

# AFRICA PEACE AND CONFLICT JOURNAL

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University for Peace



The mission of the University for Peace is to provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace with the aim of promoting among all human beings a spirit of understanding, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence, to stimulate cooperation among peoples, and to help lessen obstacles and threats to world peace and progress in keeping with the noble aspirations proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations.

—Charter of the University for Peace, Article 2, approved by the  
UN General Assembly in Resolution A/RES/35/55



# AFRICA PEACE AND CONFLICT JOURNAL

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The APCJ is a refereed journal with a panel of international editorial advisors and readers. All articles are anonymously peer reviewed by at least two referees. We welcome the following types of contributions year round and will periodically issue calls for papers on specific topics:

**Articles and case analysis**—critical case studies or thematic discussion and analysis of topical peace and conflict themes. Maximum word count: 7,000, including endnotes and bibliographic references. Abstract: 150 words or less.

**Briefings/practice**—training or intervention strategies, outcomes and impacts; policy review and analysis; country situational updates, and so on. Maximum word count: 2,000.

**Book reviews**—critical assessments of new books that integrate peace and conflict concerns. Maximum word count: 1,500.

**Resources**—reports, upcoming conferences and workshops, notices of new books, and videos, e-communications and Web sites that link peace and conflict studies (150 words maximum); documents, declarations, communiqués, and other relevant nongovernmental or multilateral organization statements. Maximum word count: 1,000.

The editors will consider only material that meets the following requirements:

- The submission must be original and not under consideration for publication by another journal or organization or have been published previously.
- Submissions should be prepared in word-processing software, preferably Microsoft Word 6 or later. Submit charts and graphs in eps, pdf, or jpeg format.
- For notes and references, use the short-title system (not the author-date system) as per *Butcher's Copy-editing: The Cambridge Handbook for Editors, Copy-editors and Proofreaders*, 4th edn (2006).
- Include full name; brief bio(s) with institutional affiliation of author(s); contact details, including mailing address and telephone number and submit to [tkarbo@upeace.org](mailto:tkarbo@upeace.org) and [echiboud@upeace.org](mailto:echiboud@upeace.org).

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## Inaugural Note

Some six years ago, the University for Peace (UPEACE) launched the Africa Programme after consultations with universities, research centres, civil society organizations, policymakers, and others throughout Africa. In Maputo in November 2002 at a gathering of stakeholders, participants defined the central mission of the programme as a sustained endeavour to stimulate and strengthen the capacity of African institutions in peace and conflict studies. In order to create conditions for lasting peace, stability, and development on the continent, the partners in these consultations and subsequent interactions also identified the need to develop a cadre of highly skilled peace researchers in Africa with the goal of building a solid capacity to analyse and better understand the fundamental causes of conflict there. Toward this goal, the UPEACE Africa Programme is launching the *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal* to promote and strengthen relevant knowledge by meeting the following objectives:

- amplify African and other voices to engage with and be better heard by the African and global peace and conflict studies communities
- facilitate intellectual discussion with the quest of finding peaceful solutions for Africa
- increase the availability of Africa-pertinent, policy-related studies in academia, civil society, and policy and decision-making circles in Africa and abroad
- serve as a vehicle for the broad dissemination of research conducted under the auspices of or in collaboration with UPEACE

The *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal*, as a multidisciplinary, peer-reviewed academic publication, strives to maintain the highest possible standards. The diversity of its articles reflects the contributions of the different disciplines relevant to peace and conflict studies in Africa and the many links between theory and practice. The articles presented will include original studies of thematic issues as well as case studies. Among the other features of the journal are reviews of books and recent documents pertaining to peace and conflict issues in Africa. APCJ, published in June and December, will also be available for electronic downloading.

It is a great pleasure to launch this first issue of APCJ. We would like to take this opportunity to invite all members of the peace and conflict studies community at-large to contribute to its success. We strongly believe that it will strengthen the participation of Africa in the global quest for peace.

Jean-Bosco Butera  
*Director*  
*UPEACE Africa Programme*

John J. Maresca  
*Rector*  
*University for Peace*



## Editorial Note

This first issue of the *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal* signifies a milestone in the development of the University for Peace's effort to strengthen and disseminate knowledge in the area of peace and conflict studies worldwide. Through its Africa Programme, UPEACE has established over the past six years a solid presence and leadership in the field of peace and conflict studies. Yet for the past few years, our efforts have focused on strengthening the teaching and practice capacities of Africa's educators and practitioners of peace and conflict resolution. APCJ compliments these efforts by establishing a venue for researchers and academicians to share their research, knowledge, and experiences with a wide audience in Africa and beyond.

APCJ strives in its inaugural issue to reflect UPEACE's principles and values based on the multidisciplinary and multicultural foundation of the field of peace and conflict studies. The six articles here represent innovative and creative approaches within the field. The contributions by Bertha Kadenyi Amisi and Mary King introduce and assert the significance of indigenous African approaches and the unequivocal need to explore and apply nonviolent methods in the area of peacemaking and peace-building. Pamela Machakanja and Edith Natukunda-Togboa focus on non-traditional and creative approaches to conflict analysis using critical discourse analysis and construction of social memory. These authors also explain how these approaches contribute not only to conflict analysis and understanding, but also to peacemaking and peace-building efforts. Craig Zelizer and Marion Keim expand the multidisciplinary reach of the field of peace and conflict studies by introducing the role of trauma healing and the use of sports to advance peace-building efforts.

Bertha Kadenyi Amisi provides an Africa-based understanding of African approaches to peace as well as Western ones. Her article efficiently demonstrates the advantages and shortcomings of the latter, especially institutional, emancipatory, and transformative approaches. She then looks at African concepts and understandings of them, such as *ubuntu*, and explores their potential contribution to peacemaking and peace-building. Amisi highlights a critical methodological challenge facing African scholars and practitioners of peace—the need to deconstruct the basic assumptions of Western approaches and frameworks and the means to rediscover and make applicable indigenous African approaches.

Mary King, in her article on teaching nonviolent struggle, asserts that nonviolent methods are not only morally superior to the use of violence, but are also more efficient and practical. She discusses especially how the use of nonviolent methods, or positive actions as referred to in many African settings, can bring about symmetry between a powerful party and a weaker one. King also explains that where typical methods of conflict resolution—such as dialogue, negotiations, and mediation—fail because of severe injustice or structural violence, nonviolent approaches can pave the way toward conflict resolution by addressing underlying grievances. King emphasizes inherent nonviolent approaches to conflict in African cultures and notes several examples of their modern application.

Pamela Machakanja shares the findings of her qualitative research among citizens of the Manicaland province in Zimbabwe. She examines the construction of social memory as a creative and innovative tool for conflict analysis and for peace-building, expanding on the work of David Middleton and Derek Edwards. Machakanja recognizes the significance of constructing social memory for ruling elites, especially with regard to issues of social and political identities, legitimacy, and acceptance of authority. Empirical data, collected through focus groups and interviews, support her assumptions on how processes of social remembering and forgetting have influenced the conflict in Zimbabwe today. She concludes with a recommendation for the use of social memory to advance notions of conflict transformation, positive peace, and conflict prevention.

Citing critical discourse analysis (CDA), Edith Natukunda-Togboa offers a linguistic methodology for comprehending the evolution, escalation, and power dynamics of the conflict in northern Uganda. She also uses CDA to “examine whether there are discursive best practices in the area that can serve as a springboard to enhancing voices of peace-building.” Natukunda-Togboa applies her methodology to explore the potential of gender- and religious-based peace-building initiatives to establish lasting peace.

Craig Zelizer offers an interesting example of the multidisciplinary tendency of peace and conflict studies in examining the efforts of scholars and practitioners of peace-building to develop academic and practical approaches that merge trauma understanding and healing with peace-building activities. He focuses primarily on making peace-builders’ work trauma sensitive. He explores the challenges to this approach and offers concrete recommendations on how to apply it for the benefit of victims of war and violent conflict as well as peace-builders.

Focusing on the Kicking for Peace project of the Western Cape Network for Community Peace and Development, Marion Keim introduces sports as a means for peace-building. She suggests that the appropriate design and implementation of sporting activities can contribute to peace-building efforts by helping to eliminate deep-seated stereotypes and prejudices between groups and by offering a positive outlet for victims of violent conflict, such as child soldiers, seeking reintegration and healing. Keim examines the challenges and promises of Kicking for Peace, a joint project of universities and civil society, and argues that such innovative approaches be accompanied by sound participatory research “to assess how [they] at the community level can be used effectively for development, reconciliation, and peace.”

Two underlying themes cut across all six articles: The need for innovation and creativity to advance conflict analysis and peacemaking and peace-building efforts and the need to explore culturally appropriate approaches that might be overlooked should academicians and practitioners continue to insist on universalizing culturally bound frameworks or lose sight of the potential of multidisciplinary approaches.

Amr Abdalla  
*Vice Rector for Academic Affairs*  
*University for Peace*



## From the Managing Editor

Welcome to the first issue of the *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal*. As a developing field, peace and conflict studies has relied heavily on related and cross-disciplines—such as political science, international relations, psychology, and others—for forums for the discussion of topics specific to it. This situation begs (and answers) the question, Why a new journal in peace and conflict studies? Because there exists a need for a specialized and dedicated journal to deal thoroughly with African issues related to peace and conflict.

The conceptualization and theoretical development of peace and conflict studies has, thus far, been driven by institutions in the West. APCJ seeks to engage African scholars and others to focus on contemporary conflict and peace issues relating specifically to Africa. The current global context is characterised by protracted social conflicts, many of them playing out on the continent. This situation offers unique challenges that need to be addressed intellectually with an African focus. The Africa Programme of the University for Peace (UPEACE) developed APCJ to contribute to the creation of knowledge on matters of peace and conflict, to provide space for scholarly analysis and reflection, and to highlight critical and constructive views involving conflict dynamics and processes that engender peace (and unfortunately violence) on the continent.

APCJ strives to identify indigenous and endogenous processes that engender peace, as well as provide a platform for actors at various levels to engage proactively in the prevention, management, and resolution of conflicts in Africa. As a forum for policy-makers, practitioners, and academics involved in conflict resolution and peace-building to exchange multifaceted and thought-provoking ideas, the debates that take place within these pages will, I hope, result in practical policy prescriptions that can be implemented at all levels of society continent-wide. To this end, APCJ explores best practices in the field, examining critical peace and conflict theories and the challenges of applying them in the African context. Our approach is through a critical qualitative review of alternatives to current thinking and theories, including their conceptual and epistemological groundings, in a manner befitting a scholarly journal.

APCJ publishes original research on a wide array of topics and questions about peace and conflict in Africa. As a peer-reviewed publication, APCJ has a renowned group of academics, practitioners, and policymakers on its editorial board. Its articles examine or constitute thematic discussion and analysis of topical peace and conflict themes and critical case studies. Manuscripts focusing on, but not limited to, the following themes will be considered:

- peace and conflict initiation and escalation
- causes and conditions of conflicts in Africa
- indigenous and endogenous conflict resolution mechanisms
- regional integration and human security
- migration, poverty, and development

- environment and natural resources, peace-building, and development
- reconciliation and postconflict reconstruction
- conflict sensitivity and development practice

APCJ's Briefings section features writings that highlight strategies of conflict resolution or intervention strategies with specific impacts and outcomes. Briefings dealing with policy issues relating to Africa also appear here; these may be country specific or at the regional or subregional levels. Country situational reports are also relegated to this part of the journal. The Bookshelf section presents critical reviews of new publications on peace, conflict, and related issues. In the Review section, APCJ will occasionally reprint classic works or excerpts by renowned scholars in the field of peace and conflict studies. The section From Our Readers offers a platform for your feedback. Please see Guidelines for Contributors at the front of this journal for additional details concerning contributions to each section of the journal. We welcome all serious submissions.

The editorial board and staff of APCJ would appreciate receiving your ideas on how to further develop the journal and our partner pool. Should you have an interest in participating as a guest editor or if your organization would like to work with the UPEACE Africa Programme in producing a thematic special issue, please contact the managing editor at [apcjeditor@upeace.org](mailto:apcjeditor@upeace.org).

As can be gleaned from the "Editorial Note" by Amr Abdalla, UPEACE vice rector for Academic Affairs, this inaugural issue of the *Africa Peace and Conflict Journal* presents, as a point of entry, various perspectives on a few broad themes. The next issue will focus in more detail on indigenous and endogenous conflict resolution mechanisms and the challenges facing these approaches in light of dominant Western notions of peace and conflict transformation.

In closing, I would like to acknowledge that the publication of this first issue of APCJ would not have been possible without the generous contributions of the International Development Research Centre through its Nairobi office. We are grateful for its support.

Tony Karbo





# Indigenous Ideas of the Social and Conceptualising Peace in Africa

*Bertha Kadenyi Amisi*

A recent resort to indigenous mechanisms to arrive at justice, peace, and reconciliation calls attention to assumptions underlying existing analyses of conflict and peace in Africa. How adequately do they capture the African people's experience of war and aspirations for peace? The answer is important for crafting policies aimed at transforming destructive and debilitating conflict and at building and sustaining peaceful societies. The trend also raises the question of what African knowledge systems have to offer in the ongoing project of theorising peace and conflict. It is thus necessary to examine the understandings of peace and war suggested by indigenous ideas, especially if African peoples are ultimately to be responsible for dealing with their conflicts constructively and sustaining the peace they build.

To launch and sustain a process of good governance in a postconflict country is a herculean task, particularly as we have already indicated it is its very absence that has in large part caused the violent conflict in the first instance. Because of its inadequate comprehension of the African conflicts the international community has unfortunately often been impatient with the lack of the delivery of instant good governance, preferably modelled after the western representative system of governance and the donor countries have gone to the extent, in some cases, of making this a conditionality for external assistance. This superficial understanding of both the uniqueness and complexity of African conflicts and of the tendency on the part of donors to view Africa's problems through the lens of western countries and societies accounts for their inappropriate policy prescriptions about peace.<sup>1</sup>

**THE LAST DECADE HAS WITNESSED** an increasing resort in Africa to indigenous mechanisms of justice, peace, and reconciliation. For example, in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Somaliland, northern Uganda, and several other countries, indigenous mechanisms have gained in appeal as possible alternatives or supplements to approaches to conflict resolution that are largely Western designed. To some observers, these approaches may on the surface appear to be a desperate return to the past—a romanticism of the 'tradi-

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**Bertha Kadenyi Amisi** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Political Science, Maxwell School of Citizenship, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.

1. Adedeji Adebayo, 'Comprehending African conflicts' in Adebayo Adedeji (ed.), *Comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts: The Search for Sustainable Peace and Good Governance* (London and New York, Zed Books, 1999), 15–16.

tional, or a nostalgia for the good old days, when things worked. To others they represent a community's realisation that the way out and forward lies within it, in its choices, knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of its experiences of war and peace.

Criticisms of this romantic view merit attention, especially when they warn against the uncritical use of traditional mechanisms blind to changes that may have occurred during the colonial and postcolonial eras. Nevertheless, these criticisms do not necessarily offer a conclusive answer to the debate on whether indigenous ideas of the social have value in promoting understanding of war and peace in Africa. The second view is the point of departure here—addressed through a focus on the concepts of flexible gender, *ubuntu*, and design—for exploring the significant advantages that indigenous mechanisms offer in understanding war and peace in Africa.

## UNDERSTANDING THE EXPERIENCE OF WAR AND PEACE IN AFRICA

The rich and extensive literature on the idea of peace draws on scholarship from a variety of disciplines, including the social, physical, and biological sciences.<sup>2</sup> It is interesting that despite the absence of a conclusive definition of peace in the peace studies literature, there exists a general consensus that peace is desirable and valuable. Instead of one idea of peace, students and practitioners speak of numerous *approaches* to peace. This situation makes the task of distinguishing between approaches difficult. Hizkias Assefa's three broad categories—peace as the absence of violence (negative peace); peace as a condition of tranquillity; and peace as the constructive transformation of conflict—are useful, however, in making sense of the literature on peace.<sup>3</sup> The current scholarship on war and prescriptions for peace in Africa is dominated by the negative peace and conflict transformation approaches.

### Peace as the Absence of Violence

The realist and liberal traditions in international relations theory and practice largely inform the idea of negative peace, or the absence of violence. This notion brings together conflicting ideas of peace that developed from different sources and over different historical contexts in the West. These ideas have coalesced into the current understanding of liberal (or neo-liberal) peace, which Oliver Richmond defines as a 'hybrid' of four understandings of peace: victor's peace, constitutional peace, institutional peace, and civil peace.<sup>4</sup> According to Richmond, victor's peace is an outcome of military victory and is dependent upon the hegemony or domination of a so-called winner. Constitutional peace exists where there is democracy, law, and trade. Institutional peace depends on normative, legal institutional arrangements, such as international regimes and organizations. Civil peace involves such approaches as dis-

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2. D. P. Barash (ed.), *Approaches to Peace: A Reader in Peace Studies* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2000).

3. H. Assefa, *Peace and Reconciliation as a Paradigm: A Philosophy of Peace and Its Implications on Conflict, Governance, and Economic Growth in Africa*, NPI Monograph Series (Nairobi, Nairobi Peace Initiative, 1993), 2–4.

4. O. P. Richmond, 'The problem of peace: Understanding the "liberal peace"', *Conflict, Security and Development* 6:3 (2006), 293–300; idem, 'Patterns of peace', *Global Society* 20:4 (2006), 380–81.

armament, aid, and humanitarian assistance. In general, liberal peace aims at the transformation of 'dysfunctional and war affected societies into cooperative, representative, stable societies'.<sup>5</sup> Underlying these four understandings of peace are three views of peace: military (pacification); institutional; and emancipatory.

The military view of peace considers war necessary and legitimate when used to protect or expand the interests of the state. Internal war, however, is a threat to the survival of the state and thus portends its possible failure or collapse. Based on this perspective, civil war is a state of nature in which an absolute state lacks the ability to control self-interested individuals. The Hobbesian notions of state of nature and related vocabulary of anarchy and failed or collapsed states offer compelling language that dominates analyses of war in Africa. Indeed, the media's reporting draws on this vocabulary to portray the continent as a place of complete chaos, where life (in Hobbesian terms) is 'short, nasty and brutish'.<sup>6</sup> For those who hold this view, a military solution seems like the most realistic, especially when warlords are cast as self-interested individuals. The military intervention of the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) in Sierra Leone and Liberia, the military invasion of the former Zaire by neighbouring states to oust President Mobutu Sese Seko, the current Ethiopian military intervention in Somalia to keep the peace, the African Union's (AU) establishment and deployment of peacekeeping forces around the continent, and the U.S. Africa Command and French RESCAMP illustrate the approaches of internally and externally driven military solutions to civil war in Africa.<sup>7</sup> In these instances, peace is the outcome of stamping out the activity of armed groups and enforcing security and order through the presence of a more powerful force controlling the means of coercion. The recent increased resort to military peace in Africa flows from shifts in security thinking in the post-9/11 era of terrorism, which considers war-affected societies in Africa and other non-Western societies as breeding grounds for terrorists or potential terrorists.

Institutional peace privileges international and domestic liberal institutions as mechanisms for resolving conflicts. Civil war is seen as unnecessary and an avoidable disruption of social, economic, and political order and stability. At the international level, such multilateral institutions as the United Nations, International Criminal Court, and World Trade Organization provide for the nonviolent resolution of conflict over political and economic issues, address common problems, advance common interests, and ensure peace. Peace, in other words, is an outcome of world order characterised by states respecting international laws, rules, and (democratic) norms.

A major assumption of institutional peace is that war is less likely when states cooperate rather than compete over political and economic issues. Institutional peace in Africa is manifest in the peacemaking and confidence-building efforts of the African Union and subregional organizations, such as ECOWAS, the Inter-Governmental

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5. M. Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London, Zed Books, 2001), 11.

6. R. Kaplan, 'The coming anarchy', *Atlantic Monthly*, February 1994, 44–76.

7. S. Hanson 'The Pentagon's new Africa command', Council of Foreign Relations, 2007, [www.cfr.org/publication/13348/pentagons\\_new\\_africa\\_command.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/13348/pentagons_new_africa_command.html); B. Charbonneau, 'Mastering "irrational" violence: The relegitimization of French security policy in sub-Saharan Africa', *Alternatives* 31:2 (2006), 215–41.

Authority on Development (IGAD), and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Regional economic integration also enhances peace. This explains the increasing focus in the post–cold war era on developing economic communities, such as the Common Market for East and Central Africa (COMESA) and the revival of the East African Community (EAC). At the domestic level, state reforms and reconstruction that include the establishment of a democratic state, implementation of the rule of law, protection of human rights, constitutional review, and security sector reform initiatives express aspirations for peace. Postconflict peace-building programmes implemented by the United Nations, such bilateral aid agencies as the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DfID) or the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and international nongovernmental organizations are illustrative of institutional peace.

Official negotiations to terminate civil war also represent the belief in strong liberal democratic institutions as key to resolving political conflict. In the domestic and international versions of institutional peace, the state is a principle actor because it has the most viable means—military, political, and economic—to bring about peace. Although the liberal view recognises the role of civic groups, it is complementary (informal) to that of the state and international institutions. Peacemaking and enforcement largely remain the preserve of the state and state institutions.

Given the persistence of insecurity despite heavy investment in reforming and rebuilding states and state institutions, it seems that how one conceives of the latter could be more of a problem than an opening to understanding violent conflict and aspirations for peace in Africa. S.N. Sangmpam, for instance, questions the resort to institutions as the pre-eminent explanation of and prescription for political outcomes in developing countries. In his view, political outcomes in the empirical world defy theoretical explanations of them from the perspective of institutions. This casts doubt on the causal and prescriptive value assigned to institutions and begs the question of whether they result from society-rooted politics or cause political outcomes. Sangmpam argues that a better understanding of political outcomes is gained from focusing on ‘competition among individuals, groups, or classes over the social product, that is property, goods, services, and values in a community,’ and ‘the competition over political/state power . . . expressed in cultural, racial, religious, gender, manipulative, or violent forms.’ Doing so renders visible three activities crucial for understanding political outcomes, including civil war: the nature of competition over resources, services, and values at the societal level; the way political power is organized in society; and the state as one among other ways of organizing political power given that it is not necessarily the chief referent of group solidarity.<sup>8</sup> Although Sangmpam’s argument is made within the context of a comparative political debate on the determinants of political outcomes within and across non-Western and Western societies, it is relevant to the discussion on conceptualising war and peace in Africa because it reinforces the emancipatory peace critique of what is problematic with an institutional explanation for war.

Emancipatory peace comprises different strands of poststructural-postmodern thinking and critical thinking that differ in analytical focus. For instance, critical theorists em-

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8. S.N. Sangmpam, *Comparing Apples and Mangoes: The Overpoliticized State in Developing Countries* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2007), 20–39, 51–75.

phasise the role of structures of oppression and domination in analyses of war; constructivists highlight the central role of identity; and communitarians stress the importance of cultural norms and ethics of the particular and universal.<sup>9</sup> Despite differences in focus, emancipatory approaches agree on the need for alternative understandings of war and peace. By highlighting identity, representation, and socioeconomic justice, emancipatory perspectives render visible marginalised groups, in addition to the natural environment. This shifts attention from the state, state institutions, and the elite to society, ordinary people, socioeconomic justice, and the environment as crucial to describing and explaining the experience of war and aspirations to peace.

Instead of a single experience of war—that is, threatened state interest or a decay or collapse of state institutions—emancipatory peace considers multiple experiences of war and aspirations for peace depending on one's gender, ethno-religious, age, socioeconomic, and political status.<sup>10</sup> One can ask how children, women, men, the elderly, youth, and marginalised ethnic, religious, and social groups see war and peace. One can even consider how different identity groups may be agents rather than victims of war or agents of peace rather than passive recipients of it. One can also consider whether child soldiers have agency if they are forcefully recruited, and if so, what kind of agency illustrates this.<sup>11</sup> The same could be asked of women, the poor, and the elderly in situations of war. Multiple visions of peace allow for a set of aspirations, including social justice, human security, human rights, equitable distribution of resources, economic development, eradication of poverty, and social reconciliation. These aspirations are manifest in the numerous local community peace-building and human security initiatives implemented by international and local nongovernmental organizations. Examples include initiatives aimed at curbing the supply and demand of small arms, peace and development programmes, and revival of traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution, for example, *bashinganthyaye* in Burundi, *gacaca* in Rwanda, and *mato oput* in north-central Uganda.

Emancipatory peace expands the notion of violence to include a covert or indirect variant—that is, unjust, repressive, or oppressive political and economic structures.<sup>12</sup> It also emphasises culturally mediated experiences of war and peace to reveal institutional and military peace as particular and historically rooted in the development of Western society rather than as the universal expressions that they are assumed to be. The acknowledgement of plurality, diversity, and difference resonates with the character of societies in Africa. An attempt is made to ensure a conceptual consistency with empirical reality, in particular, the experience of vulnerable and marginalised groups. This brings into play gender, race, culture, and political and economic systems and considers them as central, not marginal, to society. It also highlights the different histories of societies, not just European ones, and so challenges the Eurocentric view of history.

Because emancipatory peace approaches recognise the central role of human agency, they are faulted for being highly critical and polemical rather than alternative visions of society with clear policy options toward that end. Richmond disagrees with

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9. Richmond, 'Patterns of peace', 367–94.

10. *Ibid.*, 388–91.

11. A. Honwana, 'Negotiating post-war identities: Child soldiers in Mozambique and Angola', Medico Report, no. 26, 2005, [www.medico-international.de/en/projects/social/ps\\_honwana\\_en.pdf](http://www.medico-international.de/en/projects/social/ps_honwana_en.pdf).

12. J. Galtung, 'Violence, peace and peace research', *Journal of Peace Research* 6:3 (1969), 167–91.

this view, arguing that critical analyses of emancipatory peace approaches foreground the unintended consequences of policies and by doing so lead policymakers and practitioners to be more sensitive to their actions.<sup>13</sup>

In short, unlike military peace and institutional peace, emancipatory variants offer an expanded vocabulary for conceptualising the experience of war and aspirations for peace. They render visible the grassroots and middle-level initiatives and actors that fall outside the vision of narrow, state-centred analyses. They thus consider local capacity more than the military and institutional peace. Like military peace and institutional peace, however, thinking on emancipatory peace is more or less a prisoner in the house of liberal values and positions, having fallen prey to the very universalism it criticises.<sup>14</sup> In addition, it is largely forged externally, implying knowledgeable external actors emancipating the unknowing or ignorant recipient. Thus the question of vocabulary relevant to the African experience of war and aspirations of peace remains unaddressed.

### Peace as the Constructive Transformation of Conflict

Conflict transformation or constructive conflict approaches inform many of the conflict resolution initiatives in Africa. In general, these approaches view the experience of war and aspirations for peace in more comprehensive, holistic, and people-centred terms than do statist approaches. Thus they join emancipatory peace approaches that suggest an alternative way of understanding war and peace. Assefa's and John Paul Lederach's definitions typify a large number of conflict transformation activities in Africa at the community and middle level (that is, the regional and national level populated by professionals and other opinion or political leaders who are not part of government or a party leadership but have the potential to influence).<sup>15</sup> Both acknowledge the inevitability of conflict and offer a comprehensive (holistic) view of peace. In addition, both scholar-practitioners have been key facilitators of numerous peace processes in Africa and elsewhere.

Lederach considers peace a dynamic social construct, a social process best illustrated using the metaphor of a well built house. The process addresses simultaneously the structural issues (leaders and substantive issues), nature of relationships, and a supportive infrastructure. According to him, building peace is like building a house, using 'the full array of processes, approaches, and stages . . . to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships'. The construction attends to the quality and type of leaders at all levels, considers the substantive conflict issues in the context of their broader settings, the resources required to undertake activities, and the way all these elements are coordinated. Conflict is inevitable and is rooted in relationships.<sup>16</sup>

Because conflict is primarily motivated by the immediacy of hatred and prejudice, of racism and xenophobia, transforming it requires focusing on the sociopsychological and spiritual aspects of it that are largely ignored by international diplomacy. Relationships are central to this transformation, whose mechanism is the process-

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13. Richmond, 'Patterns of peace', 391.

14. Ibid.

15. Assefa, *Peace and Reconciliation*; J.P. Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC, United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997).

16. Lederach, *Building Peace*, 20–21, 37–106.

structure that Lederach likens to a glacier or stream moving slowly down a mountain. This process-structure ‘transforms a *war-system* characterised by deeply divided, hostile, and violent relationships into a *peace-system* characterised by just and interdependent relationships with the capacity to find non-violent mechanisms for expressing and handling conflict’. War is experienced as violent relationships and aspirations for peace as nonviolent ways of addressing conflict. This transformation is challenging and often requires innovation outside mainstream political paradigms. In Lederach’s view, this innovation occurs where there is reconciliation, which he defines as an encounter in which people acknowledge their past, trauma, and loss as well as acknowledge each other’s experiences so that they can envision a shared future.<sup>17</sup>

Assefa defines peace as involving three broad elements: the transformation of destructive conflictual interactions into cooperative and constructive relationships; reconciliation, leading to healthy, mature, spiritual, ecological, social, and personal relationships of interdependence; and justice.<sup>18</sup> Assefa agrees with Lederach on the central role of relationships and reconciliation in conceptualising war and peace. Peace involves restructuring relationships that promote war so that they advance peace instead. They also acknowledge the spiritual aspects of reconciliation. While Lederach works with the terminology of social psychology, which limits analyses to interpersonal and social relations, Assefa draws on Christian theology to broaden the scope of reconciliation to include the ‘intimate and deep spiritual level’ of the person and of nature.<sup>19</sup> Thus war is an outcome of the interaction between inner (spiritual) needs and outer (social, environmental) needs. Aspirations for peace include spiritual and environmental dimensions that are important in indigenous ideas of the social.

Assefa’s definition of peace as the constructive transformation of conflict offers a thin description of justice and gender relations compared to his in-depth description of reconciliation and conflict transformation and resolution. Although he emphasises justice as a key value, it is not clear why this is so.<sup>20</sup> Because Assefa’s definition has informed the design and implementation of a number of community and middle-level peace initiatives in Africa, it would be interesting to know to what extent the conceptual gaps noted here have affected the way in which these peace initiatives address questions of justice and gender relations. This is important because critical evaluations of truth and reconciliation projects on the continent; for example, the work of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission reveals that justice remains a largely unresolved issue in postconflict peace-building.<sup>21</sup> Despite this limitation, Assefa’s definition sees peace as a complex process, not an event. Like the emancipa-

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17. Lederach, *Building Peace*, 13, 84, 27.

18. Assefa, *Peace and Reconciliation*, 4, 17, 48. He defines reconciliation as ‘the restoration of broken relationships or the coming together of those who have been alienated and separated from each other by conflict to create a community’ (p. 9n3).

19. Assefa, *Peace and Reconciliation*, 8–17.

20. Assefa notes that a more detailed discussion on the relationship between justice and peace will be forthcoming in another publication.

21. M. Mamdani, ‘Amnesty or impunity? A preliminary critique of the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC)’, *Diacritics* 32:3–4 (2002), 33–59; J.E. Mendez, ‘Latin American experiences of accountability’ in I. Amadiume and A. An-Na’im (eds.), *The Politics of Memory: Truth, Healing and Social Justice* (London, Zed Books, 2000), 127–41; J. Mertus, ‘Truth in a box: The limits of justice through judicial mechanisms’, in Amadiume and An-Na’im, *Politics of Memory*, 142–61.

tory approaches discussed above, it also highlights the importance of human agency, an aspect that is fundamental to African knowledge systems.

Lederach's account of conflict transformation does not clearly articulate the political dimensions of peace. Although he demonstrates the important role that sociopsychological factors play in furthering an understanding of war and peace, these factors exist in a political context,<sup>22</sup> a fact he acknowledges in his discussion about structural elements of conflict transformation but does not adequately address. If the purpose of the process-structure is reconciliation, and is contingent on redefinition and restoration of broken relationships, then one needs to know what kind of politics is crucial for sustaining the peace under construction. What kind of power relationships do the notions of relationship and reconciliation suggest? Assefa's response is 'reconciliation politics', that is politics that values 'healing and wholeness' instead of creating 'upheaval and disruption'. He characterises reconciliation politics as promoting consensus building, inclusion, and accommodation of all interests and needs. In sum, this politics draws on the principles of his peace and reconciliation paradigm to envision a society in which social healing is the premise on which multiparty politics of a democratic government are conducted. Thus reconciliation politics calls for social healing first, and multiparty and competitive elections second. Assefa suggests that national conventions, if conducted according to principles of community and inclusion, represent one way of promoting social healing as a first step toward democratization.<sup>23</sup> The idea of reconciliation politics resonates with the indigenous political traditions in a number of African societies.

