanitarian crisis.

Throughout its almost five decades of existence, the Colombian conflict has undergone important changes in terms of actors, scope and dynamics. During the 1960s and 1970s, it was rather marginal and characterised by low levels of intensity. The leftist guerrillas that challenged the state operated mainly in peripheral areas in a few provinces and suffered important military setbacks. However, at the beginning of the 1980s the conflict experienced a "quantitative and qualitative leap", as a change in the strategy of the guerrillas took the war to

effort. The guerrillas also became involved in the illegal drug economy. Initially, they protected the coca growing peasants in their exchange with drug lords. Later, they agreed to protect coca fields and processing labs, charging the drug barons for that protection and levying a tax for each transaction. Eventually, they became directly involved in the production and commercialisation of illicit drugs.

As a result of this financial boost, the guerrillas significantly increased the number of people in arms and were able to establish corridors linking its areas of influence with routes for the importation of arms and the exportation of drugs. They also consolidated control over some municipalities after expelling the armed forces and assassinating or co-opting local political leaders. By the end of the 1990s, the number of guerrilla fighters had increased to between 15,000 and 20,000; the insurgents operated in close to 600 municipalities and exercised a significant degree of control in about 200 of them.

Sectors threatened by the guerrillas' increased territorial control and influence at the local level reacted by creating self-defence groups. This counter-insurgent alliance, which initially included sectors of the armed forces and ranchers and entrepreneurs targeted for kidnapping and extortion, was strengthened during the mid-1980s by a new, drug-related agrarian class interested in consolidating its own territorial dominance and by regional

elites fearful that a "political opening" would alter the political balance at the local level. The main objective of the alliance was to contain the expansion of the guerrillas, curtail social mobilisation, neutralise the advances of the left, and expand the rural property of drug traffickers. The paramilitaries were



**A change in the strategy of the guerrillas took the war to almost every province.**

bent on reconstructing the rural order and becoming a power alternative at the local level linked to various public and private interests. In this effort they penetrated state structures and targeted mainly social and labour leaders as well as militants of the legal leftist parties. By 1994 they were present in 373 municipalities, and in 1997 united in an umbrella organisation called the United Self Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC for the Spanish acronym).

Between 1999 and 2003 the "strategic revolution" of the armed forces, resulting from their professionalisation and modernisation and the adoption of an offensive strategy, led to yet another shift in the correlation of forces. The armed forces launched a relentless offensive, which made it possible for the state to recover control over vast portions of the national territory and to guarantee its permanent presence in every municipality. As a result of the army's offensive, the guerrillas lost the initiative and are currently in a situation of military inferiority. In an attempt to cope with this situation, they avoid direct confrontation with the armed forces



**Throughout its almost five decades of existence, the Colombian conflict has undergone important changes.**

almost every province and to important economic, political and administrative centres.

The guerrillas expanded to areas of economic boom, especially areas of mining, oil production, cattle ranching and commercial agriculture. Extortion and kidnapping increased exponentially, providing the guerrillas with significant resources to finance their war

and privilege actions more akin to guerilla warfare (ambushes, sabotage and attacks on the infrastructure). In effect, they have been forced to give up the objective of achieving territorial control and instead seek the control of strategic positions (mobility corridors, resource rich areas, and areas of military advance and retreat) to guarantee their survival. They now operate in small units and have sought refuge in areas protected by mined fields or beyond Colombia's borders.

### Humanitarian crisis

To a large extent, the war has become a contest for control of the population, territory and resources. In the struggle to administer geographical spaces in order to develop economic, political and military strategies, the targeting of civilians has become such a salient feature that many observers have referred to the Colombian conflict, not as a civil war, but as a "war against civilians". Terror is used as a "communicative strategy" to instil fear and condition the attitudes and behaviour of the civilians. Often, the purpose of the violence is to force a community to flee, in order to deprive the guerrillas from a potential source of support or to repopulate the territory with people who sympathise with the counter-insurgent project or who are willing to accept its order.

In other instances, violence is a "strategic resource" used to paralyse the social texture in order to reorganise it according to the strategic interest of the warring actors. The possibility of remaining in the territory depends on absolute obedience to the dominant actor. In yet other cases, the aggressions against the communities are intended to appropriate fertile or resource-rich lands. It is thus not surprising that the number of internally displaced persons in Colombia is surpassed only by that of Sudan.

Another common consequence of violence is the "confinement" of the population. Civilians are forced to remain in a given area, limiting their mobility and their access to information, food, fuel, medicines and other goods essential for their survival. This is usually carried out by blocking the roads that connect the communities to the external world, mining the land and establishing curfews or specific schedules for mobilisation. The purpose of forcing communities to remain in an area is to use them for war strategies such as economic exactions, the exploitation



PHOTO: UN PHOTO/MARK GARTEN

*Indigenous children from the Embera people, displaced by armed conflict. Indigenous culture is closely linked to the land, and displacement often leads to the total collapse of traditional authority and cultural patterns.*

of natural resources, the cultivation of illicit crops, the utilisation of the population as a human shield, the obligation to attend political meetings, forced recruitment and intelligence gathering, among others.

### Peaceful resistance

In view of the growing humanitarian crisis, many communities have adopted strategies to resist both the displacement and the victimisation of war. One that has received much attention is the establishment of local "peace communities" by grassroots movements, with the basic objective of protecting civilians and remaining at the margins of the war. This decision is taken as a result of internal processes within the communities and not of agreements between

the warring actors or decisions from "above" or from "outside", which differentiates them from some mechanisms for the protection of civilians and other categories of people in international humanitarian law. Their fundamental principle is non-cooperation with any of the warring actors, including the armed forces of the state. This means that they refuse to aid directly or indirectly the efforts of the armed actors by not providing strategic or tactical support, nor joining their ranks, giving out information, purchasing goods, serving as guides or turning to the armed actors to solve community conflicts, among others.

This decision to withdraw from the dynamics of war does not translate into passivity. On the contrary, it has gener-



ated organisational processes and struggles previously unprecedented in some of these communities. Some have even transcended the mere rupture of relations and changed patterns of behaviour (non-cooperation) and have in fact established social institutions that replace existing ones, bringing them into deep contradictions and direct clashes with established interests.

