

# BEYOND PEACEBUILDING: CHALLENGING A CRITICAL MAINSTREAM

ASPR REPORT NO. 3/2019



# INTRODUCTION

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### Impressum

**Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR)**  
Rochusplatz 1, 7461 Stadtschlaining, Austria  
Phone: +43 3355 2498, Fax: +43 3355 2662, E-Mail: [aspr@aspr.ac.at](mailto:aspr@aspr.ac.at)  
[www.aspr.ac.at](http://www.aspr.ac.at) |  ASPR\_Schlaining |  ASPR.Schlaining  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.23794/REP.012019>

Fotos: Renate Graf

### Beyond peacebuilding: challenging a critical mainstream

Peacebuilding has come of age. The field has reached a degree of ripeness that offers an immense diversification of approaches and topics. In the true sense of the word, peacebuilding is comprehensive. Comprehensiveness indeed was the demand when the field as it is known today had been created in the early 1990s. However, comprehensiveness implies substantial practical challenges. It requires the development of implementation of broad workstreams, each with its specific processes of knowledge production. Elements such as DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration), SSR (Security Sector Reform), transitional justice or conflict mediation turned into playgrounds of expert knowledge which, in turn, transformed these overlapping elements into what could be called 'package deals'. While packages enable a comparably quick and professionalised programme development, they often fail to reflect and respond to the particular context and are, consequently, overwhelmed by the specific challenges of ongoing post-war transitional processes on the ground.

The problematique of peacebuilding technocracy did not remain unnoticed. Critical scholarly approaches, especially the so-called local turn, challenge the way in which peacebuilding knowledge is produced and applied across contexts. These critical assessments, however, fail to address the perhaps most difficult task: how it could be possible to overcome the prescriptiveness and decontextualisation inscribed in the technocratic knowledge of the peacebuilding 'packages'. This might not be a simple shortcoming. Instead, we could have to face the unpleasant reality that peacebuilding as a critical, contextualised exercise is just not doable, or at least not likely given the prevalent structural and conceptual constraints.

The contemporary peacebuilding debate already seems to have reached this impasse. Lofty, but difficult to implement terms such as 'inclusion' get intertwined with a vast amount of applied research aiming at the provision of evidence for a wide range of highly particular situations. In defiance of such technocratic optimism, scholarly discourse pursues its assessment of persistent peacebuilding failure. Many things have been said about peacebuilding, and many contemporary debates give the feeling that they have been heard before. Despite – or because – of the impressive volume of empirical

studies done on peacebuilding issues, the field remains surprisingly weak on innovations.

Peacebuilding's conceptual impasse coincides with a structurally changing international environment. International offers on how to approach and to deal with armed conflict have significantly increased in recent years. A global marketplace of political change is at play that makes competing opportunities outside of the OECD countries available and often attractive for formerly reliable development partners. Peacebuilding's space is shrinking, politically, institutionally, structurally.

The interwovenness of these two factors – peacebuilding's conceptual impasse and shrinking space – put it into the focus of ASPR's 2018 summer academy held under the title 'Shrinking Space'. In a week of thorough conceptual discussion, young researchers from various professional backgrounds discussed how do we deal with this phenomenon of our shrinking space of action, the shrinking space, and to what extent do the approaches, strategies and options for action of state and non-state actors in the global north and south differ. As the title of the workshop – 'beyond peacebuilding' – suggests, participants were asked to think beyond the available, technocratic *as well* as critical mainstream, and to engage in three specific questions:

- Does externally supported peacebuilding have a future?
- How should international peace-political engagement change in order to be relevant in the future?
- How must new circumstances, such as strongly differentiating conflict contexts and rapidly changing international coalitions, be taken into account?

This report presents written contributions of eight young scholars addressing these questions from different angles. Two articles discuss conceptual and epistemological challenges peacebuilding might have to face to remain relevant. *Reimer Belschner* scrutinises the prevention focus that seems to experience a remarkable comeback in recent years. While moving on from the habitual debates on liberal approaches, however, prevention fails to provide appropriate answers as the focus on prevention does not make peacebuilding less opaque. In taking stock of peacebuilding scholarship, *Enrico Behne* suggests a stronger emphasis on anthropological approaches to overcome the decontextualised logic embedded in liberal peacebuilding.

Three further articles discuss issues of peace mediation. *Lena Merkle* carves out a particular 'Nordic' approach to peace mediation, which she assesses of being closely interlinked with particular national interests. *Lidiya Maidanova* challenges the mantra of impartial mediators and explores the opportunities of 'biased', partial peace mediation. *Frauke Seebass* looks at the German model of 'transformation partnerships'. Engaging with the example of Tunisia, she argues that transformation partnerships are highly dependent on local developments but, as she claims, it is perhaps precisely this embeddedness in context that adds value to other, more conventional instruments in peacebuilding.

The final three contributions discuss international peacebuilding missions along particular case studies. *Aida Šabić-Draganović* criticises the peacebuilding efforts in Bosnia Herzegovina because of its predominantly technocratic approach to democratisation, which is effectively resulting in over-bureaucratisation. *Stefanie Haring* analysis the multi-faceted approach to peacebuilding and democratisation – she calls this approach 'adaptive liberalism' – multilateral actors such as the United Nations and the European Union pursue in Liberia. *David Fussi* assesses the UN approach of political missions based on the example of Libya. The light-touch approach enables an unusually high level of impartiality but, in turn, has to accept an overall weak influence.

### Jan Pospisil

# LIBERAL PEACEBUILDING IS DEAD. PREVENTION IS NEXT

Reimar Belschner

The academic discussion of liberal peacebuilding is outdated. Simply studying UN peacekeeping missions or ad-hoc multilateral coalition peace operations misses the point. The ends and means of peacebuilding efforts – understood as all interventions aimed at ending violent conflict and fostering peace – have changed. Peacebuilding has evolved in the last decade and does no longer manifest in large-scale peace interventions aiming to transplant institutions like in the 1990s and 2000s. While military interventions and peacekeeping missions do still exist, they have given way to a new type of engagement with fragile and conflict-affected contexts. Day-to-day transformative action towards more peaceful societies has replaced large-scale societal transformation. Contemporary peacebuilding is characterised by an integration of peace with humanitarian and development action. In other words, there are still boots on the ground, but mainly on the feet of humanitarian, developmental and peace workers.<sup>1</sup> This essay examines this change in peacebuilding by analysing the conceptual development of peacebuilding and finding out what defines its new era.

## Liberal Peacebuilding is dead

The way we define peace has important implications for approaches to deal with conflict. We can define peace minimally, or with Galtung 'negatively', as the absence of violent conflict. Or we define peace comprehensively, as a social system that grants freedom and where conflicts are resolved non-violently. Different times have found different answers as to what peace is, how it can be achieved in the best way and whether external players have a role in it. Accordingly, peacebuilding interventions have taken different shapes and forms in the past.

Since the early 1990s, after the end of the bipolar world order, when violent conflicts were on the rise,<sup>2</sup> the most influential paradigm in peacebuilding has probably been 'liberal peacebuilding', as critics call it. Liberal peacebuilding is based on the idea that peace could be established by building democratic states founded on liberal ingredients like the rule of law, multi-party elections and human rights. In liberal

peacebuilding practice, this manifested in top-down attempts to transplant liberal institutions and systems irrespective of the contexts, often after military interventions to end the violence. Liberal peacebuilding found its conceptual blueprint in the report of UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali from 1992: his „Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peace-making and peace-keeping” defined how the UN dealt with conflict in the post-Cold War world. In this document, a three-phased structure of engagement with conflicts was introduced: peacemaking resolves the conflictive issues, peacekeeping preserves the fragile peace and peacebuilding rebuilds institutions and infrastructures after the conflict. In 1992, Boutros-Ghali coined peacebuilding as “post-conflict peacebuilding” to “support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.”<sup>3</sup> With its technical approach, the Agenda for Peace is part and parcel of the liberal peacebuilding model that operates on a linear cause-and-effect logic, where perceived problems could be fixed with the right institutional solution. In hindsight, liberal peacebuilding has only had limited success, because it did not establish the desired peaceful societies – even if such attempts did not always fail as radically as in the notorious cases of Afghanistan and Iraq. Most observers agree that after surges in the early and late 1990s the number and intensity of violent conflicts has been on the rise again since 2010 with a peak in 2014. The number of people fleeing from violence has constantly grown and stands at around 65 million at the end of 2017. Further, it is estimated that at least 1.5 billion people live in contexts where they are either affected by conflict or fragility.<sup>4</sup> Working towards 'peace' remains a global challenge and peacebuilding is still on the agenda of many states as well as multilateral and regional organisations.

## A changing conceptual landscape

To understand how peacebuilding in the 21st century evolved and what consequences it may have, we need to explore international cooperation more holistically. To this end, I will have a look at recent conceptual and strategic documents of relevant actors in international cooperation: the United

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1 For example, while UN peace-keeping budget 2018 is roughly \$6.7bn, the UN development organisations that directly contribute to peace work, UNDP and UNICEF, have a combined budget in 2018 \$10.8bn.

2 Cf. Pettersson/ Wallensteen (2015).

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3 Boutros Boutros-Ghali, „An Agenda for Peace,” II.21.

4 Fragility points to the poor political, social, economic, environmental and security conditions on the ground which lead to severe suffering, often caused by dysfunctional states that do not provide (sufficient) basic social services and safety and that are often on the brink of collapsing into violent conflict.

Nations (UN) as the most legitimate supranational player, the European Union (EU) as the most affluent regional organisation as well as the United Kingdom and Germany as countries with the fourth respectively third largest budgets in international cooperation and different historic relationships with the developing world. The high-level documents allow a bird's eye perspective on change, at the conceptual level but also at the level of implementation. In hierarchical organisational environments like international cooperation administration such documents are closely related to practice on the ground. Sometimes these strategies come out of a bottom-up process, putting in words what has changed on the ground. Sometimes change is top-down directed through these documents. In any case, millions of Euro are spent to achieve targets set along such guidelines.

The UN are the most important player in peacebuilding given its universal legitimacy. In 2015, following a participatory discussion process, the UN adopted the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Not commonly read as a peacebuilding document, the Agenda 2030 has, however, gained significant influence on how peacebuilding is done, because it aims at guiding the work of the majority of all organisations and actors engaged in international cooperation. The major change that the Agenda 2030 represents for international cooperation also shapes the development of peacebuilding in the 21st century: namely, the focus on the interconnectedness and dependency of peace and development. In the preamble of the Agenda it says: "There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development." In fact, the list of SDGs can be understood as a recipe to achieving comprehensive peace. The need for inclusive, transparent, effective and accountable institutions and the rule of law are portrayed as fundamental to both achieving the SDGs and to foster peace. In the spirit of the Agenda 2030, developmental work means working towards peace.<sup>5</sup>

The symbiosis of peacebuilding and development in interna-

tional cooperation was further strengthened and expressed in the UN's Sustaining Peace Agenda. On 27 April 2016, the General Assembly and the Security Council adopted similar resolutions on peacebuilding.<sup>6</sup> Concluding the 2015 review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, the resolutions outlined a new, ambitious approach to peacebuilding. All activities are seen as peacebuilding when they are "aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict". In other words, peacebuilding has become a long-term, continuous engagement at all stages of the conflict cycle - hence, the new term „sustaining peace“. This is more than a rebranding exercise, because emphasis is put on the prevention of violent conflict by tackling its root causes. Instead of managing conflicts when they turn violent, sustaining peace means every activity of the UN is either directly aimed at fostering peace or, while not explicitly designed for it, contributes to this goal. To this end, political, security and developmental actors should collaborate more closely.

A third document that represents and further promotes the UN's "shift away from managing and responding to crises and toward preventing conflict sustainably, inclusively, and collectively" stems from 2018. The UN and World Bank produced a study called "Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict", that emphasises two central components of the newly developing peacebuilding paradigm. First, the study stresses how difficult it is to build peace after violence has occurred. Hence, the main message: prevention is key. Secondly, the study strongly links conflict prevention with societal transformation. It is explored how guiding societies towards more inclusive and participatory systems through coordinated international efforts is preventative, because it tackles the structural causes of conflict. The study gives a list of promising areas for engagement to foster inclusion, like "dialogue, adapted macroeconomic policies, institutional reform in core state functions, and redistributive policies." While the plural in the study's title 'Pathways to Peace' illustrates the new understanding that various trajectories to a peaceful society are possible, the solutions of choice for the new UN Sustaining Peace Agenda are clear: fostering more inclusion and participation.

The EU's understanding of peacebuilding is similar to that

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<sup>5</sup> While the Agenda 2030 codified this understanding of peacebuilding, many actors had contributed towards it, e.g. the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States, the OECD and World Bank in the discussion on the post-2015 development agenda. See Mark Duffield's work on the security-development-nexus, e.g. Duffield (2007): Development, security and unending war: governing the world of peoples; or Duffield (2010): The liberal way of development and the development-security impasse: exploring the global life-chance divide.

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<sup>6</sup> A/RES/70/262 and S/RES/2282, both 2016. Following quotations are taken from there.

of the UN. This is not surprising, given that the EU is a vocal supporter of the UN Agenda 2030's commitment to development and peace and adopted it for its own foreign policy. The EU global strategy for European foreign and security policy from 2016 echoes the necessary shift to structural prevention of conflict by addressing root causes. However, the EU sets different priorities regarding the means and ends of peacebuilding engagement. The main objective of the new peacebuilding engagement seems to be, first and foremost, the EU's own security and prosperity "at home" that "depends on peace beyond". Increased efforts towards peace and development are understood as investment in the EU's own "vital interests". Regarding the means to do so, the EU also foresees long-term engagement to induce positive change and inclusive governance. Yet, the preferred language is "state and societal resilience", referring to the "ability to reform, thus withstanding and recovering from internal and external crises". Importantly, the EU's external action follows a "principled pragmatism" combining strategic reasoning with "idealistic aspiration to advance a better world." In other words, external action is shaped by a "dual nature" of security and development.

This move to securitise development – and thus peacebuilding – as well as to refer to self-interest in order to justify peace and development action, manifests itself even stronger in national strategies, like the ones from the United Kingdom (UK) and Germany. According to the UK Department for International Development's "Building Stability Framework" from 2016, all development aid is committed to "addressing the root causes of conflict and building stability" to enhance "national security". Strikingly, the word peace is barely used. Long-term stability through prevention has been the UK's main objective since 2011, when the government presented its foreign affairs strategy called "Building Stability Overseas". Stability is understood in a structural sense and is achieved through building "inclusive, accountable and transparent governance" that allows to "manage tensions peacefully." Like the UN's sustaining peace agenda or the EU's resilience approach, the UK's long-term stability endeavour follows a logic of prevention that sees institutional transformation necessary for that.

The German government prioritises stability as well. The federal government's policy guidelines on preventing crises, resolving conflicts and building peace from 2017 differentiate

between stability as short- or mid-term objective and societal transformation towards inclusive and participatory politics as a long-term goal of peace. Sharing the narratives of transformation with UN, EU and UK, the sense of pragmatism expressed in the guidelines is prominent: It is argued that for stability's sake, unapproved political orders often need to be accepted temporarily, because transformative processes take a long time. To that end, "stabilisation" efforts can be used to respond to and stop violence. In other words, "good enough peace" and stability efforts likely trump engagement in lengthy and complicated transformative processes. Perhaps it is a sign that the "Stabilisation Unit" of the Federal Foreign Ministry – outcome of an institutional review process in 2014 – has since inception received the highest budget increase (see also the article by Frauke Seebass in this volume).

### **Peacebuilding: A challenging future**

In recent years, we have clearly observed a conceptual change in peacebuilding. What does this change entail and what are some of the major challenges it provides?

Regarding its ends, peacebuilding today is even less a clearly defined activity in international politics as it was portrayed in the UN Agenda for Peace from 1992 and as applied in the 1990s and 2000s. On the one hand, with increased awareness of how interconnected and interdependent development and security as well as peace issues are, peacebuilding has often become synonymous with development efforts towards more inclusive and participatory systems. The objective of peacebuilding, framed as conflict prevention, is to prevent violence by accompanying the establishment of stable systems and societies. In order to get there, transformation needs to happen towards the factors that correlate with peaceful societies, first and foremost inclusive and participatory politics, social cohesion and responsive institutions.<sup>7</sup> This kind of structural prevention claims to tackle the structural or root causes of conflict through long-term comprehensive engagement. Already, a lot of what is considered peacebuilding occurs within long-term development cooperation. In practice, peacebuilding has become the standard approach to engage with fragile and conflict-affected contexts: more comprehensive and coordinated humanitarian, development and security work geared towards long-term peaceful development.

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<sup>7</sup> Most strongly emphasised and condensed in SDG 16.

On the other hand, this conceptual change towards prevention faces inherent challenges. Most importantly, the objectives of peacebuilding are also shaped by the pragmatism of *realpolitik*. The international community commits to preventing conflict by societal transformation in order to achieve long-term stability. At the same time, the past has shown that transformation processes tend to be conflictive and increase instability, especially in early phases, because they change power dynamics. In other words, there is a dilemma between transformation efforts on the one side and the objectives of conflict prevention, stability and order on the other. As a result, and visible in many strategies such as outlined by the EU, UK and Germany, the desire for stability and security will, in practice, likely take precedence over structural prevention and societal transformation. Processes of change may be controlled or cut short in favour of security interests,<sup>8</sup> leading to ‘political unsettlements’ that are stable, but not sustainable.<sup>9</sup> A pressure for pragmatism is also evident, when the UN justifies the prevention focus of peacebuilding by emphasising its cost-effectiveness in comparison to post-conflict engagement. Moreover, prevention is often seen as an alternative to intervention. Yet, peacebuilding with a focus on prevention is still an intervention with early warning and early action. In fact, it is this mode of intervention that risks or rather plans to mutate into a constant engagement. After all, it is now ‘sustaining’ rather than ‘building’ peace.<sup>10</sup>

Not only the ends, but also the means of peacebuilding have changed, the way in which peace interventions are conducted. The linear cause–effect problem-solving model of liberal peacebuilding has given way, at least in part, to a more complex idea of societal transformation and peace. Consequently, the focus lies now on shaping the means and processes, while the end-state is ideally open to context-specific conditions. The term ‘pathways to peace’ tries to illustrate this, as each society discovers its own trajectory. Interventions are increasingly perceived as political rather than technical, as local rather than programmatic. The added value of peacebuilding then lies in the political accompaniment to generate structured transformation processes and the

international attention it brings to sustain momentum. Moreover, peacebuilding interventions aim to be more inductive and bottom-up in their attempt to assist in a transformative process that allows for sustainable peace. The local context, rather than the ideal outcome, is the starting point of action. A more sophisticated toolbox helps to localise and contextualise peacebuilding efforts, following certain principles like resilience and inclusion. Inclusion describes a situation in which all relevant stakeholders are taken into account and have participated in governance and not only a fraction of them. Insofar, inclusion is more open than the concept of national ownership, mostly interpreted as participation of national governments. Resilience refers to the ability of a system to cope with change by channelling it and turning it into a constructive force instead of suffering from it. The resilience lens on conflict allows focusing on capacities that foster peace rather than on conflict drivers. This matters because the actions tackling conflict are different from those aiming at building peace. Also, the idea behind it is a specific kind of prevention: to reach a self-sustaining peace rather than just keeping the lid on violence by keeping conflict drivers in check and thereby merely achieving short-term stability. However, the new phase of peacebuilding means, in particular the localising and contextualising efforts, may be challenging to implement. For instance, to what extent will the intervening external actors accept local structures and processes, especially when those collide with their values and beliefs of what is right or wrong? Who defines ‘the local’? There is a real danger that the international community imposes external notions of what constitutes peace, like participation and gender equality etc., instead of having a meaningful dialogue to find out what the locally prevailing perceptions of peace and a good life are. Research by the Everyday Peace Indicator Project has shown that perceptions may differ significantly between the people on site and external actors.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, reading the strategies, external intervention appears to be the new normal. While peacebuilding starts with the local capacities and ideally allows for different ‘pathways’ to peace, the possibility that this can be successfully done without external accompaniment is not an option in any strategy.