In sum, conflict transformation and other emancipatory peace approaches illustrate the complexity involved in conceptualising war and peace by stressing the multidimensional aspect of peace involving numerous other concepts in dynamic relations. It is not enough for war and peace to be defined in terms of rational incentives or preferences of men and women nor in terms of state or human security. A definition of peace calls for more comprehensive and inclusive terms that address social justice, relationships, citizenship, gender relations and identity, cultural identity, self-worth, spiritual renewal, human agency, reconciliation, forgiveness, sharing, truth and healing, as well as politics.<sup>24</sup> Realist and liberal approaches are unable to account for this, yet they do offer policy solutions that are often criticised for reproducing the very problem they seek to address.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, critical theory and postmodern or

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22. Vivienne Jabri criticises conflict resolution approaches like Christopher Mitchell's for de-emphasising the political, their focus on conflicting parties as rational entities, and typifying the mediation situation in terms of cost-benefit calculations. She faults this approach for removing the conflict resolution setting from its social political context. Vivienne Jabri, *Revisiting Change and Conflict: On the Underlying Assumptions and the De-Politicisation of Conflict Resolution. A Response*, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, Berghof Handbook Dialogue no. 5, 2006, pp. 2–9, [http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/dialogue5\\_jabri\\_comm.pdf](http://www.berghof-handbook.net/uploads/download/dialogue5_jabri_comm.pdf).

23. Assefa, *Peace and Reconciliation*, 29–34.

24. H. Campbell, 'The peace narrative and education for peace in Africa', in A. Jinadu (ed.), *The Political Economy of Peace in Africa* (Harare, AAPS Books, 2000); H. Campbell, 'The new African initiative: Peace, justice and reparations or the rekindling of the human spirit', paper presented at the conference 'African Forum for Envisioning Africa', Nairobi, 26–9 April 2002.

25. O. P. Richmond, *Maintaining Order, Making Peace* (New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 12.

poststructuralist approaches expose what is problematic about realist and liberal social theories but do not offer feasible policy options.

The limitations of all these approaches in capturing the experiences of war and aspirations for peace in Africa demonstrate the real need for language that does capture them holistically. This points to looking at African societies for such language. Can African knowledge systems bridge the gap between theory and empirical evidence? Do they offer adequate language for explanation and prescription?

## INDIGENOUS IDEAS OF THE SOCIAL: CONCEPTUALISING WAR AND PEACE

The dominant languages often used to describe and explain Africans' and African realities of war and peace do so in formulations that limit what is or can be observed.<sup>26</sup> In light of this, scholars would do well to draw on indigenous ideas of the social because they resonate with African peoples. Indeed, as Ngugi wa Thiong'o notes, the value of drawing on content familiar and known to Africans is the way it captures so well the weight, complexity, and challenge of their struggles.<sup>27</sup>

Language—fundamental for conceptualising possibilities for new and empowering ways of being—is also a powerful tool for constraining possibilities and impoverishing people. One of language's strengths is its ability to change as historical circumstances change. Africa's traumatic colonial and turbulent postcolonial periods have left indelible marks on language and indigenous ideas of the social. One must therefore be cognizant of the dynamism of language when discussing events and ideas of these periods, including finding ways of reinterpreting the indigenous ideas of the social so that African peoples, in the words of Thiong'o, have '[a] liberating perspective within which to see ourselves clearly in relationship to ourselves and to other selves in the universe.'<sup>28</sup> Thiong'o and other African scholars' quest for relevance is at the heart of the suggestion here to reconsider indigenous ideas of the social for the contributions they make in conceptualising the experiences of war and aspirations for peace in Africa.<sup>29</sup>

## Gender and Understanding War and Peace

Ifi Amadiume's study of indigenous ideas of gender and gender relations among the Nnobi, an Ibo people, illustrates the importance of inquiring into indigenous ideas of the social to render the African reality more comprehensible and in terms that resonate with the experience of African peoples.<sup>30</sup> Amadiume argues that many African societies, like the Nnobis, defined gender in flexible terms, unlike European languages, which define it in rigid, binary terms and often in opposition. Thus, Igbo language, like

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26. I. Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in African Society* (London, Zed Books, 1987).

27. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London, James Currey, 1986), 78.

28. *Ibid.*, 87.

29. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics* (Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers, 1981), 74.

30. Amadiume, *Male Daughters*.

most African languages, makes it possible grammatically to conceptualise a flexible gender system, and in doing so, distinguish between biologically determined and sociologically constructed male and female.

Amadiume considers the flexible gender notion significant because it presents ‘no language or mental adjustment or confusion in references to a woman performing a typical male role.’<sup>31</sup> For instance, at the Ibo patrilineal descent level (ancestral or family house), although headship was culturally defined in terms of male status, the person holding this position could be a man or a woman.<sup>32</sup> Women could be heads because in the Ibo ideation system, ‘the oneness of blood of daughters, brothers and fathers meant that daughters were conceived of as “males” in relation to wives, and therefore superior to them in authority.’<sup>33</sup> Patrilineal daughters held a lot of power and prestige in their places of birth. They also had obligations to fulfil during patrilineal activities that even their husbands could not prevent them from performing.<sup>34</sup> In a number of cases, fathers accorded their daughters full male status in the absence of a son in order to safeguard a line of descent and its property. In this manner, a daughter became ‘male’ and could inherit land, property, ensure the continuity of descent, and also become a founding ancestress of a patrilineage.<sup>35</sup>

At the level of the matricentric production unit (the mother-child compound), headship has been culturally classified as female, even when the person has been a woman playing the role of ‘husband’ (headship of the ancestral or family house). Women could, through the accumulation of wealth at the matricentric production unit (from hard work and character based on self-reliance, efficiency, and enterprise), also access public political-religious leadership status in society. Woman, as political leader, provider, and benefactor, could take on the role of ‘female husband.’ Amadiume notes that the ideological structure of the Ibo matricentric unit, in which those who eat out of the same pot are bound in the spirit of common motherhood, was iterated at the political level as the whole of the Nnobi (community), bound as children of the goddess Idemili, the common mother.<sup>36</sup> At this level, women took on administrative and political decision-making roles as representatives of the female goddess. These titled women (*ekwe*) were leaders of the marketplace and formed a political matriarchal system parallel to the patriarchal system. Amadiume describes the relationship between the two systems as ‘dialectical’. In addition, a non-gendered system of roles and statuses acts as a bridge between the two systems uniting them under a ‘non-gendered universalistic term for a common humanity, *nmadu*, human being, person.’<sup>37</sup>

Although this discussion on flexible gender draws extensively on Amadiume’s research of the Nnobi, and so begs the question of generalisation to all African societies, the idea is not alien to a number of them. At the same time it may be alien to some African societies that have a different idea of gender relations. What is important, however, is whether this notion offers a valuable way of understanding peace and vi-

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31. Ibid., 17.

32. I. Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion and Culture* (London, Zed Books, 1997), 83–5.

33. Amadiume, *Male Daughters*, 57.

34. Ibid., 60.

35. Ibid., 52.

36. Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 18.

37. Ibid., 19.

olent conflict. First, one can ask, for instance, What does flexible gender allow one to look for in understanding war and peace in Africa? The most obvious insight is that different African societies have different understandings of gender relations. Studies on the gendered experiences of war and aspirations of peace need to be sensitive to the variety of ‘understandings’ of gender that can exist even in one civil war situation. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Mozambique, and Sierra Leone, for instance, different ethnic groups, not just a single group, experienced war and its consequences. Thus, inquiring into the gendered nature of war and aspirations for peace, one would need to first establish what each group’s idea of gender is rather than imposing dominant views of gender onto a reading of or writing on the African experience.

Second, the idea of a flexible gender system provides for a language that allows a formulation of a concept of peace and also of war in gendered terms that approximates the reality of a number of African societies whose gender relations are similar to the Nnobi Ibo. A flexible gender system renders visible matriarchy and its interaction with African patriarchy, of which much has been written. It also allows for an inquiry into how both ideologies, as organizing principles of the social, changed during the colonial and postcolonial periods, how these changes have affected social, political, and economic relations in Africa, and more important, whether and how these changes explain the outcomes of war and aspirations for peace among African peoples.

An interesting question is whether one sees elements of flexible gender operating in war and in the construction of peace. Take for example, Assefa’s three iterations of peace as the transformation of conflictual and destructive interactions into cooperative and constructive relationships; reconciliation, leading to healthy, mature, spiritual, ecological, social, and personal relationships of interdependence; and justice.<sup>38</sup> Each of these iterations would benefit from a gendered formulation that illuminates the relational source of destructive conflictual interactions and the possibilities of innovation based on indigenous ideas of gender to transform destructive relations.

Perhaps a flexible gendered formulation would reveal possible transformational mechanisms that emphasise cooperative and constructive relationships, especially the notion of solidarity, which many are quick to note as a core organizational value in African societies. Understanding the second iteration of peace as reconciliation in flexible gender terms may require drawing on the matricentric ideology of ‘those who eat from the same pot’. Reconciliation would be seen in terms of a restoration of the common bond that unites, drawing on the principles or values of motherhood, for example, compassion and love.<sup>39</sup> The idea of ‘those who eat from the same pot’ or share the same womb is often identified with belonging to the same lineage at the family level and with the same ethnic group at the societal level. In this sense, the idea suggests exclusion of other lineages and ethnic groups from participating in the process of reconciliation. This does not, however, preclude the possibility of applying this idea positively to imagining reconciliation at the interethnic or national level as a process of reconsidering the common bond of being a citizen of the same polity (regardless of

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38. Assefa, *Peace and Reconciliation*, 4 (on transformation) and 17 (on justice). He defines reconciliation as ‘the restoration of broken relationships or the coming of together of those who have been alienated and separated from each other by conflict to create a community’ (p. 9).

39. Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa*, 18.

whether by accident). As different ethnic groups see themselves as eating from the same pot, the question then becomes one of how to share rather than having groups compete to get the most out of the pot for its members. Assefa's third iteration of peace as justice would, in flexible gendered terms, raise the question of whose justice and what justice? A disturbing aspect of current reconciliation processes is that they either ignore or are insensitive to the deeply traumatic effects of sexual abuse (rape) as a weapon of war. A flexible gender approach would highlight this and suggest a policy response that dispenses justice to affected women.

Third, an interesting insight from flexible gender lies in the suggestion of flexible identity. Often analyses of ethnic identity in Africa posit this as rigid identities, excluding the possibility that communities may have made provision for the inclusion of members from other ethnic groups or even for breaking from an existing group to form a new one. Anthropological accounts and indigenous histories of origin usually allude to the forging of group identity. Ethnic identity is dynamic, not static. Flexible gender suggests the possibility of assuming a new identification with another ethnic group or even acquiring more than one identity. This has important implications for understanding war and peace in Africa, because a flexible view of ethnic identity and its historical development may reveal the dynamic nature of an identity that allows one to see how these identities as social constructions contribute to violent conflict. This would discourage the use of rigid definitions of identity as points of departure for analyses of violent relations between ethnic groups. In addition, seeing ethnic identity in flexible terms allows for the possibility of forging or valuing identities that promote and sustain peace. If some African societies have had rituals providing for including members of other groups in the past, what prevents Africans today from developing similar rituals for including conflicting groups into a new national identity that enhances peace?

An inquiry into what matriarchal systems and ideologies have to offer does not serve the purpose of demonstrating essentialist notions of women as good in contrast to men as fundamentally evil. The focus here is on the insights they provide that assist in understanding the experiences of war and aspirations for peace. By stressing the possibility of women's active participation in peace-building and war making, flexible gender reveals women to be agents of peace and also agents of war rather than only victims or passive beings. Literature on African history either has poor or no memory of women's participation in public roles, including peace initiatives and warfare, yet numerous African societies have a conflict resolution tradition that assigns to women roles in peacemaking or the making of war! It is astonishing that this historical fact disappears when it comes to efforts at negotiating peace. The idea of a flexible gender system thus exposes the misrepresentation and misinterpretation of the history of African societies. It also provides a language that scholars can make use of to envision new societies of peace that inspire action and social transformation. Though emerging from the specific experiences of particular African societies, this idea can be a resource for the envisioning of peace even in societies that may not be aware of the idea.

### ***Ubuntu: Being (Utu) as a Point of Departure for Understanding***

Ubuntu is an African philosophy and a way of being whose expression is characterised by the following qualities: willingness to share, forgiveness, human sympathy, love, peace,

harmony, and community. As Archie Mafeje observes, whereas Africans take for granted the presence of these qualities, their absence draws attention and comment.<sup>40</sup> Indeed, Laurenti Magesa notes how greed is regarded as the antithesis of the ubuntu principles of hospitality, sociability, or good company. If participation sharing is the central or ultimate principle in ubuntu, greed is immoral and destructive to life. Traditional African societies have held the qualities of *utu* (being human) in high regard because of their contribution to the goal of enhancing the life of the individual as well as the community.<sup>41</sup> What happens when, due to one reason or another, greed or life-destroying ways of being take over? Malidoma Somé suggests what could have been (and could be) a way out.<sup>42</sup>

Somé argues that healing, a concept integral to the articulation of human experience, is the path to recovering life-enhancing values. His definition of healing draws attention to the psychic, physical, and biological vulnerability of the human being. People will fall short of expressing ubuntu values on an ongoing basis, therefore they often need to be restored, renewed, and refreshed. Healing is life promoting and enhancing and results in harmony and the preservation of communion and community. It is therefore a crucial mechanism for reconnecting with ubuntu values when communities or individuals fail, for whatever reason, to express them.

Ubuntu philosophy and Somé's notion of healing focus on being and becoming, drawing attention to the person and community as agents rather than to objective structures. The point of departure for explaining the experience of war and aspirations for peace is who one is being and becoming. Both place a high premium on human agency, and more important, on character, especially moral and personal integrity. Thus war is seen in terms of a break from *utu* and the values this embodies. On the other hand, the pursuit of peace is promoting the life-enhancing values of *utu*. Healing seems to facilitate the recovery from the break with *utu*. The idea of healing embodies the recovery of a complex mix of human qualities in a dynamic relationship that includes sympathy, willingness to share, forgiveness, and love. These same qualities are integral to reconciliation, itself a process of being and becoming and a dimension of peace (as noted in Assefa's peace as reconciliation paradigm). It is interesting that the values of motherhood articulated in the flexible gender system of the Nnobi are reiterated in ubuntu.

Part of the difficulty in addressing the problems of peace-building is that it requires a multilevel, multidimensional, multi-issue approach that tackles not only the cessation of war, but also the difficulties of rebuilding relationships, communities, and institutions in contexts in which natural resources have been pillaged, looted, destroyed, and are most likely in the hands of powerful exploiters not interested in the equitable use of resources. In a number of communities, the consequences of war are expressed in the phrase 'the land is desolate'. The difficulty is better understood and addressed if the conceptualisation of peace captures healing rather than the resort to such terms as 'rehabilitation'. The idea of healing is more likely to resonate with ordinary people in

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40. A. Mafeje, 'Africanity: A combative ontology', *CODESRIA Bulletin*, no. 1, 2000, 66–70.

41. L. Magesa, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* (New York: Orbis Books), 1997, 62–4.

42. M.P. Somé, *The Healing Wisdom of Africa: Finding Life Purpose through Nature, Ritual and Community* (New York, Jeremy P. Tarcher/Putnam, 1998).

Africa than is rehabilitation, to which these communities most likely do not relate and is better understood by the external implementer of the peace-building programme.

When peace is defined in terms of healing, it draws attention to the kind of people, relationships, and societies that are at peace. The notion emphasises an ongoing holistic and transformational process of restoring relationships destroyed by violent conflict. These are not only relationships between people, men and women, but also people's relationships with natural resources and the environment. This idea leads one to reconsider mechanisms of the kinds of rituals that initiate and nurture the qualities and conditions that restore relationships and heal the person from the trauma of war. Current demobilisation and demilitarisation processes are blind to indigenous ideas of how to transit from war to peace. In some African societies, ritual cleansing of combatants was and remains mandatory before being allowed to rejoin the rest of the community.

With the notion of healing, one can define peace in more positive terms—a dynamic process of being healed and healing—rather than the absence of perpetual crisis and poverty. This is so because healing carries within it the idea of hope and possibilities. Healing and reconciliation occur together, and as iterations of peace, they cause one to consider the actual realm of peacemaking. Is it among individuals, social groups, the state, or (legal, economic, or religious) institutions? Rather than asking what kind of political system and institutions guarantee peace, ubuntu and healing call attention to what kind of human beings will make a peaceful and democratic society possible. The ideas of healing and reconciliation also lead one to critically assess whether current definitions and initiatives for transformation of destructive conflict—for instance, development for peace, humanitarian and emergency approaches, and human rights and conflict prevention—are cognizant of the importance of these notions.

### African Indigenous Design Concepts

Africans are all familiar with indigenous design concepts from their cultures. These design themes are visibly present in settlement architecture, artwork (carvings, weaving), divination systems, and games.<sup>43</sup> It is likely, however, that most Africans have not considered what these offer regarding ideas of social life. In an engaging study of mathematic concepts in traditional African design themes, Ron Eglash notes that fractal geometry is more prevalent in Africa than in design themes of other (non-African) cultures.<sup>44</sup> Fractal geometry comprises five fundamental concepts: recursion, infinity, fractal dimension, self-similarity, and scaling.

Recursion is a type of feedback loop that generates new structures in space and new dynamics in time.<sup>45</sup> During each cyclical process (iteration), the output becomes input for the next stage. The iteration can continue forever, as in the Nankana concept of the eternal,<sup>46</sup> or 'bottom out'. Infinity is the number of iterations resulting as counting continues without ceasing. Fractal dimension describes the infinite length of the

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43. R. Eglash, *African Fractals: Modern Computing and Indigenous Design* (New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1999).

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*, 108.

46. *Ibid.*, 33–4.

pattern within a finite boundary. It is a theory of measurement that allows dimensions to be expressed in terms of fractions instead of whole numbers.<sup>47</sup> Self-similarity is the precise replication of a geometric pattern each time. Recursion can also be defined as an iteration of a self-similar set (of geometric patterns). African settlement architecture illustrates these concepts of fractal geometry well. Scaling refers to the measure of the fractal dimension of a pattern. It describes similar patterns at different scales within the range under consideration and so is closely related to fractal dimension. For example, when a tiny section of the pattern is enlarged, it looks like the whole. Conversely, when the whole is made smaller, it looks like the tiny section. This concept is evident in African kinship systems and agricultural production.<sup>48</sup>

African fractals are not easy concepts to grasp, but they serve as useful analogies in conceptualising the reality of peace and war in Africa. Take for example, the fractal concept of recursion. At the core of this concept are the principle of self-organizing and the element of memory. An example of this is the age-grade system in which male and female members of each age-grade move from one knowledge level to another through rites of passage as they grow older and finally pass on. This movement or process is conceptualised in recursive terms as scaling iterations of knowledge at different levels of relationship and in different spaces (family, community).

Self-organizing is a recurrent theme in precolonial African social, economic, and political systems. It also informs African peoples' resistance to colonialism. Thus it helps in understanding how African people conceive social organization and the value premises of this political activity. For instance, Eglash's study of Ba-ila settlement design shows the nesting of houses in circular shapes as representations of iterations of *lela*, an idea that captures the relationship between mother and child (caring, cherishing, nurturing) and is reproduced even at the political level to symbolise the relationship between chief and community. Such a leadership is based on feminine principles that promote life and peace. The idea of *lela* illustrates to some extent Amadiume's description of how among the Nnobi, the ideology of the matrocentric unit is reproduced at the political level.

Africans are familiar with representations of the political leader relationship in contemporary political discourse or public rhetoric as that of father and children. That this depiction is most probably contested by many does not surprise given the way the idea of *lela* has been abused by African leaders. Nevertheless, the Ba-ila and Nnobi examples indicate that leadership in precolonial African societies was based on both feminine and masculine principles, not solely on masculine values. A flexible gendered notion of leadership values or character challenges the conceptualisation in purely masculine terms of what is good or excellent.

The element of memory concerns the ability of a system to perform iterations between present input and past behaviour. In other words, memory allows a recursive system to recall itself (self-reference). The self-organizing system relies on memory to reproduce itself. Access to memory is what defines differences in recursive power. In the cascade variety, for instance, the recursion process bottoms out, whereas in its self-reference form, the recursive system has the power to recall or refer to itself. The idea

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47. *Ibid.*, 18.

48. *Ibid.*, 24.

of memory is crucial to conflict resolution and closely tied to reconciliation, remembering (memorialising), and truth-telling activities that are on the increase as post-conflict societies come to terms with their pasts. With memory, one has the capacity to reproduce violence through demands for revenge or reproduce a revaluing of peace by breaking with the violent past. The idea of recursion thus has the potential for conceptualising social transformation. In its formulation as a feedback loop, a process generating new structures in space and new dynamics in time,<sup>49</sup> recursion offers a language through which it is possible to envision a new society, a project that is currently undertaken by postconflict reconstruction, which is in reality a social engineering of society.

A number of observations can be made on recursion as an analytical devise. The first involves leadership. It is significant that each age-set movement, from one cycle to another, suggests that leadership was handed from one generation to another. In precolonial Africa, age-set systems and kinship and descent systems—not the Western idea of the state—were what governed most societies. With colonial intervention, this self-organized recursive arrangement was broken, as new, colonially inspired forms of leadership succession and societal organizations were introduced in a violent and disruptive manner. In certain instances, the colonialists usurped the self-organizing system to serve their own ends. Indirect rule through the Ibo self-organizing political system is a case in point, and the same can be said of several other societies. A self-organizing system was thus turned against itself.

As an idea of social processes and their reproduction, recursion describes how the current behaviour of conflicting parties depends on past behaviours. This is not new. What is interesting, however, is that its utility lies in showing the possibilities that indigenous knowledge systems present for peace or for violence. Recursion may produce the language to explain when and why African societies lost leaders and leadership qualities integral to promoting peace. It is thus a useful historical analytical tool with which to explain the colonial and postcolonial state in Africa and its violent tendencies. In doing so, recursion does not provide a picture of purely peaceful African societies. If anything, the concepts of positive and negative feedback in the recursive process demonstrate an acknowledgement of the role of uncertainty, unpredictability, and disruptive events, such as war or other forms of crises. It should highlight the way African societies experienced violent conflict, how they addressed it, and whether there is value in drawing on these for theory and praxis of conflict transformation.

The second observation concerns the belief that feminine principles drive all aspects of life, including political processes, and thus are not confined to the purely domestic sphere. This is illustrated by the concept of *lela* and its iteration from the family unit to the larger societal unit. In all spheres of life, public and private, the qualities of nurturing, cherishing, and caring are shared collectively and aim at promoting life. The public valuing of these qualities is expressed in the African conception of gender in flexible and inclusive terms. These two examples of recursion in African societies have importance for the definition of peace as a composite concept, demonstrating patterns of justice, reconciliation, healing, life promoting, forgiveness, mercy, recompense, and stewardship of resources. First, peace is more than the outcome of security or resolution of violent conflict. Second, peace as a recursive process comprises iterations of col-

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49. *Ibid.*, 108.

lective social, political, spiritual, and ecological relations that promote life. These iterations are not without 'conflict'. Perhaps the negative and positive feedback mechanism deals with conflict in a way that keeps it from 'breaking' into a pattern of war.

The high level of intentionality indigenous design themes that African fractals represents suggests that these geometric patterns and possibly the social ideas they represent can be generated using explicit instructions. According to Eglash, African conceptions of intentionality can be applied to group projects over several generations. As such, they depend on human agency or will. This highlights the central role of all human beings in forging peace, not just as individuals but in community. African people have the capacity to collectively define themselves and construct their society on their own terms. The conception of intentionality that emerges from African fractals affirms the definition of peace as a collective process bringing together people in relationships. Framing peace as a process collectively undertaken with human beings as key agents raises questions regarding the role of the state and international institutions as the driving forces in peace processes and whether ritual and techniques people resort to incorporate collective values of solidarity, community, and healthy relationships. It also suggests ways of being that are not limited to citizenship in one country, but also call for responding to citizens of other countries that are hurting from war.

A contemporary example of reconciliation is that of the truth-telling mechanisms. Although its success is yet to be conclusively established, the idea of truth-telling serves as a powerful example of a recursive process. It can be described as a ritual healing space where narratives of perpetrator and victim exist in constant motion, across time (from present to past and present to future) and space (spiritual, social, physical, emotional), in a 'recursive' movement. This movement provides access to memory or the power to recall. Numerous iterations of what happened are generated, and with each, perhaps the truth about past events and atrocities emerges more clearly. As it does so, healing and reconciliation may take place, depending on what is done with the clarified memory, that is, whether it is kept as a record for later revenge or kept as a record of who one does not want to be.

## CONCLUSION

Indigenous knowledge systems have something to contribute to efforts at crafting new paradigms and approaches to peace in Africa. The ubuntu principles, flexible gender systems, and African fractals illustrate ways in which to conceptualise peace and war in Africa. First, they offer language with which to articulate African realities in ways that make visible what has to date remained hidden in analyses of the conflict and peace processes of contemporary Africa. The challenge is to reconsider how one uses language to articulate reality and to consider the authenticity with which this reality is communicated. Perhaps what is needed is a new language with which to explain African realities and also to envision new ones. Ngugi wa Thiong'o has repeatedly emphasised the need for scholarship that employs language relevant to the experience of the African peoples.<sup>50</sup> African knowledge systems offer the resources, vocabulary, and

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50. Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics, and Decolonising the Mind; Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (Nairobi, East African Educational Publishers, 1993).

signs and symbols familiar to the ordinary person that can be creatively employed to envision the kind of societies that Africans would like to live in.<sup>51</sup> Although Thiong'o makes this appeal in the context of literary scholarship, he extends it to the social sciences to which the study of peace belongs.

Second, African knowledge systems offer historical depth and broaden the scope of vision, allowing a focus on actors that would not be considered important in political theoretical terms. The main idea emerging from the discussion here is that of human agency being central to politics rather than just to institutions. The idea of recursion, for instance, suggests a way of conceiving peace from a people-centred (community) perspective. It also offers an explanation in historical perspective on how Africans came to have leaderships that promote either peace or war. The focus on human agency brings to the centre the moral questions underlying the crafting of peaceful polities.

Critics of the need to draw from African indigenous ideas of the social would point to the 'dated' nature of these ideas, many of which may seem rather strange to the younger generation of Africans. In addition, indigenous ideas of the social seem out of place in a contemporary world preoccupied with finding ways in which multicultural societies can live peacefully in the modern state (modelled after the liberal capitalist state). Indigenous ideas seem more relevant to the particular group from which they emerge and promote exclusiveness and are therefore inapplicable across ethnic groups.<sup>52</sup>

Both criticisms are plausible. African knowledge systems are not perfect. However, dismissing a reflection or reconsideration of indigenous ideas of the social and their usefulness in theorising war and peace in Africa would be like throwing the baby out with the bath water. Rather it is important to view indigenous ideas of the social as valuable resources that can be drawn upon to understand realities and envision new ones. If Africans are so quick to borrow ideas from the West, with hardly any criticism, why not borrow life-enhancing ideas from within the continent? Are indigenous ideas so archaic that they cannot be reinterpreted in terms relevant to the twenty-first century African? Is it impossible to build on these ideas through innovation, enriching them and creatively finding ways of breaking them out of their particularity so that they benefit all ethnic groups in society? Answers to these questions will emerge if African scholars explore their own knowledge systems rather than dismiss them as artefacts fit for the museum.

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51. Thiong'o, *Moving the Centre*, 17.

52. Economic Commission for Africa, *Relevance of African Traditional Institutions of Governance* (Addis Ababa, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, 2007).



# Nonviolent Struggle in Africa: Essentials of Knowledge and Teaching

Mary E. King

Nonviolent struggle, also called civil resistance or nonviolent resistance, is often misunderstood or goes unrecognized by diplomats, journalists, and pedagogues not trained in the technique of nonviolent action; to them, events ‘just happen’. To the contrary, however, nonviolent struggle requires that practitioners, who take deliberate and sustained action against a power, regime, policy, or system of oppression, consciously reject the use of violence in doing so. The technique of nonviolent action has been employed successfully in diverse conflicts—such as abolition of the trade in human cargo, establishment of trade unions and workers’ rights, voter enfranchisement, colonial rebellions and national independence, interstate strife, and religious conflicts—all without resort to violent measures, guerrilla warfare, or armed struggle. Mohandas K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr, were emboldened by the collective nonviolent action of Africans in Ghana, Kenya, Zambia, and elsewhere, in the nationalist drive for independence. If violence is to be significantly reduced or abandoned in acute conflicts today, a realistic alternative must be presented, accepted, and understood. Contemplated in this article is the need for study, documentation, and teaching of nonviolent strategic action as a technique for securing justice that lends itself to a host of applications. As Gandhi and King learned from the African nonviolent struggles of their times, and relied on observations of African campaigns to improve their sharing of knowledge, so can the rest of today’s world.

**BY THE LATTER PART OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY,** Africans were opposing colonialism and challenging imperial powers by resistance to taxation policies, contesting the lack of channels for representation, fighting to improve working conditions for labourers, and disputing the alienation of settled peoples from their traditional ownership of ancestral lands. Standing up and defying colonial hegemony through various forms of nonviolent demonstrations, their protest marches enjoyed great popularity. Kings, paramount chiefs, educated Africans, local news media, and persons from all walks of life participated in collective nonviolent action. Often carefully planned, such popular dissent took the form of petitions, boycotts, delegations, parades, and marches. By the

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mid-twentieth century, Nigerians with leadership from journalist Nnamdi Azikiwe, and in the Gold Coast (later Ghana) guided by Kwame Nkrumah, were fighting for their independence from European colonialism with nonviolent methods. In Ghana, Kenya, and Zambia the nationalist pressure for independence from British colonialism manifested itself in largely nonviolent movements that sought self-rule with free elections.

The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, closely watching the African struggles, explained, ‘If there had not been an Nkrumah and his followers in Ghana, Ghana would still be a British colony’:

Nkrumah says in the first two pages of his autobiography . . . that he had studied the social systems of social philosophy and he started studying the life of Gandhi and his technique. And he said that in the beginning he could not see how they could ever get aloose from colonialism without armed revolt, without armies and ammunition, rising up, then he says after he continued to study Gandhi and continued to study this technique, he came to see that the only way was through nonviolent positive action. And he called his program ‘positive action’.<sup>1</sup>

The nonviolent struggles of Africans that caught King’s eye had in an earlier period drawn the studious attention of Mohandas K. Gandhi, who in 1905 in South Africa, where he worked for twenty-one years, was closely observing and writing about the nonviolent struggles of Africans there.<sup>2</sup> Leaders such as Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, and Chief Albert Luthuli of South Africa would subsequently express their indebtedness to the work of Gandhi. Both Gandhi and King were emboldened in the movements they led by the collective nonviolent action of Africans.

In parts of Africa, yesterday and today, individuals and groups have used (and continue to use) ‘positive action’—Nkrumah’s phrasing—to refer to the technique broadly termed ‘nonviolent struggle’, ‘nonviolent resistance’, or ‘civil resistance’. The ‘methods’, or action steps, employed in the technique include boycotts, demonstrations, strikes, and vigils, among others. When combined with proper planning, it is possible for people, groups, and societies to use this repertoire of methods to protect liberty, achieve free elections, fight for human rights or reform, end totalitarian bureaucracies, and even dismantle despotic regimes, all without resort to violent measures, guerrilla warfare, or armed struggle.

## BACKGROUND

In considering nonviolent civil resistance, nonviolent struggle, collective nonviolent action, or nonviolent strategic action, the discussion is actually about a technique for social and political change that utilises nonviolent sanctions, rather than military

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1. Martin Luther King, Jr, ‘The Birth of a New Nation’, sermon at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, King Library and Archives, Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta, Georgia.

2. K. Swaminathan (ed.), *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (hereafter CWMG) (100 vols., New Delhi, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1958–1984), as cited in Gene Sharp, ‘Origins of Gandhi’s Use of Nonviolent Struggle: A Review-Essay on Erik Erikson’s Gandhi’s Truth’ in Gene Sharp (ed.), *Gandhi as a Political Strategist, with Essays on Ethics and Politics* (Boston, Porter Sargent Publishers, 1979), 27, 34, 41n24.

weaponry. Nonviolent movements have developed throughout history as an alternative to violence and passivity. From the late eighteenth century through the twenty-first century, the technique of nonviolent action has been employed in diverse conflicts, such as abolition of the trade in human cargo, establishment of trade unions and workers' rights, voter enfranchisement (including transnational campaigns for women's suffrage), colonial rebellions and national independence, interstate strife, and religious conflicts. Among the significant developments of the twentieth century was the securing of basic human rights for much of the world's population, through women's suffrage, anti-colonial, civil rights, and democracy movements that purposely rejected the use of violence. This form of struggle has been utilised to secure collective bargaining and the right of labourers to organise, realise economic advances, gain national independence as well as to defy foreign occupations and coups d'état, resist genocide, overturn laws enshrining discrimination, and obtain rights for women. Ordinary persons were able to change their societies through action methods deliberately chosen because they do not accomplish their goals through harm, injury, or threat of physical assault. Frequently with meagre resources, relying on themselves, they were able to make their situation more just without creating new forms of oppression or instances of injustice.