It is not uncommon that, when an actor is firmly in control of an area, the population will accept, at least formally, its authority in the hope that some sort of order will be established, which, in turn, explains the low level of violence against civilians. But when that control is challenged, the level of violence tends to rise as a result of the fear that civilians will switch loyalties in exchange for a safer environment. This happens especially where adherence to the dominant actor is instrumental rather than ideological and if the challenging actor is able to perform the same functions of mediation and protection. However, the policy of non-cooperation by the peace communities denies an actor the active support or the passive acquiescence it expects. At a minimum, this generates suspicion of cooperation with the adversary. In the worst-case scenario, it is viewed as an exercise of autonomy that openly challenges an actor's power and interests.

Given the logic of "whoever is not with me is against me", the recognition of peace communities and their policy of neutrality as a valid and legitimate option seems to be a far-fetched aspiration, and it is not surprising that the communities often confront ultimatums such as the following: "Gentlemen, in this war there is no room for indecisiveness. There are four alternatives: you arm yourselves and join us, you join the guerrillas, leave the region, or die." Although this ultimatum came from a member of the security forces, the guerrillas have expressed similar views: "In this war there is no space for neutrality", a FARC commander argued, after making a distinction between neutrality and "direct participation in military actions".

### Significant achievements

Studies conducted elsewhere have shown that when the peace communities are created through a process of consultation with the combatants, their potential for success increases. This is also the case if the peace communities

are located "in the conflict backwaters", in strategically non-important areas, or are protected by armed force. Nevertheless, even in the absence of these conditions and despite the formidable obstacles, the Colombian peace communities exhibit significant achievements. The pattern of violence against some of these communities that have been empirically analysed shows a significant shift from the more lethal forms of aggression (assassinations, forced displacement) to what could be termed "psychological softening" (intimidation, threats, harassment, pillaging and economic blockade).

The peace communities have been less successful in securing respect for their territory, in terms of forcing the warring actors to refrain from carrying out military operations. A view expressed by the Colombian state holds that accepting the existence of territories "forbidden" to the armed forces would not only amount to equating the public force with the illegal groups, but also to accepting the "fracturing" of the nation and the "imposition of limits to the territorial action of the public force or the justice system".

On the other hand, the process has repaired the social texture destroyed by the war, generated hope and democratic processes at the local level, strengthened the communities' identity, solidarity and structures, empowered their members, produced a culture of peace and coexistence, reinforced the capacity

of the communities to manage conflicts in their midst, and affected the wider context of the conflict by breaking the logic of the armed actors and the dynamics of war.

These results show that, despite the vulnerability of the communities as well as the dynamics of the war and the interests that sustain it, dominant orders and authoritarian relations always present "fissures" that allow strategies of nonviolent resistance to emerge. In this sense, the role of international and national cooperation in order to increase the efficacy of the peace communities as a mechanism for the protection of civilians and for peacebuilding in the broader sense must be noted. International cooperation has contributed to a reduction in the level of threats and actions against the communities, as it has given them visibility and conferred upon them a degree of legitimacy.


Accompanying organisations have supported specific actions or established a more permanent presence in the communities and supported legal actions at the national and international levels on their behalf. Political, economic and technical support are crucial elements for the survival of the communities and will no doubt strengthen the communities' organisational capacity, determination to act and appropriation of the experience by the community at large, reinforcing their commitment to peaceful resistance despite the aggressions and adverse conditions. 



PHOTO: PAUL JEFFREY

*A woman in the peace community of San José de Apartado. In 1997, 1,400 peasants declared that they would no longer cooperate with any of the armed parties in the conflict.*



*In the immediate aftermath of the 2007 presidential elections in Kenya, violent clashes broke out that threatened the very existence of the country. Besides the successful formal mediation efforts by the former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, efficient civil society initiatives were taken to create a peaceful infrastructure. These initiatives prove to inspire and promote long-term conflict prevention and peacebuilding in Kenya as well as in other countries.*

# Inspiring citizens' initiative for peacebuilding in Kenya

Paul van Tongeren

Less than three years ago, Kenya was regularly in the news all over the world for weeks. After the elections of late 2007, post-election violence broke out, in which more than 1,300 people lost their lives over a period of two months, and more than 500,000 people were displaced. The crisis quickly led to the collapse of law and order, threatening Kenya's very survival as a nation.

The successful mediation effort of the former UN Secretary-General, Dr. Kofi Annan, received a lot of attention, but the inspiring civil society response to the violence barely got any media attention internationally. The initiative of Concerned Citizens for Peace (CCP) in the aftermath of the hostilities in Kenya is an inspiring example in terms of its speed and timeliness, its mobilisation of a large constituency for peace in Kenya within a short time, its strategic analysis and multi-sector and multi-level actions, and its interfacing with the formal Kofi Annan-led mediation.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, it is fairly unknown that Kenya is pioneering with an Infrastructure for Peace, as is Ghana. This is an approach that has proven to prevent conflict or that prevented further escalation of violence during recent elections in Kenya and Ghana in those regions where Regional or District Peace Councils existed.

## Potential sources of conflict

The post-election conflict did not develop overnight: Kenya has long been beset by a multitude of local conflicts that can escalate at any moment, as a result of a resource crisis or because of political machinations.

Many factors contribute to these conflicts in the country:

- Natural resource use conflicts. It is evident that scarce natural resources, worsening environmental conditions and increased population have resulted in stiffer competition for land, pasture and water.
- Cattle rustling. Traditionally, pastoral communities raided each other for livestock to replenish herds depleted by severe droughts, disease or other calamities. Inter-communal rustling has become more frequent and severe, driven by political instigation, crime and availability of firearms.
- Land conflicts. Inadequacies in provisions on ownership, control and usage of land within the constitution have precipitated conflicts.
- Politically instigated ethnic clashes. First experienced with the advent of multiparty democratic elections in 1991, politically instigated ethnic violence remains the most infamous source of violent conflicts in Kenya. Attributed to political incitement, the politicians have used militia youth groups to carry out violent attacks on communities perceived to be opposing certain political agendas.

On 27 December, 2007, Kenya conducted its national presidential and parliamentary elections.

The voting process was accomplished without incident, though campaigning had been marked by a siege mentality, infused and mobilised by dangerously raw ethnic sentiments.

Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga, the two leading presidential candidates,

had previously been allies in the National Rainbow Coalition that successfully defeated the then ruling party, the Kenya African Union, in the 2002 elections. Soon after the elections, this alliance dissolved. During the constitutional referendum of 2005, Kibaki and Odinga campaigned on opposing sides, while Odinga still served in the divided government. Kibaki's sacking of Odinga and his allies from the government after the referendum defeat gave birth to Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement party which was active in the 2007 elections.