### What next?

As the analysis of strategic documents has shown, the un-

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8 See Mac Ginty (2012): Against Stabilization for further details of this argument.

9 Cf. Bell/Pospisil 2017.

10 Cf. Jacobsen/Engells 2018: 365, 379.

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11 Mac Ginty/ Firchow 2014: 37.

derstanding of what peacebuilding is and how it should be done has evolved. Most clearly, the means have changed. The term peacebuilding has been broadened and encompasses now a variety of forms of international cooperation. Also, the conceptual toolkit has been sharpened with a focus on resilience, inclusion and local content. This seems to be a pragmatic response to the perceived challenges of liberal peacebuilding and a consequent adaption of peacebuilding interventions. Yet, there is no sign of a retreat from interventionism per se. In fact, peacebuilding is portrayed as more needed than ever.

It is more difficult to answer whether the ends of peacebuilding have changed too. While peacebuilding efforts have become endeavours of prevention, there is a dilemma of transformation versus stability. On the one hand, peacebuilding interventions aim to fundamentally change societies, in order to prevent violent conflict. On the other hand, stabilising order to reduce violence immediately can prevent conflict and provide stability too.<sup>12</sup> In other words, perhaps the objectives of peacebuilding by liberal democracies moved from establishing a comprehensive peace for others to seeking “good enough peace” and stability in order to provide security and to save the liberal order for themselves.<sup>13</sup> The security priorities of industrialised countries may in practice clash with the transformative agenda. The challenge will thus be to prevent violence whilst allowing the societies in conflict to constructively transform their conflict and enable them to change and development at their own terms.

To conclude, while the means have changed, and prevention is the new conviction, the objectives of peacebuilding remain opaque as prevention can be enacted differently. In any case we observe a pragmatic turn in peacebuilding, for it is a partial adaption of means and ends to a new global environment to achieve its set goals. For an effective critique of peacebuilding, it is necessary to reflect on this development and scrutinise today’s efforts, instead of merely criticising the “liberal peacebuilding paradigm”. Of particular importance

for the future of international cooperation and peacebuilding will also be the strategic positioning of so-called emerging donors – especially China and Saudi-Arabia – and organisations like the African Union or the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

*Reimar Belschner has been working as a conflict prevention. Previously, he was working as a conflict prevention specialist for the United Nations in the Gambia on a Mercator Fellowship on International Affairs, focusing on international interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.*

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12 Cf. Karlsrud 2018.

13 Depends on the judgement regarding the real goal of liberal peacebuilding in 1990s was. David Chandler (2018: 148) argues, that “external interveners have had much more status quo aspirations, concerned with regulatory stability and regional and domestic security, rather than transformation. [...] Rather than promoting democracy and liberal freedoms, the discussion has been how to keep the lid on or to manage the ‘complexity’ of non-Western societies.” See also Pospisil 2017: 3-4.

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# THE 'LOCAL TURN' IN PEACEBUILDING SCHOLARSHIP AND THE UNIDIRECTIONAL PERCEPTION OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY

Enrico Behne

Ph.D. candidate, University of Leipzig

## Introduction

Concerted international efforts to promote peace in war-torn societies have changed considerably over the last decades. With them, the notion of (post-conflict) peacebuilding has changed as well. Emerging during the 1990s as a consequence of ideological optimism that sought to globally spread a 'liberal peace', peacebuilding is now widely perceived to shift towards more pragmatic objectives within a broader retreat to realism.<sup>1</sup> Within the policy world, this adaptation is most prominently exemplified by the dual resolutions of the United Nations (UN) Security Council and the UN General Assembly on 'sustaining peace' and peacebuilding, introduced by UN Secretary-General António Guterres over the last years.<sup>2</sup> Instead of relying on blueprints and one-size-fits-all approaches, the UN now seeks to deploy more sequenced context-sensitive mandates and 'situation-specific political strategies'. Among others, this will involve people-centred approaches that aim at incorporating local voices in peacebuilding mechanisms, instead of merely consulting them. Moreover, the concept of building peace has been extended from post-conflict contexts to the entire conflict continuum, including conflict prevention and mediation.

Scholars have long emphasised the need to rethink peacebuilding in theory and practice. A large share of this literature highlights an ideological hubris that has reproduced power hierarchies and inequalities, thereby favouring western conceptions of universal norms, values and institutions.<sup>3</sup> Yet, although aware of the assumed key problems of peacebuilding, both scholars and practitioners struggle to formulate clear alternatives. The so-called 'local turn' is one attempt to implement such an alternative. Its proponents identify current peacebuilding practices as overtly distanced from subjects intervened upon and not aware of the historical, cultural

and societal context they try to engage with. In contrast, understanding and working with 'the local' is believed to bring peacebuilders closer to the root causes of conflict and the actual needs of society. Thus, locally-driven partnerships with national and international stakeholders are key to transform peacebuilding towards more inclusiveness and legitimacy.<sup>4</sup> What is missing, however, is a clear strategy to expose and engage with 'the local'. Contemporary scholarship on 'the local' has shown its conceptual elusiveness and with it the transgression of local, regional and international boundaries.<sup>5</sup> Thus, some scholars perceive it as a 'terra nullius' whilst making sense of it within broader frameworks of hybridity and complexity.<sup>6</sup>

It is at this critical juncture that anthropology is believed to be able to produce credible knowledge on 'the local'. Anthropology and its presumably empathic methodological toolkit, for example ethnography, might provide international stakeholders with contextual expertise that is needed to effectively transform conflict and create sustainable conditions for peace. What is largely absent in these debates is a recap of key contributions and discussions from anthropology itself. Scholars of International Relations (IR) and Peace and Conflict Studies seem to systematically turn a blind eye on both classic and contemporary accounts, thereby operating with a limited understanding of anthropology and ethnography. Whatever the reasons are, limited awareness or simply disciplinary audacity, this lack of engagement appears to flatten the debate. Instead of investing in a dialogue with anthropology, a large share of the 'local turn' scholarship merely resembles a monologue on it. Thus, in this essay, (old) debates from within anthropology will be explored and set in context with the literature on the local turn in peacebuilding. The key argument that will be developed holds that anthropological debates e.g. on positivism, positionality and knowledge production are underrepresented and therefore need to be actively incorporated in further research. This will

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1 Wiuff Moe, Louise and Finn Stepputat (2018). Introduction: Peacebuilding in an era of pragmatism. *International Affairs* 94 (2), 293 - 299.

2 UN Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people. A/70/95 S/2015/446. United Nations, New York.

3 See, for example, Paris, Roland (2002.) *International peacebuilding and the 'Mission Civilisatrice'*. *Review of International Studies* 28(4), 637 - 656; Collier, Paul et al (2003). *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*. A World Bank policy research report. Washington, DC: World Bank and Oxford University Press; Richmond, Oliver P. (2005). *The Transformation of Peace*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke; and Mac Ginty, Roger & Oliver P. Richmond (2013). *The Local Turn in Peace Building: a critical agenda for peace*, *Third World Quarterly*, 34 (5), 763 - 783.

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4 Connolly, Lesley and Sapna Considine (2018). *Local Peacebuilders Share Views on Challenges to Sustaining Peace*. Online at: <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2018/04/local-peacebuilders-views-challenges-sustaining-peace/> (accessed: 06/10/2018).

5 Simons and Zancker (2014). *Questioning the Local in Peacebuilding*. Working Papers of the Priority Programme 1448 of the German Research Foundation. *Adaptation and Creativity in Africa: technologies and significations in the making of order and disorder*. Engel, Ulf and Richard Rottenburg (Ed.). Nr. 10, Leipzig and Halle.

6 Mac Ginty, Roger and Oliver P. Richmond (2013). *The Local Turn in Peace Building: a critical agenda for peace*. In: *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 34 (5), 763-783.

not be a panacea for solving the many problems that conceptualisations of and engagement with the local encounter, but it might nurture the debate in key areas.

### Peacebuilding and the (re)turn to the local

Today, in peacebuilding scholarship, it seems to be common sense that peacebuilding is either in a state of transition or entirely dissolving.<sup>7</sup> The assumed dominant liberal paradigm that guides international peacebuilding has come under increased pressure with questions of legitimacy, sovereignty and appropriateness fuelling the debates. Already at the end of the 1990s, John P. Lederach in his seminal work on 'Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures'<sup>8</sup> highlighted the neglect of local contexts within contemporary (post) conflict management policies and thereby the need for bottom-up approaches. Up until that time 'the local' was reductively thought of in, and in institutionalist parlance conflated with, terms of local governance, capacity-building and decentralisation.<sup>9</sup> In the years that followed, Lederach's central argument generated what is now described as the 'local turn' scholarship. Scholars from the mainstream critique as well as the more radical critique of peacebuilding seek to convince us that 'the local', whatever that might entail, is key to overcome the current crisis. Roland Paris, a prominent contributor to the mainstream critique, argues that 'limited knowledge of distinctive local conditions and variations across the societies hosting these missions; insufficient local ownership over the strategic direction and daily activities of such operations' are amongst the 'real shortcomings of liberal peacebuilding'.<sup>10</sup> Starting from this assumption, the turn to the local is now perceived as a post-colonial project, which could contribute to a 'decolonisation of knowledge' and an emancipation of the intervened subject by handing over

agency.<sup>11</sup> That shift has also led some scholars to conceptually abstract local-local and local-international interactions in terms of 'hybridity' and 'complexity' in order to make sense of 'real-world' developments on the ground. This new way of reasoning gave rise to the increased interest in anthropological work and the belief that ethnographic research might reveal these hybrid patterns.

Yet again this optimism about 'the local' does not come without significant conceptual and analytical ramifications. Critics stress its tendency to re-emphasise dichotomies of the 'international' and the 'local', which is often articulated in 'liberal' and 'non-liberal' or 'illiberal' contexts. This leaves the local turn in a limbus of questionable positionality. For some scholars, a turn to the local bears the danger of essentialising indigenous knowledge within a fall back to positivism: 'there is no hidden knowledge "out there" that can make intervention better, but a complex amalgam of opinions that may vary along the subject positionality of the counterpart. Essentialism is the big seduction of the "everyday"'.<sup>12</sup> Further, instead of stressing the post-colonial self-conception of the local turn, some scholars argue it might only result in new modes of parochial and colonial practices. The very ontological classification of the local in combination with the attempt 'to carve it out' leads to significant implications for peacebuilding scholarship. Knowledge is not produced within a power vacuum and needs a constant reflexive assessment.<sup>13</sup> This presumably emancipatory and post-colonial gesture of extracting and valorising indigenous knowledge, however, is criticised to be a new mode of neoliberal governmentality, as it is enforced by hegemonic powers.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the key questions to be asked remain: who represents the local? Who enquires about the local? How do we enquire about the local? And how can we prepare and present the gained knowledge?

Despite this criticism, the 'local turn', and with it both anthropology and ethnography, are portrayed as possible 'solutions'

7 See, for example, Chandler, David (2017). *Peacebuilding. The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1997-2017*. Palgrave Macmillan.

8 Lederach, John Paul (1995). *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures*. Syracuse, New York. Syracuse University Press.

9 Leonardsson, Hanna and Gustav Rudd (2015). The 'local turn' in peacebuilding: a literature review of effective and emancipatory local peacebuilding, *Third World Quarterly*, 36(5), 825 - 839.

10 Paris, Roland (2010). *Saving Liberal Peacebuilding*. *Review of International Studies*, 36, 337 - 365, quotation from p. 347.

11 Mac Ginty, Roger and Oliver P. Richmond (2013). The Local Turn in Peace Building: a critical agenda for peace. In: *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 34 (5), 763 - 783.

12 Pospisil, Jan (2017). Working Paper. Pathways to post-liberal peace: Perspectives on the 'common good' in peace and statebuilding, 1-22, quotation from p. 13.

13 Hirblinger, Andreas T. and Simons Claudia (2015). The good, the bad, and the powerful: Representations of the 'local' in peacebuilding. *Security Dialogue*, 46 (5), 422 - 439.

14 David Chandler & Julian Reid (2018) 'Being in Being': Contesting the Ontopolitics of Indigeneity, *The European Legacy*, 23:3, 251-268.

to the chronic crisis peacebuilding is facing. This line of reasoning should be seen within the broader 'ethnographic turn' of IR scholarship and peace and conflict studies. For quite some years now anthropological methods are increasingly consulted, because they are presumably able to open disciplinary narrowness, in this case softening a state-centric perspective by adding a local or peoples-centred approach. Oliver Richmond, as one of the most prominent proponents of the 'local turn', stresses the importance to invite anthropology. He argues that anthropology might facilitate the 'local turn' by adding an empathetic methodology, which ultimately would generate a 'post-colonial moment' in IR.<sup>15</sup> Richmond asserts that both IR and anthropology can teach lessons to each other, since both have experienced accusations of positivism, colonialism and orientalism.

*"Mainstream IR needs anthropology to prevent its projects from verging into hegemonic illegitimacy. Anthropology has resolved this problem for itself—at least to a greater degree. It is reluctant to potentially be co-opted by power all over again and, thus, often verges on the purely descriptive."*<sup>16</sup>

Anthropology appears as a discipline that is "better equipped to foreground the everyday realities of life, needs, security, rights, institutions and society in the really-existing world"<sup>17</sup> and, thus, can progressively influence both IR and peace and conflict studies.

### The neglect of Anthropological Debates

Amidst growing awareness of the importance to somehow include 'the local' and references to anthropology and ethnography, it is questionable why there has been such limited attention towards classic and contemporary debates coming from within the discipline. It is worth mentioning that the superficial engagement with ethnography and anthropology, as outlined above, have mainly been driven by political scientists, scholars of IR and peace and conflict studies. This is indicative in the way both are discussed and treated in these debates. On the one hand, ethnography is treated as a distinct methodological tool with clear-cut boundaries, aimed

at simply gathering data. Yet, what these accounts miss out are the many other forms that ethnographic research can take. It can, for example, include mainly qualitative research, with a focus on participant observation and conducting interviews, but also have a large share of quantitative research.<sup>18</sup> As Wanda Vrsti notes:

*'There is nothing intrinsically ethnographic in gathering evidence by listening and taking notes or in writing in narrative and autobiographical form unless these practices are reflexive about how the representations they generate are shot through with power and pregnant with political meaning.'*<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, anthropology is often displayed as being still trapped in positivism and colonialism. This assumption, however, can only be upheld if one systematically leaves out the last three to four decades of the diversification and sophistication of anthropological research. In fact, anthropology already initiated its own 'reflexive turn' in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The reflexive turn, which is still ongoing, is the constant engagement of anthropology with its own positionality as an academic subject and a source of objective knowledge production. Reflexivity, in the anthropological self-conception, is described as a look into the mirror, which presumably cracked while exposing the inverted image.<sup>20</sup> One of the key debates within the reflexive turn emerged under the notion of 'writing culture'. This debate has been sparked during the 1980s, most prominently exemplified by the seminal work 'Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography' by Clifford Geertz and George E. Marcus. The authors reasoned on the objectivity, positionality, reflexivity, intimacy, epistemology, and authority of ethnographers and the resulting ethnographic knowledge. It specifically asked the question of the role of the ethnographer, how it should be conducted and how the produced knowledge should be scientifically refined. These questions have challenged the very tropes of ethnographic research and resulted in an extended literature on scientific positivism and the politics of representation.

18 Hammersley, Martyn (2006). Ethnography: problems and prospects, *Ethnography and Education*, 1 (1), 3-14.

19 Vrsti, Wanda (2008). The Strange Case of Ethnography and International Relations. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 37 (2), 279 – 301, quotation from p. 286.

20 Ruby, Jay (ed.) (1982). *A crack in the Mirror: Reflexive Perspectives in Anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

15 See: Richmond, Oliver P. (2018). Rescuing Peacebuilding? Anthropology and Peace Formation, *Global Society*.

16 Ibid., p. 10.

17 Ibid., p. 6.

Anthropologists are aware of their hermeneutic trappings, of temporal and spatial peculiarities and their own authority as an 'expert' in the field. Clifford Geertz for instance pointed to the fact that an ethnography is produced as a dialogue between ethnographer and informants, as an intersubjective relation in which the 'expert' exerts authority and, thus, ethnographers should make the voices of the 'ethnographed' louder. Reflexive accounts can arguably be found in the better part of contemporary ethnographies. This intense reflection upon positionality has been formulated for decades to an extent that some scholars even lament the resulting monologue of anthropologists upon themselves.<sup>21</sup> Amongst others, this reflexive debate has also led to a conceptual divide between an 'emic' and 'etic' perspective. Emic refers to the usage of analytical tools and conceptions that are domestic to the research context. It thus allows to reconstruct this context close to the perceptions of the 'ethnographed' subjects. Quite to the contrary, etic refers to an understanding based on conceptual notions of the anthropologists, which thus enables its usage in a broader scientific analytical environment. Yet, both concepts are far from having clear-cut borders between each other and rather overlap symbiotically.<sup>22</sup>

The academic journal 'International Peacekeeping' recently devoted a special issue to the whole field of ethnographic research in peace and conflict studies, which illustrates its increasing academic relevance. Contributions to that issue stress the importance of methodological reflexion while doing ethnographic research on post-conflict environments<sup>23</sup> and the implications of doing ethnographic research as a 'local' and the dangers of suspicion.<sup>24</sup> In fact, as Lottholz argues in the same issue, the limited inclusion of anthropological debates already produced a narrow understanding of ethnography itself: "[t]he empiricist anthropological imagi-

nation in peace and conflict studies bears testimony to the relative isolation in which the 'local turn' and 'post-liberal' or 'hybrid forms of peace' were theorized."<sup>25</sup> Consequently this 'imagination' arguably led to the perception of ethnography as a mere data-gathering tool aimed at buttressing established theory.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, Sande Lie argues that classical ethnographic field work, as developed by Polish social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, would fail to properly engage with classical IR fields of study like international organisations or the state.<sup>27</sup> This problem was already scrutinized by Laura Nader and Ulf Hannerz, who introduced the notions of 'studying up' and 'studying sideways'.<sup>28</sup> These steps are necessary to adjust ethnographic research in order to engage not only with 'the local' but to capture also its entanglement with other spheres and spaces. Thus, what is needed is a context-specific methodology that can adapt to specific circumstances. Ethnography is here displayed as such an adaptable methodology, which can form a synthesis with old-school Malinowskian-style participant observation and contemporary forms of collaborative ethnography. Collaborative ethnography is a refinement of ethnographic methodology by emphasising the collaboration within the research project, starting from the beginning of conceptualising the research agenda to the actual writing process. On that account, ethnographic field research is increasingly described as a dialogue in which the boundaries between the 'researcher' and the 'informant' are blurred. Not only do anthropologists have their own preoccupations, but so do the 'informants'.<sup>29</sup> Its additional benefit, thus, is the co-production of knowledge and theory, which might lead a way out of accusations of one-sidedness and bias.

Moreover, during the 1980s anthropological debates emerged

21 Geschiere, Peter (2010). The Self-Reflective Turn in Ethnography: From Dialogue to Narcissism? *Etnofoor*, 22 (1), 137-146.

22 Sande Lie, Jon Harald (2013). Challenging Anthropology: Anthropological Reflections on the Ethnographic Turn in International Relations. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 41(2), 201-220.

23 Williams, Timothy (2018). Visiting the Tiger Zone – Methodological, Conceptual and Ethical Challenges of Ethnographic Research on Perpetrators. *International Peacekeeping*, 25(5), 610-629; and Hennings, Anne (2018). With Soymilk to the Khmer Rouge: Challenges of Researching Ex-combatants in Post-war Contexts. *International Peacekeeping*, 25 (5), 630-652.