In 1956, coterminously with the African nonviolent independence struggles, Martin Luther King, Jr, emphasised that this technique did not accept or represent passivity or submission:

There is another method which can serve as an alternative to the method of violence, and it is a method of nonviolent resistance. . . . A method that all of the oppressed peoples of the world must use if justice is to be achieved in a proper sense. . . . The first thing that can be said about this method is that it is not a method of submission or surrender. And there are those who would argue that this method leads to stagnant complacency and deadening passivity, and so it is not a proper method to use. But that is not true of the nonviolent method. . . . [T]he first thing about the method of . . . nonviolent resistance, is that it is not a method of surrender, or a weapon, or a method of submission, but it is a method that is *very* active in seeking to change conditions.<sup>3</sup>

In the decades to follow, countless manifestations of this technique arose: Poland became the first democracy to be achieved in postwar, communist Eastern Europe through the strikes conducted by the Solidarity union from 1980 to 1989; the Mothers of the Plaza del Mayo in Argentina, 1977–1983 brought to justice those in the military generals' 'dirty war' who had 'disappeared' their children; the dictator Ferdinand Marcos was ousted in the Philippines in favour of democracy in 1986; movements against political oppression in Serbia in 2000 and Ukraine in 2004 brought about free elections and regime change; and recent reform and liberalisation movements in Iran,

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3. Martin Luther King, Jr, 'Non-Aggression Procedures to Interracial Harmony', address delivered to executives of the Home Mission Societies of Christian Friends, Green Lake, Wisconsin, 23 July 1956, in Clayborne Carson et al. (eds.), *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr*, vol. 3: *Birth of a New Age, December 1955–December 1956* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1997), 321–28, as cited in Mary King, *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr: The Power of Nonviolent Action* (Paris, UNESCO, 1999; 2d edn, New Delhi, Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Mehta Publishers, 2002), 244–45.

Lebanon, Thailand, and Zimbabwe have pressed for clean government and reforms. Such instances signify that nonviolent struggle has become a formidable force for justice and human rights.

One reason for the extraordinary blind spots in the documentation and comprehension of the technique, despite its historically successful accomplishments, may be that it inherently questions premises of an exclusive role for the nation-state in directing political change; the history of wars is taught, but the nonviolent transformation of conflict is not mentioned or recognized. This is in part due to the failure of news media, policymakers, and social scientists (including historians) to study and grasp the power of nonviolent action. In a number of instances, nonviolent struggles that have generated or achieved national independence, including in African countries, have been trivialized or ignored or, at best, forgotten. Perhaps the later devolution into one-party autocracies, as for example happened in Ghana and Kenya, is partly to blame for the obscured record on nonviolent resistance. What had been a potent tradition throughout Africa became submerged, as the voices of ideologists for armed struggle rose above those advocating this alternative approach.

In 2002, Yonah Selethi, an historian at the University of Natal, in Durban, South Africa, implored a visiting delegation from the University for Peace (UPEACE) to focus on the 'strong, indigenous tradition of nonviolent resistance—the tradition of Mohandas K. Gandhi, Chief Albert Luthuli, and Steve Biko' in shaping programmes and activities. He saw the technique as *indigenous* to Africa. Responding to this and other guidance, the Africa Programme of UPEACE conducted two training initiatives for young civil society organization leaders, in Port Harcourt, Nigeria, in November 2005 and in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in February 2007. The latter was attended by leaders from Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone. A dearth of teaching materials on the topic led the Africa Programme in 2006 to produce four publications, which are distributed via internet free of charge.<sup>4</sup>

Although the technique of nonviolent struggle has been widely utilized in Africa, this does not mean that it is well comprehended there. Misperception is common. Collective nonviolent action is not a creed and does not require religious belief or spirituality. An important and often misunderstood point is that the behaviour of participants defines nonviolent action, not their convictions or adherence to a credo. It is a choice of pragmatism, not idealism. In addition, if nonviolent struggle is allowed to be coloured by perceptions of weakness, passivity, pacifism, idealism, or lumped in with rioting or guerrilla warfare, people may not perceive it as the alternative method of struggle that it is or even be interested in learning about it. Nonviolent struggle is not a form of idealism and pacifism, although individual adherents may consider themselves philosophical idealists and others may personally be pacifists. The desig-

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4. Mary E. King and Christopher A. Miller, *Teaching Model: Nonviolent Transformation of Conflict* (Addis Ababa and Geneva, University for Peace, 2006); Christopher A. Miller, *Only Young Once: An Introduction to Nonviolent Struggle for Youths*, Nonviolent Transformation of Conflict—Africa (Addis Ababa and Geneva, University for Peace, 2006); Desmond George-Williams, 'Bite Not One Another': *Selected Accounts of Nonviolent Struggle in Africa*, Nonviolent Transformation of Conflict—Africa (Addis Ababa and Geneva, University for Peace, 2006); Christopher A. Miller, *Strategic Nonviolent Struggle: A Training Manual*, Nonviolent Transformation of Conflict—Africa (Addis Ababa and Geneva: University for Peace, 2006). See [www.africa.upeace.org](http://www.africa.upeace.org).

nation of nonviolent resistance as pacifism was discredited in the early 1970s in a sweeping study of nonviolent struggle by the scholar Gene Sharp in the three-volume *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, which is based on the analytical work of respected political theoreticians. In this ‘first major theoretical analysis that goes beyond the Gandhian literature’,<sup>5</sup> Sharp found that he could count on two hands the number of cases, out of eighty-five studied, in which the leadership of a nonviolent movement had actually been a pacifist.<sup>6</sup>

Nonviolent struggle is an active response in which the taking of action is not violent. It is not the same as the absence of violence, which can be accounted for by numerous causes and explanations. It does not infer passivity—which alters nothing and may even constitute acceptance of hostile violence—nor does it refer to the values of tolerance and virtues of nonviolent interaction that in modern political thought constitute civil society. Rather, it stands as a technique for achieving social and political justice, in contrast to conventional warfare, armed struggle, and guerrilla warfare, which seek to achieve their goals through producing fear or capitulation (because injury to life and limb demoralizes an opponent) or through expressly violent subjugation. The technique employs strategies for applying nonviolent sanctions to bring about results; put simply, it does not seek to accomplish its goals through physical harm, injury, or killing.

Since 1973, Sharp’s typology and classification of nonviolent methods in *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (often referred to as the *Politics*, or Sharp’s trilogy) has percolated throughout the world and has been translated into two dozen languages. In a field plagued by scant documentation and poor historiography, Sharp’s delineation of three fundamental categories of nonviolent methods, or action steps—protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and nonviolent intervention—has never been seriously challenged or displaced. His conceptualization of classic psychological, social, economic, and political methods has stood the test of time. One is likely to encounter Sharp’s list of 198 methods wherever groups gather to discuss how to fight with concern for the connexion between the means and ends.<sup>7</sup> Sharp subsequently abandoned the categorising of methods (for example, picketing, marches, strikes, boycotts, vigils), as it became unrealistic to tabulate ever-changing action steps, which often derive from specific contextual, cultural, or endogenous traditions.

Most important, Sharp’s *Politics* shows that although power is comprised of a number of organisational, material, and sociopolitical elements, political power rests ultimately on the cooperation of the ruled, and it can be withdrawn. He shows that power is the basis of the enduring technique of nonviolent resistance as a means of engagement in conflicts and that such resistance is a practical and realistic substitute for armed struggle, guerrilla war, and violent strategies. Perhaps his most important crystallisation is his discernment that systems and governments must ensure for themselves a steady supply of political power and that the stock of power that sustains state

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5. This description is by April Carter, in response to a paper by Gene Sharp, ‘*The Politics of Nonviolent Action* and the Spread of Ideas about Civil Resistance’, prepared for the ‘Conference on Civil Resistance and Power Politics’, St Antony’s College, University of Oxford, 15–18 March 2007.

6. See Gene Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action* (3 vols., Boston, Porter Sargent Publishers, 1973).

7. The list can be found at [www.aeinstitute.org/organizations103a.html](http://www.aeinstitute.org/organizations103a.html). A number of publications from the Albert Einstein Institution can be downloaded free of charge from [www.aeinstitute.org](http://www.aeinstitute.org).

authority is not intrinsic to its wielders and by no means guaranteed. The people's power can be withdrawn. Sharp's work demonstrates that nonviolent strategic action achieves its political objectives by altering the power configurations among groups or persons, usually by the withholding of cooperation.

## NONVIOLENT AND VIOLENT STRUGGLE CANNOT BE MIXED

Violent struggle and collective nonviolent action work in different ways; the two are not supplementary or complementary. Injecting violence into a struggle destroys the potential for involving an entire people in self-reliant civil resistance. It affects mobilization and recruitment and mitigates against the development of a nonviolent mass movement through which the oppressed themselves can be uplifted, empowered, and potentiated. Mixing the two approaches defeats the strategic advantage of a disciplined nonviolent movement, which gains a potential advantage when its restraint stands in sharp contrast to violent reprisals employed by the target group; when an adversary reveals its brutality, it creates a situation in which splits can occur within its ranks. External third-party solidarity groups respond affirmatively to nonviolent discipline, but not so to a hodge-podge approach of 'now we'll try this, now we'll try that' involving violent and nonviolent methods.

Today across Africa, a dominant discourse holds that 'what is taken from us by violence must be retrieved by violence'. This refrain reverberates throughout the continent, despite clear evidence that when a group chooses violent means of contention, it has selected a means of struggle in which the oppressive forces nearly always possess superiority, through technical military artilleries, extended security apparatuses, and police and prison systems that can crush any armed or violent struggle. Violence as a chosen technique of struggle is counterproductive, because it prolongs and complicates disputes and can turn them into acute conflicts, while raising social and economic costs. It reduces or destroys the likelihood of a democratic environment at the conclusion. Social philosopher Hannah Arendt observes, 'the practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is to a more violent world'.<sup>8</sup> Of importance, bloodshed creates a quest for retaliation and thirst for revenge that may last for generations or centuries, even millennia. Despite the absence of evidence that responding to violence with more of the same is effective, ideologists of armed struggle are not known for encouraging self-criticism. Ideology overrides facts. Evaluations are not conducted on the actual efficacy of armed struggle.

Studies after World War II of German military generals revealed that commanders had found it difficult to cope with the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance as practiced in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway. 'It was a relief to them when resistance [became] violent, and when nonviolent forms [were] mixed with guerrilla action, thus making it easier to combine drastic suppressive action against both at the same time'.<sup>9</sup> The greatest contaminant when using the technique of nonviolent struggle is violence, according to former colonel Robert L. Helvey, who has applied his knowledge

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8. Hannah Arendt, *On Violence* (New York and London, Harcourt Brace and Company, 1970), 80.

9. B. H. Liddell Hart, 'Lessons from Resistance Movements—Guerrilla and Non-violent' in Adam Roberts (ed.), *Civilian Resistance as a National Defense* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Stackpole Books, 1968), 205.

of military strategy to consideration of strategy in nonviolent action.<sup>10</sup> Acts of violence offer pretexts for reprisals and can lead to categorization as a terrorist organization. When violence begets terrorism, repressive measures intensify, and sympathy dissipates, rendering the success of a popular movement almost impossible.

Violence can change the nature of a conflict from one of asymmetry, in which nonviolent challengers are unarmed against the military superiority of security systems provisioned with violent weapons—a situation that can be beneficial for the nonviolent protagonists—to a symmetrical affray in which both sides utilize violent weaponry—offering the advantage to the attackers with military weaponry. Nonviolent sanctions offer a practical substitute for violent struggle and can gradually replace deadly conflict if organised around particular needs and specific purposes. This does not reference conflict resolution, although it may well be one outcome of a nonviolent struggle. Some students of conflict have been persuaded that deadly discord can be mediated, eradicated like infectious diseases, negotiated away, will disappear if and when peace research improves, or addressed through arms control. Contemporary political thought emphasises peaceful alternatives to war through arbitration, compromise, conciliation, dialogic methods, diplomacy, mediation, negotiations, and other tools in the field of conflict resolution. Each such approach rests on specific truths, and the tools used represent an advance over a presumptive ‘superiority’ of military responses. Increasing research and study of the paraphernalia of prevention, management, and resolution of conflict is important. Yet these pursuits do not represent the full range of alternatives to violent struggle. If such beneficial interventions are pursued apart from recognition of the significant body of knowledge on the historic technique of nonviolent struggle, they cannot contribute significantly to a diminution of reliance on violent strategies. Furthermore, in going to the roots of deep and fundamental issues—where ethical principles, basic human rights, and justice are involved—advocacy of approaches fundamentally based on compromise may not be desirable in principle, achievable, or even pertinent.

The nonviolent technique of fighting for social justice—older and more deep-seated in history, whether written or oral, than peace studies dating to the nineteenth century in Scandinavian universities, or the twentieth-century study of conflict and its resolution—does not presume that all conflicts can be resolved by mediation or arbitration methods. Indeed, without employment of nonviolent struggle, negotiations may eventuate, but might be ineffective on their own. Negotiating with a dictator is hollow absent fundamental power shifts and alterations in the tyrant’s perception of vulnerability to popular consent.

When disputing parties possess severely asymmetrical power, the smaller or weaker side may find it difficult to obtain a hearing apart from staging a nonviolent struggle, which can bring parity between the sides of an otherwise unbalanced relationship. Nonviolent resistance may be in such instances the *only* way to reach negotiations. This insight animated aspects of the 1960s U.S. civil rights movement, for example when uneducated sharecroppers in remote rural areas appreciated that nonviolent struggle would be the only way to reach the stage of negotiations with what they called

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10. Robert L. Helvey, *On Strategic Nonviolent Conflict: Thinking about the Fundamentals* (Boston, Albert Einstein Institution, 2004), [www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/OSNC.pdf](http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/OSNC.pdf).

the 'power structure'. The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, articulated this basic proposition in 1963: "Why direct action? Why sit-ins, marches, etc.? Isn't negotiation a better path?" You are exactly right in your call for negotiation. Indeed, this is the purpose of direct action. Nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue. It seeks so to dramatize the issue that it can no longer be ignored.<sup>11</sup> King's 1968 death in Memphis, Tennessee, occurred after he had travelled to the city to support a local sanitation workers' strike, as a favour to local clergy, who had hoped that his presence there would force the mayor to begin bargaining. No one had the illusion that negotiations could take place without the pressure imparted through collective nonviolent action.<sup>12</sup>

Seeking compromise is a reasonable principle in settling disputes that do not involve deep-seated questions of beliefs or ominous issues of social inequity. Some disputes demand the full threshing of engagement before reaching the stage of searching for options of resolution. The conflict resolution approach calls for a collaborative attitude, yet its strategies fail as realistic options if the cause of distress is so profound or egregious that shifts are obligatory in the positions of the opposing sides in order to create the conditions that allow for consideration of settlements or solutions. Some strife results from grievances of such depth and acuity that no solution is possible until underlying causes of the conflict have been fully addressed. In fact, prematurely introducing conciliatory interventions can weaken prospects for durable resolution. Peace will remain out of the question in some conflicts until the depths of humiliation and pain have been addressed to the satisfaction of the aggrieved, which may be one or both or several parties.

The methods of conflict resolution are more consensual in their properties than is the technique of nonviolent resistance, and thus are not suitable for addressing all conflicts at every stage. To presume that all acute conflicts can be negotiated or 'resolved' is as analytically weak a presumption as is the notion that violence represents the 'strongest' force.

Would the slave trade have ceased by introducing conciliation methods between captors and captives? Would European colonialism have been ended through mediation between imperial powers and the colonized? Would labour unions and collective bargaining have been established through using dialogic methods with the captains of industry? Could the ballot have been won for women in country after country through negotiations?

Entitlements now considered universal human rights had in many instances first to be fought for and institutionalised through nonviolent struggles. Instructors in human rights often do not explain that nonviolent resistance was necessary to win the entitlements about which they teach, yet their subject matter of laws and international conventions may have required massive social movements for establishment. From the eighteenth century onward, the technique of nonviolent struggle was coherently developing worldwide, its body of knowledge 'globalising' long before the current interest

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11. Martin Luther King, Jr., 'Letter from Birmingham City Jail' (written 16 April 1963) in Staughton Lynd and Alice Lynd (eds.), *Nonviolence in America: A Documentary History* (Maryknoll, New York, Orbis Books, 1995), 254.

12. Kevin Boyle, *Going Down Jericho Road: The Memphis Strike, Martin Luther King's Last Campaign* (New York, Norton, 2007).

in globalisation. It is thus important to analyse and understand the historical properties of nonviolent struggle, even if the doctrinal champions of the supremacy of violence deny its efficacy.

## NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE ALTERS POWER CONFIGURATIONS

Nonviolent strategic action achieves its political objectives by altering power configurations among groups or persons. These new formations create the political space in which social change can occur, without threatening the lives or harming the well being of the target group. Study, strategy, planning, and preparation are critical, as the nonviolent protagonists must choose the appropriate methods, and a sequence for applying them, in the effort to achieve their goals. Valuable study materials are increasingly available on how to wage nonviolent struggle.

Throughout the annals of nonviolent struggles echoes a consent theory of power in which all political relationships and systems rely on the obedience, cooperation, or acquiescence of individuals, organizations, and groups. Popular sovereignty was an essential insight even in the Middle Ages and the premodern period. Until recently, however, power was viewed in the context of established structures and institutions, and theories of political obligations and social control emphasized supervision by potentates, governments, and states. During recent decades, the *institutional* perspective, which sees political power as vested in nation-states and governmental institutions, has given way to an *instrumental* view, which sees politics as relations of power. Contemporary thinking has moved away from static institutional structures, and concepts of domination and coercion, to perceiving power as relational, interactive, transactional, and contingent.

When cooperation from the ruled derives from cruelty or duress, it requires constant control from intelligence agencies, military forces, police, and security services. 'The power that governments inspire through fear remains under constant challenge by the power that flows from people's freedom to act in behalf of the interests and beliefs,' observes Jonathan Schell. '[I]t has over and over bent great powers to its will.'<sup>13</sup>

Scholars have increased awareness and understanding of how interactive political power can be affected by the collective action of nonviolent struggle. Noncooperation, or the refusal to obey, is central to its theories and methods. Recognition that consent can be given or denied is acknowledged in the use of nonviolent sanctions. 'The most important single quality of any government, without which it would not exist, must be the obedience and submission of its subjects,' Sharp asserts; 'obedience is at the heart of political power.'<sup>14</sup> It is increasingly understood that governments must continuously exact fresh supplies of political power rather than attempt to assert monolithic predominance, imposing power from above. The capability of all systems is vulnerable to the specific forces that are its fountainhead. Sharp categorizes such sources of power as follows: authority (legitimacy), human resources, skills and knowledge (including technology), intangible factors that contribute to or inhibit obedience (such as religious

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13. Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People* (New York, Metropolitan Books, 2003), 387.

14. Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, vol. 1: *Power and Struggle*, 16.

beliefs, cultural values, psychological and ideological factors, or habit), material resources (including property and finances), and the capacity to enforce sanctions. These foundational bases of power depend on obedience and cooperation.<sup>15</sup>

Compliance is encouraged by economic factors, laws and regulations, pressures of conformity, moral norms and cultural symbols, and forms of intimidation, repression, and patriarchal hegemony. Cooperation functions best when reciprocal, yet it can be intentionally and strategically denied to a ruler, government bureaucracy, system, or employer. Nonetheless, it is also true that deeply entrenched systemic obedience, oppression, conditioning, and exclusions cannot easily be dislodged, and thus, in any consideration of employment of nonviolent struggle, a rigorous effort is essential in order to comprehend the conditions under which noncooperation may affect power alignments. Gandhi considered it a right and duty to exercise withdrawal of such support to tyrannical governments:

Most people do not understand the complicated machinery of the government. . . . [E]very citizen silently but [nonetheless] certainly sustains the government of the day in ways of which he has no knowledge. Every citizen therefore renders himself responsible for every act of his government. And it is quite proper to support it so long as the actions of the government are bearable. But when they hurt him and his nation, it becomes his duty to withdraw his support.

It is true that in the vast majority of cases, it is the duty of a subject to submit to wrongs on failure of the usual procedure, so long as they do not affect his vital being. But every nation and every individual have the right, and it is their duty, to rise against an intolerable wrong.<sup>16</sup>

Power is upheld, in Sharp's influential analysis, by pillars of support that sustain the specific institutions and organizations of a society, community, or nation-state, and which allow persons and groups to maintain and exert power.<sup>17</sup> Although every society is unique, common bulwarks include the civil service, labour unions, news media, police systems and security apparatuses, schoolteachers, and university faculty and students. When the supply of the necessary sources of power that sustain authority is constricted or withdrawn, it can disclose the basic power of nonviolent struggle, which may be applied under varying circumstances and for wide purposes. Sharp makes a strong case that in applying it, those involved should follow a strategy in some ways comparable to military strategy, with the stress on planning, discipline, organization, timing, and the sequencing of appropriate tactics.

### Action Methods of Nonviolent Struggle

Nonviolent struggle is indeterminate in the sense that neither the procedures for reaching its conclusion nor the final results are specified in advance.<sup>18</sup> Although the outcomes

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15. Gene Sharp (ed.), *Waging Nonviolent Struggle: 20th Century Practice and 21st Century Potential* (Boston, Massachusetts, Porter Sargent Publishers, 2005), 30–32.

16. Gandhi, *Young India*, 28 July 1920, as cited in King, *Gandhi and King*, 291.

17. Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, 35–36.

18. See Douglas G. Bond, 'Nonviolent Action and the Diffusion of Power' in Paul Wehr, Heidi Burgess, and Guy Burgess (eds.), *Justice without Violence* (Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishing, 1994).

of institutional political action are defined and prescribed by procedures or practices, the results or effects of the noninstitutional political action of nonviolent struggle cannot be known because they derive from contentious interaction between the nonviolent challenger and the target group. Sociologist Kurt Schock explains, 'the power of noninstitutional politics inheres in its indeterminateness and disruptiveness'.<sup>19</sup>

A virtually inexhaustible array of action practices is available for nonviolent sanctions. By intentionally ignoring the immediate social or political context, and looking for similarities or distinctions in the actions that are organized, it is possible to discern a large inventory of forms of nonviolent struggle that transcend the boundaries of place and time and have been developing for centuries worldwide. Action methods fall into three broad categories, in Sharp's widely accepted categorisation: protest and persuasion, noncooperation, and nonviolent intervention.

- *Protest or persuasion* action methods send a message, and include assemblies, banners, displays of flags, leaflets, marches, mock funerals, painting as protest, parades, petitions, symbolic lights or sounds, teach-ins, vigils, walk-outs, and wearing of symbols.
- *Noncooperation* action methods suspend cooperation and assistance, and encompass boycotts of elections, civil disobedience, consumer boycotts, prisoners' strikes, resignations from jobs, sanctuary, strikes, slowdowns, and withdrawal from the social system.
- *Nonviolent intervention* action methods intentionally disrupt, and include alternative or parallel social and political systems, defiance of blockades, dual sovereignty and parallel government, hunger strikes, and sit-ins.<sup>20</sup>

Strikes comprise a subclass of their own under economic noncooperation and appear throughout recorded history. The strike involves a refusal to continue economic cooperation through work. Withdrawal of labour can occur wherever and whenever persons work for others. Strikes occur in various forms and range from peasant strikes to sympathy strikes. In a bumper strike, only one firm in an industry is struck at a time. Lightning strikes last a few minutes or hours. In a slowdown, rather than halting all work, employees measure the rate of their work, dramatically reducing productivity. In a limited strike, also called a running-sore strike, workers continue to function in their normal capacity, but refuse to carry out certain specified marginal tasks or refuse to work on certain days.<sup>21</sup> A reverse strike, performing work illegally as a form of resistance, was perfected in Sicily in 1955, when the government would not fund a badly needed road while prohibiting the building of one. Danilo Dolci organized unemployed labourers to construct the road without compensation, a court case eventuated, and the workers were paid.<sup>22</sup>

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19. Kurt Schock, *Unarmed Insurrections: People Power Movements in Nondemocracies* (Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press, 2005), 15.

20. Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, 51–65, updating Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*.

21. On the action method of the strike, with historical examples, see Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Struggle*, vol. 2: *Methods of Nonviolent Action*, 257–80. Strikes warrant a complex, dual classification, as they are often combined with other forms of economic noncooperation. *Ibid.*, 258.

22. Danilo Dolci, *Outlaws of Partinico*, trans. R. Munro (London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1960).

A general strike can bring economic life to a halt and take place at the local, municipal, district, regional, national, or international level. In 1905 general strikes spread like wildfire across Russian cities during the Russian Revolution; the most significant was the Great October Strike of 1905. Gandhi, while in South Africa, followed the strikes in Russia:

The present unrest in Russia has a great lesson. . . . The Russian people [who have] suffered . . . have found another remedy which, though very simple, is more powerful than rebellion and murder. The Russian workers and all the other servants declared a general strike and stopped all work. They left their jobs and informed the Czar that, unless justice was done, they would not resume work. What was there even the Czar could do against this? It is impossible to exact work from people by force.<sup>23</sup>

Palestinian Arabs held strikes with frequency in the 1920s and 1930s. They were contesting the Balfour declaration imposed by Britain in 1917 that without consultation with them established in Palestine a national home for world Jewry. The Palestinians conducted a general strike in 1936 that lasted for 174 days, possibly the longest strike in recorded history. They revived use of the strike in the first *intifada*, from 1987 to 1990, with prisoners' strikes, strikes by resignation, and strikes by professionals.

### Civil Disobedience: An Advanced Method of Political Noncooperation

Africa has seen a great deal of civil disobedience. Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato judge that civil disobedience is a critical component of modern civil societies, because it keeps alive the vision of a just and democratic civil society. Civil disobedience, they say, may actually constitute civil society.<sup>24</sup> Although concerned chiefly with constitutional democracies—with already established entitlements, rule of law, and democratic institutions—Cohen and Arato conclude by deduction that the use of noncooperation for purposes of establishing rights under authoritarian and nondemocratic circumstances can be part of a normative process leading to the formation of such representative institutions.

The term *civil disobedience* is often credited to the American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, yet although widely lauded for his 'Letter on Civil Disobedience', Thoreau did not, so far as anyone knows, use the term. Prior to Thoreau, civil disobedience had been considered a way of remaining true to one's beliefs; individuals and groups used it as personal witness, without any intention of bringing about political alterations. Thoreau's withdrawal of cooperation was an exertion of personal conscience against slavery.<sup>25</sup> Yet civil disobedience rests on the consent theory of power, in which any system relies on popular obedience.

Thoreau spent a night in the Concord, Massachusetts, jail in 1846 (or possibly 1845) for refusal to pay a poll tax that supported a U.S. government that he considered illegitimate, because it condoned slavery and sought to expand slave territory through

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23. CWMG, chap 5, 7–8.

24. Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory: Studies in Contemporary German Social Thought* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, MIT Press, 1994), 566, 567.

25. Joseph Wood Krutch, *Henry David Thoreau* (London, Methuen and Company, n.d.).

war with Mexico. To Thoreau's displeasure, he was released on bail paid by a relative; Thoreau had *wanted* to express his opposition by serving time in jail. In February 1848, he gave a lecture, 'The Rights and Duties of the Individual in Relation to Government', a discourse on having been jailed. Written in the same year as Marx and Engels' *Communist Manifesto*, it appeared a year later as 'Resistance to Civil Government' and received little attention. 'Unjust laws exist', wrote Thoreau, asserting a right to refuse allegiance to a tyrannical government, 'shall we transgress them at once?'<sup>26</sup> Much later, the essay came to be known as 'On the Duty of Civil Disobedience'.

Gandhi encountered Thoreau's essay, although his writings probably reinforced views that Gandhi had already come to hold, formed during more than two decades in South Africa. Gandhi's application of the consent theory would make it become an instrument of mass enactment aimed at political change. One source for such analysis of power—almost certainly studied by Gandhi while reading for the law in London—is the sixteenth-century French writer Étienne de la Boétie, whose *Discours de la Servitude Volontaire*, also known as *Contr'un*, or *Anti-Dictator*, was significant in the history of ideas in the early modern period in establishing a justification for resistance to authoritarian rule. Written in 1552, Boétie's short polemic argues that persons can refuse to be governed by those who dominate them.<sup>27</sup> The voluntary servitude of the title refers to domination by the tyrant when accepted by the people. Boétie describes the ruler as a branch of a tree that dies when the roots (popular assent) are severed. Thus withdrawal of cooperation can occur at any time and can have the effect of disempowering the despot. Reflecting a deep conviction in the agency of ordinary individuals to be instrumental in social change, Boétie asserts that no government can survive without the obedience of the populace.<sup>28</sup> Scholars do not know with certainty whether Thoreau read Boétie, but his close friend Ralph Waldo Emerson was clearly aware of Boétie.<sup>29</sup>

Boétie's influence on Count Leo Tolstoy, and through him on Gandhi, is clear, because Tolstoy quotes Boétie. Tolstoy's writings so affected Gandhi that he and the Russian began a correspondence. If only through Tolstoy, Boétie's perspective that no government can survive without the cooperation of the populace was persuasive with Gandhi in South Africa: 'By 1905 Gandhi had already grasped the essentials of the theory of power which views all governments as constantly dependent on the obedience and cooperation of the ruled'.<sup>30</sup> Together, Tolstoy and Gandhi transformed an abstraction defending the withdrawal of consent by individual witness into coherent mass

26. Henry David Thoreau, 'Civil Disobedience' in Lynd and Lynd (eds.), *Nonviolence in America*, 28.

27. Étienne (or Éstienne) de la Boétie, 'Discours de la Servitude Volontaire', *Oeuvres Complètes d'Étienne de la Boétie* (Paris, J. Rouam et Cie, 1892); for an English version see, *The Politics of Obedience: The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, trans. Harry Kurz (New York, Free Life Editions, 1975). Whether acknowledged or unacknowledged, Boétie's propositions form the context for writings on civil disobedience by Thoreau, Tolstoy, Gandhi, King, Václav Havel, Aung San Suu Kyi, and others.

28. For more on Boétie's role, see Roland Bleiker, *Popular Dissent, Human Agency and Global Politics* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 51–95, esp. 87–93. Bleiker considers the continuing influence from Boétie's treatise in the history of ideas at pages 51, 54–65, *passim*.

29. Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Étienne de la Boèce' in *The Complete Works*, vol. 9 (Boston, Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 82; *The Journals and Miscellaneous Notebooks*, vol. 9: 1843–1847 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1971), 28, as cited in Bleiker, *Popular Dissent*, 82n17.

30. Sharp, 'Origins of Gandhi's Use of Nonviolent Struggle', 27. Also see Leo Tolstoy, *The Law of Violence and the Law of Love* (London, Unicorn Press, 1959); *idem*, *Writings on Civil Disobedience and Non-Violence* (London, Peter Owen, 1967).

political action with global consequences for today's world. Gandhi's experiments would show that the intangible idea of withholding obedience is in fact practicable on a large scale, as he lifted the rhetorical notion of human agency into concrete political substantiation.

Perception of an inherent connection between the means and ends is a powerful tributary of thought that courses through nonviolent struggles. Actions should reveal the ultimate purpose, Johan Galtung stresses: the way is the goal.<sup>31</sup> That is, to achieve a certain state of affairs, the process should embody the aim, with the steps to attain it implicitly implementing the goal. Even if the action and the goal are separated by time, the means and ends should nonetheless be consistent. If practicing the goal today does not result in the desired effect immediately, the purpose has at least been lived, if only briefly. When the means are violent, the aspiration has never been realized, not even for a moment. Rejection of any notion that the ends justify the means includes the impulse to fight with 'all means of struggle', which, although long argued by ideologists of armed struggle, has been offered as a matter of dogma rather than based on objective evaluation of success or failure.

Further in regard to consistency in action and outcome, gender is also organic to non-violent struggle. Gendered exclusions would be incompatible with the desired ends if the action chosen is to be consistent with the state of affairs sought after a situation has been rectified or conflict resolved by adopting nonviolent struggle in pursuit of liberty, freedom, justice, or democracy. Although nonviolent struggle is un-gendered in its presumptions of power, experience with the technique can shed light on societally gendered distributions of power. At a workshop in Freetown, Sierra Leone, in February 2007, the salience of nonviolent action for issues of gender was clearly disclosed.<sup>32</sup> Of the thirty-seven participants from the West African countries of Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone, eleven were women, meaning three-quarters were men. In an exercise on recruitment strategies and developing slogans, attendees formed groups based on their country. Each group was asked to pick a local grievance or wrong that could be susceptible to alteration by a nonviolent campaign, the group's task being to devise a recruitment plan and message. No guidance was offered on content. When the groups reported, all four had picked local injustices for a mobilisation related to gender:

- Côte d'Ivoire targeted the international community. At issue was ending sexual abuse of young girls in the Ivory Coast by UN peacekeepers.
- Sierra Leone targeted the chiefs, heads of secret societies, and the broader community. The purpose of the campaign and the message was a demand that women be installed as paramount chiefs.
- Liberia targeted the wider community, including perpetrators of rape in Bong country.
- Guinea targeted young girls and all village members to press for guaranteed access by the girls to immunizations, including vaccinations against tetanus, unfettered by interruptions from religious leaders.

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31. Johan Galtung, *The Way Is the Goal: Gandhi Today* (Ahmedabad, Gujarat Vidyapith, Peace Research Centre, 1992), 78, 79.