In the months and weeks before the voting day, opinion polls favoured Odinga and his party. Early results indicated that Odinga enjoyed a comfortable lead. However, this lead eroded, and tensions and anxiety in the country gave way to violence, as the days after the election passed without a winner being declared. Finally, on December 30, the Electoral Commission of Kenya announced that Kibaki had won, and within the hour a swearing-in ceremony was held. In Kenya, once the President is sworn into office, the legitimacy of his election can be contested only through the courts.

Following the announcement of the disputed presidential election results, Kenya exploded into unprecedented and widespread violence. This violence led to the near-collapse of the country.

## Civil society initiatives

Within 24 hours, Concerned Citizens for Peace was launched by five prominent Kenyan civil society peace workers and mediators.<sup>2</sup> CCP immediately

emerged as a rallying point for national peace and dialogue. At a time when the country was paralysed and shocked by violence, CCP occupied a crucial space, recognising at that early stage that dialogue was the only way out of the crisis. The initial focus was to plead publicly and privately with the political leadership to dialogue, while calling upon Kenyans to stop the violence and wanton destruction of property.

Kenya was pulled back from the brink in an astonishingly short amount of time. Well-coordinated official mediation by the African Union's Panel of

A web of interrelated groups emerged from the Forum with the word 'concern' introducing a common identity: Concerned Youth for Peace, Concerned Kenyan Writers, Concerned Artists and Celebrities for Peace, Concerned Women, etc. Each of these groups and their leaders were in turn linked to other networks. The Open Forum served to build cross-party and cross-ethnic solidarity, affirming a common Kenyan identity.

On January 9, 2008 the CCP released a document entitled 'Citizens' Agenda for Peace'. The document included a seven-point agenda with strategies for ending the crisis. Appearing as it did only ten days into the crisis, the document was remarkable for its

conclusions and recommendations and bore striking resemblance to the official four-point mediation agenda. The seven-point agenda included, among others, the building of trust and confidence between the political parties, election closure, and the formation of a government of national unity.

### Learning points

Several experiences in the Kenyan case were very specific and unique, such as the high-level mediation effort of Kofi Annan. Yet some lessons may inspire others:

- Years of preparation. Long-term preparation forms a significant portion of the capacity for rapid, effective crisis response. Capacity building by training for conflict resolution and peacebuilding will empower the broader civil society.
- An inclusive web of strategic actors. CCP's choice is not for 'control' or closed doors, but for inclusive participation, transparency and an appeal to people's better nature.
- Focus on multiple levels and actors. The connectivity generated in the Open Forum enabled CCP to intervene at multiple levels of the Kenyan society, bridging the lines of tribe, ethnicity and religion.
- Providing space and opportunity for peace. The CCP experience suggests that in conditions of chaos and crisis, people need space and time to think and act together. In the midst of violent conflict, space for community initiative and leadership must be created. The disputed elections resulted in a complete vacuum of leadership

and power. No one, it appeared, was in charge of Kenya.

- Leadership. This situation required that several individuals step forward, to fill that vacuum and form and mobilise a movement.

### Successful model

Kenya is a fascinating example of a bottom-up process to establish a peace architecture. It started in 1993 with an initiative by a group of women of the Wajir district of Kenya, bordering Somalia and Ethiopia. In that region there was a highly destructive cycle of violent conflict, resulting in the failure of state institutions to regulate conflict and provide security.

The women, including Core Team member of CCP Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, sensitised the population to the need for peace. They engaged the elders of the different clans, set up a mediation process between the clans and involved representatives of formal authority in the process, particularly the District Commissioner. In 1995 the Wajir Peace and Development Committee was formed, including heads of all government departments, representatives of the various peace groups, religious leaders, NGO representatives, chiefs and security officers. The success of the committee in bringing peace to the district and in maintaining the peace led to the spread of the model to other districts in northern Kenya.

In 2001, the government established a National Steering Committee (NSC) on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management. The Office of the President, through the NSC, embarked on a process for the development of a national policy on peacebuilding. Broad consultations took place, including after the post-election violence in 2008. The National Policy was published in September 2009.

At a point when violence was threatening to engulf the capital city of Nairobi, CCP worked with the Internal Security Ministry and mobilised for peace in Nairobi, leading to the formation of the Nairobi Peace Forum, the District Peace Committees and training and capacity building activities.

Those districts that already had peace committees during the clashes reported much less violence than others during the conflict, a fact that considerably raised the importance of enhancing local capacities for peace. Following the post-election violence in 2007, the

## **Kenya is a fascinating example of a bottom-up process to establish a peace architecture.**

Eminent Personalities, led by Kofi Annan, culminated in the National Peace and Reconciliation Accord signed on February 28, 2008, after five weeks of marathon negotiations.

The official mediation process of Kofi Annan is well-known. Less well-known are the initiatives undertaken by many civil society groups, individuals, media personalities, artists, business and religious leaders in an effort to end the violence. CCP helped to rally the country toward dialogue and negotiations. In its initial media appearances, CCP appealed to all Kenyans to halt the violence and called for calm, peace and dialogue throughout the country. In a bold, but potentially risky move at the initial press conference, the CCP founders invited anyone interested in peace and in saving Kenya to come to their location, Serena Hotel and join the group.

As a result of this appeal, the Open Forum was born on 1 January, 2008. Its daily morning sessions became the meeting place for members of the peacebuilding community, leaders of civil society groups, representatives of the private sector, reporters from the media, politicians and professionals from a variety of disciplines, all expressing their concerns and all seeking to help.

Working committees were formed on Humanitarian Response, Media, Community Mobilisation, Resource Mobilisation and High Level Dialogue. Committee members assumed responsibility to harvest ideas and suggestions from the people gathered daily at the Forum, helping to translate effusive discussions into focused action.

National Accord and Reconciliation Act 2008 recommended the establishment of District Peace Committees in all of Kenya's districts.

### Peace architecture

Based on the experiences of similar structures in South Africa, after the end of apartheid, and Ghana, Kenya is developing a Peace Infrastructure. The Local Peace Committees that existed in South Africa between 1991 and 1994 contributed towards containing the spiral of violence. Ghana has experienced many conflicts during the last decades and decided to establish an 'Architecture for Peace' in 2005. The National Peace Council played a major role in ensuring peaceful elections in 2008 and a smooth transfer of power.