24 Macaspac, Nerve Valerio (2018). Suspicion and Ethnographic Peace Research (Notes from a Local Researcher). *International Peacekeeping*, 25 (5), 677-694.

25 Lottholz, Philipp (2018). Critiquing Anthropological Imagination in Peace and Conflict Studies: From Empiricist Positivism to a Dialogical Approach in Ethnographic Peace Research. *International Peacekeeping*, 25(5), 695-720, quotation from p. 702.

26 Ibid.

27 Sande Lie, Jon Harald (2013). Challenging Anthropology: Anthropological Reflections on the Ethnographic Turn in International Relations. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, 41(2), 201-220.

28 Nader, Laura (1972). Up the Anthropologist: Perspectives Gained from Studying Up. In: D. Hymes, *Reinventing Anthropology*. New York: Vintage Books, pp. 284 – 311; and Hannerz, Ulf (1998). *Other Transnationals: Perspectives Gained from Studying Sideways*, pp. 109 – 123.

29 Rao, Ursula and Stefanie Mauksch (2014). Fieldwork as Dialogue. Reflections on Alternative Forms of Engagement. *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 139 (1), pp. 23 – 38.

that engaged with the implications of development projects on the ground and its ramifications for the grass-roots level. Thomas Bierschenk in this regard asserts: 'One premise was a non-normative conception of development: development is simply what the actors in the field designate as such and the social world in which they move.'<sup>30</sup> The struggle of anthropology to be acknowledged by international institutions as a source of legitimate knowledge was long and has 'been largely won', according to Bierschenk. A similar struggle, it seems, might be waged within the field of peacebuilding scholarship. The change within development discourses and anthropological knowledge occurred amid a critical shift towards the very concepts of development and modernization. Without falling into fatalism, current shifts within discourses on peacebuilding might be the initial stages for an intensified engagement with both anthropology and ethnographic research at eye-sight.

One of the most systematic accounts for ethnographic research in peacebuilding environments is given by Gearoid Millar, who suggests an 'Ethnographic Peace Research' (EPR) approach. EPR, according to Millar, is marked by reflexivity and a broader methodological toolkit, including participant observation, qualitative field-notes and semi-structured interviews.<sup>31</sup> Millar's approach of EPR, by drawing on anthropological debates, stresses the importance to adjust ethnographic research to needs of peace and conflict studies, which is overtly policy-oriented. Anthropology, in contrast, has long struggled with its historical relationship with colonial policy and, thus, developed and rethought ethnographic methods in light of the 'reflexive turn'.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusion

Far from having settled the debates on positivism or positionality, four decades of anthropological literature on reflexivity nevertheless have contributed to new experimental and interdisciplinary methodologies, exemplified by collaborative ethnography as well as other action related methods. Both

IR and peace and conflict studies, amidst their own epistemological and ontological challenges, have tried to make use of anthropology and ethnographic research to address these problems. However, this 'invitation' only resulted in a narrow and instrumentalist understanding of both the discipline of anthropology and the method of ethnography. A fruitful dialogue needs to be built upon more nuanced accounts of the progressions that anthropology already achieved within the last decades. As of today, it seems, that anthropologists must engage with these debates more proactively. Otherwise, the 'invitation' remains rhetorical and leaves the discussions in a shallow predicament.

The argument and criticism in this essay are by no means new or unexpected. Rather, what is surprising is the still-limited reception and even ignoring of the discipline and its methods. Instead of making a 'turn' to ethnographic research, both IR and peace and conflict studies merely do business as usual by name-dropping. Anthropology might not have been freed from positivism, as many other disciplines, but it already has invested some decades in reflexivity, generating insights that only need to be brought in. This inclusion is important given the much higher prestige of IR research within the policy world. What is even more questionable in all these debates is arguably the attempt of 'Western' and 'Northern' scholars and practitioners to reveal the neglect of 'the local', to be the defender of 'the local' and, in all this, the revelation of what 'the local' actually is.<sup>33</sup>

*Enrico Behne studied anthropology and African Studies in Germany and Ethiopia. Currently, he is a Ph.D. candidate at the Graduate School Global and Area Studies (GSGAS) at Leipzig University.*

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30 Bierschenk, Thomas (2014). From the Anthropology of Development to the Anthropology of Global Social Engineering. *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 138 (1), 73 - 97, quotation from p. 73.

31 See: Millar, Gearoid (2018). Engaging Ethnographic Peace Research: Exploring an Approach. *International Peacekeeping*, 25 (5), 597-609.

32 Millar, Gearoid (2018). Ethnographic Peace Research: The Underappreciated Benefits of Long-term Fieldwork. *International Peacekeeping*, 25(5), 653 - 676.

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33 Mac Ginty, Roger and Oliver P. Richmond (2013). The Local Turn in Peace Building: a critical agenda for peace. In: *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 5, pp. 763-783.

# THE NORDIC MODEL OF PEACE DIPLOMACY: PRIDE AND HEGEMONIC PREJUDICE

Lena Merkle

University of Magdeburg

When talking about a global responsibility for peace, one easily gets sucked into moral discussions. Especially when taking into consideration post- and de-colonial approaches, the so-called Western world struggles in finding a comfortable spot. It is hard to intervene in conflicts - on what grounds can it be done, in which way and to which extent? It is equally impossible to stand by and close one's eyes while tragedies happen all over the globe.

Some years ago, there seemed to be a solution to the dilemma. Norway made itself known as a new player on the field. A small country from Europe's North introduced a new approach to mediation that was characterised by long and serious involvement, more respect and less power play.

Many saw the so-called Nordic model as a new dawn for peace mediation. If so, we have passed noon already. About a generation later, the Norway model has experienced very public failures and had to withstand strong criticism. Despite backlashes, peace has become a central concept of identification within Norway and its relations with the outside world. This relationship will be closer examined in the following essay.

## The Nordic Model

Norway's role as a humanitarian actor has long been established in the international system. Already in the 1990s, the country's rise to what is nowadays often referred to as a „peace nation“ started, coining the term Nordic model for its approach to peace negotiation, mediation and facilitation in a different way to the great powers' muscle-flexing approach. It gained international standing through several big and public coups such as the Oslo Back Channel Negotiations of 1993 between Israel and Palestine and the Sri Lankan Peace Talks in 2002 (see Lehti/Saarinen 2014:56). Before that, and ever since, Norway has participated in a number of bigger and smaller peace processes to various extent, ranging from Guatemala and Cyprus to Sudan, Mali and Timor-Leste (see Joenniemi 2014:127).

Norwegian peace diplomacy is in line with current Scandinavian and Nordic approaches to various international settings such as the UN, where the countries have long been known for being particularly active when it comes to measures of institution-building as well as development and peace aid (see Lehti/Saarinen 2014:62).

Norwegian involvement in peace processes is characterized by a multi-stakeholder approach involving official diplomats

as well as national NGOs and certain individuals with public standing. Peace research institutions and universities provide the background for action. Often, long bilateral cooperations and strong NGO involvement in various levels of development assistance and institution building created the trust on which Norway is relying when introducing its take on peace diplomacy, defined more by facilitation, providing resources and staff, than becoming an active negotiator (see *ibid.*:62-64). This tactic provides Norway with a significant advantage when it comes to communication, especially when conflict parties are known not to trust (Western) powers. These, most significantly the United States, have for decades been criticized for an involvement that is often attributed to geopolitical interest rather than altruistic motives (see Greig/Diehl 2012:65) Such interest-driven behaviour might have negative impacts on mediation and third-party-negotiation efforts.

To what extent the Nordic approach be superior to classic forms of conflict management has been famously developed by Jan Egeland (1984:209). With the Iron Curtain slowly beginning to lift, the small state in the North saw its chance to prove its potential and was ready by the time the Cold War ended.

## The Norwegian narrative: a peace nation

What Egeland did in his paper, besides spelling out an understanding of the Nordic Model, was establishing a Norwegian history of development, human rights and peace aid, grounded in social-democratic values and a tradition of a certain practicability (see 1984:210-211).

Said narrative has been gladly adapted by a number of Norwegian politicians and cited by scholars researching on Norway's history in peace diplomacy. A Norwegian experience with diplomacy can be traced back to the very foundation of the state, with its independence being achieved through negotiations with the Swedish rulers in 1905 and thereby becoming part of the national self-conception (see Schmutzler 2009:46-47). Also, the geographical situation of Norway became of relevance shortly after. After two World Wars in which Norway's neutrality served the country poorly, it found itself dangerously close to the border that from now on split the world in two. Norway became a NATO member but kept various contacts in the East, most likely for reasons of self-preservation. It thereby became to a certain, rather limited and unsuccessful, degree a mediator between both sides of the Cold War (see *ibid.*:54-55;57).

At the same time, however, Norway started to establish its role as a country striving for human rights. It was never shy to strengthen that point through civil as well as military engagement in various conflicts under the lead of UN and NATO (see *ibid.*:56-61).

Furthermore, several individuals and their effort for peace play a relevant role in the Norwegian national lore, the most famously known being (Swedish) Alfred Nobel whose Noble Peace Prize is awarded in Oslo and Fritjof Nansen, who became known for both his research and humanitarian effort (leading to the Nansen passport and award) (see *ibid.*:50-51;60). This tradition of active individuals has been carried through into new activities after 1990 (see Joenniemi 2014:123).

The Norwegian people, on the other hand, got mainly involved with matters of peace through the peace movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the country's missionary tradition (see Lehti/Saarinen 2014:64).

On an official level, as stated before, the governmental focus on development cooperation and human rights enforcement started already during the Cold War period, whereby the focus on peace diplomacy and mediation arose during the 1980s and became a political agenda with the lifting of the Iron Curtain and the changes it brought to the world order as well as to Norway's critical geopolitical situation.

All those aspects of Norwegian history and international involvement are framed within Norway in a peace narrative, including military interventions (see Schmutzler 2009:60). Said narrative is central to the Norwegian national identity. It can be easily aligned with another part of Norwegian identity that is also sometimes called the Nordic model - the comprehensive Norwegian welfare state, which aims to deliver benefits for all classes and groups within society (Alestalo et al 2014:122). The ideological and moral legitimation for this model of welfare state lies in the fact that equality is considered a core Scandinavian value, based on traditionally flat societal hierarchies. Its modern outcome is low poverty rates, high gender equality and a strong social safety net. The trust in the state and its institutions is also remarkably high (see *ibid.*:122-127).

These values easily align with humanitarian engagement all over the world and is therefore often used to fuse the various aspects of the Norwegian identity and to use them as justification for political decisions. This can easily be seen when looking at some examples of political rhetoric as used

in public speeches of Norwegian prime ministers.<sup>1</sup> There is a clear continuity when it comes to the framing of all kinds of Norwegian involvement in international conflicts and conflicts abroad, and a strong tendency to attribute to Norway a long tradition of peace work as well as defining peace and generosity as core Norwegian values. Many arguments are built on equality and the Norwegian responsibility to extend it throughout the world and to share its privilege. The country is regularly called a 'peace nation' that therefore has a responsibility to support peace all over the world.

The construction of this Norwegian identity as a moral entity as being shown in the above examples has worked quite well, as there have been little to no public and political domestic debates or media criticism of Norwegian activities (see Höglund/Svensson 2009:179).

The downsides of this is a highly functioning social punishment for those who don't conform to what Jenkins calls "Lilliput chauvinism" (2012:46 after Østergård). This attitude towards considers the Nordic way to be superior to other concepts of society and therefore needs to be protected (see Jenkins 2012:45;84).

As for that matter, there is quite a range of opinions when it comes to what protection is supposed to include. While the coming portrayal of positions by no means includes all Norwegians, it is a dominant line of discourse in public and political debates and therefore of great relevance. When taking into consideration the inclusiveness that the concept of Scandinavian equality and welfare suggests, there is a surprising level of exclusivity in the concept's reality. This is legitimized through the alleged necessity to protect the state and its system. The Norwegian society is (as those of other Scandinavian states) quite disjointed when it comes to the question of who shall enjoy these values. This issue is highly relevant to this paper's topic (see *ibid.*:144;279).

While Norway prides itself to be strongly committed to the matters of peace, human rights and development globally, it is apparently not so keen to address those matters in its own backyard. Through at times very rigid migration laws

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<sup>1</sup> The examples used here are taken from exemplary speeches held by different Norwegian prime ministers on public occasions between the years 2000 and 2010 when matters of Norwegian peace and development politics were rather present in public discourses. Since then the focus shifted first due to the economic crisis and then towards the rising number of refugees coming to Europe. Matters of peace work are therefore hardly mentioned in more recent speeches. A comprehensive list of all used speeches can be found at the end of the paper. All translations of the originally Norwegian speeches as used here are done by the author.

and a widespread lack of support for immigration, Norway is enthusiastic to take care of other countries' conflicts as long as they don't affect Norway itself (see Knoller 2013:60). This again raises the question whether altruism is the true Norwegian motivation for peace diplomacy.

### **Finding a niche – establishing a name**

Within international politics, the Norwegian motivation is in parts framed differently although altruistic and humanitarian values are still quite prominent. Norwegian arguments for their role are their impartiality, ability to provide resources, lack of geopolitical interests and flexibility as well as willingness for long-term commitment. In the official agenda, there is a direct linking of peace and development which justifies involvement before and after the hot phase of a conflict, even during times when the international attention has long since moved on (see Joenniemi 2014:126).

Norway has also proven to be especially capable when it comes to making contact and gaining the trust of non-state-actors (see Höglund/Svensson 2009:187). To a great extent, this can be attributed to the Norwegian habit of working within development cooperation for years before getting involved in peace diplomacy. The connections that Norwegian NGOs and committed individuals make during this time period are then passed on to state officials and can be used during peace processes (see Schmutzler 2009:157).

At the same time, contrary to almost any other country of the global North and many of the global South, Norway has little "compromising history" (Höglund/Svensson 2009:179). This can surely be attributed to its short existence as an independent country, while its size and limited international influence might play a role as well. Nevertheless, it puts the country in the unique position of not having to acknowledge the baggage other countries have to carry when interfering in conflicts, especially in a North-South-context.

Hence, Norway has created a niche for itself by taking a different approach to peace diplomacy than the usual suspects do. Where the US might not be welcomed because of its known tendency towards power play during mediation processes or where they are just not interested enough to respond, Norway can find opportunities. It provides much and asks for little, leaving the course of negotiation in the hands of the parties while assisting in many different and flexible ways. This approach is called 'ownership', referring to the commitment to the effort for peace as well as the ability to

drive it forward, which stays with the conflict parties throughout the whole process (see *ibid.*:177-178).

To Norway, peace diplomacy has become a welcome opportunity to occupy the above-mentioned niche within the international system that is sometimes hard to find for small states with little standing in the international system. It found a unique selling point for their international image. Norway has become one of the world's most esteemed mediators and has gone to great lengths to strengthen this position. To both international organisations and individual conflict parties, Norway has become a household name in peace mediation and diplomacy. Norway has thereby gained unusual standing within the international community, considering its size and geographic position and has shown how intelligent and strategic niche-seeking can lead to significant success and standing within the international system (see *ibid.*:179). While other states might catch up and develop their own, and in many points similar profile within peace and development, Norway still remains a pioneer state (see Joenniemi 2014). By doing relevant work, Norway itself became relevant internationally and thereby visible to a variety of actors. Said visibility in turn provided access and a voice to Norway that reaches beyond peace diplomacy. On one hand, Norway has at least since the early 2000s become a household name for international mediation and facilitation and is taken seriously in that role. On the other hand, it had thereby the opportunity to create contacts within international organisations and the governments of dominant states (namely the White House) that provide beneficial outcomes not only image-wise but also in areas such as public relations and economics (see Höglund/Svensson 2009:179).

This again raises the question if, and to what extent, the Norwegian public depiction of their value- and altruism-driven involvement lives up their actual motivation. While there have been a number of claims within the research community that attest Norway neo-colonial and geo-political interests in the conflicts they take on, Höglund and Svensson challenge in how far such motivations are in fact the reason for Norway's engagement. They show how marginal immediate outcomes in these processes are, which makes them rather unlikely to be a core reason for Norwegian peace diplomacy (see 2009:179-180).

This shall, however, by no means be understood as if those core reasons are mere good-will. There is a measurable and proven economic and political benefit of peace diplomacy to Norway that is very relevant and far more complex than a few

connections in the countries they get involved in. Norway has gained significant international standing through its efforts that pays off in many ways. It has also become apparent that it has created a national brand deeply rooted in the country's identity and can gain strong support internally while selling well on the outside.

It can nevertheless not be concluded that there is no honesty to the branding. It combines material profits with genuine idealism and feelings of responsibility. It remains a moral question whether such behaviour can still be called altruistic (see Schmutzler 2009:215-216).

### **Learning from mistakes**

Even though Norway has for some time now been a central actor in matters of international peace diplomacy and its approach has been praised on several occasions, it sometimes seems like this success happens way more often in theory than in practice. To some extent, this phenomenon might not come as a surprise, since reality is more complex than any useful model of conflict resolution could ever be. Nevertheless, current research that has been able to look beyond the hype which took place around the early years of Norwegian engagement pointed out that their success rate is quite low in the end. Many of their most prestigious cases have failed, and Colombia might just be the newest name on that list. (see Sørbrø 2018)

The Nordic model has quite a few advantages. Third parties (in this case Norway) are likely to be accepted by conflict parties due to their impartiality and previous networking through non-state-actors. There is little to no strategic and geopolitical interest of the third party in the conflict and the course of the peace process remains within the influence of local parties. On the other hand, in case of problems, the third party has almost no leverage at hand. It can neither equalize the playing field between asymmetrical actors nor can it urge the involved parties back to the negotiating table or make impactful propositions on the further progression of events (see Schmutzler 2009:227). This leaves Norway to be a quite weak actor. Especially against a backdrop of critical power-sensitive thinking, it might seem desirable for a third party actor to leave the power with the conflict parties. However, this has proven to be a difficult position in phases of peace processes where there seems to be no progress and when a certain incentive from the facilitator's side might help. In such situations, Norway has had serious problems

to find leverage to even keep mediation efforts going due to its weak position.

It is also interesting that the two big Norwegian cases from the 1990s and 2000s, Israel-Palestine and Sri Lanka, were at first considered to be a success. Only after some time had passed, it became apparent that neither led to further achievements nor a more tractable situation (see Höglund/Svensson 2009:57-59). How current cases will be evaluated in the future remains to be seen.

Another critique that has been frequently mentioned and became especially apparent in the Sri Lankan case is the exclusivity of the Nordic model. Tailored to include only two parties, it limits access to the mediation process to the two main parties of conflict, excluding all other groups of society (see *ibid.*). This might be one of the reasons why processes seemed to go well at first, when the challenge was limited to two opponents, but unravelled after they were opened to the public with its numerous other parties and their expectations, principles and inputs.

Since the backlash that followed the unfavourable outcome of the peace talks in Sri Lanka, Norway has become more prone to be involved in multi-stakeholder projects such as with the UN instead of taking whole processes into their own hands, as they used to more frequently before 2007 (see Joenniemi 2014:128). This can surely take some of the responsibility off of Norway's shoulders and provides a significant amount of further leverage. However, it might make Norway also less attractive to some conflict parties that are not keen to get either the UN or some of their dominant members involved. Further changes are yet to be seen. It might just have become apparent that the Nordic model is not suited for every type of conflict. Maybe that does not render the model as obsolete, and it should just be applied to cases that fit its profile better.

### **New hegemony?**

Where does this lead? Obviously, no perfect omnipotent kind of approach to peace mediation exists. Every approach has its up and down sides. Each one might be best suited for a certain type of conflict while more or less useless, maybe even harmful in other situations.

It is apparent that a variety of approaches is needed as much as a diversity of dedicated actors. However, such insight shall not be misunderstood as an easy way out that excuses every approach's shortcomings with „diversity“. To the contrary, it should be understood as an added responsibility to improve

through constant, critical and open-minded evaluation especially when convinced of the model.