32. The Nonviolent Transformation of Conflict Workshop, Freetown, Sierra Leone, was jointly conducted by UPEACE and the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies, Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone.

The significance here is not that nearly thirty particular men were sensitive on matters of gender, which would not necessarily be true. Rather, when asked to analyse power relations at the local level, the gendered nature of local power formations and ways to combat imbalances became clear and important to them.

## APPLICATIONS OF NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE

Nonviolent action can work under myriad circumstances to realise major, positive social change with the possibility to transform conflicts and nations or to interrupt a cycle of vengeful violence. Nonviolent methods may be used pre-emptively and also to prevent severely disruptive strife. Knowledge of civil resistance can be a prime constituent of managing conflicts. With widening application of the technique, an evolution of thinking and practices is under way toward notions of waging conflict constructively, signifying the normality of human conflict and the expectation that it can knowledgeably be fought without violence, often with positive results for all parties.

### Transformation of Conflict

The technique of nonviolent struggle has demonstrated that it is possible to interrupt the cycle of retaliatory violence while accomplishing major, positive social change with transformative possibilities. Nonviolent sanctions can be used pre-emptively, to prevent severely disruptive strife, and as a prime constituent of managing crisis. An example of preventing the outbreak of deadly violence would be the withdrawal of Israeli settlers from settlements (considered illegal under international law) in the Palestinian Gaza Strip in 2005. The settlers' evacuation was planned by Israeli police and soldiers to avoid escalation into violence through a process guided by Israeli military generals and clinical psychologists who had studied the literature and technique of nonviolent strategic action.<sup>33</sup>

To speak of transformation of conflict is to go beyond the resolution of concrete problems, appreciating Gandhi's perception of conflict as an opportunity to rearrange the basic pieces of the underlying dispute. In the post-apartheid South African context, transformation of conflict has been described as 'a continuous aspirational progression', and 'multi-level phenomenon that is dependent on different levels of structural change, . . . as well as the relationship that ordinary citizens have with structural changes'.<sup>34</sup> In seeking to influence the behaviour of the opponent, elicit responses, and activate accommodation with the point of view of the nonviolent protagonists, nonviolent struggle is at its essence relational in altering the relationships involved in the underlying dispute. Nonviolent movements have experienced better odds for transforming authoritarian domination in the contemporary era than

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33. Nahi Alon, thirty-minute personal communication with the author, Bethlehem, 30 December 2005; Albert Einstein Newsletter, spring 2006, 9. Also see Nahi Alon and Haim Omer, *The Psychology of Demonization: Promoting Acceptance and Reducing Conflict* (Mahwah, New Jersey, and London, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006).

34. Brandon Hamber, 'Transformation and Reconciliation' in John Darby and Roger MacGinty (eds.), *Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, Violence and Peace Processes* (Basingstoke, England, and New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 228. Although focusing on truth recovery processes in South Africa, rather than nonviolent action, Hamber's insight is compatible with consideration of transformation of conflict.

in the past, partly as a result of the increasing diffusion of power systems and ability of mass media to activate global responses to what in an earlier period might have been a remote local campaign.

### Social Justice and Reform

In confronting established authority to seek reform, nonviolent strategies can accelerate a search for social equity by equalizing the parties. Trade unions historically have been maximal users of nonviolent sanctions, with notable results in reaching the stage of negotiations and collective bargaining with management. Majorities can exercise overweening power on minorities, but parity between two lop-sided constituencies can sometimes eventuate with nonviolent struggle. The 1960s U.S. civil rights movement's choice of nonviolent resistance enabled it to put the black community on equal footing with the established, powerful, and numerically greater racist oligarchies. A right to civil resistance is essential when the laws themselves, and the judicial rulings interpreting them, deny basic human rights.

Governments are often afraid of the technique of nonviolent struggle, because they suppose that it gives rise to political conflict. This supposition is naïve. The causes of strife are already present, leaving the question of how and with what means to seek goals, especially if institutionalised political action has failed. *Within* given governments or bureaucracies, nonviolent action may be used to send a message or disclose a problem, as when civil servants mount petition drives or apply pressure on government ministers, in what sociologist Ronald M. McCarthy calls 'constitutional' action.<sup>35</sup> Civil servants may resign from their jobs in noncooperation. In the United Kingdom in 2007—in a one-day national strike to contest wage adjustments—civil servants, the coast guard, customs, passport office, tax collection, and justice systems brought government offices to a standstill.<sup>36</sup> The technique can be advantageous in revising national priorities in recognition of minorities' claims. In Iran in 2004, reformist parliamentarians conducted sit-ins and fasted for two weeks in pressing for changes to the electoral system that had been rejected by the religious authorities.<sup>37</sup>

Even elected officials sometimes support nonviolent action. In 2004 the mayor of San Francisco, Gavin Newsom, was frustrated by the deadlock between labour unions and hotel managers over a new contract's health care premiums, wages, and time of expiration. Absentee owners of the city's grand hotels and the management companies they employed to operate them had locked out 4,000 striking hotel workers. Newsom feared the threat posed to the city's tourism. The mayor joined union members on the picket lines, calling for a boycott of fourteen of the largest hostelryes.<sup>38</sup>

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35. 'We can broadly call the use of governmental institutions to oppose the actions of government the "constitutional" technique of action.' Ronald M. McCarthy, 'Resistance Politics and the Growth of Parallel Governments' in Walter H. Conser, Ronald M. McCarthy, and David J. Toscano (eds.), *Resistance, Politics, and the American Struggle for Independence, 1765–1775* (Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986), 481.

36. Andrew Taylor, 'Civil servants plan one-day strike in May; benefits and courts would be disrupted; cabinet office to suspend talks', *Financial Times* (London), 23 April 2007, 2; 'Row over national strike impact', BBC, 1 May 2007, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/6610379.stm>.

37. Dan de Luce, 'Iranian hardliners refuse to back down', *Guardian* (London), 19 January 2004.

38. George Raine, 'Newsom joins picket line, vows boycott of hotels', *San Francisco Chronicle*, 27 October 2004, A1 and [www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2004/10/27/MNGLE9H2T11.DTL](http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/c/a/2004/10/27/MNGLE9H2T11.DTL)

Environmental preservation, disputes over the handling and manufacture of toxic wastes, and environmental cleanup have been successfully fought with nonviolent sanctions. Indeed, environmental movements in many parts of the world show precision in their utilization of nonviolent action. In China alone, the past few years have seen more than 200 major instances of popular nonviolent action concerning environmental degradation.<sup>39</sup> Around the world, insights from nonviolent theories and methods are on their way to becoming norms for settling neighbourhood disputes and managing discord in conflict-ridden societies. Police services are increasingly trained in nonviolent methods, prevention of riots, crowd control, nonviolent practices for handling criminals or stopping street fighting, as well as mediation.

### National Defence

One area of nonviolent struggle concerns the employment of civilian strategies for national defence. It would be hard to deny the necessity for a military solution to end Nazi aggression in World War II, yet it must equally be acknowledged that a significant political factor in Denmark, Norway, and the Netherlands were the diverse resistance movements of Nazi-occupied Europe that used noncooperation to deny Hitler the ability to accomplish some of his goals. After Germany invaded Norway on 9 April 1940, some 8,000 to 10,000 of the country's 12,000 schoolteachers openly defied the Quisling puppet regime installed by the Nazis.<sup>40</sup> As an expression of their refusal to cooperate with Quisling, Norwegians wore paper clips in their lapels, a sign of 'keeping together'. In classrooms, students wore necklaces and bracelets of paper clips; the simpler and more ubiquitous such emblems, the better. Teachers formed the backbone of the Norwegian resistance, and without a single gun, fought Quisling to defeat. Had the Norwegians used military weaponry to resist, the probable result would have been bombing raids to devastate their small country. Similar nonviolent nullification of Nazi efforts to implement 'final solution' measures in the Nazi-allied or Nazi-occupied nations of Bulgaria, Denmark, France, and Italy resulted in large numbers of Jews being saved.<sup>41</sup>

Subjugation by an invading or occupying army can be made extremely difficult, if not impossible, when civilians collectively resist nonviolently with prior preparation. Civilian-based defence requires that a large percent of the population be trained in advance in a coordinated and disciplined effort. In the Baltic states, civilian-based defence preparations culminated with their independence in 1991 from the Soviet Union. In 1990, the defence ministries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania—small nations

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39. Carl Pope, 'Saving Our Natural World through Nonviolent Action', lecture presented at the 'International Conference on Celebrating Nonviolent Resistance', Bethlehem, West Bank, 29 December 2005.

40. Gene Sharp, 'Tyranny could not quell them', *Peace News* (London), 1958, 9.

41. Regarding nonviolent resistance to Hitler, see Jacques Semelin, *Unarmed against Hitler: Civilian Resistance in Europe, 1939–1943*, trans. Suzan Husserl-Kapit (Westport, Connecticut, and London, Praeger, 1993); Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, Viking Press, 1963). On German resistance to save Jews in Berlin in 1943 during what the Gestapo called the Final Roundup of Berlin Jews, see Nathan Stoltzfus, *Resistance of the Heart: Inter-marriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany* (New York and London, W. W. Norton, 1996); idem, 'Saving Jewish Husbands in Berlin—1943' in Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, 143–48. The social philosopher Hannah Arendt relied on nonviolent resistance as a prototype for exploring threats to direct democracy and free political action.

vulnerable to what is once again called Russia—prepared extensive guidelines, in conjunction with quasi-governmental and civil society organizations, on how to withdraw cooperation and employ noncooperation measures. The guidelines were widely disseminated to the citizenry of the three republics. The citizens respected the procedures on how to withhold cooperation from the Soviet military and remain nonviolent. In one of the most dramatic moments of the late 20th-century democratic transitions of former Soviet states, Lithuanians in January 1991 without weaponry defended the country's main television tower and parliament building from Soviet soldiers and tanks, rendering abortive a Soviet military coup. To the journalist-historian Anatol Lievan, 'The solidarity and the courage of the peaceful, unarmed crowds . . . , convinced that they were about to be attacked, but standing their ground, is indeed one of the most moving political images of modern times.'<sup>42</sup> Lithuania became the first of the three republics to have its independence and statehood recognized by the international community and Soviet Union in 1991.<sup>43</sup> It is possible to discern the *pre-emptive* use of civilian-based defence from this example.

The technique of nonviolent action can help a people stand up against organized mass violence. A small volume entitled *The Anti-Coup* analyses how military or political usurpation of power can be blocked by noncooperation and includes recommended steps for governments and civil society institutions.<sup>44</sup> Reading it, one wonders whether a population could be prepared to resist mass killings. In Rwanda in 1994, the organized killings that began in Kigali, the capital, were delayed in the prefecture of Butare, home to the National University, because the governor of the province refused to cooperate and give orders to kill. He also encouraged the people of the province not to obey instructions coming from the capital. It took a visit by and the active propaganda of President Théodore Sindikubwabo for the killings to be carried out in full swing in Butare. The murders began with the assassination of the governor of the province who had urged noncooperation. 'As long as the governor resisted, and encouraged the people of Butare not to cooperate, and as long as he was alive, there were in fact no killings in Butare', observed Jean-Bosco Butera, who later returned home from elsewhere in the region and became academic vice rector of the National University of Rwanda in 2002.<sup>45</sup>

### Self-Rule and Nation Building

A decisive element in collective nonviolent action is the requirement of cohesion and unity—factors that intrinsically favour popular involvement in the making of decisions. Knowledge of how to struggle without bloodshed can shape the social, political,

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42. Anatol Lievan, *The Baltic Revolution: Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and the Path to Independence* (New Haven, Connecticut, Yale University Press, 1993), 254.

43. During this period, approximately 25 deaths occurred, with 935 injured, all in 1991, as, eventually, the Soviet military backed down. Mark R. Beissinger, 'Non-Violent Civil Resistance in the Baltic: Explaining the Intersection of Ethnic Nationalism with People-Power Tactics', paper delivered at the conference 'Civil Resistance and Power Politics: Domestic and International Dimensions', Oxford, England, St Antony's College, 15–18 March 2007, 4.

44. Gene Sharp and Bruce Jenkins, *The Anti-Coup* (Boston, Albert Einstein Institution, 2003).

45. Jean-Bosco Butera, personal one-hour communication with the author, Butare, Rwanda, 22 April 2002. He is now director of the Africa Programme of the University for Peace, Addis Ababa.

and economic institutions that evolve for governance as a result of a nonviolent struggle. Although ending British rule in India was central to the independence campaigns on the subcontinent, Gandhi believed the bigger issue was preparation of a colonized people for self-rule. He considered that training an entire population in noncooperation methods constituted training for self-rule.<sup>46</sup> Although under-studied and under-theorized, such preparation of unanimity and mass involvement can powerfully influence the subsequent emergence and formation of democratic institutions.

Although increasing recognition is given to the convergence of peace with justice—acknowledgment that negotiated settlements are only part of the complex processes of building peace—more study is needed on the links between building peace and addressing grievances through nonviolent action. This rings particularly true in Africa, because nonviolent strategic action can not only achieve political objectives, but can lead to more stable and equitable long-term results that benefit all parties to a conflict, improving the odds for reaching negotiations, transforming the conflict, and laying the groundwork for reconciliation.

## WHY TEACH NONVIOLENT ACTION?

Placing a premium on the value of nonviolence as a normative construction is not the same as learning how societies no longer need to be passive or acquiescent when facing tyranny or despotism. The normative context is important, yet the learning of values and norms is closer to the domain of early childhood socialization and primary education than to higher education. Contemplated here is the need for study, documentation, and teaching of nonviolent strategic action as a technique for securing justice that lends itself to a host of applications.

Although political, economic, and social conflicts are not likely to disappear, *how* people engage in the presence of discord can change. Of course, it is no trifling matter for people to take responsibility for modifying their condition. Mobilising against poverty, for fair governance, to remove oppression, gain justice, and for rights is not simple or without risk and danger. Cries for justice go frequently unheeded. Institutionalized political instruments—such as elections, referendums, representative bodies, and lobbying—can be persistently ineffective.

Within Africa's 800 or more universities, concern is often expressed about how best to socialize young people to reject violence as a way of trying to solve problems. Academicians know it is pointless merely to declare 'no violence'. People are not going to *not* fight for justice. Indeed, quite the opposite is the case; more and more persons and groups today feel entitled to assert themselves. Therefore, if violence is to be significantly reduced or abandoned in acute conflicts, especially where ideologies of armed struggle have predominated, a realistic alternative must be available and understood in order to have a chance of success. The comprehension that comes from study of the field of civil resistance in institutions of higher learning is vital, particularly in Africa, where local and national conflicts are widespread, but the means of contestation are assumed to be limited. This is ironic, because when Gandhi was in South

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46. Louis Fischer, *The Life of Mahatma Gandhi* (New York, Harper and Row, 1950), 231; Asha Rani, *Gandhian Non-Violence and India's Freedom Struggle* (New Delhi, Shree Publishing House, 1981), 321.

Africa, he learned a good deal about tax resistance—a form of economic non-cooperation—from Africans who refused to pay a new poll tax.<sup>47</sup>

For young democracies in Africa, it is critical to realize that protection of representative government when constitutional measures fail actually *demand*s a corrective capability that can work without violence. If liberal democratic principles are threatened, and institutionalised political systems fail, it is crucial for the populace to know that they have the option of turning to a technique of extra-parliamentary nonviolent sanctions, such as demonstrations, picketing, civil disobedience, strikes, and tax resistance, which have worked in the past. Democratic societies must be able to address shortfalls without bloodshed when legal or parliamentary methods of seeking redress seize up, as the law fails to protect injustice, governments falter in protecting minorities, and institutions dedicated to justice become hostage to corruption and special interests. Collective nonviolent action is actually fundamental to democracy: it can function in democracy's absence, but also act as a means of democratic empowerment.<sup>48</sup> Michael Randle insists that respect for guarantees of fundamental human rights may be more significant for democracy than is majority rule: 'To resist the encroachment of basic rights by a duly elected government is not to deny democracy but to uphold it.'<sup>49</sup>

Nonviolent resistance—based on political armaments, but not on war matériel and munitions—could scarcely be more important than it is today, when social and political change often arises from within the growing sphere of civil society. This is particularly so because it is also from this domain that upsurges of armed struggle, paramilitary militias, child soldiers, crimes against humanity, and suicide attacks arise. Notwithstanding the depth and breadth of African experience with nonviolent struggle, recurring surveys of peace and conflict studies in Africa conducted by the University for Peace Africa Programme since 2003 reveal that few courses in the still older field of nonviolent resistance are being offered by African universities.<sup>50</sup> This may partly be because universities set in war-torn regions recovering from armed hostilities have justifiably placed emphasis on re-establishing critical core subjects. It may also reflect the fact that in the last two decades, African universities have been weakened by structural adjustment programmes that siphoned off needed resources from higher education, resulting in a focus on traditional disciplines.

Where peace and conflict studies have been institutionalized, emphases may be placed on sociological, cultural, ethnic, and interfaith approaches; multilateral diplomacy; organizational dynamics and development; or on the mechanics, gadgetry, and mathematics of interventions. Some degree programmes in peace and conflict studies do not include courses on the theories and methods of nonviolent struggle, despite the fact that some of the deepest insights in peace and conflict studies—the fastest-growing of the social studies worldwide—have come from the pre-existing field of nonviolent strategic action. One example of an insight cut from the cloth of nonviolent struggle and sewn intact into peace and conflict studies is the necessity to separate the

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47. This was not a tax on voting, but a 'head tax'. Gandhi, *Indian Opinion*, 6 October 1906, vol. 5, 462, in CWMG, 140–41, as cited in Sharp, *Gandhi as a Political Strategist*, 34, 41n25.

48. April Carter, *Direct Action and Democracy Today* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 2005), 2.

49. Michael Randle, *Civil Resistance* (London, Fontana Press, 1994), 183.

50. For the surveys, see the Africa Programme's Web site, [www.africa.ucepeace.org](http://www.africa.ucepeace.org).

antagonist from the antagonism; in other words, isolate the target of the wrong from the human beings involved. This is but one of the contributions from Gandhi's experiments, starting in South Africa.

Emphasis in the contemporary era in peace and conflict studies was placed first on *resolution* of conflict, rather than the more urgent requirement to understand *management* of conflict, under which Gandhi might have located nonviolent resistance. (Equally, he might have placed peace and conflict studies under nonviolent strategic action.) 'Nonviolent struggle' is clearly a form of conflict transformation and perhaps a more accurate term than 'conflict resolution', since actual resolution of conflicts is rare and transient. Nigerian sociologist Onigu Otiote might have been describing the technique when he wrote, 'Conflict transformation is a summary term for a complex web of interdependent factors—the parties concerned, social relationships, the changing positions and roles of interveners, and the moderation of planned or unintended consequences.'<sup>51</sup> Nonviolent struggle is inherently *transformational*, in the sense that it seeks a transactional alteration in the power relationship between the parties, and its presumptions of power are relational.

Contemporary political thought—which encourages arbitration, compromise, conciliation, dialogic methods, diplomacy, mediation, negotiations, and resolution of conflict—may, with the exception of diplomacy, tend to address symptoms, which might be called disputes, rather than fundamental causes. Such rationalistic corrective methods are built on assumptions that a solution can be found within the institutional and structural framework available. To focus on a way out of conflict may be premature when the undergirding grievances or injustices are so heinous that they demand full engagement. Deep-rooted historical grievances may make it necessary first to reach parity in political power, so that negotiations or a political solution may ensue.

Bipan Chandra, an historian of modern India, stresses, 'The leaders of the national movement understood from the beginning that Indians did not possess the material resources necessary to wage war against such a strong state. In nonviolent struggle, . . . mass support [counts] and here a disarmed people are not at a disadvantage. In other words, nonviolence is also a way of becoming equal in political resources to an armed state in a war of position.'<sup>52</sup> Participation in nonviolent struggles is an option not solely for specialists or experts, but for all. Jacques Semelin contends that 'it is no longer appropriate to analyze partial forms of opposition—moral, political, military, or others—but instead to study the way that the whole social body—civilian society—reacts against aggression.'<sup>53</sup> The aggrieved can become empowered through involvement in nonviolent resistance against injustice.

One explanation for the absence of academic courses on this topic may have to do with indistinct definitions. Ambiguities in the meanings of the terms *nonviolent* and *nonviolence* must be addressed by anyone teaching in this field, especially since innumerable languages have no words for these terms. Strong arguments have been made

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51. Onigu Otiote, 'On Conflicts, Their Management, Resolution and Transformation' in Onigu Otiote and Isaac Olowale Albert (eds.), *Community Conflicts in Nigeria: Management, Resolution and Transformation* (Ibadan, Spectrum Books, 1999), 10.

52. Bipan Chandra, Indian History Congress Presidential Address, Amritsar, 1985, 24ff, in Shiri Ram Bakshi, *Gandhi and Ideology of Non-Violence* (New Delhi, Criterion Publications, 1986), 11, 12n33.

53. Semelin, *Unarmed against Hitler*, 26.

against the use of the word *nonviolence*, because it confuses forms of mass popular action with normative, ethical, or religious beliefs in nonviolence.<sup>54</sup> Rather than use the terms of *nonviolent struggle*, *nonviolent direct action*, *nonviolent resistance*, *civil resistance*, or *nonviolent strategic action*, certain groups prefer appending to the word *nonviolence* a modifier signifying action, for example, *active nonviolence*, *militant nonviolence*, or *revolutionary nonviolence*. Some scholars favour still broader terms, such as *civil resistance*, *contentious politics*, or *popular dissent*, although these terms do not delimit disciplined proscription of violence. Whatever the term or language, the choice of exclusively nonviolent means is its core specificity. Nonviolent sanctions attack the power of the opponent, yet do not harm the well-being or lives of the adversary. Thus we are not here considering spiritual, religious, interpersonal, or familial nonviolence. Nor are we focusing on normative nonviolence or values underpinning nonviolent norms.

A mistaken view of nonviolent resistance as the absolute opposite of violence or an exact substitute for it overlooks the fact that both violent and nonviolent struggle are means of contention. A simple dualism of violence as the opposite of nonviolent struggle is a serious distortion of reality, because responses to conflict more properly fall into categories of action or inaction. Nonviolent action is one type of active response, which, by definition, cannot take place without replacing submissiveness with struggle.<sup>55</sup> Disruption or constriction of the sources of power of the target group, rather than violence, is most likely to create its success. Nonviolent struggle generally requires greater strategic *savoir faire* than does military strategy, and its moves and countermoves demand more astute calibration.

If journalists write the rough drafts of history as claimed, an additional reason for teaching the history of nonviolent struggle is so that future reporters, broadcasters, and analysts will be able to recognize and accurately report the impact and role of nonviolent strategic action. The same is true for the diplomatic corps, which report events to their foreign ministries, generally with no recognition of nonviolent struggle or the strategic thinking that underlies it. A demonstration is not a riot. Often the only methods recognized from a huge inventory of action steps are civil disobedience or boycotts.

Although indeterminate in outcome, action methods cannot be used in a vague *mélange*. The choice of steps needs to be strategic and related to the political purpose, with the ends and means linked, and the goals and targets manifested in organization, discipline, planning, leadership, and logistics. Human resources must be preserved, because they are *the* resources. The simplest methods are used first. Sequencing should be intricately conceived, perhaps ranking the progression of action steps according to the severity of the likely penalties. Results are not always auspicious.

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54. Sharp, *Waging Nonviolent Struggle*, 20–21. The volume considers twenty-three case studies. The difference between hyphenated and the non-hyphenated styles of the word nonviolent, or nonviolence, is not a prim spelling detail, because of the predicament that ‘nonviolent action’ could be construed as meaning solely the negation of violence. If so, hyphenating the word accentuates a negative connotation. Without a hyphen, the word becomes a direct affirmation, because violence itself—whether that of the warrior, machinery controlled by the nation-state, structural violence in the girders of a society, or cultural violence as in so-called honor killings—is inherently negative. It either ends life or compromises its possibilities.

55. Sharp, *Politics of Nonviolent Action*, vol. 1: *Power and Struggle*, 64–77. See especially the chart ‘Six Classes of Action in Conflicts’, 66.

In 1995 in the oil-producing Niger Delta of Nigeria, writer Ken Saro-Wiwa was hanged in a judicial killing alongside eight other activists. Saro-Wiwa had led large non-violent demonstrations to protest the environmental damage being done to the delta's nine states by oil extraction, and of importance, without comparable reinvestment in the communities from which it came.<sup>56</sup> In Kenya, Wangari Mathaai was repeatedly arrested and beaten for planting trees in a thirty-year fight over the country's environmental policies and in opposition to official corruption. Having founded the Green Belt movement that engaged poor women in planting 30 million trees, this women's mobilization developed into a major force in Kenya for clean democracy and free elections. In 2005 Mathaai would be awarded the Nobel peace prize and become a minister of government, yet her multi-decade nonviolent movement had faced continual threats. Nonviolent struggle involves risks; hence knowledge of strategy is imperative.

According to Philip B. Heymann's analysis of South Africa's protracted struggle against apartheid, success in nonviolent action can be affected by a three-way relationship among the nonviolent challengers, the adversary, and the military or security services. If at all possible, Heymann concludes, the nonviolent protagonists should clarify their grievances, objectives, purposes, and demands, so as to minimize obstruction or interruption by the other two. This means obtaining insights in advance not only into the actions of the nonviolent protagonists, but also examining the objectives, goals, and actions of the target group and police.<sup>57</sup>

## NONVIOLENT STRUGGLE AND PEACE-BUILDING

In Africa, the field of peace studies is rooted in the annals, memories, traditions, cultures, and social realities of the continent and in its global heritage and in traditions of the field worldwide. Nonviolent struggle is indebted to knowledge transmitted from the East, yet cannot be labelled Western or Eastern. To Yonah Seleti, it is indigenous to Africa. It antedates recorded history and is not the preserve of the political left or right or of any ideology.

The idea of building peace has gained acceptance since the concept was initially conceived during UN operations in Namibia in 1978. Initially viewed as a type of postconflict reconstruction relating to plans for reinforcing the peace after an accord had been secured, conceptualisations of how to build peace have steadily expanded, as can be seen in the 1992 and 1995 editions of former UN secretary-general Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *An Agenda for Peace*. Although speaking to situations following upon acute conflicts, Boutros-Ghali cited a range of peace-building approaches, including 'co-operative projects . . . that not only contribute to economic and social development but also enhance the confidence that is so fundamental to peace'.<sup>58</sup> The concept has grown rapidly in popularity to include diplomatic, political, socioeconomic, and

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56. Jeevan Vasagar, 'Militants threaten Nigerian oil stations after leader's arrest', *Guardian* (London), 24 September 2005, 18.

57. Philip B. Heymann (ed.), *Towards Peaceful Protest in South Africa: Testimony of Multinational Panel Regarding Lawful Control of Demonstrations in the Republic of South Africa* (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council Publishers, 1992).

58. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, 2d rev. edn (New York, United Nations Department of Public Information, 1995), 15, 85.

security aspects. An extremely broad concept—encompassing democracy, development, gender, human rights, and justice—peace-building can be thought of as a bridge that crosses from conflict resolution to ‘positive peace’. Yet since positive peace is more than merely the absence of war, the umbrella of peace-building must include the merits of learning to employ nonviolent sanctions for addressing and resolving present and future conflicts, especially if institutionalised political action fails. This points back to the question of teaching the technique of nonviolent resistance.

## VALIDITY OF THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

Case studies of nonviolent struggles make premier tools for coursework, scholarship, and training on nonviolent sanctions as a realistic alternative to armed struggle. They provide an invaluable tool, because they act as a link between evidentiary analyses from actual historical struggles and the building of theory.

Concrete steps can be taken to improve the historiography of nonviolent resistance by instructors and lecturers stimulating student research on local nonviolent struggles. Lecturers may encourage pupils to go into their home communities or neighbouring areas to document current nonviolent campaigns or drives. Nongovernmental organisations are eager to have their successes documented and openly seek help in recording their innovations, yet they do not always have the methodological capacity to analyse key factors. Engaging students in the writing of case accounts combines theory with praxis, connecting pupils with real-life nonviolent struggles, while doing research in an actual setting and with multiple methods.

Students will learn how widespread is the technique of nonviolent action, as they start critical reading to develop a conceptual framework. A number of the fundamental works on this topic are available free for download. As students sharpen their research questions before gathering evidence, instructors can clarify fundamental theories and methods. When they embark on collecting data, and conducting and recording interviews, they will be doing real-life research. Taking advantage of African interest in oral history, they will be able to capture historical accounts otherwise lost. When they collect documentation and artefacts—fliers, leaflets, banners, buttons, armbands, internal guidelines, or instructions for marches—the differences between various action steps will become more discernible. As they discuss events and actions with participants and observers alike, collect and interpret data, reflect on differing accounts, think about the import of their case, and draw their conclusions, they will be able to comprehend nonviolent action at a deep level and grasp the meaning of the technique.

Teaching through the writing of case studies also compensates for a lack of textbooks on theory and history of such struggles. If embarked upon as a class project, a book of local case accounts may result, or even a publishable study, which can contribute to the literature. To return to Guinea, a case study would be profitable on nationwide general strikes in January and February 2007 that were instituted by the country’s labour congress in conjunction with civil society groups. President Lansana Conté had held power for twenty-four years and become deeply unpopular. Three demands were made in the widely supported noncooperation action, in return for which the January general strike would cease: appointment of a civil servant as prime minister, parliamentary elections, and a presidential election in 2010. In addition, wage

demands were proffered and calls were made to bring to justice two ministers of government that the president had pre-emptively released from prison.

Security forces killed fifty-nine or sixty persons in response to the general strike, which is always a difficult nonviolent method to implement because it tends to be indiscriminate in targeting and difficult to sustain. Unconfirmed reports suggest that when the president told air force commanders to give orders to fire on demonstrators from military aircraft, they refused to do so. A case study on this Guinean national general strike, and on another that followed a few weeks later in February, could be revealing. It may disclose the limits of general strikes as a nonviolent sanction, given that the president soon after imposed martial law, or might document the potential in such a situation for nonviolent struggle to alter power configurations.

Major issues in the field of nonviolent struggle, such as how to use asymmetry to one's advantage and how to institutionalize the alterations manifested by nonviolent struggles, cry out for serious research. Other queries are of great concern, yet little studied: how to prevent subsequent dictatorships from coming into being; how to help groups plan struggles for protracted periods, such as ten years or more.

An unexplored argument in favour of nonviolent struggle has to do with its tendency to act as a predictor of democracy. While civil resistance does not guarantee the emergence of democracy, nonviolent movements historically have tended to lead to democratic institutions and governance. This may be related to the arduous processes involved as groups decide strategy or the rigours demanded as individuals make personal choices to take risks and suffer the penalties that accompany nonviolent struggle. In analysing transitions among regimes, one study found that democratisation was more likely in nations where citizens had engaged in nonviolent action, in comparison to countries where violence was utilised by the citizenry, or the transition was driven by elites.<sup>59</sup> An outcome of democracy is not a matter of ideology; nonviolent movements tend to select democratic results, and the leaders that emerge are inclined and predisposed to be democrats. In contrast, one of the consequences of authoritarian structures within armed movements is that they often lead to coercive systems. Such issues can benefit from the case-study approach.

## CONCLUSION

A technique for sociopolitical change that offers a realistic alternative to violent struggle and armed conflict, nonviolent resistance as a chosen means of engagement can lead to outcomes in which all the parties profit, disconnect cycles of intergenerational violence, enhance negotiations, heighten prospects for reconciliation, and favour outcomes with a democratic ethos—without bloodshed or physical and economic destruction. Yet nonviolent struggles in pursuit of social equity, justice, reconciliation, and human rights remain largely undocumented and often misunderstood.

Deeper comprehension of how nonviolent sanctions work will spur more extensive analysis of success, and as improved chronicling spreads knowledge, more and more

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59. Adrian Karatnycky and Peter Ackerman, *How Freedom Is Won: From Civic Resistance to Durable Democracy* (New York, Freedom House, 2005), [www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special\\_report/29.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special_report/29.pdf).

can understand its dynamics and why it is important. The young democracies of Africa can benefit from intensified study, documentation, and teaching of collective nonviolent action as a technique for securing justice that can lend itself to a host of applications. Denunciations of violence or blandishments against armed struggle hold little prospect for impact unless a substitute for violent struggle can be understood and comprehended, thereby allowing people, groups, and societies to grasp a way to fight for reform and justice without the debilitating, intergenerational quest for revenge that results from bloodshed.

When a conflict is structural, or indispensable human needs are at stake, it is possible that no solution can be developed until its causes have been addressed and the parties have equalised themselves to the point where negotiations or conciliation methods stand a chance. The most humane way to change the balance of forces may be nonviolent struggle. In a global search for plausible alternatives to military intervention, and the need for legitimate challenges to the mentality of armed cadres and weaponised militias, a shift in the larger discourse to recognising the potency of collective nonviolent action is worthy of study. Such an alteration can occur, but it starts with introducing the teaching of nonviolent struggle and recognising that it is a fundamental dimension of building peace.