The vision of the National Policy on Peacebuilding and Conflict Management is 'a peaceful and stable Kenya' with the mission to 'promote sustainable peace through a collaborative institutional framework between state and non-state actors'.


The policy proposes a peace architecture with the following structure:

A National Peace Commission (NPC), with thirteen commissioners, one from each province and five others, representing among others women, youth and civil society, all with a national reputation. The work of the NPC shall be guided by bipartisanship and independence.

- A National Peace Forum, to be constituted as a platform for consultation and cooperation by all peace actors and stakeholders.
- Provincial Peace Fora, to be constituted as a platform for consultations and coordination at the provincial levels.
- District Peace Committees, hybrid institutions that bring together synergies between traditional and formal mechanisms for conflict resolution.
- An NPC Secretariat, to be the management arm of the Commission.<sup>3</sup>

The Peace Councils in Ghana and Kenya consist of highly respected persons of great integrity who are capable of bridging political divides. In both countries, the Peace Councils have helped to prevent or reduce violent conflict. The approach of a Peace Infrastructure proved its impact in South Africa in the beginning of the 1990s and in Kenya and Ghana during recent elections. Infrastructure for Peace is a positive, inclu-

sive and participatory approach with a great potential that ought to be followed by many more countries.

In the second half of 2010 a proposal was launched for a 'Global Peace Building Strategy', including the objective to build national Infrastructures for Peace in ten countries by 2014.<sup>4</sup> 

1 George Wachira from Nairobi Peace Initiative – Africa (NPI-Africa) has documented the story well in *Citizens in Action: Making Peace in the Post-Election Crisis in Kenya – 2008*. CCP, NPI-Africa and GPPAC; see <http://bit.ly/KanyaCCP>

2 Ambassador Bethuel Kiplagat, a renowned diplomat, former Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and chief mediator for Somalia. General (Retired) Daniel Opande, a veteran of UN

Peacekeeping in Namibia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

General (Retired) Lazaro Sumbeiywo, former Chief of Staff of the Kenyan Army, chief mediator for Sudan.

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi, an experienced peace-building trainer and mediator and founding member of the Wajir Peace and Development Committee.

George Wachira, Senior Research and Policy Advisor and former Executive Director of Nairobi Peace Initiative-Africa, with 18 years of peacebuilding experience in conflict settings in Africa. The founding group of CCP represented a combined compliment of unique multi-level skills, experiences and approaches to conflict and crises.

3 More on this issue: *Infrastructures for Peace*; Working Paper GPPAC, July 2010, <http://www.gppac.net/page.php?id=1#par2544>

4 *Global Peace Building Strategy*, by Scilla Elworthy and Paul van Tongeren; see [www.worldpeacefestival.org](http://www.worldpeacefestival.org)



PHOTO: AP PHOTO/KAREL PRINSLOO

*A man and his two boys speak to paramilitary police that protect them after overnight ethnic fighting in the Mathare slum in Nairobi.*



# The road to Jaffna

During the 26 years of war, the road between southern Sri Lanka and Jaffna in the north was nearly always closed. During different periods, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) controlled different parts of it. Many bloody battles were fought there, and long stretches of the road were mined. About seven months after the Sri Lanka government had proclaimed its victory over the LTTE, the road was opened for civilian traffic.

Half a year later, I was going by car to Jaffna together with a couple of Sri Lankan friends. On the way Anjali got a text message from London.

– My uncle wants me to say a prayer for him in the Murugan temple in Nalur, she said.

I looked, surprised, at her. Anjali is a Sinhalese Buddhist. Now she told me that her uncle is a Hindu, born in Jaffna. When the war broke out, the uncle and his whole family escaped to London. From there they followed Anjali's first trip back to Jaffna after the war in a number of text messages.

In order to fulfil the wish of Anjali's uncle, we got up before dawn and went to the temple. Anjali dropped a coin in a big offertory box. The priest came by and she told him her uncle's name. At first she stayed shyly in the background, but smiling Jaffna inhabitants beckoned her to step forward.

When we came out from the temple, the city had woken up. I thought of what

I had heard about an interreligious ceremony that had been planned to be held just here on the anniversary of the end of the war. On their way here, people had been threatened, and many had turned back home. Those who had still gone on to the temple area had found it surrounded by military and police. Everybody had been registered by the police. A priest had been taken to interrogation at the military headquarters.

If the ceremony had taken place, it would have been an opportunity for the participants to remember their dear ones, who were killed in the war. I suppose that is why it had been stopped. In many other places in the country, military parades and ceremonies were held that day in honour of the soldiers that were killed. But the loved ones of the Jaffna inhabitants were not fallen soldiers. From the victor's perspective, they had died on the wrong side of the war. A memorial ceremony for them was not tolerated.

At the Elephant Pass, the entrance to Jaffna, there is a monument of victory: Sri Lanka is held up by hands and guarded by lions (singha = lion). Not far from it is another monument in the form of an authentic bulldozer decorated with flower garlands. Engraved in stone is a text about how Corporal Gamini Kularathne from the Singha regiment sacrificed his life here by going alone with hand grenades towards

## SRI LANKA – BACKGROUND

The Sri Lankan Civil War was a conflict between the government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), a separatist militant organisation also known as the Tamil Tigers. Their aim was to create an independent Tamil state in the north and east of the island. An estimated 80,000–100,000 people were killed in the 26 year long war. In May 2009, the Sri Lankan military defeated the Tamil Tigers.

The largest ethnic group in the country is the Sinhalese, composing approximately 74 per cent of the 21 million inhabitants. The Tamils make up about 18 per cent of the population and are concentrated in the north, east, central and western provinces.

About 70 per cent of the population is Buddhists, who are distributed across most parts of the island except in the North. Hindus constitute about 15 per cent and are concentrated in north, east, and central high lands, though large populations also exist in the city of Colombo.

Source: [www.wikipedia.org](http://www.wikipedia.org)

the bulldozer, which “ruthless LTTE terrorists” had loaded with explosives. I remember the photo in the newspaper showing Gamini Kularathne's mother putting flowers here.

While a mother stops at the burned out remnants of a bulldozer to mourn her fallen son, other mothers are denied the right to express their grief in public. Although the road is open and people intermingle, there are few real meetings between Tamils and Sinhalese, as the latter often come as soldiers, or have recourse to soldiers. Thus, the present politics and militarism strengthen the cleavages between the peoples. But it could be different. Anjali's personal history, her prayer in the temple and the friendliness she met are in all their simplicity hopeful signs of the conditions for peace. However, far more concrete measures are needed to create real peace and reconciliation.