Despite some empirical evidence that might suggest otherwise, the Nordic model has many advantages. One of the most relevant for current debates might exactly be its focus on ownership (see Höglund/Svensson 2009:177), in contrast to classic power mediation, where peace processes can easily get an imperialist touch, especially when the mediator is the US. Leaving the reigns with the affected parties, however, leaves room for alternative ways of peace resolution that go beyond Western approaches overseen by dominant mediators, a rather hegemonic behaviour (see Brigg/Bleiker 2011:19). It would be compatible with the idea of ownership to leave room for non-Western concepts to conflict resolution or to even strengthen and encourage such ideas. To the knowledge of the author, there has been no such effort by Norway yet. It could be questioned to what extent the system in which the country works with its rules of conduct and formalities is even able to support alternative approaches in the first place. It is more likely to limit ownership to a fixed set of (Western) methods and approaches. Even though Johan Galtung himself worked on inclusive processes, there is surely room for further exploration (see Brigg/Bleiker 2011:21). Within the country itself, the same narratives are still being kept alive. While they are no longer as prominent in public debates as they were 15 years ago, there has been no political caesura on the matter.

However, keeping in mind what has already been mentioned about Norway's tendency towards *realpolitik* in peace diplomacy, resistance to change even as lessons were learned from mistakes, and a well-meaning but paternalistic idealism and „Lilliput chauvinism“, Norway might just not want to adapt its model. While helping others is surely part of its intention, there seems to be very little willingness to do it at Norway's own expense. Being a „peace nation“ does not mean supporting peace at any expense. And while one should not judge a country on such an altruistic premise, it might limit Norway's preparedness to change, which is regrettable since the Nordic model is promising and could be very relevant to the future.

*Lena Merkle studied Philosophy, Cultural Anthropology and Peace and Conflict Studies in Germany, Denmark and Indonesia. She currently writes her Ph.D. at the Chair of International Relations at Otto-von-Guericke-University of Magdeburg.*

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# BIASED CONFLICT MEDIATION IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Lidiya Maidanova

M.A. student, Freie Universität Berlin

Since the end of the Cold War, we can observe the shift from the interstate to more intrastate conflicts and also a change in the art of solving the conflicts: fewer conflicts are solved with military means and more through mediation. For example, the International Conflict Management Dataset reports that twice as many conflicts were solved with mediation means after the Cold War than before (Berkovitch et. Al. 2008). Mediation is a conflict management tool that implied the involvement of a third party in the negotiation process. This role can be performed by individuals (e.g. former US President Jimmy Carter in Camp David), IOs (e.g. the UN), regional organizations, NGOs or states and especially superpowers or regional powers (India in Sri Lanka, Malaysia in the Philippines, South Africa in Zimbabwe). Due to the observed increase of mediation offers and processes since the end of WWII, it is today considered an „overcrowded field“ with many different actors (Lanz/Gasser 2013: 1ff). This development can lead to a shrinking space for conflict mediation actors as well as more complexity and some unpredictable effects on conflict management in particular states. Questions about mediation processes and their effectiveness are an important part of current academic research. It was long assumed that conflict mediation should be impartial and neutral to be effective. However, in ongoing debates, a lot of attention is paid to the discussion of the advantages and effectiveness of biased mediation. So, do we still need neutral mediation and if yes, is it possible at all to reach absolute neutrality in international conflict mediation?

Mediation is not a new tool of international conflict resolution. We can see one of the first recorded examples already in 209 B.C.: A Greek city-state was a third party in the first Macedonian war and helped to build trust between the Aetolian League and Macedonia (Melin 2013: 78). Apart from international conflict management, the practice is much older still: on the interpersonal level, mediation of conflicts was used as a method long before states emerged. In the literature, neutrality and impartiality are traditionally presented as the most important features of an effective and successful mediator. When the mediator has no self-interests in the conflict, parties trust that he or she can decide fairly, and thus be trusted to work towards a sustainable outcome. How is it in the international arena? Intuitively, we believe that a neutral and impartial mediator without self-interests in the conflict will be the best one. But when we see the international system in terms of Realism, with international

politics dominated by a self-help system, neutral mediation through a third party (state) motivated by altruism and moral norms seems impossible. According to this expectation, some scholars (e.g. Bercovitch 1992: 9) claim that by engaging and spending resources on conflict resolution in another state, actors expect to gain something from this process. Can conflict resolution be effective despite this bias, or even effective because of it? In this essay, I focus my attention on these questions. I will take a closer look on biased mediation and discuss advantages and disadvantages of biased state-led mediation, as well as making some notes about the effects of this type of mediation, followed by a conclusion about possible consequences and the future of this field.

## Motivations for accepting and offering mediation

In order to explain the popularity of this type of conflict management, two main questions arise: Why do some states want to mediate in conflicts, and why do conflict parties allow this mediation? These questions used to be popular among peace researchers, who found different possible explanations for these phenomena and several factors that make state-led mediation more likely in some cases and unlikely in others.

Factors which affect the likelihood of accepting mediation offers have been described as follows: mediation is considered a low-risk and flexible form of conflict management (Penetrante 2012: 12). Mediation is preferable when the costs of the conflict are high for both parties and they are stuck in deadlock without perspectives for a military resolution of the conflict (cf. Melin 2013: 89). In some cases, parties expect the mediator to influence the other side to make a concession, or intend to use the time provided by the mediation process to regain military strength (Penetrante 2012: 12f). Melin (2013) observed a relationship between the likelihood of mediation offers being accepted and factors such as regime type (democracies and non-democracies), third-party capabilities, conflict costs, rivalries and reoccurring conflict, the mediation history of the mediating state and rival states, conflict stalemate as well as the nature of the conflict.

Factors which motivate another state to get involved in a conflict can be diverse as well. First and foremost is a threat to stability and international order – as internal armed conflict can be seen as such by other states. In order to minimize this threat, they seek to preserve the structure of the inter-

national order which they are part of. Armed disputes can also adversely affect the political or economic interests of third states. Finally, political interests or cultural bonds either to a state or minority groups within it can also motivate another state to intervene. Mediation can be seen as a way of expanding, maintaining and enhancing one's own influence in the international political arena.

### **Advantages and disadvantages of biased mediation**

As we can see, mediator states usually have a lot of interests to offer mediation. It is also logical to spend one's own resources only with an expectation to gain something back from it. But before asking about the possibility of neutral and impartial state-led mediation, where the third party is absolute non-biased, we should consider the advantages and disadvantages of biased mediation. First of all, we have to define, what interests a mediator can have that affect the mediation process and make it 'biased'. A potential mediator without any preferences regarding conflict resolution would most probably not intervene and offer own assistance because of the high costs of mediation. At the same time, a biased mediator who is interested in solving the conflict in one defined way will push the process in the direction which is more likely to fulfill his or her interests. It makes a mediation offer from a biased third party more likely to happen, because the possibility to fulfill these interests outweighs high mediation costs. But it can also have negative effects and lead to a breakdown of settlement efforts if this solution does not meet expectations of one or both sides in the conflict. Or, sometimes, the third party can be interested in not ending the conflict at all. In all of these cases, the mediator state can have a great effect on the conflict outcome and can follow two possible strategies: it can block any settlement which would go against its national and foreign policy interests, or it can start a competing parallel initiative, when it is concerned that an ongoing peace process would lead to an undesirable outcome. A prime example for this is conflict management in Sudan, where Egypt started a Joint Initiative in 1999 parallel to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) process (Lanz/Gasser 2013: 5). In such cases, all efforts are very contraproductive for conflict management.

Biased mediation is defined here in terms of the preferences of the mediator, which can be aligned with/be biased in favor of a government or rebel group as one of the conflict

parties and thus constitute a self-interest in the outcome of the peace negotiations (cf. Kydd 2003: 601). Apart from this, when a mediator allied with one of the conflict parties has an interest to end the conflict, it can press a side to which it has ties (like economic dependence or cultural and historical ties) to make a concession (cf. Svensson 2009: 448f, Kydd 2003: 607). Accordingly, a biased mediator can manipulate a special relationship and have more influence on at least one conflict party and use its power to solve the conflict. It is also important if the mediator can offer a continuing relationship (of mostly economical nature) after a conflict resolution (s. Bercovitch/Houston 1993: 317).

This is one of the ways to become a credible third-party mediator in the eyes of a conflict party. Credibility and trust are very important for mediation. Penetrante (2012: 10) argues that credibility is more important than neutrality and impartiality when choosing a mediator. Research results show that credibility is assigned mostly to biased mediators because they share the preferences of one of the negotiation parties (Kydd 2003: 607f, Svensson 2009: 449).<sup>1</sup> This can be explained with the hope that the mediator can influence the other side to make a concession. But at the same time, a third party that is credible to one side should be not necessarily credible to another. It is possible that because of this bias and intention to solve a conflict in favor of an ally, the second conflict party will distrust the intermediary. A biased mediator can try to push the other side to make a concession, but without a „special relationship“ between them, this would likely lead to the breakdown of a settlement (Beber 2012: 404).

The biggest and most likely common problem is that this constellation — mediation process led by a biased mediator — will produce asymmetrical peace agreements because the biased mediator will look for stipulations that protect their own interests and those of their preferred side (cf. Svensson 2009: 448, Lanz/Gasser 2013: 13). On this basis, it will hardly be possible to make a peace agreement featuring power-sharing that both parties will be satisfied with, since the results of such agreements are beneficial for one side and not the other (cf. Svensson 2009: 448). In this way, further grievances

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<sup>1</sup> In general, Walter (1997) notes three basic conditions to become credible mediator: 1) presence of a specific self-interest in upholding a promise; 2) intention to use force if necessary and in case of violence of treaty; 3) ability to signal determination.

and future escalation of the conflict are likely. Understandably, the engagement of an impartial and neutral mediator, who can be trusted by both sides and has no interest in favoring or harming either side, will be preferable. However, it can be problematic when a mediator tries to apply pressure on one or on both of the conflict parties without capabilities – in terms of leverage – and credibility to bring the parties to concessions. Such attempts also have a risk of breakdown because of the lack of a special relationship (Svensson 2009: 449). Paradoxically, in some cases, mediators must be biased in order to be believed when they attempt to provide important information. An unbiased mediator will have incentives not to send messages that might increase the likelihood of conflict or can misrepresent information with an intent to resolve the conflict. Knowing this, conflict parties might not trust the mediator (Kydd 2003: 606ff). However, biased mediators may also have incentives to distort information, or may allow one conflict party to bluff because of its special relationship to the mediator. To overcome this problem, there is one possible solution – if all conflict parties, and in the best case also the mediator, are part of the same network, e.g. if they are all members of an international or regional organization. Through this membership, they would share some common bounds that promote trust and willingness for cooperation (cf. Bercovitch/Houston 1993: 317)

Another advantage of biased mediators is that they may push for a more rapid and better resolution. For example, Svensson (2009: 464) argues that neutral mediation does not generate peace agreements which the international community considers important for durable peace and democracy. However, in cases of biased mediation, he observes better-institutionalized peace arrangements, which include political or territorial power-sharing, international third-party security guarantees, repatriation of affected civilians, and provisions for government-sided amnesty. The reason for this is the incentive of a neutral mediator to push for an agreement that puts an end to the fighting without trying to insert power-sharing regulations into an agreement. However, the problem of power distribution is one of the most common reasons for conflicts. Biased mediators pay more attention to the distribution of powers in a conflict settlement, presumably creating more sustainable settlements. Furthermore, biased mediation is considered by some researchers (e.g. Kydd 2003:) as a more rapid resolution in comparison to neutral interventions.

One of the best examples in the literature for biased mediation is the case of Libya and Malaysia in South Sudan. These mediator states succeeded at overseeing an impartial conflict resolution process despite bias. In this case, bias was structurally limited by the role of the mediator (Penetrante 2012: 18ff). However, it is unclear what can be generalized from these examples. Another example with Libya as mediator shows that the involvement of third-party states with bias in the process of conflict management and resolution can contribute to the complexity and intractability of a conflict: Libya's involvement in the Philippine conflict promoted the splitting of the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) into three fractions (cf. Penetrante 2012: 27).

#### **What is a possible solution?**

Many studies examine the effectiveness of biased mediation as a conflict resolution instrument. While several claim that biased mediation is more effective in comparison to unbiased one, there are also other opinions. Beber (2012) argues that biased third party mediation is relatively ineffective and examples of positive bias effects can also be interpreted in negative terms. But at the same time, he observes that impartial and neutral mediators involve themselves in disputes relatively rarely because of a lack of incentives (2012: 403ff). Accordingly, in most cases, no unbiased mediation will be possible, but this may be for the better. When biased mediation is the only way to solve a conflict, it should be done this way. But efforts should be directed first of all on finding a type of mediator who has some ties to both sides in a conflict. When this condition is met, there is no need for a neutral and unbiased mediation at all, although it is very difficult to fulfill. A possible solution could be the involvement of at least two mediators that are biased towards different sides and can represent their interests. However, this is very difficult. The involvement of additional actors in conflict resolution processes make them more complicated. The same is true for mediation and third-party states. So, in the case of a mediation conducted by multiple actors, the possibility of process failure rises (e.g. Vulcovic 2014: 75). Unpredictable changes resulting from the integration of other actors in negotiations can be negative for the peace and reconciliation process. If each actor strives to fulfill his expectations and protect his own interests, there will be little space left for a peacebuilding project itself.

Additionally, even if mediation as an instrument of conflict resolution gains prevalence, it may not be enough to counteract the rise in intrastate conflicts. State conflict actors often decline mediator offers because of fears to legitimate rebel groups and their demands, as well as enabling them to obtain support from outside. In this case, mediators are unlikely to be included in negotiations.

In the field of international conflict mediation, we can also observe another trend: the increasing number of IOs or NGOs as mediators. On the one hand, this trend brings with it greater complexity in conflict constellations and peace processes, but it can also solve the problems presented by state-led mediation. Mediation processes focused only on conflict parties and International Organizations or NGOs as mediators can exclude interested third-party states, producing novel opportunities in a negotiation process and getting rid of many of the disadvantages of biased mediation. However, this is only possible if there is a shared analysis of the problem and proper synchronization of mediation activities (Vukovic 2014:76).

Having taken all these factors into account, we need a more comprehensive analysis of mediation processes and their effectiveness, which should also consider other factors besides the characteristics of third-party mediators. Contextual factors like system features, the nature of the conflict, and the internal characteristics of conflict parties as well as behavioral factors like mediation strategies need to be taken into account. Multiparty and multilevel mediation, which is being increasingly practiced, also deserves further attention.

*Lidiya Maidanova studies Political Science in Germany and Norway and holds a B.Sc. from Freie Universität Berlin. She focuses on Peace and Conflict Studies with an emphasis on conflict resolution. Since 2013, she has been a scholarship holder of the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).*

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# CRISIS MANAGEMENT APPROACHES IN POST-PEACEBUILDING TIMES: A CLOSER LOOK AT GERMANY'S TRANSFORMATION PARTNERSHIP WITH TUNISIA

Frauke Seebass

German Council on Foreign Relations <sup>1</sup> (DGAP)

## Introduction

‘From Arab Spring to Arab Winter’ <sup>2</sup> – these and other supposedly catchy metaphors enjoyed increasing popularity when the protests which had begun in North Africa in 2010 did not have the desired effect of steadily democratising the MENA region.

What had started with the self-immolation of a street vendor in the Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid was soon to take over the entire region, toppling heads of states who had been ruling for decades. Western governments observed the developments sceptically and were mostly reluctant to engage, given their experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq, and were fearing the consequences of instability. German foreign minister Guido Westerwelle, in contrast, chose to reach out to Tunisia and Egypt early on and promised non-bureaucratic aid to foster democratic structures to be implemented by the government's diverse foreign intermediary organisations.<sup>3</sup> These bilateral agreements, later extended to other countries in the region, were named *Transformation Partnerships* (TPs). The concept was quickly adopted by the European Union, which, in March 2011, launched its *Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean*. In addition, most EU-countries started to engage in bilateral projects in North Africa.

Eight years on, the situation has changed considerably, with Egypt having relapsed into authoritarian rule and Libya in shambles. Tunisia, often referred to as the ‘lighthouse’ of Arab democratisation, was so far the only country to emerge from the revolts as a quasi-democracy, albeit still facing numerous challenges. The following article will explore the role of the German TP model in Tunisia as an important but in itself insufficient approach in the light of changing Western involvement in crises around the world and with an increasing number of alternative players on the ‘New Global Marketplace of Political Change’.<sup>4</sup>

## The International security paradigm and its implications for (Western) foreign involvement

This marketplace has been shifting and growing considerably since the end of the Cold War, with EU enlargement, the rise of China to a world economic power, and not least the turmoil known as the Arab Spring. A shift not only of players was the result, but also in normative assumptions (regarding concepts such as security and development) as well as practical approaches to support them. In the field of international security, the world witnessed the rise and retreat of the peacebuilding paradigm in reaction to ‘new wars’ after the end of the Cold War confrontation <sup>5</sup>, resulting in large-scale military interventions, many of which are operational until today.

The failure to protect civilians during the bloody civil wars in Rwanda, Bosnia and elsewhere caused the United Nations to step up their involvement, introducing the Chapter VII mandate allowing, for the first time, the use of force for blue helmets to protect civilians (and not only for self-defense). Extensive missions were deployed in Kosovo, Somalia and other countries around the globe for ‘building sustainable peace’ and introducing democratic structures based on a liberal peace paradigm. After the 9/11 attacks, the US government went even further and set out to export democracy to Afghanistan and later Iraq with infamous results. These invasions in the name of the ‘war on terror’ severely hampered interventionist legitimisation, and any allegations of an apolitical character of peace operations have long been dismantled<sup>6</sup>.

It is thus understandable that in the 10<sup>th</sup> year of the war in Afghanistan, the ‘West’ was reluctant to engage again in large-scale efforts in the region. Yet, when Libya fell into turmoil following its neighbors and genocide was looming on the horizon, the UN – invoking the concept of a ‘Responsibility to Protect’ (R2P) introduced in 2005 – decided to authorise air strikes, a mission which in the end resulted in the ousting and killing of Muammar Gaddafi. However, not only was the international community not able to prevent Libya from consequently lapsing into civil war, but the Russian government furthermore perceived the fall of Gaddafi as the actual intention of the US and its allies and accused Washington

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1 The author would like to thank Departments S03 and 312 of the Federal Foreign Office for their valuable inputs.

2 Hinnebusch, Raymond A., ed.: *From Arab Spring to Arab Winter: Explaining the Limits of Post-uprising Democratisation*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2015.

3 <https://www.firmenpresse.de/pressinfo350891/westerwelle-die-freiheit-muss-auch-wohlstand-bringen.html>

4 See: Carothers, Thomas, and Oren Samet-Marram: *The new global marketplace of political change*. Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2015.

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5 See: Kaldor, Mary. *New and old wars: Organised violence in a global era*. John Wiley & Sons, 2013.

6 See: Chandler, David. *Peacebuilding: The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1997-2017*. Springer, 2017.

of exceeding the UN mandate for hegemonic aspirations<sup>7</sup>. They consequently blocked all further military engagement, including in Syria, thus rendering the UN practically powerless by establishing itself as a de facto protection power of totalitarian states.

But it was not only since attempts failed to pacify Libya that the trend has moved away from large-scale interventions to smaller efforts. The lack of desired results and the financial crisis of 2008 were influential factors for the US government to reduce foreign engagement, a tendency further aggravated by the current administration. This opens new spaces for other actors to engage, including Germany, and for testing more comprehensive concepts for conflict resolution. One important notion is the contemporary understanding of the connection between peace and socio-economic factors, known as the 'security-development nexus'<sup>8</sup>. The preamble of the 2030 UN Agenda for Sustainable Development from 2016 hence emphasises: "There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development". Fostering resilience, supporting institutions and boosting local ownership have consequently become principal goals for Western foreign engagement, at least in principle, and their approaches generally more modest and smaller in scale – not least due to the crisis of liberal democracy in the EU and elsewhere.