To be an effective element in peace-building, the technique must be better understood both theoretically and in its practical applications. Disparities in historic understandings can be addressed by African academicians as part of their pedagogy, while filling gaps in documentation. With improved understanding, nonviolent struggle can become 'mainstreamed' into situations of strife. It is a matter of urgency to accelerate the studying, documenting, and teaching of the dynamics, mechanisms, and strategies of nonviolent struggle. This is important for Africa. Just as King and Gandhi learned from the African nonviolent struggles of their times and relied on observations of African campaigns to improve their sharing of knowledge, so, equally, can the rest of the world today.



# Politics of Memory: Collective Remembering and Manipulation of the Past in Zimbabwe

*Pamela Machakanja*

The past plays several roles in the history and everyday lives of different societies. Shaped as heritage, historical sites, monuments, and museums, the past can be appreciated for its ancient aesthetic and nostalgic value. The past can also be a distinctive source of experiential education, as well as entertainment. Above all, the past reflects and transmits a strong sense of sociopolitical identity and power and a sense of place and time that creates difference and uniqueness among nations. As a source of power, the past can be appropriated in the present as a mechanism that serves to legitimise or de-legitimise political actions, both violent and nonviolent. When this process is controlled by the ruling elite, who often claim monopoly over interpretation of the past, certain aspects of the past can be distorted and manipulated to satisfy political agendas. Although the ruling elite's domination over the creation and representation of the past is acknowledged, official representations are not presented simplistically, that is, solely as the outcome of the ruling party's coercive political mechanisms. In fact, attempts by the ruling elite to suppress or obscure certain aspects of the past create space for the emergence of alternative voices to challenge elite interpretations and justify demands for negotiation between and among the ruling elite and counter-hegemonic groups in society.

**LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT** what has throughout history and with different intensity in different cultures encouraged and inspired people to tell the stories of their lived or learned political experiences. This study attempts to fill that gap. In an effort to accumulate new knowledge on memory work, it explores how the practices and processes of remembering and forgetting can become symbols of commemorative memorialisations, embroiled in disputes, conflicts, and struggles on how to come to terms with a nation's past. In so doing, perhaps it can transform thinking about how memory work is understood and its implications for conflict resolution as a frame that facilitates collaborative dialogue among contending parties. By focusing attention on the active and productive roles of those engaged in memory struggles and how they generate different interpretative meanings of the past, framed by power relations embedded in the presence of conflict and violence, this process can illuminate alternative thinking that will drive the practice of creative and interactive conflict resolution within the broader field of peace and conflict studies.

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The present exploration of practices and processes of memory work in Zimbabwe is informed by the argument that any discussion or investigation of contemporary political struggles cannot be done from outside the arena in which the struggles are occurring. To date, little research has been done to explore and understand memory work and practices as subjective processes anchored in symbolic and material markers in transitional societies such as Zimbabwe. Based on data collected in Zimbabwe in 2004–2005, this article draws on the instructional themes of David Middleton and Derek Edwards, which explain social practices of remembering and forgetting as dynamic processes of engagement and contestation through which symbolic events of commemoration and memorialisation can be used to achieve a variety of ends, to illuminate Zimbabwe's current political landscape.<sup>1</sup>

## CONTEXT

This study was carried out in the eastern province of Manicaland, the third largest province in Zimbabwe. Comprised of ten districts, Manicaland has a population of approximately 1.6 million.<sup>2</sup> Zimbabwe is a landlocked country with a total area of 390,580 square kilometres. It shares borders with South Africa to the south, Botswana to the southwest, Zambia to the northwest, and Mozambique to the east. From the time it achieved independence in 1980 until the late 1990s, Zimbabwe was considered a bright spot on the continent of Africa, with its well-developed agricultural system, education and health systems, a literacy rate of more than 80 percent, and a relatively functional democratic governance system. The political events of the last decade have, however, created challenges that have attracted domestic and international attention. A referendum that rejected the government's draft constitution, growing opposition to the ruling party Zimbabwe African National Union–Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), land seizures by the landless, the refusal or reluctance of state authorities to evict illegal land takers, continued intimidation and political violence during elections, and a depressed economy coupled with soaring unemployment all suggest a dramatic turning point in the political landscape of Zimbabwe. It is against this backdrop that Zimbabwe's current political factions struggle to shape perceptions of the past to serve their respective ideologies and political goals.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The term *social memory* denotes sociocultural processes of constructing and reconstructing images of the past within contexts of dialogue, action, interpretation, and representation.<sup>3</sup> Social memory involves power relationships around which individu-

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1. D. Middleton and D. Edwards, 'Introduction' in D. Middleton and D. Edwards (eds.), *Collective Remembering* (London, Sage Publications, 1990), 1.

2. This figure is based on the 2002 census.

3. In the discussion that follows, 'social memory' will be used interchangeably with 'collective memory', 'public memory', and 'cultural memory'. See J. Fentress and C. Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1992); M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. and trans. L.A. Coser (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992); J. Bodnar, 'Public memory in an American city: Commemoration in Cleveland' in J.R. Gillis (ed.), *Commemorations* (Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1994), 74–89; and P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

als and groups actively negotiate as they make decisions about what to remember and what to suppress or forget. Our discussion emphasises notions of social/collective memory as conflictual fields of power and power relations; contested social practices; and struggles over meaning, interpretation, and representation. Inherent in these struggles is the understanding that as people remember past events—even the same event—they do not do so in the same way. Understanding and interpretation of events differ depending on circumstance, interest, and motivation. This then raises an important question: given that the past is fluid, how do certain aspects of the past get established and disseminated as dominant and shared while others fade into oblivion?

### Conceptualising Social Memory

From a social constructionist perspective, collective memory is conceptualised as a social construct that is socially organised and mediated through social relations of exchange. It is supra-individual in the sense that individual memory is conceived in relation to a group and is always rooted in shared recollections or experiences of the past. Its existence is an outcome of interaction, sharing, discussion, negotiation, and often contestation.<sup>4</sup>

Social memory helps people to understand that they live not only in the present but also in the past; experience of the present comes through the lens of the past. Every social group develops a memory of its past. This past is distinct from that of other groups. To distinguish itself from outsiders, the group retrieves from its available past key memories that are perceived as essential to the construction of its identity—a process of inclusion as well as exclusion.<sup>5</sup> As Maurice Halbwachs argues, it is through collective remembering that people reconstruct what they know from the past to give meaning and make sense of contemporary ideas and challenges.<sup>6</sup> In this way, the present becomes the social frame through which the past is built. That is, the past is reconstructed with regard to the concerns and needs of the present. The challenges one faces today determine the kind of past one remembers and how one interprets that past. Halbwachs' assessment of the instrumental use or value of the past indicates how the past creates either possibilities or constraints for the resolution of present problems.

From a sociocultural perspective, social memory is conceptualised as a tool for social control and domination. While such control may be contested, it is typically managed by powerful groups to serve their own purposes as an imposed consensus.<sup>7</sup> From this perspective, the core proposition put forward is the creation of hegemony through domination of cultural and political meanings of selected past events in the interest of a few. One way of creating a dominant hegemonic memory is through the deliberate fabrication of memory through rituals, emblems, commemorative events, and monuments that signify symbolic and physical markings of the past.<sup>8</sup> Despite appeals for

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4. E. Zarubavel, 'Social memories: Steps to a sociology of the past', *Qualitative Sociology* 19:3 (1996), 283; Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

5. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

6. *Ibid.*, 224.

7. M-R. Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston, Beacon Press, 1995), 113.

8. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), 263–308.

hegemonic power, however, the sociocultural perspective recognises the existence of continued struggles for power, contested understandings and meanings, and the possibility of counter-hegemonic representations of the past by other groups in society. Thus, because of the interplay among actors, there are bound to be power struggles over what should be remembered, signified, silenced, or forgotten as well as struggles over the very processes of remembering. According to Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, this struggle is between official and popular representations of historical pasts, and whether dominant social groups can monopolise the selection and interpretation of the past as they wish.<sup>9</sup>

It is imperative to examine how the past is instrumentalised in ways that legitimise power. Quite often in memory work, legitimacy and power are not only related but also facilitate the claim that when an authoritarian regime's power is challenged it will feel threatened and make attempts to institute strategic political changes in search of legitimacy. In one sense, the use of legitimacy draws from Max Weber's notion of a common belief among groups of people that a certain type of domination is justified. Going beyond Weber's three normative types of legitimate order—legal, charismatic, and traditional—leads to Leslie Holmes' continuum of legitimacy, which ranges from goal-rational to formal-informal dimensions that influence attempts towards building a desired legitimacy. This implies that depending on political circumstances, certain forms of legitimacy may be achieved through coercive means aimed at satisfying and perpetuating personal and elite interests. As the Zimbabwean case study shows, the nationalist rhetoric on legitimacy has become an important tool in the interpretation and representation of the past by the ruling liberation elite.

Social remembering and social forgetting are subjects of power as well as abuse in the sense that selective remembering must necessarily rely on selective forgetting. Elaborating on Hobsbawm's proposition, John Bodnar affirms the argument that any representation of the past is a product of elite manipulation and 'public memory will always change as political power and social arrangements change'.<sup>10</sup> Both emphasise the manipulative use of the past as a means of maintaining political power and power relations. This is because with each new regime, new symbols are constructed to accommodate new formations and imaginations. At the same time, some old symbols are invested with new meanings while others are relegated to the background or completely discarded. This implies that new versions of the past are achieved through a continuous process of negotiation, amendment, restatement, replacement, or even erasure. The past becomes precarious, and its content hostage to the condition of the present, thereby reinforcing a common tenet of the social constructionist view—namely, that people reconstruct memories of what they want to remember to serve personal interests and agendas. Thus, a common tenet to both social constructionist and cultural domination approaches to memory work is that people reconstruct memories of what they remember to serve personal interests.

Conceptualising memory from these perspectives still fails to offer a comprehensive understanding of why certain memories persist despite pressures to suppress them. Part of the reason can be found in Edward Shils's argument that although the past is often revised to reflect the concerns of the dominant groups, the past in some respects

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9. Ibid.

10. Bodnar, 'Public memory', 20, 252.

and under certain conditions can be resistant to arbitrary makeover.<sup>11</sup> The logic here states that social memory can be highly resilient as well as resistant to oppressive pressures. For Shils, all social phenomena have a past that cannot be easily shed. As such, change as well as persistence remain in the grip of the past. Social or collective memory, then, demonstrates a sense of historical continuity that acknowledges the idea that 'the past does appear in the present but it does so against the obstacles of death and birth'.<sup>12</sup> For instance, while each generation possesses its own memory of the past, no generation creates its memory experiences from a clean slate or vacuum. A large part of what one possesses or experiences is handed down from the past. This implies that even though one might not have lived in a particular past, and even though one might have his or her own understanding of that past, to some extent one nevertheless proceeds from where past generations left off.

For Michael Schudson, as well, the past is constantly retold in order to legitimate present interests, but nevertheless in some ways and under certain conditions remains highly resistant to efforts to make it over.<sup>13</sup> In certain circumstances, the past is resistant to total manipulation and fabrication. This means that the past cannot be constructed at will, because some parts of the past have been recorded and thus obtain at least some degree of authenticity. As Schudson notes, the idea that 'the present shapes our understanding of the past is only half the truth, the other half is that the past shapes the present'.<sup>14</sup> Understanding social memory as a continuity of the past still limits explanations of how social memory becomes distorted and legitimised during periods of dramatic social and political change. The argument here is that while collective memory draws its resources from the past, it also represents aspects of memory continuity and discontinuity, where the past, present, and possibilities for the future intersect in meaningful as well as contradictory ways for social groups in society.

A summary analysis of the conceptual viewpoints reveals varied levels of consensus as well as disagreement on understanding of collective memory as socially constructed through shared experiences. The powerful line of explanation in Halbwachs' presentist approach describes how groups use the past for present purposes and how the past can be a useful strategic resource for expressing political interests. Central to this approach are two lines of argument: the functional, or instrumental, and the meaning-making dimension of memory. The former sees images of the past as a direct manipulation for specific political purposes and goals,<sup>15</sup> while the latter sees selective memory as an inevitable consequence of how one interprets social reality on the basis of either one's own lived or learned experience within set cultural contexts.<sup>16</sup> Schudson and Barry Schwartz, while sharing Halbwachs' assumption that recollection of past events is an active process and not simply a matter of passive retrieval of the past, nevertheless emphasise the sociohistorical context in which memories are produced through processes and practices of resistance. Central to their arguments is how processes of memory making represent networks of political decision making about

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11. E. Shils, *Tradition* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1981), 35.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Schudson, 'The present in the past versus the past in the present', *Communication* 11 (1989), 105–13.

14. *Ibid.*

15. Hobsbawm and Ranger, *Invention of Tradition*.

16. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

the past not only to satisfy the narrow interests of the elite but as forces of social change aimed at challenging the status quo. Thus, for both Schudson and Schwartz a partial answer as to why changes in the representation of the past take place lies in the structure of decision making. Specifically, they look at who in a given circumstance is eligible to make decisions about the past and the ways in which other groups claim eligibility to challenge those decision-making processes.

### CONCEPTUALISING THE POLITICS OF COMMEMORATION AND MEMORIALISATION: THE PAST IN THE PRESENT

Middleton and Edwards employ instructive themes that structure and characterise engagements of remembering and forgetting as inherently social practices and those of commemoration and memorialisation as sociopolitical practices.<sup>17</sup> In their analysis of the social nature of remembering, Middleton and Edwards refute any simplistic explanation and understanding of memory work as confined to an individual capacity. Instead they map out common themes that explain processes of remembering and forgetting. Included among these themes are 'remembering together', 'social practices of commemoration', 'foundations and social context of the individual and collective memory', 'rhetorical organisation of remembering and forgetting', 'socio-institutional remembering and forgetting', and the 'modalities of social practices in the continuity of life'.<sup>18</sup>

Central to Middleton and Edwards' proposition for understanding memory work are two key factors. First is the proposition that because memory is an integral part of social life, the social practices of a society can provide insights into the political dynamics of how that society remembers its past. Second is the understanding that the content of collective remembering is not primarily concerned with recovering any historical truth, but rather always involves conflicting interests and social and political values and attitudes. Therefore, collective remembering is the result of negotiation and disagreement, both of which are essential to our understanding of the political dynamics that form the structure and practice of collective remembering in society.

The linkages among the proposed memory themes are complex and manifold. Middleton and Edwards' proposition in many ways resembles Paul Connerton's explanation of how social memory is conveyed and sustained within and among social groups.<sup>19</sup> Connerton, a major proponent of cultural memory, together with the Popular Memory Group identified the conditions under which social memory is culturally reproduced. In so doing, he highlighted the crucial roles played by legitimised agents of memory, collective recollection practices, and formal spaces for the articulation and public depiction of memory. Memory advocates maintain that social memory is intentionally mediated by social actors and is embodied in performative practices that act as intervening mechanisms in the meaning-making processes of the present.<sup>20</sup> The common argument of all of these memory-work proponents is that because social memory

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17. Middleton and Edwards, 'Introduction'.

18. *Ibid.*, 1.

19. P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989).

20. See also Z. Bauman, *Morality, Immorality and other Life Strategies* (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1992).

is socially mediated, quite often in keeping with the key ideas and values of dominant social groups, remembrance and commemoration of key historical events become a valuable means by which to construct and preserve national identities and consolidate preferred nationalisms. Middleton and Edwards' model of social memory as performative practice is complemented by the work of a number of historiographers, including Reinhart Koselleck, Paul Riceour, Paul Veyne, and Hayden White. In many ways all concur in the view that understanding of any historical event is not exclusively about what happened but also about how events are narrated in the present.

Middleton and Edwards' first theme, 'remembering together', maintains that while it is true that 'people share memories of events and objects that are social in origin', it is important to understand that this sharing of memories amounts to more than 'a mere pooling of experiences'. What is remembered and commemorated extends beyond the sum of individual remembrances to a collective that then forms the basis for any future reminiscence. Hence, in the contest between varying accounts of shared experiences, people reinterpret and rediscover elements of the past that become the content and context for what they will jointly recall and commemorate on future occasions.<sup>21</sup>

The process of collective remembering becomes an ongoing active and creative process of invention and reinvention of certain images of the past that become part of a people's cultural tradition and heritage. For example, in most postcolonial states, including Zimbabwe, independence spurred the restructuring and re-interpreting of the past in a way geared toward defending the state's newfound nationalism. By repudiating or formally disowning a colonial past, these states justified their emerging political identities and national status. The need to justify and legitimise became the driving force for the reconstruction of a collective memory that articulated a new value system and shared identity that resembles Benedict Anderson's notion of an imagined community.<sup>22</sup> Within the context of Zimbabwe, this landmark process highlighted the beginning of a period of contention as the past was told and comprehended in ways that competed for precedence.

Middleton and Edwards draw attention as well to the 'social practices of commemoration'.<sup>23</sup> Their notion of social practices of commemoration is grounded in historical underpinnings where the past becomes the object of intentional commemoration and is inscribed some historical significance. They point to tensions that exist in such practices wherein 'acts of commemoration embody continuous tensions between immutable aspects of the past conversed in the present'.<sup>24</sup> Thus, certain commemorative acts silence contradictory interpretations of the past, thereby creating a selected pool of memories viewed as easily accessible and desirable for particular groups in society.

Middleton and Edwards also note the importance of the 'rhetorical organisation of remembering and forgetting'.<sup>25</sup> This theme is represented in arguments about the contested nature of accounts about the past with regard to who the speaker is, his or her motive for speaking, and who is to be blamed, excused, acknowledged, praised, honoured,

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21. Middleton and Edwards, 'Introduction', 7.

22. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, Verso, 1991).

23. Middleton and Edwards, 'Introduction', 8.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 9.

thanked, trusted, and so on. Rhetorical organisation is crucial to the process of collective remembering and forgetting, as is understanding how that process is carried out in relation to broader ideological considerations that place people in both contradictory and complementary relationships with what they report about the past. This highlights the importance of language in memory work, especially language that amplifies contention or persuasion and its power to influence perceptions and behaviour in ways aimed at establishing a shared sense of remembering. Also, in emphasising the narrative model of social remembering, Reinhart Koselleck points out how representations of the past are realised through social and personal standpoints and positions that both contain and create meaning in relation to place, time, and person, thereby resulting in shifting and multiple interpretations. Thus, the social capacity to narrate, to objectify, and to collectivise historical experiences is subjected to uneven social and political conditions of constraint and possibility.

Finally, Middleton and Edwards draw attention to ‘socio-institutional remembering and forgetting’ and the social contexts that frame memory practices.<sup>26</sup> This context, as already elaborated, is a terrain of struggle, one carved out of continuing clashes between and among sociopolitical groupings as they compete for the interpretation and possession of memory. The notion of institutional remembering and forgetting is not simply a reference to the creation of communities of memory, but also refers to the manipulation of what should be remembered and forgotten. As Bodnar argues, the dogmatic institutionalisation of official memory is quite often advanced by elites who are committed to the rhetoric of social unity, the continuity of particular institutions, and the cultivation of loyalty.<sup>27</sup>

## DATA COLLECTION

Data collection for this study—applying Middleton and Edwards’ themes on remembering and forgetting to the current political crisis in Zimbabwe—took place over the course of a year.

### Sampling Frame

The study sample was comprised of eighty-two informants strategically selected to represent women and men from both rural and urban areas. Included among these were resettled farmers, district councillors, war veterans, market women, academics, politicians, political activists, and university and high school students from both rural and urban schools in Manicaland. A purposive sampling frame was used that combined several sampling techniques, including the snowball technique whereby those interviewed first identify additional potential informants. The sample is fairly evenly split between males and females, and both genders evidence variation in age. Ensuring the presence of women in the sample group was done in cognisance of the patriarchal practices in Zimbabwe that generally exclude women—rural women in particular—

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26. Middleton and Edwards, ‘Introduction’, 9.

27. Bodnar, ‘Public memory’, 75.

from making their voices heard. This was important, as it is generally acknowledged that women experience conflict situations differently from men.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

Data collection took place in a series of in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Given the sensitive nature of my investigation, involving as it did the profound meanings of people's political lives or learned experiences, it appeared that the usefulness of quantification techniques would be extremely limited. Therefore, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis were selected as data collection methods. The in-depth interviews and focus group discussions ensured rigour and the subjectivity necessary to establish a qualitative measure that would not only validate 'ways of knowing' but also capture the personal, contextual, and holistic nature of informants' experiences. In the series of in-depth interviews, the sample groups described how they perceived ongoing political events, identified what they considered to be significant events in shaping the processes of the political crisis, and, most important, what those experiences meant to them. Each of the eighty-two informants was interviewed once with the aim of understanding their reflections and insights into key political events. Twenty-nine follow-up interviews were subsequently conducted with the aim of eliciting deeper reflections and further elaboration of subjectivities offered during the initial interview. Through this cyclical, schematic process of in-depth interviewing, there emerged links between themes, patterns, and relationships in expressed opinion among the different groups.

### **Focus Groups**

Four sessions of focus group discussions were conducted with university students, high school students, and market women and men. The rationale for using focus group discussions was based on the need to engage different groups of informants in a discussion of key thematic issues with a view to yielding a diverse array of responses. Focus group discussions were especially useful with young people who generally felt that a group setting provided a safe environment for discussion of sensitive issues with minimal inhibition.

## **DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS**

All interviews and responses from focus group discussions were transcribed and coded for entry into a NUD\*IST database. The NUD\*IST software was used to create categories and index the data. Open and axial coding (grounded theory) were used to generate categories and themes, which enabled a deeper understanding of emerging issues, patterns, and relationships related to the topic under study.

## **FINDINGS**

The following findings include discussions of the institutionalisation and memorialisation of the past; social practices of commemoration and memorialisation; ritualisa-

tion of the past through political commemoration, political funerals, and burial; the politics of representing and remembering the dead; and continuities and discontinuities in redefining the past.

### Institutionalisation and Memorialisation of the Past

Research findings from different categories of people (war veterans, academics, youths, politicians, and university students) revealed that upon gaining independence from Britain in 1980, Zimbabwe embarked on a memorialisation process aimed at creating a collective historical memory befitting the new social order. One way in which the historical memory was restructured was through the institutionalisation of a wide range of political and historical symbolic expressions of an emulated past. Following Middleton and Edwards' framework, the institutionalisation of different forms of memory traces in cultural forms and sociopolitical practices affirmed the intention to invent an imagined tradition set on an ideological foundation of the liberation memory. Founded on the ideals and aspirations of the armed struggle, Zimbabwe's memorialisation process resembled similar initiatives in countries such as China, Japan, Korea, Germany, Russia, and the United States, where such processes continue to signify symbolic memory theatres representing crucial components of nation-building as well as mechanisms to restore the dignity of war heroes.<sup>28</sup> During interviews a number of academics and war veterans revealed how sites of memory were created to secure recognition of a Zimbabwean heroic past, with monuments erected in memory of the war of liberation, in particular the victories of the liberation war heroes.<sup>29</sup> These memorial sites, which are a common feature throughout the country, symbolically share instrumental political values about the past in the present, as they provide interest driven explanations in search of legitimacy. As representations of a historic and political tradition, they also embody distinctive memory traces of both a heroic and traumatic past.

Findings from political activists, nationalists, war veterans, and academics revealed how cities, towns, streets, and buildings were renamed in honour of nationalist heroes and in recognition of cultural traditions.<sup>30</sup> In the perception of some war veterans and academics, a sense of a cultural revolution prevailed whereby memorial symbols and artefacts considered to be a part of an offensive past, such as a statue of colonial pioneer Cecil John Rhodes, were destroyed and replaced with representations of the new social order, or what Anderson calls 'invented tradition'.<sup>31</sup> Zimbabwean national holidays are also marked on the national political calendar to create a shared network of practices around which the collective memories of a desired past form a representation of a people's identity and sense of nationalism. Of significance on the national

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28. R. Werbner, 'Multiple identities, plural arenas' in Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (eds.), *Postcolonial Identities in Africa* (London, Zed Books, 1996).

29. Interviews: 23 October 2004, Colonel Bangidza, war veteran; 18 December 2004, Mr Ndoro, an academic; 19 January 2005, Mrs Mtambara, social worker; 14 September 2004 and 4 October 2004, Mrs Shirley, academic; 4 October 2004, Hatina, student; 31 November 2004, Mercy, student.

30. Interviews: 17 October 2004, Ms Miti, political activist; 1 November 2004, Professor Phiri, academic; 15 November 2004, Mr Pasi, district officer.

31. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*. Interview: 23 October 2004, Colonel Bangidza, war veteran, Zimbabwe National Army.

political calendar are the Independence Day, Heroes Day, Defence Forces Day, Unity Day, and Africa Day holidays.<sup>32</sup> These political holidays resemble Middleton and Edwards' memorial social practices, which commemorate key historical events and the victorious achievements attributed to liberation war heroes.

Perceptions from all categories of people interviewed—villagers, political activists, youth, academics, war veterans, and market women and men—acknowledged the view that the collective forgetting of the Zimbabwean past, just as much as the collective remembering of the past, has remained contested because, as Halbwachs notes, 'society tends to eliminate from its memory anything that seems to contradict the new imagined identity'.<sup>33</sup> In Zimbabwe, the government's attempts at institutionalising the processes of forgetting and remembering reveals that collective remembering is essential for the creation of a common identity that accords some sense of legitimacy to the creation of a new nation. Such legitimacy becomes not just a matter of controlling the past, the present, and the future but also cements understandings that defend the aspired frames of identity and nationalism.<sup>34</sup>

Those opposed to the ruling party's position argued that despite the institutionalisation of these defence mechanisms, since independence the government's political legitimacy and interpretation and representation of its national memory—especially the liberation memory—has become highly contested through a series of social and political challenges.<sup>35</sup> For instance, one interviewee, a member of the political opposition MDC (Movement for Democratic Change), stated that the violent political conflict between the rival liberation movements, the Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) and the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU), in Matebeleland two years after independence in 1982, revealed the fragile nature of memory. The government's efforts toward creation of a grand collective memory met with resistance from certain sections of the 'imagined community'.<sup>36</sup> The defection in the mid-1980s of some elite nationalist leaders from the ruling party and subsequent creation of their own political opposition party, the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM), also presented challenges to the government's attempts to both create a hegemonic state and control the past in the present.<sup>37</sup> Similarly, the war veterans' open challenge to the ruling party's leadership in 1997 and 2001 over land claims and entitlement demands, respectively, challenged the notion of nationalism founded on a common representation of the past.<sup>38</sup> As E. Zarubavel argues, a society's need to restructure, monopolise, and control the past becomes greatest when it experiences serious challenges aimed at upsetting its social and political order. Hence, it is in such situations that the politicisation of memory attains great hegemonic power enshrined in selected scripts of history.

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32. Interview: 24 October 2004, Ms Mupfukurirwa, war veteran.

33. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. Interviews: 10 October 2004, Mr Chikomo, villager; 23 October 2004, Mr Kanjanda, villager; 16 November 2004, headman; 23 October 2004, Colonel Bangidza, war veteran; 8 November 2004, Mr Maposa, academic.

34. Interview: 20 October 2004, Cde. Nyambuya, governor and war veteran.

35. Interviews: 8 November 2004, Mr Muyekwa, opposition member of parliament, 23 September 2004, Mr Chaza, academic and opposition member MDC.

36. Interview: 8 November 2004, Mr Muyekwa, member of parliament, MDC.

37. Interviews: 1 November 2004, Professor Phiri, academic; 8 November 2004, Mr Maposa, academic; 23 October 2004, Mr Chaza, college lecturer.

38. Interview: 23 October 2004, Colonel Bangidza, war veteran in the Zimbabwe National Army.

As the government makes sense of these ongoing political changes, especially the present challenge from the MDC, currently the main opposition political party in Zimbabwe, the government's intervention strategy is centred on appeals to the past, whereby exhumation and evocation of certain memories function to frame present problems as wholly attributable to the colonialism and imperialism of the past as well as to any opposing forces.<sup>39</sup> Critics of the current regime also argue that long-forgotten or neglected memories of the liberation war are being reclaimed and re-established in people's present memories in ways that position the ruling party and government as victims of colonialism as well as the sole agents able to resolve the current crisis.<sup>40</sup> The government's interpretation of events is viewed as a strategy to remind and warn people about the consequences of forgetting the past, especially the liberation memory. The government reinforces its cultural and political authority to monitor any public social or political event as a way of controlling dissent.<sup>41</sup> Analysis of this situation matches Halbwachs' argument on the malleability of social memory and the functional use of social memory in pursuit of political goals.

### Social Practices of Commemoration and Memorialisation

As Middleton and Edwards argue, acts of commemoration raise questions about distinctive practices, purposes, occasions, actors, meanings, and legitimacy; these questions revolve around the need to understand who engages in commemorative practices, for what purposes, and with what results.<sup>42</sup> This process also helps with understanding how commemorative practices and their meanings can become not only contested, but can also change over time.

Independence Day, celebrated on 18 April of each year, is an example of what Middleton and Edwards refer to as a 'social practice of commemoration.'<sup>43</sup> It is an act of remembering together that has been reworked as an event tailored to re-create or re-imagine the hard-won independence. Through the social practice of this political event, the past is put to use not only to serve as a reminder of the struggles and victories of the liberation war but also as a response to the challenges of the present. It has also become an instrument of historical revision and measure of evaluation on the gains and losses made of the past. To different groups of people (war veterans, academics, political activists, villagers, youth, and nationalists) the day produces a mix of feelings that reveals a strong sense of ambivalence in meaning, given the context of the current political crisis. For example, to some people, especially those who support the liberation memory (war veterans, headmen, district officers, and nationalists), the day represents the celebration of a past full of triumph. The sense of victory, success, and achievement and a joint understanding of a people's past provide some sense of continuity in life.<sup>44</sup> To a number of war veterans, then, the day symbolises the heroic birth

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39. Interview: 17 October 2004, Ms Miti, political activist.

40. Interviews: 8 November 2004, Mr Muyekwa, opposition member of parliament, MDC; 13 November 2004, Abby Mugugu, political activist.

41. Interview: 5 October 2004, Mr Maposa, academic.

42. Middleton and Edwards, 'Introduction'.

43. *Ibid.*, 80.

44. Interview: 20 September 2004, Mrs Manonga, secondary school teacher.

of a new nation, signified in the hoisting of a new Zimbabwean flag. The flag in turn is material testimony of legitimacy and symbolises the need for continued nurturance and vigilance of the liberation memory from what is perceived as both internal and external subversion and betrayal.<sup>45</sup>

To those who lived through the armed struggle, the Independence Day celebration acts as a reminder of the traumatic experiences endured during the liberation war. The day brings back sorrowful, traumatic memories of the armed struggle and the sacrifices made by Zimbabwean heroes. To them, this momentous day illuminates the outcome of the struggle symbolised through bravery, selflessness, suffering, sacrifice, and death. Viewed in this light, this historic event and day evokes emotional memories of a turbulent and traumatic past.<sup>46</sup>

Those who did not directly experience the war of liberation, however—youth in particular—reveal fragmented memories of uncertainty, fear, and contradiction in regard to their expectations and aspirations.<sup>47</sup> To them the ruling elite's interpretation and representation of the Independence Day celebration silences any alternative interpretation of the past. The younger generation does not see the relevance of the celebrations in the context of today's spiralling poverty, high unemployment, political violence, and marginalisation.<sup>48</sup> Although most young people acknowledge the need to recognise the victories brought about through the war of liberation, they are equally concerned with how profound remembrance of those who died in the liberation war excludes those who were not on the front lines of fire. The event, too, silences accounts of the violence allegedly perpetrated by those who claim to be liberators of the masses, including the alleged terror and brutalities committed by the liberation fighters during the war of liberation in the villages.<sup>49</sup>

Focus group discussions with university students revealed that the vision of independence and its commemoration has been reshaped by the current violent political events. The result is new layers of meaning added on to the old.<sup>50</sup> In their view, the day now symbolises a means of reassessing the advances made to reclaim the ideals of freedom that emerged during the war of liberation and the legitimacy and authority gained through the armed struggle. Of significance is the view that the Independence Day celebration has in fact become an act of collective remembering endowing the struggle with narrow and particularistic meanings, specifically, celebrating victory while not forgetting resistance against colonial oppression and exploitation.<sup>51</sup> Youths complain that they are expected to unquestioningly comply with the nationalist ideals defined by the earlier liberation struggle; these ideals, however, are now seen by many as embedded in the politics of corruption, lack of transparency, poverty, and political polarisation. Critics of the current political regime, university students and opposi-

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45. Interview: 25 October 2004, Ms Mpfururirwa, war veteran, Colonel Gambiza, war veteran in the Zimbabwe National Army, Cde. Chakaipa, war veteran and resettled farmer.

46. Interview: 25 October 2004, Ms Mupfururirwa, war veteran.

47. Focus group discussion, university students and youths.

48. Interview: 10 November 2004, focus group discussions, university students.

49. Interview: 10 November 2004, focus group discussions, university students.

50. Interview: 10 November 2004, focus group discussions, university students; MDC members; Ms Matapi and Mrs Ranganai, graduate students.