PHOTO: ANNA ÅKERLUND

Bypassers stop at a burnt out bulldozer in Jaffna to pay their respect to a fallen soldier. Other victims are mourned in silence.

Anna Åkerlund  
Translated by Kristina Lundqvist

# LPI News

## Africa in focus at the Göteborg Book Fair

The big Göteborg Book Fair in Sweden in September had Africa as its theme this year. Close to a 100,000 visitors were counted, and no less than 44,000 of them visited the vibrant 'International Square', where LPI, together with some 50 NGOs, provided book displays and mini-seminars. LPI's presentations included religious perspectives on the arms trade, the river Nile as a source of development and/or conflict, and prospects for post-referendum Sudan.



Former Archbishop KG Hammar and Elisabeth Sandlund, editor at the Swedish daily Dagen, discussed challenges related to the growing arms trade. The seminar was arranged by LPI, the Swedish ecumenical campaign the Global Week of Justice and the Gothenburg Process.

Invited guest speakers were Moses Monday John, Executive Director for the Sudanese peacebuilding organisation Sonad, and the researchers Yacob Arsano from Addis Ababa University together with Cyril Obi from the Nordic Africa Institute in Uppsala. LPI colleagues Linda Forsberg and Malin Brenk, and Lena Boberg from the Swedish Mission Council discussed the achievements of LPI in Sudan, Somalia and DR Congo.

## New agreements and partnerships

In the past two years LPI has been deepening its relations with Addis Ababa University (AAU) in Ethiopia through cooperation along the lines of secondment, joint research and direct campus peace interventions (through Sustained Dialogue with the student Peace Club). A Memorandum of



LPI staff from Uppsala, Khartoum, Nairobi and Addis Abeba met with colleagues from the DRC office in Bukavu for a three-day workshop.

Understanding signed by the president of the university and LPI in September 2010 aims at "academic and institutional cooperation in order to build the capacity of AAU academia and student clubs in conflict transformation, theory and practice".

It is further projected that the partnership will enhance AAU's role in promoting tolerance and dialogue within the university as well as in the Ethiopian society. Six areas of collaboration have been identified, and currently there is funding for activities within three of the areas, while fundraising is required for the other three.

Similarly, in separate agreements with the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Switzerland, and the European Commission, LPI has received new funding for its conflict transformation work in Somalia. Main partner on the ground in Somalia is the Mogadishu-based Somalia Peace Line.

## Participatory Action Research in focus as LPI meets in Congo

Early November, LPI staff from Uppsala, Khartoum, Nairobi and Addis Abeba met with colleagues from the DRC office in Bukavu for a three-day workshop aimed at further developing LPI's Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. Although all programmes engage in the PAR approach to its conflict transforma-

tion work, the DRC team and its local partners in Bukavu and Goma have developed particular experience in the Kivu provinces.

## London – global conference on arms trade

The Gothenburg Process, a faith-based network for disarmament (see New Routes no 3/2010 and other back issues), arranged an international conference on the arms trade in London 28-31 October 2010, the so-called Gothenburg IV. The purpose was to share information and case studies from various continents and to search for effective ways to work, particularly with the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), which is in the making.

Among the participants from all continents except Australia were representatives from various churches and ecumenical bodies but also the interfaith organisation Religions for Peace. Particular attention was given to the ongoing process on a global ATT, which many participants suggested should be "robust" and comprehensive. Also small arms and ammunition need to be included in the treaty and not just conventional arms.

In a special session, the conference met with the Executive Committee of the European Council of Religious Leaders (part of Religions for Peace) to



explore various religious perspectives on the arms trade and how to work towards a culture of peace.

LPI is one of four partners in the Gothenburg Process, along with the Christian Council of Sweden, the Swedish Mission Council and the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation. For more information see: [www.gothenburgerprocess.org](http://www.gothenburgerprocess.org)

### LPI board member heads the ecumenical UN-office

Margareta Grape, a member of LPI's board, and Director of International Affairs at the Church of Sweden, has been appointed new representative of the World Council of Churches (WCC) to the UN. She will start in early 2011 as the coordinator of the WCC-run United Nations Liaison Office in New York. The newly formed ACT Alliance will coordinate its advocacy work in the UN with the WCC.

### New member of LPI board

Dr. André Karamaga, General Secretary of the Nairobi-based All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), has been appointed as a new member of the



Karamaga served as head of the Africa desk at the World Council of Churches in Geneva.

LPI board of directors. He replaces Bishop Mvume Dandala, who also was his predecessor at the AACC. Prior to taking up the position in Nairobi, Dr.

### Staff changes

#### Uppsala

LPI has welcomed Amanda Ree, replacing Jody Henderson during her parental leave, Charlotte Booth and Per Stenfeldt. Charlotte, who worked for LPI some years back, replaced Kristina Lundborg as Programme Advisor from October 2010.



*Per Stenfeldt.*

Per, new Finance Officer in LPI's administration and finance team, comes from a position as the Head of Finance with an NGO in Stockholm.

#### Nairobi

Two new colleagues have joined the Nairobi team: Shamsia Ramadan as Communications Advisor and Editor for the Horn of Africa Bulletin and Ali Iman in the programme team. Abdi Ali Aden, LPI's very senior colleague in the Somalia programme, has left after six years to join the NGO Saferworld.

#### Khartoum

Linda Forsberg, who has worked as an Uppsala-based advisory Resident Representative after leaving her position in Khartoum, finished her contract with LPI in November. In the vacancy period before a new Sudan Resident Representative is appointed, Programme Advisor Amanda Ree will be acting.

## Reviews and resources

### Civil society peacebuilding mapped and scrutinised

*Civil Society & Peacebuilding – A Critical Assessment. Edited by Thania Paffenholz. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO, 2010*

In early spring 2007, I (as an LPI intern) sat in a two-day meeting with a dozen reputable researchers in a downtown Chicago conference room. The group had gathered from all over the world to improve upon a framework developed by Swiss-based Thania Paffenholz and Christoph Spurr, which would basically answer what civil society contributes to peacebuilding and how well it does so. The discussions were engaging, experiences from different contexts were juxtaposed and as a consequence, the analytical tool was further sharpened. The participants left Chicago with a common understanding of the framework and with a mission to investigate how the model corresponded to the realities in their respective geographical areas of expertise.