Where does that leave 'international security'? Over the past two decades, the field has been broadened extensively, re-defining the very term and its implications. This includes not only the search for new solutions but also the formulation of new questions, extending the debate to 'indirect' security threats such as climate change and migration and by coining the term *human security*. With this terminology comes a broader range of challenges and fields of operation, including actors outside the classic security sector: the overall consensus today rejects purely military solutions to conflicts and includes civil state and non-state organisations and individuals as meaningful contributors to sustainable conflict resolution. While states remain the main unit of operation, the recognition of non-state actors as drivers both of conflict and peace is growing. Overall, peace operations today involve

a variety of actors within and beyond the state, resulting in a pressing need for increased national and international cooperation for more effective global security governance. Yet, current global protectionist tendencies indicate the opposite trend. We see the self-proclaimed 'leader of the free world' engaging in international trade wars and drastically reducing humanitarian aid funds, while other players are increasingly dividing the remaining vacuum among themselves and along individual interests. At the same time, this might be an opportunity to reform multilateral approaches to crisis management within and outside of the UN.

### Arab Spring, turmoil, democratisation: Tunisia since 2011

Much of the discourse described above has evolved especially around the recent uprisings in the Middle East and their consequences. If we consider the distinct reactions of (Western as well as non-Western) states and actors to the initially quite similar protests throughout the region, much of the criticism towards international interventions prevails. With stability taking the centre stage, demands for democratic reform have recently been growing quieter from Western leaders who find it a lot easier to deal with authoritarian counterparts than with permanent transition. The growing discrepancy between vision and reality has triggered increasingly 'pragmatic' approaches such as supporting civil society in their emancipatory efforts against authoritarian governments while at the same time committing to trade partnerships with those same governments.

Tunisia has taken the rocky path towards a multi-party democracy after the ousting of 14-year president Ben Ali in 2011, resulting in the first free elections and the drafting of a new constitution in 2014<sup>9</sup>. This was not the only upheaval in the country's recent history since independence from France in 1956. Ben Ali himself had replaced his predecessor Bouguiba in a bloodless coup d'état in 1975 by having him declared unfit by a medical examination board who allegedly did not bother examining the aged head of state before giving their verdict<sup>10</sup>. Both Bouguiba (who became president of the republic after just one year of monarchy in 1957) and Ben Ali could rely on broad public support despite their authoritarian rule.

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7 Bellamy, Alex J., and Williams, Paul D: The new politics of protection? Côte d'Ivoire, Libya and the responsibility to protect. In: *International Affairs* 87.4 (2011): 825-850.

8 See: Alamir, Fouzieh Melanie: The Complex Security-Development Nexus—Practical Challenges for Development Cooperation and the Military. *S&F Sicherheit und Frieden* 30.2, 2012: 69-75.

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9 See: Choudhry, Sujit, and Stacey, Richard: Semi-presidential government in Tunisia and Egypt. *Constitution Building: A Global Review*, 2013.

10 See: Garon, Lise: *Dangerous alliances: civil society, the media and democratic transition in North Africa*. Zed Books, 2003.

As 'founding father of modern Tunisia', Bouguiba refrained from harsh oppression and instead continued modernisation efforts initiated by the former French rulers, such as widespread high-quality education including for girls. Another factor was his rejection of pan-Arab ideologies and his reluctance to get involved in regional conflicts such as the various Arab-Israeli wars. His skilful diplomatic balancing acts secured the small nation's independence and good neighbourly as well as international relations.

Ben Ali, emerging from the same political establishment sought to continue the modernisation path and opened Tunisia to neoliberal market economy fostering socio-economic development. Yet, corruption and favoritism resulted in vast inequalities as well as growing unemployment rates. Another difference was Ben Ali's past as head of national security and its various institutions which resulted in Tunisia's development from a soft authoritarian to a police state. These changes were legitimised through the promise of gradually introducing democratic structures and staged elections, while popular movements and criticism towards his rule were violently oppressed.

While this article is not going to engage in an extended comparison between the two countries, some characteristics of both governance and societal makeup help to explain the different developments in Tunisia and Egypt after seemingly similar popular movements emerged as the beginning of what is now known as the 'Arab Spring'. Ben Ali had expanded the internal security sector while keeping the military at bay, who in turn played a marginal role during the protests and are to this day perceived quite positively among the population. Egypt, however, has a history of a strong military, as could be witnessed in reaction to initial protests as well as during the ousting of first post-Arab Spring president Mohamed Mursi in 2013.

Popular dissatisfaction in Tunisia was amplified through socio-economic stagnation and police violence against initial protests in the capital. When street vendor Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest of police harassment in December of 2010, he ignited the dissatisfaction felt everywhere in the country, where people took to the streets to protest their government; it took less than a month before Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia and the country began its rocky transition towards democracy.

It is noteworthy that the revolution was – at least initially – a lot less ideologically charged than portrayed in international

media.<sup>11</sup> Inequality, poverty and unemployment had left large parts of the population in dire conditions, especially in the central and southern (desert) region. Wealth has historically been concentrated along the coastline, from the ancient trade hub Carthage to the contemporary tourism industry. It was hoped that a regime change and the establishment of democratic structures would boost the economy and employment rates. However, Tunisia was off to a rocky start with the first elections held in October 2011 giving power to moderate Islamist party Ennahdah. The system adopted was a semi-presidential parliamentary system, sharing power and accountability between a prime minister and a president. The independent human rights activist Moncef Marzouki was elected to the latter post, a sign of hope for the young democracy. Yet, disagreement over the murder of an oppositional figure dissolved the government in 2013, sparking further protests.

The Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015, consequently emerged as the central force to prevent a looming civil war, as had erupted in other countries in the region. Incorporating major unions and civil society organisations, the group chaired a peaceful dialogue, including the drafting of a new constitution, leading to the first real democratic elections in 2014. The founder of secularist party Nidaa Tounes, Beji Caid Essebsi, emerged from it as president, while his party colleague Youssef Chahed became head of government. Both are however closely linked to pre-revolutionary government circles.

In the 2017 Democracy Index by The Economist, Tunisia ranks 69th and is considered a 'flawed democracy'.<sup>12</sup> After free and fair elections and with increasing civil society participation, the state is celebrated as the 'only Arab democracy'. Yet, internal political turmoil as well as economic stagnation continue to threaten stability. Internal factors include especially regional inequalities and high youth unemployment, while the border region with Libya has become a hub for militant Islamists, adding to the threats posed by Tunisian foreign fighters and returnees. The country's dilemma of a large, well-educated youth and a lack of employment opportunities results in mass-emigration, especially to the European Union, while Tunisia also became a country of transit used by

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11 Cambanis, Thanassis: The Arab Spring was a Revolution of the Hungry. The Boston Globe, 2015.

12 Economist Intelligence Unit: Democracy Index 2017: Free Speech Under Attack. Economist Intelligence Unit.

migrants of other nationalities. Major structural reforms are needed to tackle economic stagnation and in the meantime, democracy is increasingly perceived as a factor of instability, especially since two terrorist attacks threatened the precious tourism sector in 2015.

### **A transformation partnership with the Arab World**

While the protests in North Africa were met with careful endorsement in the West, many governments were shy to get directly involved, given the volatility of the region as a whole and the insecure outcomes of political turmoil in direct vicinity of Europe. A notable exception, then-foreign minister Guido Westerwelle offered German support to help the struggle for democracy in Tunisia and Egypt shortly after Mubarak's ousting, proposing six fields of future cooperation under the framework of bilateral Transformation Partnerships (TPs). These included civil society, elections, an independent judiciary, education and economic development, as well as regional stability. Three main goals were mentioned in the strategy paper consequently published by the Federal Foreign Office: democracy and rule of law, economic and social development, and the optimal assignment of international resources. The idea was a mutually beneficial partnership among equals: while the country's sovereignty and self-determination were uncontested, the minister emphasised the German and European interest in democratic developments in the region.<sup>13</sup>

Atypically unbureaucratic, the first projects started implementation already in spring 2011, conducted by government agencies, their intermediary organisations, political foundations and non-governmental organisations. On its website, the Foreign Office proclaims: "The main focus of cooperation is on the promotion of democracy and civil society, human rights, guidance on constitutional and judicial matters, administrative reforms, equal opportunities for women, the media, scholarships and research collaboration".<sup>14</sup> Originally administered in the field of foreign cultural and education policy (*Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik, AKBP*), the TP is today centrally administered in the newly created Department S (for stabilisation) following the office's 2014 Review Process. The

budget assigned under this title can be requested by German and international (non-)government and UN agencies across the board in the spirit of a comprehensive approach for conflict prevention and an attempt to involve the great variety of actors engaged in bolstering the strategic goals. All of these must ensure monitoring and evaluation throughout the project. In addition, technical and development cooperation provided by the Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) supplements this strategy.<sup>15</sup>

The initial annual budget was 100 million euros, and a large part of it was dedicated to Tunisia. Political and economic development were the main targets, closely followed by support for science and education. In addition, the BMZ increased its support for Tunisia almost eightfold following the revolution in 2011. Throughout the years, the partnership became both more concrete and more diversified, with different actors and projects securing long-term cooperation while also reacting to emerging challenges. Organisations associated with the Foreign Office, including the Goethe Institute, the German Academic Exchange Service DAAD and the Institute for Foreign Relations IFA extended their programs especially in the field of training and education. At the same time, other ministries and their intermediaries used the funds provided both by the Foreign Office and BMZ, notably through the 'Employment Pact' by the German-Tunisian Chamber of Industry and Commerce, to increase job opportunities for young Tunisians, and the cooperation of German civil defence authorities with their counterparts to foster resilience. In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Tunisia in 2015, these efforts were further intensified, including through the cooperation of the German Federal Police with Tunisian authorities. This liaison was aimed especially at increasing border security with war-torn Libya, fighting violent extremism in Tunisia and at improving citizen dialogue and perception of the police after decades of oppressive rule. Apart from the formal bilateral agreement between the two governments, the Transformation Partnership is thus built on multiple and diverse collaborations between ministries, business and science institutions and non-governmental organisations from both countries.

But what is the goal of this transformation, and what is the benefit Germany expects from a closer engagement in the country? Clearly, the support for democratisation and

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<sup>13</sup> Sattar, Majid: Berlin erhofft sich von Kairo und Tunis Modellfunktion. In: Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 22.8.2011

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/en/aussenpolitik/regionaleschwerpunkte/nahermittlererosten/05-transformationpartnerschaft>

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.ifa.de/fileadmin/pdf/zivik/Foerderkonzept\\_AA\\_Transformationpartnerschaften.pdf](https://www.ifa.de/fileadmin/pdf/zivik/Foerderkonzept_AA_Transformationpartnerschaften.pdf)

increased economic development is a means to an end of securing long-term stability, preventing violent extremism and reducing migration to Europe. The basic idea this concept for cooperation follows is that local actors are a lot more capable to bring about change than an international intervention can, while foreign help is aimed at supporting the transformation process. When the new administration following Ben Ali's ousting confirmed the will to institute democracy, the German Foreign Minister was quick to affirm this as a common goal and identify possible fields of cooperation based on already existing connections between the countries. With Germany being Tunisia's third largest trade partner and about 55.000 Tunisian employees in German businesses in the country, there was obviously a lot at stake for both sides.

#### **A comprehensive agreement? The partnership eight years down the road**

During the eight years since its initiation, the initiative has evolved considerably. Not only has it changed departments within the ministry, but it has furthermore been extended to now also include Morocco, Libya, Jordan, Yemen, Lebanon and Iraq. Given the national developments after 2011, however, efforts are increasingly concentrated on the 'flagship' partner Tunisia. Countries in open conflict such as Yemen and Libya are only marginally supported under this initiative today and subject to different political tools and funds. Recognising the wide variation in the respective national developments, the Foreign Office aims at flexibility on the one hand while promising long-term support on the other, allocating project money based on continuous evaluation processes.

A well-known dilemma of stabilisation efforts is that any transformation usually increases instability especially in early phases. At the same time, is it this momentum, this 'window of opportunity' created by major transition that significantly sets the course for the future. Foreign involvement in these highly volatile processes must therefore be carefully adjusted to the socio-political situation on the ground, and policy makers should be aware that even the most civilian of measures will be perceived as political engagement. A redistribution of power does not occur in a political vacuum,

and any support will benefit those currently holding it.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, clear political statements by the federal government are crucial, and must be matched with the actions taken. Bearing in mind the third goal formulated in the original strategy by the Foreign Office, the optimal assignment of international resources, it is noteworthy that the transformation partnership is not the only measure of support to Tunisia deployed by the German government. The EU was quick to pick up the concept and offers support especially in the economic sector through a "partnership for democracy and shared prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean". As part of the G8/G7, Germany was furthermore a strong actor in establishing the 2011 "Deauville Partnership with Arab countries in transition", "*designed to marshal international support from the G-8, regional partners, International Financial Institutions, and International Organisations to provide political and economic support for reforms underway in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Morocco, and Jordan.*"<sup>17</sup> However, this initiative expired at the end of 2018 and its future is uncertain.

Given the variety of actors and measures, one would expect a broad strategic concept among the various government agencies involved in the transformation process, and in accordance with multilateral efforts by the EU and G7 initiatives. But while consistency is of high importance, the reality is more complex. Resources must be allocated country- and context-specifically, and any strategy must allow for adjustment in the case of local changes. What is more, the initial 'quick response' campaign and its comparatively unbureaucratic character have evolved in response to the processes they engaged with and have themselves had a large impact on the formulation of a more comprehensive strategy that embeds the TPs in a broader German foreign policy approach.

According to the 2017 whole-of-government 'guidelines on preventing crises, resolving conflicts, building peace' issued by the Foreign Office, the government aims at focusing its involvement on conflicts where it is deemed most effective, repeatedly emphasizing regions sending and receiving large amounts of migrants and refugees and including diverse action from stabilisation efforts in ongoing conflicts to streng-

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16 Salehi, Mariam. Transitional Justice: Aus Tunesien lernen. PeaceLab Blog, 18.09.2018: <https://peacelab.blog/2018/09/transitional-justice-aus-tunesien-lernen>

17 <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/deauville-partnership-arab-countries-transition>

thening resilience in volatile regions. Five principle fields of engagement are indicated, including legitimate politics, security, rule of law, economy and natural subsistence as well as state income and services. These are supposed to underlie any measures taken, as is the case with the TPs, and must be based on an interdependent understanding of governance, fragility and conflict. Human security is the goal of any mission and needs holistic involvement of military, police and civil actors as well as extensive arms control. On a practical level, this can extend to the strengthening of resilience to natural disasters and training of local personnel as provided through the *Ertüchtigungs-Initiative* (capacity building initiative) that was started in 2011 and uses a combined budget from Defence and Foreign Ministry to support training of local troops in Iraq and elsewhere. Security-related measures originally financed under the Foreign Office's TP budget now fall under this initiative as well. In addition, the Ministry for Economic Affairs now is in charge of measures related to the economy and trade.

#### Too many cooks or a 'strategic' lack of strategy?

Yet, the strategic formulation and alignment with international efforts remains vague. It is no secret that while middle and low-level cooperation between ministries is usually running smoothly, high-level strategy convergence is often subject to interministerial concurrence and political cooperation between ministers and their parties. But strategic ambiguity can undermine the principle of cooperation among equals and alienate partners when these feel excluded from planning processes.<sup>18</sup> This effect is multiplied by comments like those of former Justice (and now Foreign) Minister Heiko Maas, who argued that funds for Tunisia should be cut if the government refused to take back terrorists. Another strand of argumentation, however, warns against ambitious comprehensive strategies in volatile contexts, advocating to keep in mind a balance to adapt to change on the ground.<sup>19</sup> While this does not exclude basic principles of engagement, such an approach aims at avoiding an overly broad mandate and overburdened institutions especially

when various national interests are involved. In light of this, the current practice of informal exchange supplemented by round-table meetings between foreign and development ministries might be better suited to uphold efficiency. At the same time, principles and priorities of engagement are defined in an annual country concept which is however drafted internally and does not consult other ministries. All projects are furthermore selected in consultation with the German Embassy in Tunis, who in turn regularly consults with other (EU) embassies in the country to avoid duplication of efforts. The TPs are currently undergoing an extensive external evaluation process which ought to be completed by 2019.

#### Conclusion

Since 2011, the Transformation Partnerships centrally administered by the Federal Foreign Office aim at creating multiple and diverse collaborations between ministries, business and civil bodies from both countries to provide support in the ongoing transition process to a full-fledged, resilient democracy. Political, judicial, economic, and civil society projects are financed to increase employment, citizen participation and foster strong institutions relying on flexibility on the one hand while promising long-term support on the other. The TP approach is a prime example of how German foreign policy has evolved in recent years. An important step was the 2014 review process, resulting in an institutionalisation of the principle that diplomacy is the first pillar of foreign involvement, and at the same time a major strength of an economically and not culturally well-connected country like Germany. It renders the notion of a 'new German responsibility', as proclaimed during the 2014 Munich Security Conference, credible and gives a political anchor to any measures taken towards conflict management outside its borders. However, the Foreign Office should not rest on its laurels. Achievements have been made, but the current situation leaves a lot of room for improvement. On a national level, a synchronisation of efforts between ministries is crucial to guarantee political consistency and reliability. Strategic planning must involve international and especially local partners and match the demands on the ground. While a holistic perspective and regional approaches are important, there must be room for flexibility, as the TP experience clearly shows. The different developments in Tunisia and Egypt require distinct answers, and this is true to an even greater extent for the other partner states.

<sup>18</sup> See Lettau, Meike. 'Transformation und Partnerschaft' als kulturpolitische Strategie Die Rolle des Goethe-Instituts im tunesischen Transformationsprozess.' *Kulturarbeit in Transformationsprozessen*. Springer VS, Wiesbaden, 2016. 67-78.

<sup>19</sup> See 15; see also Tardy, Thierry. *The EU: from comprehensive vision to integrated action*. European Union Institute for Security Studies, 2017.

Capacity building efforts have moved to the forefront of German engagement, be it in Afghanistan, Iraq or the Sahel region and in close cooperation between the Foreign, Defence and Development Ministries. Yet, it has been mentioned that these kinds of political mandates are risky, given the volatile situations they are employed in where the legitimacy of power is always disputed. This is especially sensitive when military training is involved, in the best case alienating part of the population and in the worst creating future separatists. Stabilisation as operational imperative will always be subject to questions regarding democratic legitimacy. Clear and transparent policies are key and must continuously be scrutinised, including national interests of all actors involved. Evaluation of efforts involving multiple stakeholders across the board are an essential part of this.

All in all, the Transformation Partnership in Tunisia has many characteristics demanded in the debate on successful crisis management measures: long-term commitment, adaptability to the context, and a strong role for local actors. Long-standing networks have helped the German government in this endeavour, as well as its important economic role in the country. While the format is implemented in other countries in the region, its transferability is obviously limited as measures correspond to specific Tunisian challenges. Its impact is constraint and subject to local developments, but this is true for any intervention no matter how large in scale, and recognising this is an important step towards more feasible operations. If lessons learned from this process will be taken seriously, they can be a central contribution to German strategic orientation and an overall definition of its future role on the international marketplace of foreign interventionism.