51. Interview: 15 November 2004, Mr Muyekwa, opposition member of parliament.

tion members in particular, allege that because of the current political crisis the ruling elite is bent on falsifying interpretations of the past as a way of disguising its own misdeeds and its own violations of the human rights of its political opponents.<sup>52</sup>

While a number of people from all sample groups (academics, political activists, youth, war veterans, villagers, and resettled farmers) revealed that they are proud of national independence and the achievements of the past, they are also gripped by feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. Independence was supposed to bring freedom and reclamation of prime land from the white minority. This has not fully occurred. Because of the government's failure to fulfill people's liberation expectations, a number of those interviewed, both urban and rural, are increasingly frustrated by the continuing economic depression and social and political polarisation. They desperately want change in their standard of living.<sup>53</sup> Interviewees tended to blame the ruling elite for preventing political and social change, stalling dialogue to resolve the crisis, mismanagement of the economy, and the driving into exile of young and vibrant skilled professionals. In the view of some academics and university students, the failure to resolve the current political crisis is not so much a result of imperialist mischief, as claimed by government, but of postrevolutionary dogmatism and political arrogance.<sup>54</sup> This mix of feelings—hope and frustration—signal a sense of unfinished business in terms of fulfilling expectations and aspirations.

### Ritualisation of the Past through Political Commemoration, Political Funerals, and Burial

In order to understand the processes of remembering the dead, it is imperative to first understand the dynamics of political funerals in Zimbabwe. Political funerals symbolise the liberation memory and are enacted through rituals and revolutionary songs and dance that capture the spirit of the political struggle. They represent the cycle of heroic birth, life, and death. Their culmination usually sees the war hero laid to rest at the national, provincial, or district shrine, depending on the deceased's status. The death of a political hero also symbolises a lifetime of service and dedication to national duty. The funeral process functions as an emblem of association, dedication, sacrifice, allegiance, and enduring service to a common cause. The deceased becomes a representative of heroic sacrifice whose beliefs remained uncompromised even in situations of profound adversity. The political sacrifice of the deceased creates a model of action. The story of suffering is woven into a celebration of a life of dedication. It is ultimately a story meant to inspire the younger generation with a call to arms and sacrifice.

As social practices, political funerals are conducted with due attention to traditional and ritualistic practices and with the full participation of the nation as a people.<sup>55</sup> As in most African countries, death is very much a community experience. People follow well-known customs. Ritual prevails, from the announcement of the death, to the

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52. Interview: 15 November 2004, Mr Muyekwa, opposition member of parliament.

53. Interviews: 10 and 11 September 2004, Mrs Taipa, Mrs Rwizi, Ms Tafanei, Mr Kufa, market people; Tendai, Hatina, student leaders; 10 January 2005, Mrs Matamba, social worker.

54. Interview: 26 October 2004, Mr Chaza, college lecturer; focus group discussions with university students.

55. Bauman, *Morality*.

preparation of the body for burial, to the shared grieving. During political and heroic funerals, revolutionary songs are sung and dancing, weeping, and loud wailing occur as family members and close relatives embrace the body lying in the centre of the house.<sup>56</sup> This process is then followed by a period of lying-in-state before the state funeral itself takes place the following day at either the national, provincial, or district shrine.

It is important to note that the death of any war hero and liberator is politically significant. The status of 'hero' is only accorded through recommendations made to the ruling party's politburo by provincial committees that represent the deceased. Since politburo membership is exclusive to the ruling party elite, this implies that opposition party members and their supporters remain unrepresented, raising doubts about the inclusiveness of the whole process.

### The Politics of Representing and Remembering the Dead

The celebration of Independence Day resonates through the commemoration of Heroes Day and the 'intentional rhetoric' that accompanies this event at the national memorial site, the Heroes Acre. As with Independence Day, the meaning and significance of Heroes Day has become highly contested and fragmented.

Heroes Day occurs each year on 11 August; celebration at the Heroes Acre follows on 12 August. Both are highly significant dates on the national political calendar. Heroes Acre serves as a historic landmark symbolising the founding of the nation and affirmation of Zimbabwe as a sovereign state and nation.<sup>57</sup> The Heroes Acre effectively embodies the official version of the victories of the liberation war. As a memorial symbol, the shrine is designed to arouse national consciousness and a sense of national unity and identity. Specifically, it signals the manner in which the masses sought and ultimately achieved freedom by transcending tribalism, ethnicity, regionalism, and racism.

Here the war of liberation is 'elaborately memorialised through the re-creation of heroes from the dead'.<sup>58</sup> Each year, and each time a hero dies, people are reminded through official speeches of the heroic lives of deceased war heroes and of the significant memories allied to this national landmark. Led by the president's well-choreographed speech, the nation is emotionally stirred into sombre remembrance and honouring of all fallen heroes who sacrificed their lives for independence. Simultaneously, provincial governors officiate at provincial shrines around the country where the president's speech is read publicly.

Central to the televised national speech is an elaboration of the war victories and how the country's gallant sons and daughters laid down their lives for the birth of a nation and the liberation of the masses. The speech also highlights the unwavering support of the masses for the cause of freedom and justice as well as the pain, the suffering, and the brutality endured by the masses and liberation fighters at the hands of the enemy. All people, young and old, are reminded of how the sons and daughters of the soil paid the ultimate sacrifice in the fight to free the motherland from minority rule and colonial oppression.

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56. J.S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London, Heinemann, 1969); H. Sawyer, *The Practice of Presence* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, 1996).

57. Werbner, 'Multiple identities, plural arenas'.

58. *Ibid.*

Analysis of this commemorative and memorialisation process represents a forceful narrative of what Middleton and Edwards refer to as ‘the intentional rhetoric of memorialisation’ aimed at compelling people to honour and never compromise the social and political bond that binds the nation in mourning and celebration of the heroic memory.<sup>59</sup> People are reminded never to doubt or in any way question the living presence of the liberation memory. To do so would signify betrayal of the heroes and the nationalist ideals. Symbolically, political funerals are viewed as a time for the nation to display solidarity and re-emphasise a shared national identity. Through this commemorative event, the people—especially the youth—are reminded about the debt they owe the nation’s heroes who laid down their lives so that future generations could enjoy freedom. In this way the people are called upon to emulate the heroes’ ideals, values, and revolutionary spirit of patriotism.

Interview results, however, reveal that those opposed to the current official representation of this event believe that Heroes Day has lost its original meaning. In their view, liberation values and aspirations for peace, prosperity, and stability are no longer attached to the event. Critics, especially opposition political party members and some university students, have urged people to shun all commemorative events, arguing that the women and men who laid down their lives for freedom would be astounded at the misery that has since gripped the country.<sup>60</sup> To the opposition, the function of this commemorative event has been utterly altered, and now simply provides the president with a moral high ground from which to castigate and demonise the opposition and all those perceived as enemies of the state. As one opposition member revealed, anyone who opposes the ruling party’s liberation ideals is dubbed unpatriotic and too often becomes the object of official persecution, scorn, and denunciation.<sup>61</sup> In the view of these critics, rather than representing a symbol of unity for all people, Heroes Day and the Heroes Acre have become not only profoundly political but divisive and repressive as well.

A further area of contention relates to the criterion used to determine who qualifies for burial at the national shrine. Officially, two groups are eligible to be accorded hero status. The first group represents the heroic or founding nationalist leaders, whose unwavering support and dedication for the nationalist cause led to the victorious creation of a new nation. The second group is comprised of those who share with the fallen and living heroes the political values of loyalty and patriotism. In both cases, direct engagement or support for the war of liberation and party ideals remain the defining criteria in defining a war hero.

Rural people are more supportive of the official version of heroism and the criterion of selection than urban people. The latter demonstrate greater concern over who is included and excluded for burial at the national shrine.<sup>62</sup> To most urban people the

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59. Middleton and Edwards, ‘Introduction’.

60. Interviews: focus group discussions with university students; 12 January 2005, Brian Kagoro, political activist; 18 December 2004, Mr Ndoro, academic and urban resident; 30 November 2004, Mercy, student.

61. Interview: 18 December 2004, Mr Masimba, opposition member, MDC.

62. Interviews: 10 October 2004, Mr Kanjanda, villager; 20 October 2004, Mr Chari, villager; 11 November 2004, Mrs Chasi, villager; 28 August 2004, Mr and Mrs Tawonezwi, resettled farmers; 10 September 2004, Mrs Manoka, rural school teacher; 5 October 2004, Mr Tapi, urban school teacher; 18 December 2004, Mr Ndoro, urban academic.

selection process remains flawed; in their view, the process tends to discriminate against people largely on political grounds. Because the selection is viewed as the sole preserve of the ruling elite (ZANU-PF's politburo), the process is seen as biased as it marginalises members of opposition political parties who may have contributed equally towards the liberation of the country. Both urban and rural informants agreed that the selection process reveals a hierarchical rank and file that distinguishes national heroes from provincial heroes, district heroes, and non-heroes. At the bottom of the hierarchy are the war collaborators, or masses, who gave support to the freedom fighters by providing material and logistical support in the war zones. In most instances, these individuals are not officially recognised. Those who classify themselves as war collaborators claim that they are marginalised when it comes to recognition for their contributions and sacrifice.<sup>63</sup> The greatest concerns expressed by war collaborators are that those at the top of the political hierarchy enjoy a number of privileges, including lavish state funerals, pensions, and state grants for surviving family members, while those at the bottom receive neither funeral assistance nor benefits from the state. As critics of this commemorative and memorialisation process they allude to contradictions in the official representation of the national shrine as a symbol of unity that transcends all boundaries.

Analysis shows that these controversies and crises in meaning are enduring. Questions concerning what constitutes a war hero, whether a shrine is for the party or for the nation, and who qualifies to receive burial at the national site continue to rankle. One political analyst has made reference to how the ZANU-PF denied some senior ZAPU nationalist leaders and freedom fighters hero status and burial at the national shrine because they had been accused of engaging in dissident activities in the 1980s.<sup>64</sup> Of particular note, Lt. Gen. Lookout Masuku, commander of the Zimbabwe People's Revolutionary Army (ZIPRA), was refused both hero status and burial at the Heroes Acre. Critics note that his political party had fallen out of favour with the ruling party during the dissident crisis period.<sup>65</sup> This selective forgetting led to great animosity between the two rival political parties. ZAPU leaders castigated the government for suppressing the heroic memories of its war heroes on political and ethnic grounds.<sup>66</sup> As a way of countering the ruling party's exclusionary policy on remembrance, ZAPU boycotted commemorations and burials at the national shrine, challenging the government's monopoly over liberation war heroism and legitimacy. Through the Unity Accord of December 1987 the ruling government used the strategy of co-option to counter what it saw as a challenge to its memory-making agenda.

Following Middleton and Edwards' proposition, these types of controversy signify the contested nature of any memory-making process, especially in times of crisis and conflict. At another level, controversy raises questions on whether all people who supported the war of liberation should or should not be treated as equals in commemorative terms. Those opposed to the ruling government's position view it as politically

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63. Interviews: focus group discussions with war collaborators; 2 and 5 September 2005, Mr Mafara and Mr Manzini, villagers.

64. Interview: 18 October 2004, Mr Mudzi, political analyst and media commentator.

65. See also N. Kriger, *Guerrilla Veterans in Post-War Zimbabwe: Symbolic and Violent Politics, 1980–1987* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003); Werbner, 'Multiple Identities, Plural Arenas'.

66. Werbner, 'Multiple identities, plural arenas'.

rigid and monopolistic. The government's failure to confront its own horrendous past and its inability to justify alleged human rights violations has led it to invoke the very repressive aspects of the past it purports to abhor. This controversy remains as a major challenge to the validity of the government's official representation of the memorial site.

### Continuities and Discontinuities in Redefining the Past

The use of memory as a rhetorical tool in dialogue and conversations implies the existence of tension between continuities in history and revisions of the past. According to Middleton and Edwards, such dilemmas are normally voiced in any rhetoric of justification as a way of defending or legitimising what should or should not be remembered or forgotten of the past in current circumstances.<sup>67</sup> The truth about the past becomes not only heavily contested but also ambiguous and relative. Applied to the Zimbabwean case, this theme views social memory as a narrative resource for the achievement of different political agendas. Invoking the lived past has perhaps more rhetorical force because speakers are able to refer to events they have seen and experienced, a statement that again implies an assertion of both truth and moral authority as well as ambiguity.

Since 2000 many Zimbabweans have witnessed the government's attempts at rewriting the country's historical memory. One academic interviewee expressed the view that the process of historical revisionism or historiography now constitutes one political site where history, memory, and identity intersect in contest for reconfiguration.<sup>68</sup> Through historiography different social groups intentionally or unintentionally now compete to reshape or even exploit the past to suit their present political affiliations and imaginations. Other academics and university students viewed current efforts by the government to revise history textbooks as aimed at achieving a desired version of nationalism embedded in politically motivated interpretations of the liberation struggle.<sup>69</sup> In their view, the government's excessive attempts to control what is taught in schools, colleges, and universities only serve to reinforce its monopoly over the amount and kind of the past to which the young should be exposed.<sup>70</sup>

### IMPLICATIONS AND CHOOSING APPROPRIATE CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESSES

Several important implications can be derived from the preceding discussion. First, the instrumental use of the past in relation to the legitimation of power suggests unique new ways of analyzing, understanding, and approaching structural power. Second, although social memory provides a link between past and present experiences, whether one can readily draw lessons from those links is less certain. Lessons that lead to such frame statements as 'Never again' or 'We should remember so as not to repeat' can only

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67. Middleton and Edwards, 'Introduction', 9.

68. Interview: 1 November 2004, Professor Phiri, academic.

69. Interviews: 1 November 2004, Doctor Masikati and Ms Karisi, academics; focus group discussions with university students.

70. See also T. Ranger, 'Histography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: the struggle over the past in Zimbabwe', *Journal for Southern African Studies* 30:2 (2003).

be formed through the processes of questioning and interrogation. In fact, in-depth understanding of the dynamics that shape and drive the practices and processes of memory work is the necessary component from which relevant lessons may ultimately be drawn. Third, memories should be looked at historically; that is, one must realize that the meanings attached to the past change over time and are part of larger, complex social and political dynamics and scenarios.

The challenges that memory poses cannot be addressed successfully through an itinerary that is linear, coherent, and univocal. Instead, what is needed is a convergence of multiple approaches that will shed light on the very elusive subject of the social construction of memories and meanings of the past. Conflict resolution, peace-building, reconciliation, and transitional justice can all contribute to strategies that respond effectively to the violence and structural power manifestations that emanate from the vulnerabilities of memory. Conflict resolution in its variety of forms—conflict prevention, mediation, post-conflict social justice, political and gender justice—can help in thinking about what structures and processes will strengthen mediation efforts aimed at helping Zimbabweans develop sustainable resolutions to the current crisis situation. Central to this argument is the need to develop a clear awareness of the political and pliable nature of historical memory in Zimbabwe.

Fourth, there exists the potential for conflict resolution in the transformation of memories of a violent past to memories of post-conflict justice and peace. In this context, the kind of social justice envisioned would represent processes of psycho-social healing and the advancement of memory work through research-based analysis that offers criteria and norms useful for developing policies and strategies responsive to the ongoing political challenges. This process calls for the creation of open and flexible social and political environments that encourage nonviolent conflict resolution initiatives to take root. Such initiatives will eventually create bases for the peaceful co-existence of all social groups in Zimbabwe. Related to this transformative approach is the need to develop structural conflict prevention processes aimed at building new societal structures through which peace can take hold, citizens can experience enriching political and economic choices, and an environment open to different social, cultural, and political agendas can take hold. It is only through such multi-sectoral and multi-level participatory and dialogical processes that people can reach a broad consultative consensus on what constitutes a Zimbabwean collective memory. This would facilitate the emergence of a foundation of robust democratic processes and institutions upon which support for human rights and the rule of law, personal security, and sustainable economic development mechanisms can rest.

Fifth, conflict resolution can act as a catalyst for cooperation and a bridge between the other sectors necessary to create peaceful social memories. The key component is the development of a political culture that encourages public dialogue on issues central to the propagation of generally accepted social memories. Thus, human rights and rule of law issues would dovetail with issues of conflict resolution, democratic memorialisation, and commemoration processes.

Once political spaces have been created that allow conflict transformation to take place, the challenge of knowing which processes might be most effective remains. Three approaches appear to be applicable to the resolution of the Zimbabwean crisis. The first is Johan Galtung's concept of positive peace. Positive peace refers to a societal condition in which structures of exclusion, domination, and exploitation—all of which under-

lie the current conflict in Zimbabwe—are eliminated in favour of more inclusive ones. The second approach is John Burton's notion of conflict prevention. Conflict prevention refers to a resolution that seeks to eliminate the root causes of the conflict or problems that have led to the current conflict. This implies the institution of structures and mechanisms that respond to all forms of both colonial and postindependence social, economic, gender, and political injustices. The third approach is John Paul Lederach's concept of conflict transformation. Conflict transformation adds to Burton's notion of conflict resolution by including changes in attitudes and mindsets.

## CONCLUSION

In Zimbabwe, collective remembering and its memorialisation are the central mechanisms through which the state and different social groups have become active agents in the process of understanding the past and using it to shape the present. Various theories of social memory shed light on how powerful institutions, such as the state, can exploit historical memories in ways that suppress oppositional accounts; at the same time, however, certain aspects of the past can be highly resistant to manipulation. Application of Middleton and Edwards' thematic framework reveal that social memory is not a static process but one that is evolutionary, constructed through the experiences, images, and emotions of individuals. When represented through processes of memorialisation and commemoration, social memory can present various challenges for nations in transition. This is because the past can be used to build and foster individual, group, and national identities and provide moral authority that may justify repression and perpetuation of the status quo. Alternatively, the process can empower marginalised groups in their struggles against the dominance of the status quo or support their demands for redress of perceived injustices. Social memory can also be abused by dominant groups to serve present political purposes, thereby making it more than just the recall of past events.

Zimbabweans certainly need to understand their past, especially the significance of the liberation war. In fact, the current drive for understanding and remembering these events has been prompted by what is seen by many as the increasingly state-centric reconceptualisation and manipulation of national history and selected memories of the past. This raises the issue of to what ends Zimbabweans remember their past. Exploring this reveals the continuities and discontinuities of a complex process encompassing what is remembered, how people remember, why people remember, and how these processes are governed by the challenges of an ever-evolving present. Social memory is never constructed or shaped in a vacuum; hence, its motives are never pure. The processes of memory making in Zimbabwe affirm the argument that social memory is highly vulnerable, and no account of remembering a shared past can ignore that everyday life involves the fabrication of the past through its reconstruction, transformation, or re-ordering either intentionally or unintentionally. Zimbabwe should consider embracing political approaches that remain sensitive and open to alternative voices and contexts as a way of accommodating and unifying the social practices of remembering, commemoration, and memorialisation.



# From the Language of Conflict to That of Peace-Building: The Role of Discourse in the Conflict in Northern Uganda

*Edith Natukunda-Togboa*

Drawing from contemporary approaches to the study of language and discourses in social institutions, this article applies critical discourse analysis (CDA) to written and spoken texts to explore whether language, as a traditional tool of social and organizational structuring, has been used to provoke and sustain violence in the ongoing conflict in northern Uganda. The goal is to illuminate, in the context of what Stef Slembrouck describes as 'performative speech acts', how the words of fighters, journalists, community workers, public functionaries, and local and national leaders have affected the evolution of conflict. CDA will also be used to examine whether there are discursive best practices in the area that can serve as a springboard to enhancing voices of peace-building.

**FOR THE PAST TWO DECADES**, northern Uganda has been engulfed in a vicious, protracted civil war, pitting rebels, now under the auspices of the Lord's Resistance Army, against the national army, the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF).<sup>1</sup> This conflict in the subregion commonly known as Acholiland, comprised of the districts of Gulu, Kitgum, and Pader, has been well researched and documented by humanitarian agencies, nongovernmental organizations, academic institutions, and independent researchers.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Bishop Macleard Baker Ochola, vice chairman of Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative, has summed up the destructiveness of the conflict: '[It] has affected every family in Gulu and Kitgum. All are traumatized [both here and outside] by what is going on. We are most affected by the way the Government has dealt with the situation. Innocent people suffer killings on all sides. . . . There is constant displacement, disorganising cultivation and normal life. The people are forced into protected villages. The conditions are pathetic, not fit for human beings. . . . Development activities are at a standstill. Visitors never come North. . . . Our children [have been] ferried across [to Sudan] as slaves since 1994. . . . Our human rights are not protected'. K. Ward, 'The armies of the Lord: Christianity, rebels in Northern Uganda', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 31:2 (2001), 201.

2. Various studies have drawn attention to the different aspects of the conflict in northern Uganda. For instance, the joint research by the Human Rights and Peace Centre, and others traces its political origins and ramifications. Bainomugisha and Tumushabe covered its genesis, transformations, and peace processes. The Civil Society Organisation for Peace in northern Uganda analysed its economic and social costs. MSF Holland has examined its mental health impacts. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health

Some researchers have traced the roots of the conflict to colonial distortions that created a potentially explosive north-south divide.<sup>3</sup> Other scholars have linked it to Uganda's culture of political violence since the 1960s,<sup>4</sup> while still others connect it to economic policies that resulted in the exclusion and marginalization of the northern region.<sup>5</sup> There also exist discursive, or linguistic, aspects of this war.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Stef Slembrouck views 'language as a social action' and language use as 'essentially a matter of "practices" rather than "structures"'.<sup>6</sup> As Hillary Janks has explained, CDA, as a sociocultural theory of language, posits a systematic relationship between the social context, the functional organization of language, and the discursive production of relations of power.<sup>7</sup> It is presupposed here that the 'performing' or 'enacting' or 'operationalizing' of social or organizational 'practices' hinges on discourse.<sup>8</sup> This link between language, social action, and power relations had earlier been examined by French critical linguists Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, as summarized by Allan Luke: 'Language and discourse are not transparent or neutral means for describing or analyzing the social and biological world. Rather, they effectively construct, regulate and control knowledge, social relations and institutions . . . by this account, nothing is outside or prior to its manifestation in discourse'.<sup>9</sup>

It is not argued here that social relations and institutions are no more than discourse, but rather that 'discourse is the principal means by which organisation members create a coherent social reality that frames their sense of who they are'.<sup>10</sup> In other words, discourse is recognized as the central organizing principle of social coherence. By using this approach to rhetorical analysis, it is acknowledged that 'Critical Discourse Analysis assumes a social constructionist view of discourse. . . Peoples' notions of reality are constructed largely through interaction with others, as mediated by the use

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Organization (WHO), and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) have conducted several household studies focusing on the diverse difficult living conditions in this conflict area.

3. Human Rights and Peace Centre et al. *The Hidden War, the Forgotten People: War in Acholiland and Its Ramifications for Peace and Security in Uganda* (Kampala, 2003), 19.

4. A. Bainomugisha and G. Tumushabe, 'The torturous peace process in Northern Uganda: An analysis of peace initiatives and perspectives for a settlement', MACOMBA Policy and Academic Research Series, no. 1, 2005, 19. MACOMBA is a joint research project of Makerere University, Coalition of Advocates for Development and the Environment, and Mbarara University.

5. Makerere University Faculty of Law, Refugee Law Project, and the Human Rights and Peace Centre, 'Beyond Juba: Building consensus on a sustainable peace process for Uganda', conference report, Makerere University Faculty of Law, Kampala, 1-3 December 2006, 17.

6. 'What is meant by discourse analysis?' <http://bank.rug.ac.be/da/da.htm>.

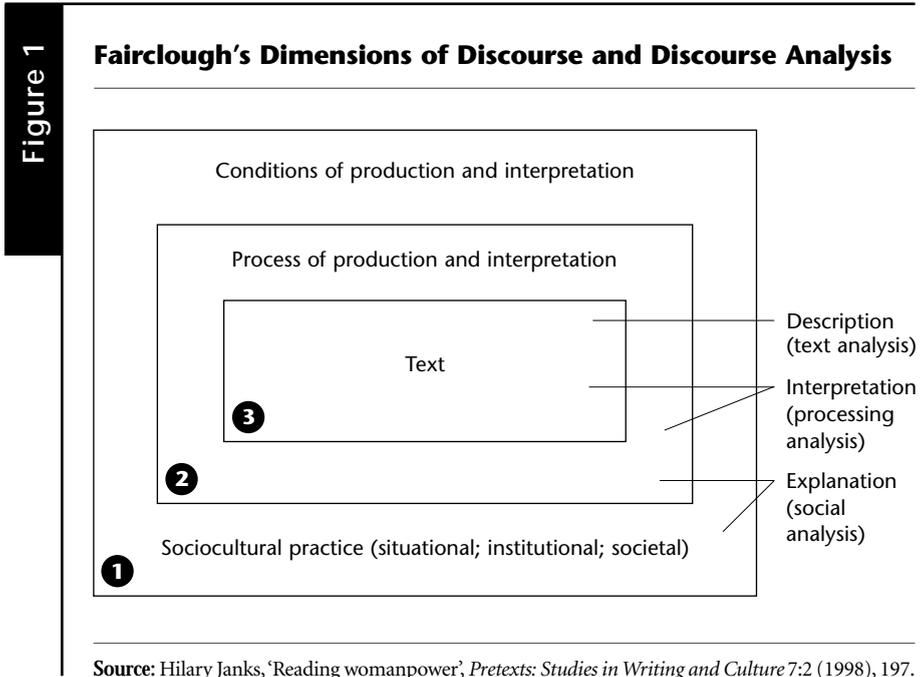
7. H. Janks, 'Reading womanpower', *Pretexts: Studies in Writing and Culture* 7:2 (1998), 195.

8. Norman Fairclough, 'Critical discourse analysis in transdisciplinary research on social change: Transition, poverty, and social inclusion', *Lodz Papers in Pragmatics* 1 (2005).

9. Allan Luke, 'Introduction: Theory and practice in critical discourse analysis' in L. Saha (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Sociology of Education*, article no. 504057, p. 2 [www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/ed270/Luke/SAHA6.html](http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/kellner/ed270/Luke/SAHA6.html).

10. Fairclough, 'Critical discourse analysis'.

of language and other semiotic systems'.<sup>11</sup> According to CDA methodology, there are three levels of language analysis: 'the text; the discursive practices that create and interpret that text; and the larger social context that bears upon it'.<sup>12</sup> This inter-relatedness of the three levels of discourse analysis can be reflected graphically in the following manner:



One can discern in Figure 1 that text, whether written or oral is 'multidimensional' and 'layered'. Indeed, text is the sum of 'content-structures' comprised of syntactic forms that have been selected and packaged to reflect the 'ideological organisation of a society in conflict'.<sup>13</sup> As is typical in CDA practices, it is presupposed that an analysis of the vocabulary, images, symbols, and texts used in conflict discourse will reveal textual portrayals of the persistent asymmetries of power relations and resource distribution that have led to creating a sense of marginalization and exclusion in the conflict-affected area. Following CDA procedures, this article highlights the relationship between the 'stories people tell, or discursive practices for dealing with one another' and the evolution of the conflict.<sup>14</sup> The different forces involved have constructed ver-

11. N. T. Huckin, 'Social approaches: Discourse analysis', 2007, [http://eca.state.gov/education/engteaching/pubs/BR/functionalsec3\\_6.htm](http://eca.state.gov/education/engteaching/pubs/BR/functionalsec3_6.htm).

12. Ibid.

13. B. Dellinger, *Critical Discourse Analysis* (London, SAGE Publications, 1995), 2.

14. Jonathan Potter, 'Discourse analysis and constructionist approaches: Theoretical background', 1996, [www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ss/JP-docs/Richardson%20Handbook%20Chapter.htm](http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ss/JP-docs/Richardson%20Handbook%20Chapter.htm).

sions of reality that favour one set of interests or a particular social positioning. This may confirm or refute the observations of Teun van Dijk, who argues that ‘power is not only a way to control the acts of other people, but also their minds, and such mind control, which is again at the basis of action control, is largely discursive. . . . Discourse plays a fundamental role in the cycle of reproduction of social power.’<sup>15</sup>

## EVOLUTION OF CONFLICT IN THE 1980S AND THE LINK TO DISCOURSE

Although the National Resistance Movement/Army (NRM/A) of President Yoweri Museveni took control of the Ugandan government in January 1986 in Kampala, it was only in March–April 1986 that its forces reached the Acholi region of the country. This three-month gap in backing up the inaugural discourse of ‘fundamental change’ with a nationwide security mechanism for protecting the people may have served to cultivate strained relationships between the regime and populations in various parts of the country.

Following a breakdown of discipline among members of the National Resistance Army during March and April, reports surfaced of soldiers inflicting property damage, human rights abuse, and wanton killings in Acholiland. The fears of the population were further fueled, reported journalist Caroline Lamwaka, by an order of 10 May 1986 calling on all former Uganda National Liberation Army (UNLA) soldiers to report to army headquarters in Kampala.<sup>16</sup> These were largely soldiers of the former regime who had lost to Museveni and his forces. According to Samwiri Karugire, this order reminded many of the soldiers of a similar command during the Idi Amin era, when all Acholi soldiers were summoned to headquarters in the 1970s for a tribal massacre.<sup>17</sup> The order of 10 May, however, served as a rallying cry and led the former soldiers to mobilize to fight the government.<sup>18</sup> The discourse of dominant forces thus pushed a population gripped with the fear of marginalization and victimization to organize for what they legitimized as self-defence. Such is the powerful effect of the collective memory of a past repressive military order.

The reconstructive effects of discourse, subject to conditions of conflict, most probably determined what variant of past military practices were selected, retained, and reacted to. The relationship between discourse and history, as Cezar Ornatowski puts it, ‘is conceived in terms of “historicity”’.<sup>19</sup> What is collectively remembered is what ‘penetrates and shapes the consciousness of the present.’<sup>20</sup> From what is selected and emphasised in this instance, one can deduce that the war-affected population mainly retained the conflictual effects of the 10 May order. The experiences of war

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15. T. A. van Dijk, ‘From text grammar to critical discourse analysis: A brief autographical autobiography’, version 2.0, 2004, p. 24, [http://discourses.org/cv/From\\_text\\_grammar\\_to\\_critical\\_discourse\\_analysis.pdf](http://discourses.org/cv/From_text_grammar_to_critical_discourse_analysis.pdf).

16. C. Lamwaka, ‘The peace process in Northern Uganda, 1986–1990’, Conciliation Resources, 2002, [www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/peace-process-1986-90.php](http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/peace-process-1986-90.php).

17. S. Karugire, *Roots of Insatiability in Uganda*, 3rd edn (Kampala, Fountain Publishers, 2003), 77.

18. Lamwaka, ‘The peace process in northern Uganda.’

19. Cezar M. Ornatowski, ‘Rhetoric and the subject of/in history: Reflection on political transformation’, 2007, [http://wrt.syr.edu/newsarchive/guest\\_speakers/ornatowski/politicaltransformation.pdf](http://wrt.syr.edu/newsarchive/guest_speakers/ornatowski/politicaltransformation.pdf).

20. Gerard Hauser, quoted in Ornatowski, ‘Rhetoric.’

survivors validated or gave social traction to the mythologized order. What matters in this moment of collective memory is not that the recollection was 'true', but that it was accepted as real and that the people who had been affected by the earlier war truly believed that there was a new threat of massacre. The historicity of historical discourse here seems independent of the objective truth.<sup>21</sup> History in this case has been subjected to a social conditioning by the political memory and selectively construed to fuel conflict.

The selective belief of historical discourse can also be observed on the government side. Within the context of an already ethnicized political environment, the post-1986 NRM regime could not trust the former UNLA Acholi soldiers who had fled but were still armed. They were considered 'a threat which had to be dealt with immediately if the new regime was to consolidate its power.'<sup>22</sup> Once again, it was not the reality of the threat that was paramount, but the fact that it was accepted as real.

Following the first government military reprisals of the 1980s to disarm the UNLA, Acholi civil society mobilized a 'goodwill' peace mission that consulted widely with northern Ugandan leaders and leaders in Juba, Sudan, who were allegedly supporting the rebels. In March 1987, the peace team presented its report recommending the release of all prisoners of war and amnesty for Acholi 'fighters'. By May 1987, the parliament had passed a general amnesty act for former soldiers and intelligence officers; those who had committed murder or rape, however, would face trial.<sup>23</sup> This act, interpreted as a partial amnesty, was perceived by many former soldiers as 'a trick rather than a gesture of good will'.<sup>24</sup> They argued that the limited level of judicial archival retrieval would not allow for tracing alleged crimes with precision to five years prior and beyond. Interpreting the discourse of amnesty in the context of the existing capacity of the judicial mechanisms in Uganda, the former soldiers reasoned that the process was subject to manipulating data to fit the alleged culprit once he had been apprehended.

Skepticism and misinterpretations on both sides persisted into peace talks between the NRA and the then-opposing force, the Uganda People's Democratic Movement/Army (UPDM/A), another Acholi force assembled after the government began its reprisals in March 1988. Discursive discordance characterized the talks; whereas the government and its allies were proposing a surrender, the UPDM/A was lobbying for 'stopping fighting under a peace agreement'.<sup>25</sup> The discursive discordance could also be heard in both parties' statements of intentions. On one side, Maj. Mike Kilama, from the UPDM/A, stated with conciliatory undertones, 'We are coming out fully to join government but not as those who have surrendered; we are coming to join hands with the NRA and rebuild our nation'.<sup>26</sup> In contrast, on the government side, Abubakar Mayanja, the information minister, was sounding an alarm over the state radio and television; he warned the Acholi soldiers, 'Amnesty is expiring on 31 March. Run, run, for your life'.<sup>27</sup> The incongruity of the two discourses was so evident that the president's

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21. Emile Benveniste quoted in Ornatowski, 'Rhetoric'.