Three years later, I am sitting hunched over the finished product, *Civil Society & Peacebuilding – A Critical Assessment*, eager to find out whether the mission was accomplished. However, before making any conclusive remarks, an overview of the content is in order.

Part 1 lays out the theoretical foundation for the book and places particular emphasis on the historical and conceptual development of the term "civil society". With a notion that bears so many different meanings in various literatures and contexts, the editor has wisely taken precaution to ensure that the reader is well-versed in the jungle of conceptualisations. Thus, the theoretical part consists of four chapters that

carefully build up towards the main analytical framework. The framework itself is based upon a functional understanding of civil society rather than an actor-oriented one; in the latter, one concentrates on the performance and features of civil society actors, whilst in the former, the focus is on the actual functions that civil society performs.

Paffenholz describes the advantage of the functional approach in these words: "it provides the opportunity to identify what is needed prior to an analysis of who has the potential to fulfil these functions ..." (p. 429). So which functions do civil society perform when they are working towards peacebuilding? The authors suggest seven: Protection, Monitoring, Advocacy, In-group socialisation, Social cohesion, Inter-mediation and Service delivery. In addition, the framework includes three elements: context, assessment – in particular the relevance and effectiveness of the functions measured against the context and peacebuilding objectives in the different various conflict phases – and conclusions.

This comprehensive model is then applied in eleven world-spanning case studies which are provided in Part 2, with LPI having made a small contribution in the case on Somalia. For peacebuilding practitioners, Part 2 is a small treasure chest of knowledge of what civil society colleagues around the world have endeavoured to do on an aggregated country-level – and this is a real contribution. It allows the reader to not just learn about scattered projects here and there, but one gets a synthesised and comprehensive picture of the contribution on a national, cumulative level. Peace researchers will undoubtedly be impressed by the uniform-



ity in which the data is presented, which makes it easier to generalise across cases and build upon for future research.

Part 3 makes a structured comparison of the seven peace-building functions across the cases and reveals very interesting, and sometimes unexpected, findings. For example, while inter-group social cohesion (essentially bridging of divides between adversary groups) is one of the most commonly performed functions, it is also one of the least effective as they are designed today. Moreover, the third section identifies enabling and disabling factors for civil society peacebuilding; looking at factors such as the behaviour of the state, the freedom of the media and the role of donor engagement

So, back to those promised closing remarks on the study. For too long it was simply assumed that civil society's involvement in peace processes was essential, but exactly what it was most suited to perform and how or why were questions that remained unanswered. Civil Society & Peacebuilding contributes to filling this critical knowledge gap. It strengthens the case for civil society engagement by providing empirical support for such assertions, while at the same time pointing out where the performance has been weak. The functional framework has really drawn out novel and rich empirical material on civil society peacebuilding that is likely to evoke new research questions, and thus further cement this research agenda on the peace and conflict research scene. Mission accomplished!

Hannah Tsadik

LPI Programme Advisor with focus on Ethiopia

## Religion and politics – friends and foes in Africa

*Holy Warriors, Infidels, and Peacemakers in Africa*, by Jacob Tesfai. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010

Yacob Tesfai has entered an ambitious project with his book *Holy Warriors, Infidels, and Peacemakers in Africa*, as he analyses the relationship between religion and politics in the older and more contemporary history of the continent.

Tesfai's main thesis seems to be that the role of religions and religious differences and tensions has been under-analysed in the conflicts of post-colonial Africa. He therefore implies that religious actors and values have not been sufficiently mobilised in the attempts to prevent or mitigate them.

The book looks at the different regions of Africa. Tesfai credibly documents the heavy influence of religion in the, at times, savage conflicts. The deepest analysis of the relationship between religion and politics is made around the Horn of Africa. Tesfai shows that conflicts do not only arise between religions, but perhaps more fiercely within religious traditions. While being true in many African conflicts, the case of Somalia illustrates clearly the relationship between internal and external forces that influence both politics and religious interpretations of one religious tradition.

The author does not limit himself to looking at religion as fuelling conflicts. He looks at efforts of applying religion in conflict prevention and peacebuilding when its deep spiritual, moral and social potential is mobilised. Examples include St. Egidio's involvement in Mozambique, the role of Sudan Ecumenical Forum and Sudan Inter-Religious Council in the Sudanese conflict, the courageous actions by the "Imam and the Pastor" in Nigeria, and the heroic interventions by the Sierra Leone Interreligious Council in the Sierra Leonean conflict. Tesfai further presents three continental

bodies with different structures and multi-religious peace-building mandates.

Two observations about the book: Firstly, when Tesfai on p. 70 claims that "...religious schools that were few in the past are now becoming almost normal", I have to question how he defines the thousands of schools throughout Africa run by missionaries. Is there a slight one-sidedness that Muslim schools are sectarian and Christian schools are neutral? In other parts of the book there is a similar tendency of seeing religious conflicts linked to the expansion of Islam in Africa, while being relatively silent about the Christian expansion in the same continent.

This brings me to the second observation: When writing about religion and politics, it is difficult to remain neutral. The book is clearly written by a Christian scholar. This is not a problem, as long as this premise has been stated by the author. Tesfai describes his academic and professional history, but he could probably have been clearer in stating his vantage point for his very valuable narratives and analysis.

Does Tesfai succeed in his ambitious project? What can be put in 160 pages is, of course, of limited scope, but his book is a useful and valuable start of a research process that should be further encouraged. The book is well written, and is highly recommended for scholars, religious practitioners and politicians.

Stein Villumstad

Deputy Secretary General, Religions for Peace

## Peacebuilding vs. pacification

*From Pacification to Peacebuilding. A Call to Global Transformation* by Diana Francis. Pluto Press: London and New York 2010

Diana Francis, is a long-time activist and practitioner with the Committee for Conflict Transformation Support. Her arguments are mainly addressed to fellow peacemakers and campaigners and built around the understanding that "positive peace means far more than the ending of war. It presupposes a worldview that sees the well-being of others as interwoven with our own" (p. 166). The solidarity movement taught her "that 'struggle' was not necessarily being applied in ways or with aims that coincided with our values, and that the discourse of justice and liberation were often used in pursuit of exclusive nationalist and separatist agendas that went against the needs of ordinary people" (p. 2).