*„Frauke Seebass studied in Germany, Israel and the Netherlands and holds an M. Sc. in Peace and Conflict Studies. She is currently employed with the German Council on Foreign Relations (DGAP) focusing on fostering policy dialogue in the Western Balkans and the MENA region. A member of the young think tank Polis 180, she focuses on German foreign and security policy and multilateral cooperation.“*



# PEACEBUILDING'S DEMOCRACY DEFICIT: THE CASE OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Aida Šabić-Draganović

CEEPUS - Central European Exchange Program for University Studies<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

Considering liberal peacebuilding in stabilizing concerned states and their international relations with implementing liberal democracies and an open market economy, this article points out the bureaucratically excessive activity-oriented approach of the „peacebuilding actors“ during the peacebuilding process. The transformation process in Bosnia and Herzegovina serves as an illustration of hybrid transition, which can be traced back to the action of bi- and multilateral, national and international actors. Due to the state of suspension from international intervention, the country is simultaneously accompanied by successful military peacekeeping and a continuous shift between democracy and autocracy. The national and international bureaucracies developed lives of their own and cover up the „cold peace“ within society that is caused by political parties and independent of social needs. Throughout the course of the transition, the consequence is the hybridization of the political system and the government system, which manifests itself in the vacillations between democracy and autocracy and the associated functioning of the state.

## The actors of peacebuilding

The political system in Bosnia and Herzegovina must be assessed from a multi-dimensional vertical and horizontal perspective as it involves a sophisticated system of government based on artificially created federal-territorial and ethnopolitical principles.<sup>2</sup>

The literature assumes that for a successful peacebuilding strategy, an inherent multi-stakeholder engagement process with a variety of actors directly involved in conflict and peacebuilding is required. On the one hand, there are „insiders“ such as state institutions, local political actors with their bureaucracies, civil society and private companies and, on the other hand, there are „outsiders“.<sup>3</sup>

Academic mainstream often simplistically lumps these so-called „outsiders“ into the concept of „international community“, which includes both international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and official development agencies, such as the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ); state governments with their own bureaucracies, such as the US, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, the Netherlands and the Nordic countries; as well as international organizations, in particular the United Nations (UN), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union (EU), World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).<sup>4</sup> After the East-West conflict, Europeanization and globalization have gained new momentum. European integration, growing prosperity and European values such as freedom, democracy, solidarity and the welfare state, experienced a legal and political paradigm shift.<sup>5</sup> The prerequisites for EU integration are the development of democratic systems, the transformation of the market economy and structural adjustments that make it possible to adopt the European *acquis communautaire*. The economic transformation of formerly socialist systems follows globally valid principles agreed by the IMF, the World Bank and the USA: a liberalisation of trade policy, deregulation of markets and prices, privatization of public enterprises and restriction of workers' rights, devaluation of the currency, promotion of foreign trade, direct investment and protection of private property.<sup>6</sup> Against the background of these political, legal and economic upheavals, the conflict and the region of former Yugoslavia in the 1990s evolved as a laboratory of new peace policy instruments, in which international actors negotiated their roles and tested measures. At that time, multilateralism received an important momentum as the EU fathom its common foreign, security and defence policy in the Balkans, and the UN further developed its peacekeeping and peacebuilding instruments. During the war, the instrument of humanitarian intervention was gradually recognized both politically and legally. International conflict management, which began with the so-called „oriental issue“, became globalized and

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1 This article reflects the author's analysis of the matter and was written independently of her current employment.

2 The Guardian, Bosnia and Herzegovina: the world's most complicated system of government? <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/oct/08/bosnia-herzegovina-elections-the-worlds-most-complicated-system-of-government>> [04.10.2018].

3 International Association for Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, <<http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org/index2519.html?pagelid=2088>> [04.10.2018].

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4 Chojnacki/Menzel, Peacebuilding: am Scheideweg – oder in der Sackgasse? in Politische Vierteljahresschrift, Vol. 52, No. 3 (2011), pp. 504-536, 508.

5 Calic, Südosteuropa: Weltgeschichte einer Region (2016) 579f.

6 Calic, Südosteuropa: Weltgeschichte einer Region (2016) 579.

experienced a veritable transnational boom. A global sphere of action opened up for civil society actors working for universal humanitarian concerns. Within academia, debates about nationalism theories also experienced a boost.<sup>7</sup>

The fascination over the Balkans is driving international researchers to deal with nationalism. However, the lack of in-depth knowledge of the area and the conflicts often resorts to simplistic nationalism theories. This portrays the Balkans as a space torn apart by nationalist hatred, and war is seen as an inevitable consequence.<sup>8</sup> IR theorists made a significant contribution to the stereotypical explanation of the Yugoslav war, which stresses the antagonisms of Western Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Islamic civilisation and emphasizes these as explanatory paradigms of conflict. In particular, the work „Clash of Civilisations“ by Samuel P. Huntington offers a stylized portrayal of war as a clash of civilisations, which nationally conscious politicians and scientists from the region have advanced as proof that multiethnic communities are impossible to realise.<sup>9</sup> The persistent instrumentalisation of intolerance and mistrust in the multiconfessional Bosnian-Herzegovinian populations, provoked by several nationalist parties of Serbs, Croats, and Bosniaks since the beginning of war, serves primarily to provoke ethnic conflicts. Before and during wartime, this instrumentalisation technique was used to produce ethnic conflicts for the purpose of enforcing concrete geopolitical aims. At that time, the warmongers were particularly concerned with competing for victimhood in order to safeguard their actual intentions, military undertakings and strategic ambitions and to conceal them externally. Otherwise, the commanders-in-chief of the militia units would have risked a confrontation and a loss of sympathy at the international level, which would have led to a loss of legitimacy in peace negotiations and loss of humanitarian aid. Nowadays, within the governmental system, different „in-siders“ seem to hold different aspirations: Serbian parties in the Republika Srpska seeking greater autonomy, Croat parties angling for a third entity, and several Bosniak parties hoping for a more cent-

rally governed country.<sup>10</sup> Through the constitutional reforms of 2002 and the accompanying bloat of institutional engineering, the practices of the post-war elite reveal the interest of maintaining a complex state structure and maintenance of the status quo.

The trend of politicization along ethnonational lines is used for the purpose of legitimising their own competitive autocratic rule<sup>11</sup> in the territorial-administrative complexes of power in order to consolidate these social groupings. In order to bridge the transformation from warring parties to post-war elites, these actors aimed to harmonise the tension between internal and external conditions. On the one hand, political actors in the region consider the expectations of the ethnonational base in their own social groups as fundamental. On the other hand, they depend on external state-building by international actors.<sup>12</sup> In particular, the international financial and aid measures create a relationship of dependency between the international and local actors, leading to the imposition of minimal standards for the transition to a rule of law and democratic state.

### The implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement

One of the biggest challenges and starting points for the implementation was that the war turned civil society into a post-war society that, at first, needed humanitarian support. At the military level, the deployment of SFOR was tasked with supervising the continuing ceasefire. Having the elections every two years, it was aimed to enforce democratization within society.<sup>13</sup> The externally-driven reason was that the Clinton administration wanted to present a credible „exit strategy“ for Bosnia and Herzegovina since the US electorate was becoming increasingly sceptical on the intervention.<sup>14</sup> The second stage of the implementation initiated several processes, which continue to be slow until today. On the

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10 The Guardian, Bosnia and Herzegovina: the world's most complicated system of government? <<https://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2014/oct/08/bosnia-herzegovina-elections-the-worlds-most-complicated-system-of-government>> [04.10.2018].

11 Beyer, Vom Sozialismus zu Demokratie und Marktwirtschaft - Systemtransformation als Governance-Problem in Lütz (Hrsg.), Governance in der politischen Ökonomie: Struktur und Wandel des modernen Kapitalismus (2006) 123.

12 Bliesemann de Guevara in Kakanien Revisited, 02.02.2015, 1-13.

13 General elections 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002.

14 Chojnacki/Menzel, Peacebuilding: am Scheideweg – oder in der Sackgasse? in Politische Vierteljahresschrift, Vol. 52, No. 3 (2011), pp. 504-536, 515.

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7 Calic, Südosteuropa: Weltgeschichte einer Region (2016) 575 ff.

8 Džihčić, Ethnopolitik in BiH, 52.

9 Calic, Krieg in BiH, 18.

one hand, the process of refugee return, including internally displaced people and the restitution of property began, a challenge that was aggravated by „minority returns“. Peacebuilding actors wanted to realise the return of the citizens to those areas in which they lived in the pre-war period, but who now - after the war de jure and de facto - constituted an ethnic minority there. On the other hand, „institution building“ was undertaken to strengthen the state. Furthermore, the accession process of European integration has started,<sup>15</sup> which is still ongoing and slow to make progress.

The overall outcome of the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement is manifested in the existence of one state, two so-called entities, three constitutive peoples, five presidents, ten cantons, 127 political parties and 136 ministries with their administrative machinery.<sup>16</sup>

The constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina is determined in Annex 4 of the Dayton Peace Agreement.<sup>17</sup> The peculiarity of Annex 4 is not only that the foundations of the constitutional order originate in international law and are based on the result of interest-oriented peace negotiations.<sup>18</sup> It was also never ratified by the Parliamentary Assembly, leaving its legitimacy to rest on an international rather than domestic agreement. Interestingly, the Dayton Agreement is an international regulatory policy treaty that also includes the constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the legalized existence of the so-called Entities. Although Annex 4 of the „Dayton-Package“ represents an imposed constitution, this constitutional practice and effect cannot be disregarded. Annex 4 seals a politically nested peace treaty that came about through a „matryoshka principle process“ and is at bottom based on a combination of the Vance-Owen Plan and Owen-Stoltenberg plan, with the Washington Agreement as their precursor. For the progress of negotiations, not the content was changed, but the strategy. The infringement of

international law on the domestic constitutional process<sup>19</sup> through the Dayton Peace Agreement and Washington Agreement,<sup>20</sup> the creation of legitimacy based on ethnicity, and the missing inclusion of citizens in constitutional process are still unresolved and ignored issues.

While the Dayton Peace Agreement ended the fighting between the belligerent actors<sup>21</sup>, long-term peacebuilding is still superficial. Paradoxically, the Dayton Agreement reaffirms the unity of Bosnia, while simultaneously perpetuating the division of the country by the two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) and Republika Srpska (RS). Bosnia's state institutions retained authority over foreign policy, foreign trade policy, customs policy, monetary policy and the finances of institutions and for the international obligations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as immigration, refugees, asylum policy and its regulations, international and inter-entity criminal law enforcement, including relations with Interpol, establishment and operation of common and international communications facilities, regulation of inter-entity transportation and air traffic control. All other government functions and powers were assigned internally to the two entities. Both entities have a broad range of powers, including the right to develop specific parallel relations with neighbouring states. Overall, the entities secured significant sovereignty and independence vis-à-vis the Bosnian state.<sup>22</sup> Using a neo-institutional approach, an ethnicity-based power-sharing model was implemented based on „consociational democracy“ developed by Lijphart. This means a „government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy“. <sup>23</sup> It deals with the stabilisation of an ethnically divided society through the consent of leaders of different ethnic groups to jointly govern the community and make decisions by consensus.<sup>24</sup> This approach led to an overlap of state institutions

15 Schmidt-Hornstein, *Bosnien und Herzegowina: Ein kompliziertes Gebilde vor den Wahlen am 5. Oktober*, KAS-AI 8/02, 19-45.

16 RFE/RL, *Bosnia By The Numbers: Bureaucracy Amid Bad Times* vom 13.02.2014 <<https://www.rferl.org/a/bosnia-by-the-numbers/25262916.html>> (30.08.2018).

17 General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina Annex 4, Ohio/Dayton on 21 November 1995, so-called Dayton Peace Agreement, UN Doc. S/1995/999 vom 30.11.1995.

18 Herdegen, *Völkerrecht*10 (2011) § 22 Rn 2.

19 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid from 1973 and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination from 1965

20 Boyle, *Washington agreement on bosnia means genocide by word-processor*, EIR Vol. 21 no 17, 22.04.1994, 40-43.

21 Calic, *Südosteuropa: Weltgeschichte einer Region* (2016) 575.

22 Tzifakis, *The Bosnian Peace Process: The Power-Sharing Approach Revisited in Perspectives*, No. 28 (Summer 2007), pp. 85-101, 87.

23 Lijphart, A. (1969). *Consociational Democracy*. *World Politics*, 21(2), 207-225, 216.

24 Tzifakis, *The Bosnian Peace Process: The Power-Sharing Approach Revisited in Perspectives*, No. 28 (Summer 2007), pp. 85-101, 85.

in Bosnia, which manifests itself in a dysfunctionality of federalism at an early stage, and at all levels of the state where this model is implemented. The requirements of the ethnic proportionality of the three constitutive people (Bosniaks, Croats and Serbs) in institutions created by the entities and minority protection mechanisms ultimately lead to their misuse as tools to block the influence of state institutions. These blockades are manifested mainly in the lack of implementation of 89 constitutional court decisions<sup>25</sup> or in the lack of implementation of reforms, such as amending the constitution or electoral law, thus discriminating other minorities and Bosnian citizens who do not want to declare as one of the three constitutive peoples.<sup>26</sup> Regional political actors use the governmental structure to put persons who mediate between the international community and the local population into a key strategic position in order to preserve the established party machinery.<sup>27</sup>

### Impact on Society

If one regards the war as a transformation medium for the implementation of the respective ambitions of the warring parties, which are reflected in the Dayton Peace Agreement, it becomes apparent that the bureaucratically exaggerated action orientation of the peacebuilding actors was successful for the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement, but the effects for civil society are quite inconvenient. In contrast, the regional actors endeavour to smash the last remnants of a multicultural consciousness and identity within the Bosnian-Herzegovinian society and strive for the creation - each for their own population group - of new societies whose legitimacy is based on a foundation of war atrocities and the promotion of their own victim role. As a result, due to the losses of the war and traumatising, one involuntarily falls into the „conflict of the victim roles“ provoked by the actors on a social level, without being able to or wanting to include the other side. This process can be observed from the first post-war election to the present.

For this reason, legitimising the territorial administrative units is still an ongoing process. It is based on blurring the root cause of the conflict that resulted from a debate over the transformation of economic tensions to an ethnic war led by regional political actors. Due to the perception of the conflict as an „ethno-national war“, the strategy of international actors was adjusted accordingly, and all peacebuilding measures oriented towards treating this symptom rather than the root cause. Subsequently, the pursuit of this strategy led to a strengthening of these social formations. From such a perspective, the involved peacebuilding actors were guided by a perspective that sought to establish legitimacy based only on ethnic principles. The political structures fulfil only the minimal conditions of democratic rule, since the entities, the cantonisation of the federation, and its electoral law are based on ethno-political principles. In addition, territorialism promotes the preservation of selective perceptions of the war within society and thus has an effect on the different collective memories of the Bosnian-Herzegovinian population. The legitimisation process of territorial administrative units is accompanied by the legitimisation of ethnic nationalism. One of the fundamental challenges of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society is an enduring collectivism inherited from pre-war society. Thus, on the basis of collectivist social structures, the psychological project of ethnic nationalism was undertaken, and has by now established itself as a personal identity feature.<sup>28</sup>

The constellation of the current political system is emerging as a double-edged sword for civil society. On the one hand, it legally guarantees minority protection for returnees, on the other hand, this constellation creates a further division of society, which manifests itself in the entities in inequality at the ballot box. The continuous dominance of the former warring parties, which played a significant role as determining actors<sup>29</sup> in the aftermath of the war, shows tendencies of a de-facto apartheid system, which are expressed in elementary educational institutions. An example is the program of „two schools under one roof“, where Bos-

25 *Aljazeera Balkans*, Bez kazni za neprovođenje odluka Ustavnog suda BiH vom 27.04.2015 <<http://balkans.aljazeera.net/vijesti/bez-kazni-za-neprovođenje-odluka-ustavnog-suda-bih>> 04.10.2018

26 *Balkan Insight*, Bosnia Still Failing to Address Discrimination Verdict <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/bosnian-constitution-remains-discriminatory-12-14-2017>> [04.10.2018].

27 *Bliesemann de Guevara* in Kakanien Revisited, 02.02.2015, 1-13.

28 Kahrović-Posavljak, Dino Abazović (III): Postsocijalistička društva, desekularizacija i slučaj BiH, *Oslobodjenje und BH Dani* vom 16.01.2015 <<https://www.bhdani.ba/portal/clanak/918/feljton-dana/postsocijalisticka-drustva-desekularizacija-i-slucaj-bih>>, <<http://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/dino-abazovic-ii-postsocijalisticka-drustva-desekularizacija-i-slucaj-bih>> [25.10.2016].

29 Bliesemann de Guevara, *Externes State-Building in Bosnien und Herzogovina: Anstoß zur (Re-) Institutionalisierung des Staates oder Katalysator paralleler Strukturen, Kakanien Revisited*, 02.02.2015, 1-13.

niak, Croatian and Serbian children not only have separate lessons on all subjects, but are also physically separated in the schoolyard. Above all, a post-conflict economy controlled by the ethno-national elites can also be observed. The lack of economic alternatives compels the majority of the population to either emigrate or adapt for reasons of survival, whereby voting behaviour ultimately serves as a declaration of loyalty to clientelist networks.<sup>30</sup> A different point of view illustrates that economic reform cannot pass through these political constellations. This shows the transformation of the power practices of the old warring parties. Whilst the structure of power in the state of war was maintained by physical violence, the power preservation of the post-war elite is characterized by a „relative“ use of force through economic measures. These interactions open a dynamic field of power, which make it possible for regional actors to expose Bosnian-Herzegovinian society to a constant „triggering“ through various means. Accordingly, ethno-national legitimacy foundations, in conjunction with controlled economic measures, are deliberately used as a power-conservation mechanism, thereby shaping social behaviour. The suicide of Mahir Rakovac and the murder of Denis Mrnjavica in 2008 made critics note the lack of empathy and solidarity within society.<sup>31</sup> Psychologist Jasna Bajrektarević describes the state of affairs of Bosnian-Herzegovinian society in terms of the courage of Rakovac’s parents, who made a public statement on the motives for his suicide:

„In Bosnia and Herzegovina there is a secrecy that has become a way of life style for society. Simultaneously, we want to represent our lives in the best possible light and sustain everything that is bad. We pretend that we have friends, but we keep every sorrow and anger for ourselves“<sup>32</sup>

Accordingly, an „organised idleness“ of the majority of society can be observed both at a social and political level. The established sophisticated system structure proves to be the cause of such a societal behaviour. A system whose elementary institutions such as social insurance, health or education systems do not effectively and comprehensively function because of corruption and clientelist structures, creates a collective general unconsciousness of all age groups of the

social strata. This dysfunction is exacerbated by the continuing instrumentalisation of ethnonational polarisation and the memories of war. Consequently, society remains divided, and individuals are left with two choices: on the one hand, integrating oneself into this system and choosing the path of least resistance; or on the other, escaping from high unemployment, limited prospects for the future and limited room for personal development through emigration, an increasingly popular option. The mechanism for maintaining power, whereby the consequences of the war are constantly kept in mind, leads to a psychological stress independent of the burden of war. In this respect, political power struggles constantly reproduce a trauma, which in turn produces antisocial behaviour. The disregard for social obligations and indifference gradually becomes a social norm.<sup>33</sup>

## Conclusion

The overlap of state institutions in Bosnia that arose from institutional engineering led not only to a dysfunctionality of federalism at all levels of the state, but also to a clash of different institutional bureaucracies. Parliament’s lack of ratification of the „Dayton Constitution“ thus opened up a space for different interpretations of the constitution and its political contestation, leaving the entire legal system on shaky ground.

While the peace work of NGOs and governmental organizations seems predominantly focused on data collection for reporting, fact sheet creation for background information and partial financing of civil society projects, it has to be considered that the focal point of the constitution and its implementation is not civil society, but the constitutive peoples. Not only is the Dayton framework a power-sharing arrangement, in which conditions for a workable political system are not in place; it is also a bad implementation of the Lijphart model. This is because the Dayton accords include several elements of a partition approach to conflict resolution that have encouraged the wartime ethnic leaderships to maintain their nationalistic programs and endeavour to exploit the power-sharing arrangement.<sup>34</sup> If one looks at the economic

30 Bliesemann de Guevara in Kakanien Revisited, 02.02.2015, 1-13.

31 RFE/RL, Vršnjačko nasilje u BiH: „Sistem“ je ubio Mahira, vom 27.01.2016 <<http://www.slobodnaevropa.org/a/vrsnjacko-nasilje-u-bih-sistem-je-ubio-mahira/27514594.html>> [15.11.2016].