22. Human Rights and Peace Centre et al., *The Hidden War, the Forgotten People*, 34.

23. Lamwaka, 'The peace process in northern Uganda'.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Ibid.

emissary at the time, Maj. Gen. Salim Saleh, was forced to acknowledge that ‘this verbal disparity could have jeopardised the peace process.’<sup>28</sup>

The 1988 peace agreement did not end the war in Acholiland because its provisions were never fully implemented. Later, in 1989, the NRM leadership initiated fresh contacts with the diaspora-based political wing of the newly re-organized opposing fighting force, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), to negotiate an agreement for a ‘full amnesty.’<sup>29</sup> Many among the frustrated Acholi who retained the memory of the 1985 Nairobi peace accord between the Obote government and opposing fighters referred to the new talks as ‘peace jokes.’<sup>30</sup> Given the lack of real dialogue at the time, it was not surprising that the 1989 Addis Ababa accord also failed to fulfil the peoples’ expectation of peace in northern Uganda.

How should the relationship between discourse and conflict in the history of northern Uganda be understood? Events in the 1980s in Acholiland clearly bear a sense of ‘landmarking’ the political discourse of the time. This political discourse was unfortunately characterized by a cyclic escalation of tensions. Although the process remains complex, there is discursive evidence to suggest that when a period of tension degenerates into open armed conflict, as in northern Uganda, the postconflict discourse tends to generate more causes of social tensions. Efforts at peace negotiations attempt to mitigate these tensions, but when they fail, as happened in the 1980s, they tend to spark aggravated violence, subjecting the population to spiraling conflict interspersed with phases of peace talks.

## CONFLICT ESCALATION AND PEACE DIALOGUES IN THE 1990S

The early 1990s were characterized by intense violence alternating with strong pressure for peace dialogue. Following fierce reprisals by the LRA at the end of 1980s, the government of Uganda created new political infrastructures ‘to coordinate a response to the crisis in the region.’<sup>31</sup> Bucking traditional African conventions that place war in the male domain, President Museveni appointed a woman, Betty Bigombe, as minister for the north. Her original title was minister for the pacification of northern Uganda, but it emerged later that she was not sent to negotiate peace but ‘to convince remnants of the insurgents to come out of the bush.’<sup>32</sup> Subsequent to a new interpretation of her role, Bigombe’s title was changed to one designed to convey less discursive expectations: minister of state in the office of the prime minister. The title itself was undermining what had seemed to be her initial intention of moving to the north to live in the conflict zone in order to understand the dynamics at play and consult with residents about developing peaceful solutions.

Gender dimensions as a subset of the language of conflict cannot ignore analysing politically subversive talk that accompanied Bigombe’s appointment. Some male voices

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28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. Human Rights and Peace Centre et al., *The Hidden War, the Forgotten People*, 24.

31. Billie O’Kadameri, ‘LRA/Government negotiations, 1993–94’, Conciliation Resources, [www.crcr.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/negotiations-1993-94.php](http://www.crcr.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/negotiations-1993-94.php). The image created of unruly ‘insurgents’ and of savages ‘in the bush’ reflect Fairclough’s third dimension of discourse analysis, in which text takes on new meaning in relation to its interpretation and description.

32. Ibid.

were swift to conclude that her assignment to Acholiland was ‘motivated by the desire to show the president’s power over Acholi masculinity and was deliberately provocative. Predictably, there were rumours that she was Museveni’s lover’.<sup>33</sup> In a social context where the trivialization of women’s work and the denigration of their merited achievements are the norm, such speculation must be treated as attempts at sabotaging her professional profile. Bigombe went on ultimately to prove her commitment and competence with her verbal power of persuasion and the documented pro-people actions that she implemented on the ground.

Bigombe’s first village-based strategy of self-defence was to create the Arrow Groups, consisting of members of a community. The opposition responded with targeted killings of civilians in 1992. The anti-government fighters now seemed intent on instilling ‘fear of revenge if people did not cooperate’.<sup>34</sup> This was also a period when people accused of being government agents would have their lips and hands mutilated by LRA members set on terrorizing the population. As one person who was abducted observed in an interview, ‘People’s lips were cut off because it was with the lips that they made alarms when being attacked and the [LRA] also claim it was the same lips that people used for reporting them to the Uganda Peoples’ Defence Forces (UPDF) who pursue and attack them. So this was done to discourage others from making an alarm when being pursued. And the rest of the other body parts were cut on the same argument that they aided the civilians to contact the UPDF’.<sup>35</sup> It is of significance that the organs for articulating discourse were the ones being targeted: the mouth for speaking and the hands for gesturing. The LRA intended to silence the population, literally and figuratively.

In 1993 Bigombe reversed tactics and opted to talk to the allies of Joseph Kony, leader of the LRA fighters. Little did she know that ‘internal contradictions’ among government army commanders would be of crucial importance to the revived, but frail, peace process. More dissonance divided the two main actors in the conflict: while the peace activist, as Bigombe perceived herself, was negotiating with the fighters, UPDF commanders were intensifying army operations, in order, as they reasoned according to their military strategy, ‘to further weaken the rebels’.<sup>36</sup> They argued, in their militaristic discourse of coercion, that it was better to deal with a weaker LRA because it would presumably submit to peace negotiations faster.

Bigombe was willing to go along with demands made by Kony’s group in order to start peace negotiations face to face.<sup>37</sup> When the government army insisted on ensuring security for the negotiations, however, the fighters did not trust their word that they would be there simply to protect the negotiators. LRA leaders therefore sent only middle-ranking officers to the first meeting with Bigombe’s team. The LRA representatives said that for the talks to be successful, ‘old wounds should not be re-opened’ and that the dialogue should ‘mark a new beginning’. They asserted that they ‘were not surrendering’ but ‘returning home’ and did not want to be referred to as ‘rebels’ but as

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33. T. Allen, *Trial Justice: The International Criminal Court and the Lord’s Resistance Army* (London and New York, Zed Books, 2006, 44).

34. O’Kadameri, ‘LRA/Government negotiations’.

35. Allen, *Trial Justice*, 66.

36. O’Kadameri, ‘LRA/Government negotiations’.

37. *Ibid.*

'people'.<sup>38</sup> They asked for a cessation of hostilities 'to organize their men for the return'. They recognized that due to the blood shed between brothers, there was a need to organize 'a formal traditional ritual' to mark the reunion with former enemies. In all their statements and recommendations, one notices the conciliatory discourse of the 'returning sons of the soil' ready to consent to a binding verbal and ritual exchange.<sup>39</sup>

The language advocating peace in this instance is rich with overtones of collective traditional values. It is in connexion with such dynamic use of 'traditional knowledge' that Ornatowski,<sup>40</sup> quoting Jean François Lyotard, suggests that 'the narrative of the hero's successes or failures bestows legitimacy on social institutions. . . . In this way, . . . the narrative tradition defines the threefold competence . . . through which the community's relationship to itself and its environment is played out. What is transmitted through the narrative is the set of pragmatic rules that constitute the *social bond*'.<sup>41</sup>

Based on the discursive expectation on both sides of the conflict of respecting promises, which in effect would have led to a performative act of negotiating the cessation of hostilities, one would have expected the LRA members to accept the 'social bond' and thus rejoin society as consenting actors. Applying this social theory of bonding to discourse, one can deduce that the peace negotiations were expected to constitute the discursive process through which each consenting member was to 'secure [her or his] presence in discourse, as well as locate [herself or himself] within the matrix of social relations'.<sup>42</sup> Having noted that this was the moment when all parties in the conflict were socially hurting, this would have constituted the most opportune moment for a peace dialogue. Despite this promising first meeting, apprehension mounted on the government side. It is alleged that Bigombe's supervising authorities refused to accord her the necessary logistical support and political backing she needed. No heavyweight in the UPDF or official government spokesperson made a public statement explicitly affirming or backing her actions.<sup>43</sup> Thus, political discourse in support of a peaceful dialogue was glaringly lacking in the peace process.

Alongside the lack of government pronouncement of support was an increasing reversion to non-reconciliatory language. For instance, at one follow-up meeting in which the rebels were arguing the necessity of having official army uniforms, one UPDF brigadier is reported to have retorted that '[h]e thought [the rebels] had come [there] to negotiate [their] surrender. . . . "If [they] are negotiating a peace deal to come out of the bush, why do [they] need uniforms?"'<sup>44</sup> The textual practices of the government officers suggest an underlying design to humiliate, injure, and control the other party. This would serve to reinforce a conflictual rather than a reconciliatory relationship between the main actors and in turn perpetuate the asymmetry of power, ensuring that the dominant party is associated with expectations of victory, while the other party is subtly linked with those of being vanquished.

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38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ornatowski, 'Rhetoric'.

41. Ibid., 7 (emphasis added).

42. Ibid., 13.

43. Ibid., 3.

44. Ibid., 4.

By February 1994, talks had started 'going sour' to the point that at one meeting an LRA fighter accused an Acholi elder who was part of the peace negotiating team of 'pointing his penis towards the bush to curse [them].' This, performative act of cursing one's manhood and reproductive channel, according to O'Kadameri, is the 'ultimate curse that a father can perform against his offspring.' At this moment in the peace process, fear, suspicion, and mistrust raged so high that meetings were shunned for fear of the 'army's dirty tricks.'<sup>45</sup> What appeared to have dealt the final blow to the discourse of peace at the time was the president's address on 6 February 1994 in which he explicitly withdrew whatever political goodwill was being accorded to the peace dialogue and seemed to endorse a militaristic discourse. He said that 'Bigombe had begun talks with the LRA to restore peace, but the LRA had taken advantage to perpetuate banditry and killing of people. He announced that [the] LRA had seven days to surrender, otherwise the government would defeat them militarily.'<sup>46</sup>

This explicit assertion of power negated the previously conciliatory discourse, sending equally negative signals with regard to the possibility of a peaceful settlement of the conflict. 'Historicized' and 'retained' as a political memory, the speech bore resemblance to the discursive past choices by Idi Amin that had brought Uganda to the brink of war in the 1970s.<sup>47</sup> It is therefore not surprising that in an unprecedented eruption of violence two weeks later, the media reported that LRA fighters had crossed into Sudan to launch their attacks from there, thus escalating the conflict to an international level. From the failed 1980s and 1990s peace process, the conflict had now grown intractably into 'a war of words.'<sup>48</sup>

The NRM regime had become increasingly convinced that it had to 'crush the political and military opposition in Acholi militarily.'<sup>49</sup> On the LRA side, there was equally strong mistrust of Museveni's commitment to a peace negotiation. In short, 'This mistrust is based on the failed 1985 Nairobi Peace Accord. . . . For this matter, Museveni is seen as a person who can not be trusted. The rebels argue that Museveni understands only one language: the gun.'<sup>50</sup> For the affected population, the multiple conjunctions of language and conflict, as experienced in the 1980s and 1990s in northern Uganda, suggest that the violence had escalated to a complex mix up of history, memory, discourse, and collective identity. In this particular case, historical conjunctions seem to have led to a collective negative retreat into self, rendering a population already shuttered by war twice removed from social activeness. This points to the need for a new form of discourse to facilitate a positive self-understanding and a reactivation of the people's role in peace-building and social reconstruction.

## APPLYING CDA TO THE LANGUAGE ON CONFLICT

The efforts to bring the conflict in Acholiland to a peaceful resolution continue. Peace initiatives include those of religious leaders, civil society, nongovernmental organiza-

45. O'Kadameri, 'LRA/Government negotiations'.

46. Ibid.

47. Karugire, *Roots of Insatibility in Uganda*, 84.

48. This is a discursive echo of an earlier militaristic description of the same conflict as the 'war of generals'. Human Rights and Peace Centre et al., *The Hidden War, the Forgotten People*, 34.

49. Ibid., 32.

50. Bainomugisha and Tumushabe, 'Torturous peace process in Northern Uganda', 57.

tions, Acholi in the diaspora, international bodies, as well as several governments (of Canada, Egypt, Libya, and Sudan). Despite the absence of a lasting agreement, these initiatives have from time to time secured periods of reduced hostilities and relative tranquility for the civil population.<sup>51</sup>

Many among the civil population, the national leadership of the Acholi, and the broader Ugandan public have taken to radio, television, and the print media to make appeals, issue counterproposals, and stimulate debate. The text in Figure 2 from the government-supported daily *New Vision* is an example of such interventions and can be used to illustrate the application of CDA, using the article's most relevant discursive elements. The emerging linguistic analytical framework draws insight from cultural studies of the Acholi and the works of several CDA practitioners.<sup>52</sup>

In terms of genre, as a news story, 'Museveni talk angers Acholi leaders' is 'supposed to use objective language.'<sup>53</sup> Several loaded elements, however, slant the report so that it reads like a folksy piece spiced with narrative and undertones of political propaganda. The report has been framed as a narrative of 'good guys' (Acholi local leaders and civil society) versus 'bad guys' (government and government forces). Concerning discursive differences, the first seven paragraphs represent the voice of a typical, common user of Ugandan English—ordinary, unsophisticated, helpless, and powerless. In contrast, the second and last part of the report emphasises the authoritative, political scientist, and 'expert's' voice from the seemingly domineering, 'power holding community'.<sup>54</sup> The reporters appear to give prominence to the Acholi leaders by giving them textual precedence vis-à-vis the quotations from the government side.

In terms of topicalization, although the government is graphically subordinate—placed after the Acholi leaders' assertions—it seems nonetheless to be the grammatical initiator of the action, and hence the actor that is exerting power. In the text, it is the government that is unleashing military might and controlling those who want to access amnesty. The LRA and the Acholi community, on the other hand, are depicted as passive recipients of the government's actions, included for 'just continuing the topic'.<sup>55</sup>

When the president's press secretary states that the LRA members 'are terrorists because anybody who indiscriminately uses violence is a terrorist,' he is making a presupposition. It is political rhetoric that is most probably manipulative, but difficult to challenge, because the criteria for gauging 'indiscrimination' in the use of violence are debatable. This is an example of a potentially manipulative statement that has been inserted to slant the report because it is simply taken for granted. With regard to insinuations and connotations, the LRA members who are 'not angels' will be imagined 'evil' by the reader. They are 'not fighters', and thus by reference to the negative historic memory of Ugandan politics, they are 'bandits'.

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51. As of December 2008, the government of Uganda, the LRA, and a wide range of observers were engaged in peace talks in Juba under the leadership of Joachim Chissano, the former president of Mozambique. The talks were reported stalled due to such unresolved matters as the warrant of arrest issued by the International Criminal Court against Joseph Kony and some other LRA leaders.

52. The CDA practitioners include Tradycja Antyczna, Osdarek Badan, Norman Fairclough, Thomas Huckin, Michael McCathy, and Jonathan Potter.

53. Huckin, 'Social approaches'.

54. Fairclough, 'Critical discourse analysis'.

55. Huckin, 'Social approaches'.

## Report on the Acholi Conflict

### Museveni talk angers Acholi leaders

*Justin Moro and Cris Ocowun*

Some Acholi leaders have accused President Yoweri Museveni of violating the Juba peace talk's agreement by using provocative and abusive language.

Pader LC5 chairman Peter Odok W' Oceng, who is also the chairman of the peace mobilization team of leaders from Lango, Teso, Acholi, Bunyoro, West Nile and Karamoja, cited Museveni's remarks during his recent visit to the north.

Odok told a press conference at Rainbow hotel in Gulu yesterday that Museveni's remarks on *Radio Mega* on September 19 were provocative and dangerous to the peace process.

Odok was flanked by former Pader woman MP Santa Okot.

'He (Museveni) called the LRA a terrorist outfit. Has the president become a spoiler of the peace process? He even stated that they would hunt the LRA and finish them up. Is he aware of the LRA assembling in the agreed areas in Southern Sudan, awaiting the amicable conclusion of the peace talks?'

He appealed to Museveni to 'stop his intention to spoil the peace talks in Juba in order to hunt Kony and kill our children and Southern Sudanese children now present in the his (Kony's) camp. This might spark up a new tier of resistance from the people of the greater north and southern Sudan which the president will never defeat.'

'Let us resolve the conflict by peaceful means and save the lives of thousands of our innocent children. Some of us are more interested in these peace talks because of our children who were abducted and are still in the rebel camps. We don't want them to be hunted and killed. When a snake coils around your baby, you don't take a stick to fight it, you throw a frog or rat and it will uncoil and leave your baby alone', Odok said.

Meanwhile, the President's press secretary, Onapito Ekomoloit, said Museveni was just being factual. 'Do you want him to call them angels? They are not angels, they are not freedom fighters, and they are not even rebels because they haven't presented an agenda. They are terrorists because anybody who indiscriminately uses violence is a terrorist. How else can you describe him (Kony) even if you loved him,' Onapito said.

He said the LRA has come out of the bush due to military pressure not through pleading with them.

'I am sure there is nobody in Acholi who disputes that Kony did something wrong. It is only through the magnanimity of the president and other Ugandans that they said fine, people make mistakes but you can still come out. Museveni is a firm leader who speaks his mind assertively. It should be understood with a sense of urgency because the people continue to suffer,' Onapito said.

**Source:** *New Vision*, 27 September 2006.

Whereas the local leaders' interventions seem cordial and conversational, one cannot verify whether this is a true or phony register calculated to induce misplaced trust. What does appear to be verifiable is the authoritative expert register of the press secretary that was calculated to convey reliability. In contrast to the local leaders' polite appeals to deference, peace, and reconciliation, the press secretary's modality of certitude, authority, and tilt towards violence conveys an air of heavy-handedness. Indeed, his rhetorical trajectory reveals some characteristics of 'near domination' of what is supposed to be a public discursive scene.<sup>56</sup>

56. B. Osrodek and A. Tradycja, 'Rhetorical regime in crisis: The rhetoric of Polish leadership, 1980–1988' in J. Axer (ed.), *Rhetoric of Transformation* (Warsaw, DiG, 2003), 91.

Concerning imagery and metaphors, the local leaders' discursive choices of a 'child, snake, frog [and] rat' tend to stress the way their 'mind and action are contingent on specific cultural forms' from the rural countryside, creating an image of idiosyncratic Acholi life.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, the selection of 'not angels,' 'not freedom fighters,' and 'terrorists' seems to have been marshaled in this particular context from the international media, in order to legitimize passing the blame to the minority (Acholi) group. In other words, the 'interpretative repertoires' and 'resources' seem to be organized around the 'historically developed indigenous, traditional and domesticised'<sup>58</sup> biblical metaphors that form an important part of the contemporary Ugandan culture. The main stylistic difference that should be noted is that whereas the traditional idiosyncratic metaphors of the local leaders render their speech alive and spontaneous, the international lexicon of the press secretary sounds as formal and frozen as the formalistic impersonal speech of a news presenter. As a consequence, whereas the Acholi leaders appear to embody the speech of the genuine people's representatives, the press secretary seems to be 'voicing' a well-rehearsed 'authorized version' of his political milieu.

At the paragraph level, the first two paragraphs constitute the abstract, presenting a summary of the article. The third and fourth paragraphs orient the discussion, characterizing the provocative nature of the statements made and their negative consequences for the peace process. Paragraphs five and six represent the complicating event from the principal speaker's perspective, highlighting the set of pronouncements that could trigger an escalation of conflict. In contrast to the preceding paragraphs, the seventh one provides a resolution, an appeal to using 'peaceful means' for the sake of the children held in the rebel camps. Instead of the expected ending after the offer of peaceful resolution, the reporters chose to replicate the complicating event in paragraphs eight and nine, this time through the government speaker's point of view. Paragraphs ten and eleven constitute the coda, the 'bridge between the story world and the moment of telling'.<sup>59</sup> In this case, the writer returns the reader to the reality of the violent conflict in Acholiland and its accompanying human losses. The inversion of the expected paragraph transition seems to reflect the complicated evolution of the discourse around the northern Uganda conflict. It does not grow to maturity; instead, it tends to be retrogressive and self-destroying.

At the sentence level, the typical unit of description, it should be noted that the press secretary's statements are replications of the local leaders' syntactical format. Following the introductory sentences in the abstract and orientation sections, the grammatical sequencing progresses by first posing a question and then answering it. The same sequence of rhetorical question and response is repeated for the larger part of the article. In each response sequence, the reply to the rhetorical question starts with an opening move and then ends with a longer follow-up that provides additional information. The writer does not disclose whether the press secretary is responding to the Acholi leaders' statements. What is clear, however, is that he follows almost to the letter the community leaders' exchange model of posing a rhetorical question and then following it with an explanatory consequence. The idiomatic pattern of the sen-

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57. Potter, 'Discourse analysis'.

58. Ibid.

59. M. McCarthy, *Discourse Analysis for Language Teachers* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), 137.

tences appears to have been calculated to signal the opposing relationship between the positionings of the Acholi leaders and the press secretary.

Taken as a whole, the text presents on one side the community leaders accusing the president of using 'provocative', 'abusive' language that is 'dangerous to the peace process'. They wonder about the speaker's 'awareness', 'intention', and 'sensitivity to regional consequences' and appeal for a more peace-seeking tone and mode. They also invite the reader to identify with the children suffering in rebel camps and appeal to the bond of parenthood. The symbol of violence, the coiled snake, is well known in African proverbial wisdom for its cunning and fatal attacks. It also echoes the biblical symbolism of the evil that comes with its discourse. According to the elders, this evil can be avoided by intentionally proposing a peaceful atonement as an alternative. On the other side, the retorts of the government press secretary are stingy and heavy-handed. The original speaker, Museveni, according to the press secretary, was being 'factual', because it is politically appropriate to call a terrorist a terrorist. There is little discursive sensitivity to the goodwill of those 'savages' who 'have come out of the bush'. Military might is exalted as firmness, and assertiveness is applauded as an act of good leadership. Indeed, the press secretary even discerns 'magnanimity' in the president and other Ugandans' attitude towards the fighters in the conflict area.

The difficulty with considering the article as a mediatized conversation is that the two speakers seem to talk parallel to each other, rather than in concord. Consequently, the sequence of their statements comes across as a dialogue of the deaf. In short, the parties to the conflict are not listening to one another while hundreds of thousands of people are internally displaced and violations of human rights continue unabated. This mismatch in the dialogue amounts to discursive indifference.

## PAST TRAJECTORIES, PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES: PROSPECTS FOR THE DISCOURSE OF PEACE-BUILDING

Empirical data from texts and talks of major stakeholders illustrate that their practices and actions have a discursive association with the conflict in Acholiland. The enactment of discourses prone to conflict has led to the social isolation of a community that once had 'a well cherished and very rich culture'.<sup>60</sup> The hitherto permanence of organizational and individual practices of conflict-prone discourses are signs of deep internal conflict. Even when the prospects of peace are at their lowest, one could be heartened by the observations of social analysts who discern transformative waves of motion towards peace underneath the turbulences of conflict escalation. The journalist Anthea German, for instance, writing about 'reporting non-stop violence in South Africa' observed, 'Because of their inherent volatility, the [conflicts] hold within themselves the possibility for transformation, and this transformation could be positive'.<sup>61</sup>

Maybe a positive transformation can be conceived as the turning point for major stakeholders in the conflict in northern Uganda. Indeed, in spite of the devastating past trajectories of the conflict, some civil society organizations, religious and community leaders, human rights activists, and members of the Acholi diaspora have continued tireless efforts to bring the violence in Acholiland to a peaceful discourse.

60. Human Rights and Peace Centre et al., *The Hidden War, the Forgotten People*, 67.

61. Quoted in A. Mbaine, *Media in Situations of Conflict* (Kampala, Fountain Publishers, 2006), 24.

Alongside these attempts, are the periodic interventions of several governments and international bodies that have tried to broker peace in this subregion. Two discourses of peace-building, focusing on gendered and religious approaches, have been selected to highlight examples of growing voices of positive transformation beneath the turbulences of conflict. The Gulu District Women's Development Committee (GDWDC) and the Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative (ARLPI) capture the use of discursive acts and practices that are explicitly gender biased and endogenous, blending the best from the indigenous approaches with the positive elements from external influences.

In 1989, according to Rosalba Oywa, the GDWDC mobilized women in a peaceful demonstration opposing the war and advocating for peaceful dialogue. District committees, under the present system of governance, are substructures of local government that can initiate community activities of a civil character. The Gulu District Women's Development Committee has been associated with mobilizing to provide food and shelter for the most vulnerable, orphan care, women's self-help projects, and HIV/AIDS-related services. Its civil mobilization mechanisms and target activities often vary according to the changing needs of the conflict-affected community.

The Gulu District Women's Development Committee's 1989 initiative, one of the earliest civil voices to speak out against the war and advocate for a dialogue, was typically community-based, tradition inspired, and gendered in approach. As noted by Oywa, 'Wearing rags and singing funeral songs, the women marched through Gulu town demanding an end to the violence.'<sup>62</sup> Funeral songs, in several Ugandan cultural settings, are not a discursive element that one can 'enact' as mere entertainment. When they are performed outside their funeral settings, by members dressed in funeral attire, they send the message of an impending threat of death or provocation of the wrath of angry ancestors. Charles Sanders Peirce notes how a specific sign can generate different meanings depending on the culture in which it is witnessed.<sup>63</sup> The 'wearing of rags' by the Acholi women perhaps served to signify a time of mourning, sadness, and poverty, contributing to symbolic discourse interpretation and meaning making. Poverty here is viewed as a lack of joy, happiness, and finances, all offering a 'social cultural explanation' of the impact of the war on the Acholi people.

The women 'marched', thus mimicking a male's performative act in a war zone. Their borrowing of a masculine demeanor could have been purposely calculated to symbolize a change of gender roles brought about by conflict transformations. Because they are the mothers of the daughters who have been abducted as sex slaves by the rebels, the child soldiers in the bush, and the young boys sold as slaves in Sudan, they have the social, political, and moral right not to 'request', but to 'demand' their male relatives for an end to the violence. By the same maternal voice, they were demanding the government to change its strategies, 'to promote peace.'<sup>64</sup>

It is rare that women in such a traditional setting would appear almost naked to publicly protest. When it does occur, as in Nigerian women's protests against the working conditions of oil workers in the Niger Delta in 2002, its power is feared as an

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62. R. Oywa, 'Women's contribution to peacebuilding in northern Uganda', Conciliation Resources, 2002, [www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/womens-contribution.php](http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/womens-contribution.php).

63. Quoted in Chandler Daniel, *Semiotics: The Basics* (London, Routledge, 2004).

64. Oywa, 'Women's contribution'.

expression of the 'curse of nakedness'.<sup>65</sup> In the case of Acholiland, it could be interpreted as 'the curse to violence'. In order to gauge how effective this gendered discourse to peace-building was, it is important to note that 'following that demonstration, many LRA fighters gave up fighting and returned home'.<sup>66</sup> The women's demonstration had a definite de-escalating effect on the conflict at that time.

The Acholi Religious Leaders' Peace Initiative 'has consistently called for an end to violence . . . and the use of negotiations to end the conflict'.<sup>67</sup> Their most sustained peace advocacy activity was the campaign for the 1999 Amnesty Act and popularizing its implementation. Their status in Acholiland is ambivalent. As Ward has observed, 'Church leaders and traditional leaders in the community often overlap. The church, not so much "represents" local opinion as provides a channel by which local opinion can express itself'.<sup>68</sup> The critical importance of the religious leaders must be understood within the cultural context of the Acholis' strong beliefs in the spiritual and metaphysical dimensions of life. Consequently, when religious leaders requested that LRA members agree to the Amnesty Act, which had been received with skepticism, their discourse was interpreted as a Christian attempt to rehabilitate the rebels and a 'creation of local and spiritual resources to effect conflict resolution'.<sup>69</sup> It is striking to note how religious leaders espouse the ambivalent duality between the traditional and the Christian voice for the Acholi. In the pulpit, it is reported, 'they protest against the indignities of the war' and in their pastoral community approach to development, they propose a discourse of 'constructive solutions'.<sup>70</sup>

It is perhaps because of their capacity to house two contending spiritualities in one body and soul that their peace discourse draws parallels between the Acholi traditional peace discourse of *mato oput* (reconciliation ritual) and the biblical symbolism of unconditional forgiveness.<sup>71</sup> The religious leaders emphasise the complementarity of *mato oput* with the Christian understanding of granting pardon to anyone who requests it.<sup>72</sup> They speak of Joseph Kony and other LRA members 'as prodigal sons who can be forgiven and received back into society'.<sup>73</sup> Some government officials may not be able to relate to this discourse of unconditional forgiveness and reconciliation, but it should be understood within the logic of being 'consistent with fundamental Christian values'.<sup>74</sup>

From these two examples of peace-building discourse, it would appear that the women were trying to use the power of maternity just as the religious leaders were attempting to use the mystery of religion to subdue the violence of the ongoing conflict. Perhaps this peace discourse, still nascent, is the beginning of the 'positive transforma-

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65. Iyenemi Norman Wokoma, 'Assessing Accomplishments of Women's Nonviolent Direct Action in the Niger Delta' in Dina Rodriguez and Edith Natukunda-Togboa (eds.), *Gender and Peace Building in Africa* (University for Peace, 2005), 192, [www.africa.upeace.org/documents/GPB%20in%20Africa.pdf](http://www.africa.upeace.org/documents/GPB%20in%20Africa.pdf).

66. Oywa, 'Women's contribution to peacebuilding in northern Uganda'.

67. Carlos Rodriguez, 'The role of religious leaders', Conciliation Resources, 2002, [www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/religious-leaders.php](http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/northern-uganda/religious-leaders.php).

68. Ward, 'The armies of the Lord', 187.

69. Ibid.

70. Ibid.

71. Rodriguez, 'The role of religious leaders'.

72. Ibid.

73. Ward, 'The armies of the Lord', 206.

74. Ibid.

tion' beneath the turbulence, a discourse from which one hopes will flow changes in social attitude to effect more peaceful practices. Maybe as the journalist George Lugalambi has challenged Ugandans, 'We should be able to talk about evolving a culture of peace, the way we talk about dismantling the culture of violence.'<sup>75</sup>

The women of the GDWDC and religious leaders from the ARLPI may well be examples of the reactivated collective voices linking the collective memory of the Acholi to social practices that could, at this time, be used constructively for peace-building purposes. Evidence points toward the benefits of emulating such best practices of peaceful discourse as a step towards creating conditions that will deconstruct the language of violence. This way, as Soyinka convincingly argues, 'in the aftermath of a true tragic apprehension' the collective memory will cease to be 'a burden' and become 'an affirmation of existence . . . and a resolve in defence of unborn generations.'<sup>76</sup>

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75. Quoted in Mbaine, *Media in Situations of Conflict*, 116.

76. W. Soyinka, 'Review of the politics of memory: Truth, healing and social justice', *Jenda, A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies*, no. 6 (2004), 1.



# Trauma-Sensitive Peace-Building: Lessons for Theory and Practice

*Craig Zelizer*

Over the past several decades, peace-building and trauma studies have emerged as interdisciplinary fields that seek to better understand their respective social phenomena and develop appropriate responses. Practitioners of peace-building often work in severely conflicted settings with groups that have been exposed to traumatic events, while a number of trauma professionals interact with individuals and groups from conflicted regions. Despite increased cooperation based on the work of scholars and practitioners who have begun to explore the intersection between peace-building and trauma, significant challenges remain, particularly concerning how peace-builders can make their work more trauma sensitive. This article provides a brief overview of the fields of trauma studies and peace-building, highlights connections between the two areas, reviews recent literature, and discusses the concept of trauma-sensitive peace-building and several challenges of conducting practice in this area.