"Our values", however, does by no means imply imposing dominant values of hegemonic states and cultures upon others. Rather, "the only way to promote the observance of human rights and political participation is by demonstrating unfailing respect for them, through the exchange of ideas and steady, persistent, respectful persuasion. This must be done with due humility, on the basis of human equality rather than of assumed superiority." (p. 175). Diagnosing that "the culture of violence poisons all our societies" (p. 69), Francis maintains, "where there is no peace to keep, peacekeeping cannot work" (p. 100). The dominant approach to conflict mediation is no solution: to pacify, instead of building lasting peace, is in the long run part of the problem. Hence, Francis purports that "the only real protection is to demilitarise minds and societies" (p. 101). The challenge is to work at the interface between power politics and conflict transformation by tapping into "those aspects of a particular culture that tend towards respect, compassion and cooperation, and to re-examine those areas that encourage cruelty and glorify violence". (p. 106).

Current initiatives to bring peace sow further violence: "The presence of occupying armies ... normalises violence and gives it a respectable face" (p. 100). Francis is nonetheless painfully aware that doctrines like the Responsibility to Protect cannot be dismissed lightly. She acknowledges the challenge to walk a tightrope guided by the desire to build lasting peace, while at the same time reducing violence with at times even violent means, to force notorious perpetrators into negotiations (which for her includes the recognition of the United Nations agencies as potential allies, even though often abused by the interests of individual states). This latent tension, if not dilemma, makes this volume a credible and thought-provoking read and prevents an easy dismissal of the concerns and motives presented as being out of touch with reality or naïve.

As the preface concludes, positive peace is not separate from economic and social justice, human rights and environmental protection. Francis helps us, to understand why we need peacebuilding instead of pacification as a step towards such a future, although she misses to devote the necessary energy and space to these related aspects which she rightly identifies as complementing dimensions. Unfortunately, in our current world there is plenty of scope for more volumes to be published, adding further value to this one.

Henning Melber

*Executive Director of The Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation and  
Research Associate with the University of Pretoria.*

### Everybody's and nobody's water

*Water and Conflict: Incorporating Peace Building into Water Development* by Jason Gehrig with Mark M. Rogers Edited by Dennis Warner, Chris Seremet, and Tom Barnat. Catholic Relief Services – United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2009

The overall presentation in this book is enriched with images, boxes, figures and tables which obviously help a wide readership to clearly grasp the messages without much difficulty. The first part deals with the background to water related conflicts and cooperation, while the second part expounds on peace building principles in the arena of water practice.

The vivid stories graphically speak about the challenges and resilience in the water arena. The anecdotes of "water well widows" of Somalia, where people die vying for the scarce water; of "the water revolt" in Cochabamba, Bolivia, against a soaring effect of privatisation of their water; of "the marches of Indian farmers" in protest against the dwindling water resources due to the expansion of bottling industries are all lively stories from different continents.

The Berber and Bedouin practices of water utilisation, management and protection determine water rights on the basis of units of time rather than units of volume. This traditional method can be useful for today's researchers and policy makers. The mechanism has helped the two communities to harmonise their mutual interests over the scarce water resources by handling any conflict on a continual basis.

The Andean world outlook on water, on the other hand, conceives water as a 'living being'. According to this conception 'water allows the integration of living beings and the articulation of nature and human society'. The authors also depict the practical side of the Andean view that 'water is everybody's and nobody's', hence its distribution should be carried out equitably and reasonably according to the needs and cyclical availability of water.

The UN Committee for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in November 2002 declared that access to water is an essential matter of human rights. The authors expound the positive implications of the declaration emphasising the ratification of the document by 160 countries. This act will have to be taken as more than a symbolic commitment and obligation to the world community at large.

The book covers an impressive number of cases and stories for the present study. The coverage, content and various illustrations give overwhelming evidence of water being an arena of cooperation or a place where people strive to cooperate. The inevitable tension (which may not necessarily be a conflict syndrome) does not and should not pin down water to a source of conflict..

Yacob Arsano

*Associate professor of Political Science &  
International Relations, Addis Ababa University*

### Separate, unequal, violent

*Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies.* Edited by Frances Stewart. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008

In a comprehensive study of 126 armed conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa from 1980 to 2005, Sakiko Fukuda-Parr and associates concluded that among the risk factors for such conflicts, two in particular were "relevant more consistently than other factors". These two structural conditions, judged more significant than chronic poverty or extreme natural resource dependence among others, were (a) demographic "bulges" of unemployed, disaffected young people, and (b) "horizontal inequality", that is, inequalities between identity groups with ethnic, religious or linguistic ties.\*

The term "horizontal inequality" (HI for short) may be new to some readers – and is not without conceptual and explanatory difficulties – but it refers to inequalities in political participation, economic and social aspects, and cultural status between culturally defined or identity groups. It is associated most frequently with British scholar Frances Stewart, editor of the volume under review.

In this book, Stewart and her colleagues make a solid argument for the significance of such inequalities and illustrate their relevance and analytical utility across a variety of specially commissioned case studies. They present four hypotheses, three of which they conclude are supported by the cases (pp 299-300). These are: "(a) Conflict is more likely where there are significant political or economic HIs, or both"; (b) Political mobilization is especially likely where there are consistent HIs (both political and economic HIs run in the same direction)"; and (c) Lack of cultural recognition and equity, or cultural status HIs, will be provocative, while cultural inclusion will help sustain peace." (They cite insufficient evidence to sustain a claim about mobilization and possibly conflict being more likely where HIs are widening).

By limiting "vertical HIs" to income distribution and Gini coefficients, Stewart and colleagues seem to give unduly short shrift to class and caste. And for a Latin American case such as that of Guatemala, one must note that the economically marginalized, politically excluded and culturally disrespected indigenous peoples were far more victim than protagonist in that country's severe armed violence.

That said, in a world in which so many violent conflicts

of recent vintage have been at least partially ethnic and/or religious and regional in character, shining light on “horizontal inequalities” seems a significant contribution to analysis. One might consider, for example, the Kenyan post-election violence of 2007-2008.

HIs also have important policy and practice implications. As Stewart argues, to prevent and mitigate conflict, both direct and indirect action is needed to address HIs. These inequalities nonetheless seldom figure in recommendations from major donors, and as politically sensitive sore spots, they are often willfully ignored by national governments.

NGOs, as Stewart rightly points out (pp 315-316), tend to reduce at least some HIs by “providing direct services to deprived areas”. A key question that remains for such organizations is whether they/we give adequate attention to HIs in doing sound conflict analysis, and whether they/we should not be doing more in the arena of policy work on ethnic, racial, religious and regional equity.