32 RTVFBiH, Sendung „Odgovorite Ljudima“ vom 13.01.2016.

33 ICD-Code F60.2 für Disoziale Persönlichkeitsstörung und ICD Code F43.1 für Posttraumatische Belastungsstörung <<http://www.icd-code.de/icd/code/F60.2.html>>, <<http://www.icd-code.de/icd/code/F43.1.html>> [15.11.2016].

34 Tzifakis, The Bosnian Peace Process: The Power-Sharing Approach Revisited in Perspectives, No. 28 (Summer 2007), pp. 85-101, 86f.

transformation of Bosnia, one becomes aware of the negative consequences for the population, which are expressed not only in the high unemployment rate, corruption and youth emigration because of a general hopelessness. The lack of empathy within society is even more worrying.

In this context, the globalisation-driven strategy of peacebuilding actors, with its bureaucratic and activity-oriented approach, is fundamentally questionable. Unequal circumstances cannot be treated in the same way, neither through the processing of war consequences within society, nor through economic transformation or peacebuilding according to global principles.

*Aida Šabić-Draganović is a lawyer with a specialisation in constitutional law, political science and legal sociology. She is currently assistant to the Central CEEPUS Office. Previously, she worked for the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, the University of Graz and Advantage Austria Sarajevo.*

# THE CASE OF LIBERIA – AN ADAPTED LIBERAL PATH TO LASTING PEACE?

Stefanie Haring, Junior researcher, Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management

The peacekeeping mission in Liberia has been praised as a success story. In his letter to the president of the Security Council, António Guterres referred to the peacebuilding in Liberia as an example that could serve as a model in post-conflict situations. Has the liberal peacebuilding path, combined with an increasing focus on the local, laid the foundations for lasting peace in Liberia? Can the UN engagement thus indeed be used as an example of successful liberal peacebuilding? According to the author's opinion, the UN's approach and proceeding is the right path, since it already includes aspects not directly connected with liberal peacebuilding. However, some aspects (that are set out in this article) could be included to a greater degree than it is currently done. The liberal path is not the wrong one per se, but important factors as a partial decentralisation and triangular cooperation are not sufficiently addressed.

## Introduction

After experiencing 15 years of UN deployment, which has come to an end in March 2018, the Liberian population has put trust in the new president George Weah to set the right course for the country after the UN mission left. Because of the mission's closure, a peacebuilding plan, including two phases for Liberia's transition, had already been formulated by the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the government, the National Civil Society Council, the UN Country team and the donor community in 2016. Phase I of the UN's peacebuilding plan for Liberia was completed in March 2018 and had prepared Liberia for the time after the UN peacekeeping mission by supporting the electoral process, a peaceful and democratic transfer of power and the transition from UNMIL to the United Nations Country Team (UNCT). In order to sustain the peace, Liberia's Peacebuilding Plan Phase II is currently being implemented and shall be completed by 2020. The prerequisites created by multidimensional peacekeeping seem quite promising and the current peacebuilding plan is described as a "plan [...] which could be emulated by other post-conflict countries" (Peacebuilding Commission). This article analyses to what extent the peacebuilding plan follows the path of liberal peacebuilding or focuses on the local. For this purpose, the former mandates of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL), United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia (UNOL), United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), etc. (primarily UN missions since the article con-

centrates on the United Nations as the main actor), are put in contrast to the current phase of the plan. Furthermore, it shall be shortly outlined how the EU is supporting the peacebuilding process in Liberia based on a liberal peacebuilding concept. What are the chances and limitations of this current approach in general and to what extent is the example of peacebuilding in Liberia an actual model?

## Liberal peacebuilding in a nutshell

Liberal peacebuilding is generally assumed as the promotion of liberal democracy, market-based economic reforms and the formation of institutions similar to those of Western states. Because of the sometimes low effectiveness of the transfer of Western standards, the legitimacy of liberal peacebuilding has been widely criticised. The pivotal point is that the concept lacks in local ownership and in consultation with local stakeholders. In "New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding" (Newman/Paris/Richmond), it is argued that contemporary peacebuilding is still blamed to put the focus on top-down mediation amongst power brokers and on state institutions. Bottom-up, community-driven peacebuilding is only pursued in a limited way. (and if at all, the question is if it is done sufficiently and effectively.) There have been discussions about interpreting liberal peacebuilding more broadly, especially because there is no common understanding about what components are included in the concept (the concept of liberal peacebuilding includes a range of practices and values like secular authority, capacity-building, centralized governance and institutions of justice). Because of this criticism, liberal peacebuilding has embraced other concepts such as, inter alia, the local and contextual component to the practice of peacebuilding.<sup>1</sup>

## Post-liberal peacebuilding

According to Richmond, different types of power emerge from below and oppose processes or institutions that are neither contextual nor under critical agency. Whereas liberal peace's top-down approaches often lack legitimacy because of missing coordination and inclusivity, post-liberal peacebuilding concentrates on the work with parallel institutions

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<sup>1</sup> Newman/Paris/Richmond (2009): Introduction, in: Newman/Paris/Richmond: New perspectives on liberal peacebuilding, available: <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/1b39/fe2828eb656c3c3a68dc40f79d47e198d192.pdf>, page 4

and local partners, putting the local at the centre. However, this doesn't mean to imply the non-relevance of international actors like the UN, World Bank, IMF, EU, other donors, and international NGOs or agencies in peacebuilding. Their roles adapt to the contextual settings, whether it's the local, state, regional, international, transnational or transversal context. Mere imposition from above seems to be no longer feasible within the concept of post-liberal peacebuilding. The question is what degree of (the liberal dynamic of) centralisation or (the post-liberal dynamic of) decentralisation, as characterized by Richmond, is necessary. Especially, as modern statebuilding approaches today "veer erratically between centralisation to deal with security, institutions, rights, and public services issues, and decentralisation to respond to market, identity and territorial pressures as well as to provide closer and more locally legitimate forms of governance", as described by Richmond.<sup>2</sup>

### Post-liberal peace and hybridity

Post-liberal peace further introduced the concept of contextual hybridity that results from social, political, economic, cultural and historic experiences of peace in different levels (local, transnational, international). The inclusion of this concept within peacebuilding shall reveal the multiple sources of power and agency (actors and norms) that have constraining or enabling effects. Hybridity therefore demonstrates differentiated categories to explain peacebuilding by including bottom-up initiatives. One example might be decentralisation efforts, which are a way of finding compromises between all actors.<sup>3</sup> Decentralisation efforts can be observed in Liberia, as the UN Liberia Decentralisation Support Programme (LDSP) started in April 2013 and has since pursued to develop a localized system of governance that cares for the needs of the Liberian population. UN County Service Centres in all 15 counties of Liberia were constructed in order to deliver services to the people of Liberia.<sup>4</sup>

2 Richmond (2011): A post-liberal peace, Routledge: USA/Canada, page 186ff.

3 Mac Ginty, Roger/Richmond, Oliver P. (2016): The fallacy of constructing hybrid political orders: a reappraisal of the hybrid turn in peacebuilding, *International Peacekeeping* 23 (2), page 228ff.

4 UNDP (2018): The Liberia Decentralization Support Programme (LDSP), <http://www.lr.undp.org/content/liberia/en/home/operations/projects/democratic-governance/the-liberia-decentralization-support-program--ldsp-.html>

The short outline given of liberal and post-liberal concepts shall help to look at the UN Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and the different successive mandates of peace operations and efforts in Liberia to better interpret what kind of concepts were being pursued in the past and if they might be also the most qualified ones for the future.

### Liberia's population and growth as a chance

Liberia has one of the youngest populations in the world, considering that 60 percent of the 4.6 (January 2018, 2019: 4.9) million people of Liberia are under 25 years old.<sup>5</sup> In other numbers: The median age of Liberia's population is 18.7,<sup>6</sup> a number that hasn't changed much over the last three decades. Perspectives for the young generation, however, have undergone change. According to the AfDB and the World Bank, a growth rate of about 5% in 2020 compared to 0.7% in 2014 seems feasible. Both aspects, youth and economy, are a focus of the incumbent government, but also the UN. Even if UNMIL left, UN is still present in the form of the UN country team in order to support the government of Liberia. Let's have a look back at the beginning of UN presence in the country that started with the observer mission back in 1993.

### UNOMIL and its mandates:

UNOMIL, the UN Observer Mission in Liberia from 1993 until 1997, should assist the Liberian transitional government in the implementation of the peace agreement. UNOMIL's first mandate foresaw to support the peacekeeping mission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Military Observer Group (ECOMOG), in negotiating and implementing the peace agreement. The first mandate of September 1993 was limited to observation. However, it also enabled to assist in humanitarian assistance, mine action and development activities.<sup>7</sup> The mandate of 1995 put a stronger focus on human rights by investigating violations of human rights and supporting local human rights groups. It is highlighted throughout the resolution that the UN's ac-

5 UNHCR (2018): Liberia, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/62475>

6 Worldometers (2018): Liberia population, <http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/liberia-population/>

7 S/RES/866 (1993)

tivities had to be in coordination and in agreement with the Liberian National Transitional government (LNTG) as well as with ECOWAS.<sup>8</sup> Whereas the first mandate authorized 303 military observers until November 1995, the second limited the number of military observers to 160.

The special representative of the secretary-general in Liberia at that time, Tuliameni Kalomoh, referred to UNOMIL as a success. However, greater achievements could not be reached during the mission. UNOMIL facilitated the holding of the elections in 1997, but the engagement as a whole suffered many setbacks. Financial and material resources were not sufficiently allocated, the compliance with human rights couldn't always be ensured and the coordination with ECOMOG couldn't be guaranteed when, for example, making agreements with warring factions unilaterally.<sup>9</sup> The UN left the country when the mandate was completed. However, its focus on observation as the main task and trying to act unilaterally without consulting regional partners did not guarantee lasting peace, as the second Liberian Civil War began only two years later. No foundation for reconciliation or national unity was built and with the departure of UNOMIL, the aspect of deterrence in regard of using force was not present anymore. The mandate was lacking a comprehensive approach that would have acknowledged the hybrid conditions.

### UNOL (1997 – 2003)

The Peacebuilding Support Office in Liberia (UNOL) was established in 1997 and superseded UNOMIL. The office focused on facilitating the reconciliation process and the strengthening of democratic institutions. Among its tasks were the coordination between different UN agencies and the mobilisation of international assistance for the country's reconstruction.<sup>10</sup> The office, however, did not succeed concerning the latter, since there was not enough funding from the international community. Ex-combatants were still not reintegrated and resettled by 1999 and demanded oppor-

tunities for self-employment in order to generate income. Another downside was the missing mandate that would allow UNOL to deal with human rights. Whereas UNOL could not monitor or investigate human rights abuses, the office took small steps forward. The mission provided technical assistance and advice on human rights issues by participating in the training for security personnel or in sessions to draft bills and documents related to the matter.<sup>11</sup> UNOL's attempt to promote liberal values, however, became soon moribund when Charles Taylor, Liberia's then-president, did not fulfil the agreements made and restored an authoritarian regime in the country.<sup>12</sup>

### UNMIL (2003 – 2018)

Cooperation and coordination with the ECOWAS mission in Liberia (ECOMIL, a mission by ECOWAS that was deployed in 2003 but folded into UNMIL after just one month), and therefore with ECOWAS, gained centre stage. According to the UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1509 that established UNMIL, it was determined that the subregion will be pivotal for sustainable peace in Liberia and therefore cooperation among the countries of the subregion was a necessary coordination of the UN.

The former Chief of Political Affairs of UNMIL, Olubukola Akin Arowobusoye, concentrated on the political nature of peace: even if there are many challenges the country faces, peacekeeping missions, first and foremost, have to focus on supporting political arrangements and restoring public trust in the government, democracy and human rights. In order to sustain peace, the fundamental task of the trusted political system is to fulfil basic needs, whether they are material, political, economic or social. Peacekeeping must support the local government in becoming able to achieve this task.<sup>13</sup> A Constitutional Review Committee established in Liberia included consultations with political stakeholders as well as the general public and led to the result of 25 propositions,

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8 S/RES/1020 (1995)

9 Klay Kieh Jr, George (2010): *International Organizations and Civil Wars in Africa: The Liberian Case*, in: Mangala, Jack (ed.) *New security threats and crisis in Africa. Regional and international perspectives*, Palgrave Macmillan: New York, page 191ff.

10 UN (2018): *Peacebuilding Offices*, [http://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/subsidiary\\_organs/peace\\_offices.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/sc/repertoire/subsidiary_organs/peace_offices.shtml)

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11 University of Pennsylvania – African Studies Center (1998): *Liberia: Interview with Head of UNOL*, [http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Newsletters/irinw\\_82599.html](http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Newsletters/irinw_82599.html)

12 Klay Kieh Jr, George (2010): *International Organizations and Civil Wars in Africa: The Liberian Case*, in: Mangala, Jack (ed.) *New security threats and crisis in Africa. Regional and international perspectives*, Palgrave Macmillan: New York, page 191ff.

13 UN (2018): *The Story of UNMIL*, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNMIL%20BOOK%20-%20HIGH%20RES%20PDF%20FOR%20eBOOK%20-%20rework%20timeline%20-%202021%20Mar.compressed.pdf>, page 88

including, inter alia, the topics of local governance, rights of women or land use. In the making of Liberian laws, UNMIL especially concentrated on the compliance of these with human rights norms and best practices. UNMIL had a huge impact on key bills such as land rights and local government as well as decentralisation, areas that are pivotal to create equal conditions and subsequently sustainable peace. The UNMIL Political Affairs Section also mediated between branches of government, members of the judiciary and legislature in Liberia, and thus enabled the formulation of the National Police Act and the Immigration Service Act in Liberia. Another success was improving communication between the judiciary and legislative branches of Liberian government, and the relationship between the national elections commission (NEC) and political parties. UNMIL concentrated on forming a capable government and national unity. The former chief of political affairs in Liberia stressed the primacy of politics but followed the assumption that peacekeeping missions must be led by political officers understanding the complex local context as well as stakeholders' interests, since peacekeeping is no one-size-fits-all solution.<sup>14</sup>

The former UNMIL Principal Rule of Law Officer, Melanne A. Civic described the political neutrality of the UN peacekeeping mission as a big advantage. UNMIL contributed to building trust among the people of Liberia in the public and security institutions as the police. The peacekeeping operation furthermore helped transition to good governance.<sup>15</sup> According to Civic, the lack of national ownership and political will, necessary to sustain new reforms and subsequently the peace, was a huge problem. This, however, should be demanded and promoted by the international community. Additionally, it is important to assist Liberia to deal with natural resources, agriculture and animal farming as well as to develop infrastructure and required distribution networks. Local products and local agriculture open possibilities that need to be used. A National Policy on decentralisation and local governance was launched, with the support of UNMIL, in 2012 and should deconcentrate and delegate functions and resources to local governments within a period of 10 years. What has been reached so far is the opening of county

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. page 98ff.

service centres in all 15 counties, strongly supported by UNMIL. Establishing these counties ensured the provision of services to local people. The overall aim was to decentralise political, social and economic power to enable the local communities to care for themselves. So, the leadership of the Liberian people as well as their needs have to be placed in the foreground when talking about the development and peacebuilding process<sup>16</sup>.

UNMIL followed a path combining liberal and post-liberal elements. By promoting human rights, influencing the formulation of bills and following a more top-down approach (high-level mediation between judiciary and legislative), the liberal tendencies are manifest. Nonetheless the increasing focus on the local clearly runs like a recurrent theme through the mandate. The discourse around local governance, local products as well as local agriculture, but also support for the decentralisation process puts the „local“ at the centre of activities and implies that the UN has not adapted a purely liberal concept during UNMIL.

### The Liberian Peacebuilding Plan

The peacebuilding plan for Liberia was formulated and produced by a joint process, as stated above, in March 2018. This was at a time when the UN had made progress in establishing stable democracy, but still had many problems to tackle, like the high youth unemployment, limited reconciliation, a lacking justice system and governance aspects (corruption, lack of economic diversification).<sup>17</sup>

Phase II of the peacebuilding plan has the intention to integrate longer-term peacebuilding priorities into development frameworks.<sup>18</sup> It focuses on security, development and on human rights (great attention had already been given to human rights norms, but also to the role of women and youth during phase I). The plan in general highlights that consultation concerning its implementation takes places with the government, political parties and civil society. Both the government and international (regional and sub-regio-

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 101ff.

<sup>17</sup> NYU Center on International Cooperation/International Peace Institute/Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (2018): The Liberian Transition and Lessons for Sustaining Peace. Summary Report, [https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ASP-Workshop-7-Summary-Report\\_final\\_for-pub-2.pdf](https://www.ipinst.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/ASP-Workshop-7-Summary-Report_final_for-pub-2.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> UN (2018): The Story of UNMIL, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNMIL%20BOOK%20-%20HIGH%20RES%20PDF%20FOR%20eBOOK%20-%20rework%20timeline%20-%202021%20Mar.compressed.pdf>

nal) partners agreed that commitments shall be built upon human rights principles. It is defined that the government, national stakeholders as well as the international community are responsible for lasting peace. The UN's future contribution to this goal by means of the UNCT shall play a coordinating, communicative and convening role while supporting national institutions and plans. Whereas this aspect distances the UN's engagement from liberal aims, highlighting support for the government in "domesticating international instruments on gender-based violence and the promotion of girls and women education and empowerment" again suggest a liberal concept behind the engagement.<sup>19</sup>

### South-South cooperation instead of international engagement?

One aspect missing in the peacebuilding plan is the concept of South-South cooperation. South-South cooperation is the development cooperation that should be pursued complementary to North-South cooperation (triangular cooperation) but shall not replace the latter.<sup>20</sup> South-South cooperation is a key element in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The concept implies that partnerships between developing countries that look similarly at development should be strengthened in order to share knowledge, expertise and resources while ensuring national sovereignty and ownership. This should be pursued not only from government to government, but shall be extended to the private sector and civil society.<sup>21</sup> The UN therefore established the UN Fund for South-South Cooperation (UNFSSC), a voluntary fund that has led to a large increase in cooperative activity and fund contributions, which nearly doubled from 2016 to 2017.<sup>22</sup> Within the concept of South-South cooperation, countries do not cooperate on the basis of receiving money, but on an equal level to exchange ex-

periences. The support by international donors regarding these partnerships should be done in consultation with each other, to provide coherence. In regard to Liberia, the exchange of knowledge might be profitable, for example, when thinking of the economic diversification in Sierra Leone or success stories of other partners in the South.<sup>23</sup>

### EU

The EU focuses on supporting the democratic and peaceful consolidation of the Liberian state, but also on delivering basic social services and infrastructure to the population. The EU has aligned its development programme (2014-2020) with the new government's „Pro-poor Agenda“.<sup>24</sup> One of the many projects in this field is support for the General Auditing Commission (GAC) of Liberia by providing technical as well as financial assistance. The independent external government audit enables the transparent, efficient and accountable use of public resources.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, addressing land rights and self-determination are focal points of the EU's engagement. The local as priority is demonstrated by many projects from 2017 on equitable land rights and self-determination while promoting democracy. The EU puts efforts in advancing the Land Rights Act in general and makes a special effort for civil society organisations in order to improve their capacities.<sup>26</sup>

### Concluding remarks

It seems that the UN has turned away from a rigid concept of liberal peacebuilding when regarding the example of Liberia. Rather, additional aspects within the peacekeeping and peacebuilding process have broadened the concept. It has been tentatively adjusted to the local context by starting from root causes and what the locals need, even if the

19 UN (2017): Liberia Peacebuilding Plan, <https://unmil.unmissions.org/liberia-peacebuilding-plan-20-march-2017>

20 ISS (2018): To achieve real change, Liberia should look closer to home, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/to-achieve-real-change-liberia-should-look-closer-to-home>

21 A/RES/62/209 (2007) South-South cooperation

22 UN (2018): The United Nations Fund for South-South cooperation. A year in review, <https://www.unsouthsouth.org/2018/09/12/the-United-nations-fund-for-south-south-cooperation-a-year-in-review/>

23 ISS (2018): To achieve real change Liberia should look closer to home, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/to-achieve-real-change-liberia-should-look-closer-to-home>

24 EC (2018): The EU supports Liberia's efforts on governance and delivery of basic services, [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/news-and-events/eu-supports-liberia\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/news-and-events/eu-supports-liberia_en)

25 EEAS (2018): European Union has launched new phase of technical support of the General Auditing Commission of Liberia, [https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/48958/european-union-has-launched-new-phase-technical-support-general-auditing-commission-liberia\\_en](https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/48958/european-union-has-launched-new-phase-technical-support-general-auditing-commission-liberia_en)

26 EC (2018): Supporting communities self-determination and land rights in Liberia, [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/supporting-communities-self-determination-and-land-rights-liberia\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/projects/supporting-communities-self-determination-and-land-rights-liberia_en)

foundations for sustainable peace have to be laid on the top level first, and therefore are political. In the beginning, the UN's engagement intended to assist the government or a legitimate authority that should provide the basis for a functioning state. While starting with unilateral engagement and some cooperation with organisations such as ECOWAS, the UN began exploring and soon relying on partnerships with a number of regional and sub-regional organizations. Phase II of the Peacebuilding Plan contains the following priorities: peace, security and rule of law, governance and public institutions, economic reform and development as well as cross-cutting issues. Specific objectives of the mentioned priorities are drafting and enacting a national peace policy, accelerating the process of decentralisation and ensuring implementation of the Local Government Act, amending the Liberia anti-corruption Commission Act of 2008 and accelerating the domestication of outstanding international human rights instruments into national laws. When looking at these, one clearly sees that the UN influences the process on a large scale, even if the emphasis is on the guiding principle of inclusive national ownership. Regional organisations, bi- and multilateral partners as well as civil society are more extensively mentioned than in any previous mandate.