Tom Bamat

Senior Technical Advisor, Justice and Peacebuilding,  
Catholic Relief Services, Member of LPI's Board of Directors

\* The Conflict-Development Nexus: A Survey of Armed Conflicts in Sub-Saharan Africa 1980-2005. Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Maximilian Ashwill, Elizabeth Chiappa and Carol Messineo. *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 4(1), 2008, pp 6-22.

## DRC: Macro-level is not enough

*The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding*, by Séverine Autesserre. *Cambridge Studies in International Relations*, Cambridge University Press, 2010

The conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is acknowledged as the largest ongoing humanitarian crisis in the world and as the deadliest conflict since World War II. There is no question that the scale of the humanitarian challenge in the DRC is extraordinary. To their credit, the international community has in fact responded: the DRC hosts one of the largest UN peacekeeping forces in the world, the International Criminal Court selected the DRC as its historic first case for review, and the European Union mobilized its first ever European-led peacekeeping force in the DRC. Nonetheless, the road to stability in the DRC has been elusive.

Séverine Autesserre's important and timely new book examines how, despite deep involvement in the country, the international community has had limited success at establishing stability in the DRC, let alone a pathway to durable peace.

Drawing on more than 330 interviews and a year and a half of field research, Autesserre demonstrates that the violence in the Congo is fixed at the local level – fundamental micro-level tensions over land and access to political power – while the dominant peacebuilding culture is instead fixed on the national or macro-level. It is local peacebuilding that is the missing link in Congo, argues Autesserre. However, actors working to build peace in the country have, up to this point, approached micro-level peace work as if it were unknowable, unimportant, and unmanageable.

The author argues that the “toolkit” employed by the international community in the DRC is unfit for how the conflict itself is actually shaped. She explains that this disparity between problem and prescription is rooted in the dominant culture of peacebuilding, arguing that the international community often maneuvers within an ingrained and relatively

inflexible operating culture that determines the parameters of acceptable action. These assumptions and standard operating procedures work to determine what is considered, what is viewed as possible, and then what is ultimately determined to be the natural course of action. Too often, Autesserre argues, we are focused on macro-level solutions, such as national elections and other perceived panaceas for transitions to peace.

In *Trouble with the Congo*, Autesserre clearly illustrates how in the DRC, tensions are brewed at local level and the dominant approach misses the point and therefore only ends up jeopardizing well-intentioned macro-level efforts. She does not disregard the need for macro-level efforts but instead convincingly underlines the need for international actors to reevaluate the assumptions of violence and intervention.

Amanda Ree

Acting Programme Advisor, LPI

## “Neither your justice nor mine”

*Walk with Us and Listen, Political Reconciliation in Africa*. Charles Villa-Vicencio. Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press 2009

What can be a better start to this review than a quote from former Archbishop Desmond Tutu's foreword: “This book reflects the importance of engaging one's adversaries in dialogue and participatory decision making.”

That is it. Charles Villa-Vicencio, a well-known and experienced academic and practitioner, shares his perspectives in this comprehensive book. Bishop Tutu, in charge of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the 1990s, where Charles Villa-Vicencio served as the research director, boils down the message in another excellent formulation: “For justice to prevail, it can be neither your justice nor mine. It needs to be a form of justice that unites us.”

In this book Villa-Vicencio stays with the topic to which he has devoted so much of his personal life and career: political reconciliation. Almost ten years back he visited Sweden and gave a lecture that was published by LPI as *The art of reconciliation*. This perspective is clearly underlined again. The process of reconciliation is neither easy to prescribe, nor predict in terms of outcome. But things do happen, and this is what the book is about, with reflections and accounts from various African processes where the author has often been personally engaged.

Following a theoretical prologue, there are three chapters on peacebuilding and negotiation practices in an African context and five chapters on transitional justice and political reconciliation in a more specific way.

The author's mission is to make clear that this concept and practice is important to Africa and to the world. Political reconciliation has not received enough attention compared to what Villa-Vicencio labels as its “cousins”: conflict transformation, restorative justice and mediation. In the final chapter, *Seeking consensus*, he argues that there must be room for both the International Criminal Court and the traditional African mechanisms for justice and reconciliation.

Whether you have read earlier books by Villa-Vicencio or not, don't miss this one. It has an important global message *Out of Africa*, so walk with him and listen ...

Tore Samuelsson

Communications Director, LPI



# Watch out for the new New Routes!

In order to make New Routes more accessible to more people, from next year it will be published as an electronic quarterly journal. It will be sent to subscribers free of charge as a PDF-file, and you will also be able to download earlier issues from LPI's website [www.life-peace.org](http://www.life-peace.org). Furthermore, from next year it will be possible to download separate articles, a service that has been asked for.

For those who still prefer hard copies, New Routes will be available in a printed version that you can subscribe to: 4 issues (one year): € 65 \$ 90

If you want to make your own printout of the electronic journal, of course you are free to do so.

As you see, the New Routes issue that you are holding in your hands has turned into four-colour. That is the first step among the changes that New Routes will go through in the nearest future.

Make sure to send us your e-mail address, so you don't miss out to subscribe to the new electronic New Routes! In 2011 we plan to focus on, among other things, the role of the UN and the civil society since the death of Dag Hammarskjöld (Secretary-General 1953-61). Water as a source of conflict and co-operation is another theme we will take up. Together with you, we look forward to the coming issues!

*After 19 years at Sysslomansgatan 7, LPI has moved to new localities at Eddagatan 12, also in Uppsala. See full address on page 2.*

## LPI AND ITS PERIODICALS

**Life & Peace Institute**, (LPI) is an international and ecumenical centre based in Uppsala, Sweden, that supports and promotes non-violent approaches to conflict transformation through a combination of research and action, and hence contributes to the prevention and mitigation of violence as a precondition for peace, justice, and non-violent coexistence.

The Institute's conflict transformation work is based on an understanding that conflict is a natural part of societies that has the potential for both constructive and destructive change. It also builds on the premise that peace can only be achieved through the active involvement of the communities in conflict themselves.

LPI's operational focus is on Africa, and more specifically on the Central Africa and Horn of Africa regions. In addition to the head office in Sweden, LPI has programme offices in

Nairobi (Kenya), Bukavu (DRC), and Khartoum (Sudan) and staff working with the Addis Ababa University in Ethiopia.

LPI publishes two periodicals: the quarterly journal **New Routes** (see above) and the monthly electronic newsletter **Horn of Africa Bulletin**, covering the African countries of the Horn. Free online subscription.

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