Liberal values should be increasingly brought into the countries' own procedures. One example is the National Council of Tribal Elders in Liberia that uses the language of liberal peace (rule of law, democracy, human rights), but tries to maintain its own process of communal justice which doesn't divide between criminal and civil cases.<sup>27</sup>

Activities within the peacebuilding plan should clearly continue to pursue the promotion of liberal values, as UNMIL had already done within the last 15 years. A promising approach will be to integrate values, perceived as substantial and legitimate by the Liberian people, into local and contextual approaches of support, especially if the UN and also the EU want to remain valuable partners for Liberia. In this sense, a better pursuit of triangular cooperation could also contribute a lot to the peacebuilding process.

*Stefanie Haring has studied transcultural communication English/Russian and holds a Master's degree in Global Studies (specialisation on international relations and politics). During her studies she has gained working experience in the NGO sector as well in the department for development cooperation of the provincial government of Styria. She was a trainee at the Permanent Representation of Austria to the EU (BMEIA) in 2017 and is currently junior researcher at the Institute for Peace Support and Conflict Management (BMLV) in Vienna.*

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27 Richmond (2014): From peacebuilding as resistance to peacebuilding as liberation, in: Aggestam, Karin/Björkdahl, Annika (eds.) Rethinking Peacebuilding. The quest for just peace in the Middle East and the Western Balkans, Routledge: USA/Canada, page 69.

# THE CASE FOR POLITICAL MISSIONS: UNSMIL IN LIBYA

**David Fussi**

M.A. student, University of Vienna

## Introduction

After the Second World War, an international community under the umbrella of the United Nations Organization (UN) and other global and regional bodies developed. They understood themselves as actors allowed to intervene in conflicts and rebuild countries after conflict. Over the course of the years, several kinds of interventions touching the sovereignty of other states evolved. The United Nations are by far the largest actor when it comes to interventions and differentiates between two kinds of missions. As of October 2018 the UN runs 37 missions around the globe, of which 15 are peacekeeping missions and 22 are political missions.<sup>1</sup>

The following essay explores the case study of Libya after 2011, where a UN political mission – the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) – was established during the uprising in 2011. UNSMIL is frequently being criticized, especially by Libyan actors. However, the possible benefits of a political mission in Libya are hardly ever highlighted and rarely are part of the scientific debate. Still, UNSMIL as political mission is the best and most suitable option the international community has at its disposal to deal with the current deadlock in Libya.

In the following article, I argue that in some instances, political missions prove to be more effective than peacekeeping missions. This is not only because political missions have a more modest claim, but because the logic of political missions differs significantly from peacekeeping missions.

After a short review of the events in Libya since 2011 and the international response, I briefly discuss the concept of political missions in general. In the second half of the article, I take a closer look at UNSMIL from a theoretical perspective and elaborate why a political mission in Libya is currently more suitable and has better chances of resolving the conflict than a large-scale peacebuilding mission does.

## Approaches to conflict management in Libya

When the so-called 'Arab spring' protests broke out in the Middle East and North Africa – first in Tunisia in late 2010, then later in Egypt, Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain – the international community faced a new and challenging si-

tuation. After quick regime changes in Libya's neighboring countries Tunisia and Egypt, the uprising in Libya took a highly violent turn. The international community and certain nation states took up a bundle of measures to deal with the civil war-like protests in Libya.

Different approaches evolved, all communicated and negotiated within the framework of the United Nations. The main approaches of managing the conflict were (a) sanctions, (b) a large-scale intervention by force, and (c) a UN Special Political Mission (SPM). While the large-scale intervention, in form of an air campaign, was only temporal, the other two measures remain in place until today.

In February 2011, when the uprising was still in its initial phase, a sanctions regime was imposed on Libya by the UN Security Council. The first wave of sanctions, imposed through UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1970, included an arms embargo, targeted financial sanctions and travel bans for the closest circle around Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi. In the following month, UNSCR 1973 extended the sanctions and called for the establishment of a no-fly zone over Northern and Central Libya, which was then executed by several NATO member states and other allies.

The arms embargo was partly lifted six months later, when it became clear that rebel forces got the upper hand in the uprising, but in its altered form remains in place until now. In subsequent years, the sanctions regime was extended in two directions. On the one hand, oil smuggling helped some militias finance their activities in Libya, so UNSCR 2146 (2014) allowed for the inspection of ships suspected of oil smuggling from Libya. On the other hand, several individuals accused of people-smuggling were sanctioned by the Security Council in April 2018. The latter, however, has only limited influence on the general conflict situation in the country.

During the uprisings in Libya in 2011, through which long-time leader Gaddafi was toppled, parts of the international community argued for intervening in the civil war-like uprising on behalf of protecting civilians. UNSCR 1973 (March 2011) included a phrase that authorised all necessary means to protect civilians – the legal justification for the heavily disputed air campaign that followed. The air campaign, which is regarded as the second strand of international conflict management in Libya, faced fierce accusations of, firstly, unnecessarily destroying state infrastructure and thus weakening state capacity and sustainability; and, secondly, supporting

<sup>1</sup> United Nations (2018): "United Nations Peace Operations". <https://www.unmissions.org/#block-views-missions-political-missions> (19.10.2018)

the rebels' military campaign rather than protecting civilians, and by doing so overstretching the mandate. The intervention in Libya was the first, and so far only, intervention in history which was legally justified with the protection of civilians.

In order to accompany and support Libyan institutional development towards a democratic state, especially after the fall of Gaddafi, a UN Special Political Mission for Libya was established as a third strand of international conflict management. Shortly after the start of the uprising in February 2011, the UN secretary general appointed a special envoy to Libya to work towards a peaceful transition. The special envoy took up office in March 2011. Since this approach showed some effect and it was the only option for the UN to support the Libyan transitional process, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) was established. A follow-up large-scale intervention with boots on the ground was no option at this point, as neither the Libyans, nor the international community wanted such a mission. UNSMIL, up to now, remains the most important mediator in the Libyan transitional process.

### The rise of political missions

The system of the United Nations employs two different types of missions to tackle conflicts: peacekeeping missions and political missions. Peacekeeping missions are frequent subjects of the scientific discourse, as they are the more eye-catching way to deal with conflicts. Political missions, in contrast, hardly attract attention. For the first time, in 2010 the *Review of Political Missions* put the spotlight on political missions, triggering a debate in academic circles and the UN itself on alternative ways of conflict management and how political missions could be optimized.

The main difference between political missions and peacekeeping missions is that they apply to different conflict situations. While peacekeeping missions are designated for the post-conflict phase, when a certain level of violence is still given, political missions are normally applied to non-violent conflicts and are predominantly preventive measures.

In the second half of 2018, there were 13 running political missions, seven of them in Africa, three in the Middle East,

two in Central Asia and one in South America.<sup>2</sup> The size of political missions varies significantly from mission to mission, ranging between a dozen people up to 2.000 and more, with the vast majority being civilian personnel. UNSMIL, for example, had a staff of around 150 people in 2012, 85% of them international civilian staff, 15% local staff.<sup>3</sup>

The UN installs political missions in certain conflict situations. During the last years, political missions have become the main vehicle to address unconstitutional changes or threats to constitutional order, such as electoral frauds, mass protests or the unwillingness of governments or presidents to step down after lost elections. Another major task of political missions is to support local institutions in transitional periods, like in Libya for example, and mediate in conflict situations, monitor peace agreements and promote good governance, like UNSMIL does in Libya.<sup>4</sup>

One main reason for the rising popularity of political missions is their high output compared to the low costs in contrast to peacekeeping missions. In spite of the relative low number of personnel and the small logistical effort, political missions sometimes produce considerable results. Additionally, the discreet profile of political missions and the high adaptability to external circumstances makes them an attractive alternative to large-scale peacekeeping missions.<sup>5</sup> The United Nations Support Mission in Libya is therefore a prime example of a UN Special Political Mission.

In the next chapter, the structure, tasks and successes of UNSMIL will be briefly described in order to lay the basis for the final section, where I argue why UNSMIL is the best option of the international community to resolve the conflict in Libya.

### UNSMIL

In September 2011, the UN Security Council adopted UNSCR 2009, which was the starting point for the United Nations Support Mission in Libya. UNSMIL was the response of the

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Department of Political Affairs (2018): "Overview". <https://www.un.org/undpa/en/in-the-field/overview> (10.10.2018)

<sup>3</sup> Center on International Cooperation (2012): ". Political Missions 2012". p. 34

<sup>4</sup> Jones, Bruce D. (2011): "Preface", in *Review of Political Missions 2011*. Center on International Cooperation. p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Pascoe, Lynn B. (2011): "Foreword", in *Review of Political Missions 2011*. Center on International Cooperation. p. 10.

international community to the request of the Libyan transitional bodies “to support the country’s new transitional authorities in their post-conflict efforts.”<sup>6</sup>

The mission is led by a Special Representative appointed by the UN-Secretary General, who is supported by a Deputy Special Representative. Currently, Lebanese diplomat Ghassan Salamé is head of UNSMIL. UNSMIL makes no official announcement about the number of its staff, however the report “Political Missions 2012” gives a number of 158 people working for the mission. 135 of them were international civilian staff, 22 national civilian staff.<sup>7</sup> Six years later, the number may have varied slightly. As it is the case with UNSMIL, most of the personnel of political missions are international experts.

The main tasks of UNSMIL are, as its name suggests, supportive. The initial mandate of the mission has been extended and modified seven times since 2011. Since the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) was signed by the end of 2015, the main task is:

*“to exercise mediation and good offices in support of the Libyan political agreement’s implementation; the consolidation of governance, security and economic arrangements of the Government of National Accord and subsequent phases of the Libyan transition process. Further, UNSMIL, within operational and security constraints, should support key Libyan institutions and provide, upon request, essential services and humanitarian assistance. Among other mandated functions, UNSMIL is tasked with monitoring and reporting on human rights; support for securing uncontrolled arms and counter-proliferation; and the co-ordination of international assistance and the provision of advice and assistance to efforts led by the Government of National Accord to stabilise post-conflict zones, including those liberated from ISIL.”<sup>8</sup>*

As mentioned above, the implementation of the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA) is a major part of UNSMIL’s activities. This fact is crucial, because the LPA and the Government of National Accord (GNA) which is legitimised by the LPA are

heavily disputed, especially inside Libya, which touches the mission’s impartiality.

In all its tasks and activities, the core principle of UNSMIL is local ownership, which means that UNSMIL should not abduct the leadership of the stabilisation process, but leave the lead to the Libyan institutions and only take a supportive role.

### **Possible Advantages of UNSMIL as a political mission**

There are many reasons why a political mission is more suitable and can produce more effective outcomes in Libya than a peacebuilding mission could. But first of all: How come that the international community sent a political mission to Libya instead of a large-scale peacekeeping mission with boots on the ground?

In autumn 2011, after the overthrow of Gaddafi, there simply was no perceived need of a peacekeeping mission. It was common sense inside and outside Libya that the conflict will be over with the fall of Gaddafi, which was, at the time when UNSMIL was installed, foreseeable. The fighting soon stopped, the transitional process went well, hence nobody could reasonably argue for employing a large-scale military mission. Thus, a political mission with a mandate to support the transitional institutions was the best option. Discussions about the mission’s suitability erupted when fighting again broke out in 2014. However, even then the option of a peacebuilding mission was never seriously considered, as the Libyans did not want any large-scale outside interference.

None of UNSMIL’s tasks requires heavy military or police presence, which helps to keep the profile of the mission low. For this reason, political missions are very unlikely to become part of the conflict themselves. On the one hand, they do not engage actively (by force) in the conflict, on the other hand, unlike military missions they do not provide an easy target. The downside of this is that political missions, as they have hardly any self-defence capabilities, have to engage with local actors in order to guarantee their own safety and may have to make concessions or favour the strongest groups. UNSMIL in Libya faces exactly these accusations. As Lacher and Idrissi show in detail, militias in the Libyan capital Tripoli behave

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6 UNSMIL (2018): “Mandate”. <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/mandate> [12.10.2018]

7 Center on International Cooperation (2012): „Political Missions 2012”. p. 34

8 UNSMIL (2018): “Mandate”. <https://unsmil.unmissions.org/mandate> [12.10.2018]

in a cartel-like way,<sup>9</sup> and neither the Unity Government in Tripoli nor UNSMIL openly criticize these militias, since both physically rely on them.

The small size of the mission and the circumstance that a part of the personnel and structures of UNSMIL are located outside Libya results in the fact that UNSMIL has little self-interest. As a consequence of its physical absence from the conflict area, UNSMIL neither has to secure its offices and headquarters, nor does it have to secure supply lines in the way peacebuilding missions have to. These circumstances make UNSMIL less dependent on one of the local actors, which may be a party to the conflict. Relying on this independence, UNSMIL can take a more unbiased stance regarding its mediation tasks. Due to, however, occasional presence of UNSMIL staff in conflict zones itself, a certain degree of arrangement with local actors is inevitable.

The civilian nature of UNSMIL furthermore makes an exit strategy easier. In case of a pullout of the mission, there will be no security vacuum, as it was the case after many peacekeeping missions such as in Afghanistan or Iraq.

As mentioned above, a large share of UNSMIL's staff are international experts. This, on the one hand, contributes to the mission's credibility. The international nature of the personnel, and the fact that the majority of the staff does not come from a single country, or that there is not one country in the lead of the mission, like it often is the case for peacekeeping missions, enables a high degree of impartiality.

## Challenges

However, when the Libyan Political Agreement (LPA), which foresaw the establishment of a Government of National Accord (GNA), was signed by the end of 2015, UNSMIL partly lost its impartiality. First, some Libyan key actors with actual influence on the ground were not involved in the negotiation process of the LPA, which brought up these actors against the mission. Second, as a consequence of its mandate, UNSMIL is acting as a lobby for the Government of National Accord which became itself a party to the conflict. However, when the GNA physically

arrived in Libya in early 2016, it had to meet arrangements with local militias in Tripoli to secure its own existence, which, in turn, privileged these militias. Because of the exclusion of actors from eastern Libya, Field Marshal Haftar, the de-facto ruler over Eastern Libya, for example, denied to engage with UNSMIL for a few months.<sup>10</sup>

A huge advantage for UNSMIL is that the most important external actors in Libya do not try to abduct the peace process. Admittedly, Egypt, Italy, France, the UAE, Turkey and Russia have their own diplomatic initiatives in order to secure their interests in Libya, however these do not stand directly in the way of UNSMIL's work. The diplomatic initiatives peaked in summits in Paris and Sicily regarding the preparation and conduction of elections in Libya.

And despite the fact that UNSMIL is regularly criticised by some Libyan actors, it hardly ever stands in critique of the international community or certain nation states. All resolutions regarding UNSMIL were so far adopted unanimously by the UN Security Council, which underlines the international legitimacy of the mission.

Outside interference, however, is a main challenge for UNSMIL as especially regional states, like Italy, France, Egypt, the UAE and Turkey have vital interests and agendas in Libya, from which they will not back down. And UNSMIL head Salamé does not have the power to stop these states from interfering in the country, but he needs international backing in order to do so.

The core principle of all actions of UNSMIL is national ownership and national responsibility of the transition process. UNSMIL, as its name suggests, only supports Libyan institutions and organizations. The mission still does not have a secondary role in the peace process. It indeed is the leading mediator in the negotiations. However, it lacks the authority to force anybody into any agreement.

## Conclusion

International conflict management is in constant change, as is the nature of conflicts. Today, the United Nations is the main institution to tackle conflicts, and the UN knows two different ways to deal with them: by sending peacebuilding missions or political missions to the conflict-zone.

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<sup>9</sup> Lacher, Wolfram; Idrissi, Alaa (2018): „Capitulation of Militias“. In Small Arms Survey. <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/T-Briefing-Papers/SAS-SANA-BP-Tripoli-armed-groups.pdf> (19.10.2018)

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<sup>10</sup> Lacher, Wolfram (2018): „Libyen: Die Wette, die nicht aufging“. In Mission Impossible?. p. 26

UNSMIL in Libya represents the second kind, a political mission with no police or military presence on the ground, except for self-protection. It supports the Libyan transitional institutions and is the main mediator in the ongoing political and military struggle for power.

In this article I explored the possible advantages and disadvantages of UNSMIL's nature as a political mission. Apart from all the critique UNSMIL faces, especially from Libyan actors, the fact that there is a political mission in Libya and not a peacekeeping mission with heavy presence on the ground has many advantages regarding the resolution of the conflict. Further to the credibility of UNSMIL, due to its international and mixed staff, the mission is able to keep out of the conflict because of its pure civilian nature. The absence of troops on the ground strengthens UNSMIL on the one hand and opens several opportunities, but also makes it vulnerable and forces it to meet arrangements with local actors in order to guarantee the mission's safety. The relative impartiality of UNSMIL, which is only possible because of its nature as political mission, gives the mission the backing of the international community and by this curtails outside interference, which is often a main driver of conflicts. Most importantly, as the name of the mission suggests, its merely supportive role in working towards a functioning settlement is the key feature of UNSMIL as political mission. Local ownership of the transition process is regarded crucial in order to reach a political settlement.

All in all, taking the nature of the conflict in Libya and internal and external circumstances into consideration, a political mission like UNSMIL seems a good, however not perfect way to work towards a settlement in Libya.

*David Fussi studied Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Vienna. He has traveled the region widely, absolved Arabic language courses in several local countries and conducted field work for his Master's thesis on the Libyan border economy. As a long-term intern at the Austrian National Defense Academy, he was tasked with analyzing the conflicts in Libya, Syria and Iraq.*