**PEACE-BUILDERS HAVE AN ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITY** to ensure that they conduct their work in a trauma-sensitive manner. At a minimum, peace-building should seek to ensure that activities do not cause further traumatization or psychological harm to people already suffering the effects of conflict. Another issue for practitioners is the hazard of classifying people as traumatized, without recognizing that individuals, groups, and communities respond to severe events in different ways and within political and social contexts.<sup>1</sup>

The concept of trauma can be a useful analytical tool, but there is a risk in applying a one-size-fits-all model across conflicts or importing models developed in other settings and applying them to different contexts. A significant shortcoming in the peace-building field is the critical need to develop methods for dealing with the challenges of secondary trauma and burnout that practitioners may experience. While more established helping professions, such as psychology, social work, and others, have developed extensive 'self-care' processes, this is something that peace-building is only now beginning to approach. The peace-building field has a responsibility to provide the students

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1. R. K. Papadopoulos, 'Political violence, trauma and mental health interventions' in D. Kalmanowitz and B. Lloyd (eds.), *Art Therapy and Political Violence, With Art, Without Illusion*, (New York, Routledge, 2005), 35–59.

of the discipline—the next generation of practitioners—with better a understanding of trauma-related issues.<sup>2</sup>

## TRAUMA STUDIES: A BRIEF HISTORY

Since the emergence of the concept more than a century ago, the study of trauma has gone through several periods, ranging from the initial ideas of Freud to the experiences of war-affected soldiers in the twentieth century. For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, individuals experiencing trauma were thought of as ‘weak’, and their symptoms were viewed with detachment from the larger political and social context.<sup>3</sup> It is only with the development of the field of trauma studies, largely starting with the experiences of veterans of the Vietnam War in the United States, that a deeper understanding of the social context of trauma began to develop. Instead of seeing trauma as a symptom of a weak individual, or personal neurosis, it came to be understood as something that could occur in individuals and groups exposed to extremely stressful social phenomena, such as natural disasters, wars, and physical abuse.<sup>4</sup>

Freud was one of the first individuals to identify the concept of trauma. He originally hypothesized that traumatic experiences were at the root of hysteria, which he had observed in a number of his female patients. Freud initially thought that patients who exhibited hysterical symptoms had experienced a traumatic event that they were unable to deal with on a conscious level, so they repressed it in the unconscious. According to Freud, a traumatic event is ‘any impression which the nervous system has difficulty in dealing with by means of associated thinking or [that] by motor reaction becomes a psychological trauma.’<sup>5</sup> Soon after his initial hypothesis of the causes of neurosis and hysteria, however, Freud changed his opinion about traumatic experiences being at the root of hysteria and neurosis. As Rolf Kleber and Dan Brom explain, ‘Freud gradually began to doubt his trauma theory. He began to suspect that the patient’s story about seduction and abuse during the childhood was the product of sexual desires and fantasies in that period.’<sup>6</sup> Thus Freud saw trauma and hysteria not as something caused by external acts of society, but as the result of an individual’s subconscious and internal desires.<sup>7</sup>

During World War I, psychologists observed the phenomena of war neurosis—or ‘shell shock’—in many soldiers. Its symptoms included anxiety, startled reaction, numbness, and inability to function.<sup>8</sup> The main form of treatment was to shame sol-

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2. H. van der Merwe and T. Vienings, ‘Coping with trauma’ in L. Reyhler and T. Paffehholz (eds.), *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide* (Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), 343–51. For one of the first texts on the intersection of trauma and peace-building, see B. Hart (ed.), *Peacebuilding in Traumatized Societies* (Lanham, Maryland, University Press of America, 2008).

3. J. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (New York, Basic Books, 1992).

4. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*; N.D. Sinclair, *Horrorific Traumata: A Pastoral Response to the Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder* (New York, Haworth Pastoral Press, 1993).

5. S. Freud, *Collected Papers*, ed. J. Strackey, vol. 5 (New York, Basic Books, 1959), 20.

6. R. J. Kleber and D. Brom, *Coping with Trauma: Theory, Prevention and Treatment* (Amsterdam, Swets and Zeitlinger, 1992), 12–13.

7. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

8. R. J. Kleber, C. R. Figley and P. R. Gersons, ‘Introduction’ in R. J. Kleber, C. R. Figley, and P. R. Gersons (eds.), *Beyond Trauma: Cultural and Societal Dynamics* (New York, Plenum Press, 1995), 1–10.

diers into accepting responsibility for their duties so that they could return to combat.<sup>9</sup> Often the neurosis was perceived as a weakness on the part of the soldiers and not as a normal response to the stresses of war.

At the conclusion of the war, interest in the conflict's effects on soldiers gradually subsided. With the outbreak of World War II, and the effects that the war had on soldiers, psychologists renewed their interest in the study of neurosis and trauma. For the first time, psychologists recognized that anyone could break down under conditions of extreme stress and that it was not necessarily a sign of weakness or genetic preconditioning.<sup>10</sup> The main goal of the psychologists, however, was to quickly treat soldiers so they could return to the front. The treatments, such as hypnosis or talk therapy, offered temporary relief.<sup>11</sup>

In the 1970s, trauma began to receive widespread focus because of the long-term psychological effects of the Vietnam War on soldiers. Upon returning to the United States, many soldiers exhibited myriad symptoms of traumatic stress, including flashbacks, emotional numbness, and difficulty in reintegrating into society without a reliable means of support.<sup>12</sup> Veterans and select mental health professionals began subsequently organizing peer-support discussion groups throughout the country so soldiers could share their experiences with one another as a way of coping with the effects of the war.<sup>13</sup> The long-term impact of the Vietnam War on soldiers led the American Psychological Association to develop the category of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) under which to classify the soldiers' various symptoms. This designation was the first framework for and recognition of the problems that could result from exposure to traumatic incidents.<sup>14</sup>

In the mid 1980s, the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies was established as one of the first formal initiatives to recognize trauma as a distinct multidisciplinary field of study. Through the efforts of society members and other scholars, research expanded beyond looking at individual trauma to explore how natural and other disasters affect communities.<sup>15</sup> The impact of armed conflict on individuals and communities around the world has recently become an integral area of study.<sup>16</sup>

## THE CAUSES AND SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

What exactly qualifies as a traumatic event? Ronnie Janoff-Bulman defines a traumatic event as 'those that are most apt to produce a traumatic response—are out of the ordinary and are directly experienced as threats to survival and preservation.'<sup>17</sup> The most

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9. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

12. Sinclair, *Horrible Traumatized*.

13. Kleber and Brom, *Coping with Trauma*; Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

14. R. Yehuda, 'Conflict between current knowledge about posttraumatic stress disorder and its conceptual basis', *American Journal of Psychiatry* 152 (1995), 1705–17.

15. For a history of the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, see [www.istss.org/what/history.cfm](http://www.istss.org/what/history.cfm).

16. Psychologists for Social Responsibility, *Personal and Community Reconstruction, Resilience and Empowerment in Times of Ethnopolitical Conflict*, Washington, D.C., 2002.

17. R. Janoff-Bulman, *Shattered Assumptions: Towards a New Psychology of Trauma* (New York, Free Press, 1992), 53.

common distinction of types of traumatic events is between natural disasters, such as earthquakes, tidal waves, hurricanes, and those resulting from the actions of men and women, such as war, terrorism, and domestic violence. Frank Ochberg, a medical doctor with extensive experience working in trauma situations distinguishes between ‘victimization’, trauma that results from human cruelty, and ‘traumatization’, brought on by natural disasters.<sup>18</sup> Another common distinction is to examine the effect of traumatic incidents at the interpersonal, community, national, or international level.<sup>19</sup>

Trauma can cause emotional or physical harm or be singular, episodic, or continuous in duration.<sup>20</sup> There are numerous symptoms that individuals can develop as a result of experiencing potentially traumatic situations. It is essential to note that although an individual may experience severe trauma, many do not develop such ongoing psychological problems as PTSD. Individuals initially might experience mild denial or flashbacks, but after a period of time recover and return to normal functioning.<sup>21</sup> For those who develop long-term problems, however, the effects of trauma do not recede; instead they tend to intensify and negatively affect their ability to cope with life.

The psychological symptoms associated with exposure to trauma include anxiety, depression, substance abuse, social withdrawal, hostility, estrangement, isolation, feelings of meaninglessness, anticipation of betrayal, hypervigilance, and an inability to trust.<sup>22</sup> In addition, most trauma victims suffer from a sense of helplessness and terror because the traumatic event often destroys their sense of security and well-being.<sup>23</sup> At the heart of the trauma survivor’s experience is the tendency to deny and repress the triggering event and emotions associated with it, while at the same time, this same event and related emotions repeatedly intrude into the person’s consciousness without warning.<sup>24</sup> Often these episodes and experiences of denial and intrusion alternate, causing a feeling of loss of control over life until the traumatized individual is able to heal from the event.<sup>25</sup>

Another common dynamic is that survivors of trauma often stigmatize themselves. The victim may blame herself for not fighting back, which leads to a further decrease in self-esteem, and an increased sense of guilt and humiliation. In addition, the larger community often blames the victim for his or her situation or does not wish to acknowledge the pain and suffering in the world and therefore of that individual.<sup>26</sup>

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18. F. Ochberg, ‘Introduction: Twenty years after defining PTSD’, *Mind and Human Interaction* 8:4 (1997), 201–3.

19. R.J. Ursano, B.G. McCaughery, and C.S. Fullerton, ‘Trauma and disaster’ in R.J. Ursano, B.G. McCaughery, and C.S. Fullerton (eds.), *Individual and Community Response to Disaster* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3–30.

20. Ochberg, ‘Introduction’.

21. C. Yoder, *The Little Book of Trauma Healing* (Intercourse, Pennsylvania, Goodbooks, 2005).

22. K. Maynard, ‘Rebuilding community: Psychosocial healing, reintegration and reconciliation, at the grassroots level’ in K. Kumar (ed.), *Rebuilding Societies after Civil War: Critical Roles for International Assistance* (Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1997), 183–202; Yoder, *Little Book of Trauma Healing*.

23. Ursano, McCaughery, and Fullerton, ‘Trauma and disaster’.

24. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

25. Ibid.

26. H. Holloway and C.S. Fullerton, ‘The psychology of terror and its aftermath’ in Ursano, McCaughery, and Fullerton, *Individual and Community Responses to Disaster*, 31–45.

Moreover, perpetrators of trauma often try to use their power to silence or question the credibility of those they injure.<sup>27</sup>

## TRAUMA AND PEACE-BUILDING

Similar to the development of trauma studies, peace-building has emerged in the past two decades as a way to help prevent and respond to conflicts. One accepted definition of peace-building calls it ‘a process that facilitates the establishment of durable peace and tries to prevent the recurrence of violence by addressing root causes and effects of conflict through reconciliation, institution building and political as well as economic transformation.’<sup>28</sup>

Several scholars and practitioners have researched the nature of peace-building activities,<sup>29</sup> which can be divided into two main types: those that focus on the structural sources of a conflict (such as governmental and economic institutions and policy) and their reformation (which tend to be more elite and policy focused); and those concerned with improving relations between groups (which tend to be more community based). The majority of activities within the relational approach to peace-building concentrate on civil society and focus on improving understanding and trust between groups in conflict and facilitating interaction through community projects. The underlying basis for most of these activities is that an essential component of peace-building and trust-building involves the reconstruction or reconfiguration of relationships between parties in conflict.

Practitioners working in areas of severe conflict are often interacting in societies that have been exposed to severe trauma and have therefore become susceptible to its long-term consequences at the individual, community, and national levels. They operate at the nexus of trauma and peace-building. If one of the primary goals of peace-building is to help repair and rebuild fragmented social relationships, peace-building scholars and practitioners need to be familiar with the basic concepts of trauma studies, and vice-versa.

In recent years, a number of peace-building scholars and practitioners have begun to discuss the relationship between trauma and conflict. For example, Hugo van der Merwe and Tracy Vienings collaborated on ‘Coping with Trauma’, an excellent overview of trauma and conflict.<sup>30</sup> Of particular relevance for peace-building is their discussion of ‘secondary victimization’. They assert, ‘The traumatic nature of violence means that any contact with the traumatic materials—through witnessing or hearing of the event—can also have a deleterious effect.’<sup>31</sup> Although the authors raise a number of important issues, the chapter does not provide sufficient guidance of how to effectively conduct peace-building work in potentially traumatic situations, explore the

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27. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

28. Johns Hopkins University, School for Advanced International Studies, Conflict Management Toolkit, [www.sais-jhu.edu/cmtoolkit/approaches/peacebuilding/index.html](http://www.sais-jhu.edu/cmtoolkit/approaches/peacebuilding/index.html).

29. J. Galtung, *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization* (London, SAGE Publications, 1996); J.P. Lederach, *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures* (Syracuse, New York, Syracuse University Press, 1995).

30. Van der Merwe and Vienings, ‘Coping with trauma’.

31. *Ibid.*, 349.

distinction between peace-building work and therapy, or discuss in detail how to deal with secondary trauma. In 'How will I sustain myself?', a chapter in the *Handbook of International Peacebuilding*, the authors warn about the possible danger of secondary trauma and offer several coping strategies, including talking in a support network about what is being heard and experienced, leaving one's work at work (not bringing it home); and returning to one's sanctuary.<sup>32</sup>

These publications are important first steps in exploring the relationship between trauma and peace-building, but much work remains. The following narratives and discussion represent reflections on some of the personal challenges this author has encountered due to the lack of training in or knowledge of trauma-related issues while conducting peace-building work.

New York, Georgian-Abkhazian Youth Peace Camp, 1998

We sit on the beach watching the sun go down. There is no pressure to talk, but the four teenagers and one adult want to share their personal experiences from the war in Georgia/Abkhazia. They are here as part of a group of 30 Georgian and Abkhaz youth who are participating in a three-week conflict resolution program. The two sides have developed strong friendships across the conflict divide. They have been learning, traveling, and exploring together.

However, we (the staff) find ourselves questioning whether they can truly be friends without a deeper understanding and exploration of their personal experiences in the conflict? What does it mean to say that we are friends without exploring the underlying hurt?

As a peace-building practitioner, I do believe storytelling and sharing of hurt helps groups create common narratives and understanding. The participants are not ready or eager to share this belief? Perhaps the suffering is too raw? Perhaps they are not eager to talk on this level given the frozen nature of the conflict? What is the proper balance, do we let go of the idea of personal storytelling? Do we have the training and skills to work with such stories?

After much careful discussion among staff and with participants, we decide to create an optional session for those who want to tell their stories. Only a few participants from the 'Georgian side', who are internally displaced persons from Abkhazia living in Georgia, choose to participate. They have been unable to visit their homeland for over five years and all have suffered significant personal losses. One participant shares about fleeing through the mountains in deep snow up to the waist and watching people die, others talking about people being killed, shot, in front of them.

I wonder how can we help them heal? Is witnessing enough? Are we truly helping them by encouraging the sharing? Moreover, why do youth from only one side choose to share? I find little of my formal and informal training has prepared me to adequately address these questions.

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32. A. Potter, R. Kraybill, L. Diamond, and J. Campbell, 'How will I sustain myself?' in J. P. Lederach and J.M. Jenner (eds.), *A Handbook of International Peacebuilding: Into the Eye of the Storm* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2002), 277.

## WHO IS TRAUMATIZED?

One of the challenges of working with trauma is understanding how individuals and societies may be affected by trauma. As mentioned above, many societies experience traumatic events, but a significant percentage of the population does not suffer long-term consequences or develop PTSD. According to World Bank figures, among the general population in most countries, between 1 percent and 3 percent have psychiatric problems, such as alcoholism, PTSD, and depression.<sup>33</sup> Although the data regarding mental health in conflict-affected populations is limited, studies reveal acute rates of depression and PTSD to be higher than 10 percent in general postconflict populations and possibly as high as 40 percent, or more, among refugees and IDPs.<sup>34</sup>

Researchers have several hypotheses for the development of PTSD in some individuals but not in others. First, the type and severity of trauma experienced is likely to be a strong factor, with incidents of violence and abuse likely to cause more PTSD than other types of trauma.<sup>35</sup> On-going exposure to traumatic events, such as war and repeated violence, is likely to lead to an increased incidence of PTSD. Some research points to other factors that may encourage or prevent the development of PTSD, including family history, genetic risk factors, an individual's personality, cultural factors, past history of trauma, behavioral or psychological problems, parental relationships, and social support.<sup>36</sup> Resilience has emerged as one of the most important concepts concerning how individuals and communities respond to traumatic events. Julio Peres and others define resilience as 'the ability to go through difficulties and regain satisfactory quality of life' and as a key factor 'of the intensity and duration of trauma related symptoms'.<sup>37</sup> A number of factors can help build or sustain resilience, including family and communal ties and how individuals process and make meaning from events.<sup>38</sup>

Statistics related to PTSD should, however, be taken with a significant degree of caution. It is difficult to obtain baseline data, and Western-imposed instruments and frameworks may not adequately capture the diverse range of individual and community responses that can result from exposure to trauma.<sup>39</sup> As Debra Kalmanowitz and Bobby Lloyd, art therapists who have worked extensively in conflict regions, note, 'The vast majority of individuals who live through war, political violence or acts of terrorism do not become traumatized, nor do they experience either medical or psychiatric difficulties'.<sup>40</sup> Traumatic incidents in and of themselves occur within political and social contexts, and it is essential not to pathologize individuals and groups outside of

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33. F. Baingana and I. Bannon, 'Integrating mental health and psychosocial interventions into World Bank lending for conflict-affected populations: A toolkit', World Bank, Washington, D.C., <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTMH/Resources/Toolkit-Final.pdf>2004.

34. Ibid.

35. Yehuda, 'Conflict between current knowledge'.

36. Ibid.

37. J.F.P. Peres et al., 'Spirituality and resilience in trauma victims', *Journal of Religion and Health* 46:3 (2007), 345.

38. Papadopoulos, 'Political violence'; Peres et al., 'Spirituality and resilience'.

39. D. Summerfield, 'War and mental health: a brief overview', *British Medical Journal* (international edition) (July 2000), 232–6; Yoder, *Little Book of Trauma Healing*.

40. D. Kalmanowitz and B. Lloyd, 'Introduction' in D. Kalmanowitz and B. Lloyd (eds.), *Art Therapy and Political Violence, With Art, Without Illusion* (New York, Routledge, 2005), 5.

this context.<sup>41</sup> As Derek Summerfield, a noted trauma expert explains, 'Current concepts of trauma are in line with the tradition in Western biomedicine and psychology to regard the singular human being as the basic unit of study and to prescribe technical solutions. But it is not a private experience and the suffering it engenders is resolved in a social context.'<sup>42</sup>

It is also important to be aware that the impact of trauma may not only affect individuals, but possibly also the broader society. At a conference organized by the United States Institute of Peace, Vamik Volkan, a psychiatrist with extensive experience in conflict areas, commented that massive trauma 'may result in various forms of PTSD in individual victims, may cause new social and political processes on a broader social level, and may result in altered behavior transmitted from one generation to another.'<sup>43</sup> A failure to deal with the effects of trauma in one generation may lead to future generations carrying the suffering of previous ones, what Volkan terms 'transgenerational transmission'.<sup>44</sup> This can help lay the ground for future conflict, psychological suffering, and impaired functioning at the group and individual levels.<sup>45</sup>

## Responding to Trauma

To date there is no agreed upon method for treating trauma in conflicted societies. Mental health approaches include psychiatric assistance and indigenous counseling methods among others.<sup>46</sup> One of the issues in this approach, particularly when imported from another society, is the appropriateness of the method. In addition, as Judy Barsalou of the United States Institute of Peace observed, 'Even when medical approaches seem appropriate, many societies emerging from conflict have limited medical communities and no means to provide psychological counseling to thousands, let alone millions, of citizens.'<sup>47</sup>

In 'Coping with Trauma', Hugo van der Merwe and Tracy Vienings outline three main elements that need to be accomplished to help someone deal with the effects of trauma: getting the person to talk about what has happened to him or her, telling the story in detail; reframing the victim's perceptions of his or her role in the event; and developing and sustaining coping mechanisms for the individual.<sup>48</sup> Throughout the healing process, one of the most critical factors is for individuals and communities who have suffered from a traumatic incident to have a safe space. The challenge in

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41. Papadopoulos, 'Political violence'; Yoder, *Little Book of Trauma Healing*.

42. Summerfield, 'War and mental health', 233.

43. J. Barsalou, 'Special report 79: Training to help traumatized populations', United States Institute of Peace, 2001, p. 2, [www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr79.html](http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr79.html).

44. V. Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).

45. Ibid.

46. Baingana and Bannon, 'Integrating mental health and psychosocial interventions into World Bank lending'.

47. J. Barsalou, 'Special report 135: Trauma and transitional justice in divided societies', United States Institute of Peace, 2005, [www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr135.html](http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr135.html). For example, one noted activist makes the point that there is only one practicing psychologist in all of Liberia. Kimmie Weeks, 'Beating swords into plows: Africa's youth movement for peace', a talk delivered at Georgetown University, 15 February 2007. Weeks is the founder of Youth Action International.

48. Van der Merwe and Vienings, 'Coping with trauma', 347.

many conflicted regions, however, is the lack of safe spaces, thus increasing the likelihood of on-going trauma that can be difficult to cope with.<sup>49</sup>

Although many scholars and practitioners believe it is important for individuals and societies to tell their stories as part of the healing process, there are also potential dangers in pushing too hard using this approach. For example, if a group or individual is not ready to talk about trauma, re-traumatization may occur if forced to do so. In addition, some societies may prefer other options for dealing with trauma. Journalist Helen Cobban researched postconflict healing in three countries in Africa and found in the case of Mozambique that there was no widespread sharing of stories of suffering at the national level in contrast to some other countries. Instead in Mozambique, she found extensive use of healing ceremonies, at individual and small-group levels.<sup>50</sup> In addition to psychological assistance and cultural rituals, many other methods exist for helping individuals heal from trauma, among them creative arts-based processes, such as theater, music, and dance<sup>51</sup>

## TOWARD TRAUMA-SENSITIVE PEACE-BUILDING

Trauma-sensitive peace-building rests upon the concept of conflict sensitivity as developed by International Alert.<sup>52</sup> Conflict-sensitive practice assumes that an organization will be conscious of the conflict context in which they operate, will seek to do no harm, and integrate this approach throughout administrative and programmatic operations.<sup>53</sup> A trauma-sensitive approach to peace-building assumes that an organization or individual involved in peace-building will understand the potential negative or positive interactions of the intervention on the psychological well-being of the participants and larger community; be clear about the ethical guidelines of working in potentially trauma-affected areas and, if appropriate, in partnership with other trained professionals; and ensure that project staff is equipped to deal with potential psychological difficulties or has the necessary support.

### Understanding the Potential Impact of Projects

Although it is not possible for peace-builders to be experts in all areas, it is essential that they at least have a basic familiarity with trauma. In recent years, conducting peace and conflict impact analysis has become a standard component of much of peace-building. In addition to the standard questions involved in impact assessments, a few additional questions could be added to address trauma. These might include the following: How much exposure to trauma has the community had? What are its current coping mechanisms? What is the resilience level of the community? What potential negative or positive effect will a project have on the trauma levels of the community?

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49. Yoder, *Little Book of Trauma Healing*.

50. H. Cobban, *Amnesty after Atrocity: Healing Nations after Genocide and War Crimes* (Boulder, Colorado, Paradigm, 2007).

51. Kalmanowitz and Lloyd, 'Introduction'; Yoder, *Little Book of Trauma Healing*.

52. M. Lange and M. Quinn, 'Conflict, humanitarian assistance and peacebuilding: Meeting the challenges', *International Alert*, London, 2003, [www.international-alert.org/pdfs/humanitarian\\_assistance\\_peacebuilding.pdf](http://www.international-alert.org/pdfs/humanitarian_assistance_peacebuilding.pdf).

53. *Ibid.*

Being trauma sensitive does not mean that difficult emotional or psychological issues should necessarily be avoided.<sup>54</sup> It does require minimal research, at the least, to ensure that projects be conducted in a sensitive manner and avoid inflicting additional harm on participants. There is no single model for how this should be done; it depends in part on an organization's culture, location, type of activity, staffing, and so on. There is a need to provide increased support and training in this area not only for expatriate staff, but also for local staff, who are from and working directly in conflict regions. Oftentimes, these staff do not have the luxury of leaving the conflict area.

## Ethical Guidelines

Turkey, 2005

We are facilitating the conflict resolution component of a 10-day conflict resolution peace camp for youth from Georgia (many of whom are IDPs from Abkhazia). Unfortunately at the last minute the Abkhaz government decided not to allow the Abkhaz participants to travel. However, we are able to spend a very intense and productive period working on building skills and facilitating dialogue among the participants.

One of the challenges throughout the training session was if we should encourage the participants to engage in storytelling about their personal experiences in the conflict? We had hours and hours of discussion on all ends, with opinions ranging from what's the point to concerns we might open up painful memories to the possibility the youth are more comfortable talking on a general level.

After careful discussions with local staff and select participants, we decide to create a safe space for storytelling, establish ground rules, and allow anyone to share. It is one of the most powerful components of the program for the participants and staff. Several participants do choose to talk about the war, what happened to them, how much they miss their homeland, their hopes for the future and their eagerness to talk with people from the other side. The normally boisterous group of teenagers is completely quiet throughout the duration and even one of the adult staff who was most resistant to the idea shared her story.

What is the appropriate role for conflict resolution professionals working with issues of trauma? What happens if, in a desire to encourage people to talk and work through their past, the professionals do more damage the good? How can one encourage groups to share their stories in a meaningful and productive way? These are several of the key questions that emerged in this particular session and in much of the conflict resolution work that I do. I have often found in working with groups who have experienced severe conflict that I constantly dance around these issues. At times, I have pushed too hard to encourage people to talk, largely based on my own, more prescriptive agenda, and have had it backfire. At other times, these sessions have been some of the most powerful experiences I have been fortunate to witness. Obviously, any deci-

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54. John Ehrenrich, in *A Guide for Humanitarian, Health Care, and Human Rights Workers* (2002), stresses the importance of providing a safe space when working with individuals from trauma areas and also ensuring that they are comfortable with the program/interview. See <http://psp.drk.dk/graphics/2003referenccenter/Doc-man/Documents/7Staff-support/Caring.others.guide.pdf>.

sion to approach sharing of potentially traumatic issues needs to be decided and conducted in an elicitive manner based on the needs and capacity of local partners and participants.<sup>55</sup> Local and international peace-building partners can play a critical role in creating a safe space for this work.

In some of my work with youth from conflicted regions, the projects have hired social workers with extensive experience dealing with youth to be a core part of the staff. The social workers were not there to conduct formal therapy with the participants or staff, but to talk with participants who had difficulties with the process or with being away from home. Of equal importance, they also provided basic training for program staff regarding trauma and possible symptoms; throughout the program, they were critical resource people. This idea of working in partnership with professionals from other sectors, for example mental health, is critical. As Judy Barsalou states 'Individuals and groups suffering from the trauma of armed conflict have psychological needs that need to be addressed at the individual, community, and national levels. Professionals working in different fields—psychiatry, psychology, community development, education, and conflict resolution—all have different skills and strengths to offer to trauma victims.'<sup>56</sup> Often, however, funding for this type of cooperative work may not be available. There are also potential downsides to working in partnership; for instance, there may be a lack of agreement over roles, and participants may feel uncomfortable if they perceive that a mental health professional is there to treat them.

To date there has been little academic writing in the peace-building field on the difference between peace-building and therapy. While peace-building can be therapeutic in nature and bring out difficult emotions and experiences, many peace-builders do not have training in mental health. They can potentially do significant harm if traumatized groups or individuals open up and peace-builders push too hard, do not provide a safe space, or prematurely push them toward reconciliation. Although mental health professionals cannot be part of all peace-building programs, it is important that peace-builders working in situations involving trauma have a basic understanding of the concept, are aware that sometimes they may need to consult with professionals from other fields, and should always work to ensure the safety of local populations. Peace-builders also need to develop stronger ethics and guidelines of practice.

Another potential ethical challenge in postconflict settings involves the push to do cross-community peace-building across the conflict divide. Although this work is essential, at times if it is too rushed it can be potentially detrimental. A number of conflict resolution scholars have explored the importance of integrating healing and mourning as a component or a necessary first step in conflict resolution work.<sup>57</sup> To a large degree, however, trauma and conflict resolution work remain separate areas of practice. If individuals, groups, or societies are suffering from the negative effects of traumatic incidents, it might be unethical to move ahead with peace-building work without creating a safe space for healing, mourning, and rebuilding. Groups that have

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55. Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*; Baingana and Bannon, 'Integrating mental health and psychosocial interventions into World Bank lending'.

56. Barsalou, 'Special report 79'.

57. J. Montville, 'The healing function in political conflict resolution' in D. Sandole and H. van der Merwe (eds.), *Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application* (New York, Manchester University Press, 1993), 112–27; Volkan, *Bloodlines*.

suffered in conflict often need a safe space to explore their anger and hurt. For example, if a child has been repeatedly abused by a parent, bringing a parent and child together prematurely can potentially cause more harm than good. As Arnold Mindell, a psychologist with extensive experience in conflict regions, explains, ‘There is, of course, a moment to forgive, but dealing hastily with abuse issues invites those who experienced them not only to forgive but to forget. Forgetting creates insensitivity to one’s own pain and blocks a person from taking the necessary steps to avoid further danger.’<sup>58</sup>

One method for dealing with some of the challenges of cross-community work is conducting in-depth, single-community work prior to bringing groups together. As Cynthia Cohen, professor of coexistence at Brandeis University, states, ‘Very often preparation for intercommunal exchanges—especially when it involves some degree of healing from trauma—is best accomplished in uninational or unicommunal settings.’<sup>59</sup> This within-community work may not always be appropriate or feasible, but it is important to at least consider it as a possibility. There is also the challenge that without external assistance, groups may not always be willing to engage with one another. Few clear guidelines exist regarding how to effectively integrate psychosocial and trauma-related issues and conflict resolution work. One of the most promising initiatives in this area is the work of the Seminars on Trauma Awareness and Recovery Initiative at Eastern Mennonite University, which is conducting research and capacity building for a diverse set of practitioners.<sup>60</sup> There is an on-going need for increased work and policy guidance in providing guidelines for practice in this arena.<sup>61</sup>

### The Power of Action

One of the potential dangers in working in regions of conflict involving trauma is classifying people as victims. Although groups that suffer from traumatic incidents might suffer long-term consequences, it is important to view them as powerful and capable actors in their own work and recovery.<sup>62</sup> Although peace-building by nature tends to be participatory, such is not always the case. Thus, attempts at measuring levels of trauma and working with groups who might be suffering need to be sensitive to the power of language and the need to be participatory.

Power is a central issue in conflict and trauma situations, because the more powerful parties will try to diminish the experience and humanity of the opposing side. As David Becker explains, ‘Victimizers in all parts of the world have used the supposed

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58. A. Mindell, *Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity* (Portland, Oregon, Lao Tse Press, 1995), 107.

59. C. Cohen, ‘Engaging with the arts to promote coexistence’ in A. Chayes and M. Minow (eds.), *Imagine Coexistence: Restoring Humanity after Violent Ethnic Conflict* (San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2003), 273.

60. For more information, see [www.emu.edu/ctp/star/about.html](http://www.emu.edu/ctp/star/about.html).

61. In a brief review of codes of conduct in conflict resolution work, little or no reference is made to trauma issues. For example, in International Alert’s Code of Conduct (1998), there is no reference at all. In *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners* (2003), there is only a mention of the danger of burnout among staff.

62. A. Fuentres, ‘In their own words: Contextualizing the discourse of (war) trauma and healing’, *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 21:4 (2004), 491–501.

“disorder” of the victims to justify their acts of cruelty and destruction.’<sup>63</sup> Thus, conflict resolution professionals need to be acutely aware of power imbalances in conflict situations and seek to ensure that they are not contributing to the disempowerment of groups.

### Supporting Project Staff

Considering the high-stress situations many individuals place themselves in, particularly those working in international conflict situations, the field has done a poor job of addressing the importance of self-care.

#### *Secondary Trauma*

Most helping professions, from social working to psychology, have well-established systems of self-care that often include peer-support groups, mentors, and training provided in instances of burnout and secondary trauma. As a field, peace-building is only now beginning to incorporate these concerns into practice.

Many students and practitioners peace-building working in conflict-affected countries may not have the tools or skills to deal with burnout and secondary trauma. The challenge of listening to stories of suffering and possibly witnessing acts of violence can have a strong psychological and emotional impact on individuals. As Hugo Van der Merwe and Tracy Vienning, observe, ‘Those who in some way have contact with [a] narrative of violence or trauma, including aid workers, and those in the helping professions, can also be traumatized and may be considered victims if they experience any adverse reactions.’<sup>64</sup> Most established helping professions devote significant time, resources, and training to preparing aspiring and well-established practitioners with the collegial support and awareness needed to deal with secondary trauma issues.<sup>65</sup>

#### *Training and Education*

To date, the peace-building field continues to lag significantly in dealing with secondary trauma at the practitioner and educational levels. In a recent research report on international careers in the field, a number of professionals stressed that younger professionals need to be better prepared for the possible psychological insecurity, burnout, and exhaustion that they may experience in the field.<sup>66</sup> At the graduate level, students are often trained in conflict analysis skills and process skills, but the issue of

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63. D. Becker, ‘The deficiency of the concept of posttraumatic stress disorder when dealing with victims of human rights violations’ in R. Kleber, C. Figley, and R. Gersons (eds.), *Beyond Trauma: Cultural and Societal Dynamics* (New York, Plenum Press, 1995), 103.

64. Van der Merwe and Vienings, ‘Coping with trauma’, 349.

65. G. Van der Veer, K. De Jong, and J. Lansens, ‘Clinical supervision for counselors in areas of armed conflict’, *Intervention: International Journal of Mental Health, Psychosocial Work and Counseling in Areas of Armed Conflict* 2:2 (2004), 118–28.

66. C. Zelizer and L. Johnston, *Skills, Networks and Knowledge: Developing a Career in International Peace and Conflict Resolution* (Alexandria, Virginia, Alliance for Conflict Transformation, 2005), 40.

self-care is only starting to receive attention. In a survey of courses offered at ten graduate-level conflict resolution programs in the United States, only two universities offered a class specifically on trauma or trauma healing and conflict. Although each graduate program in conflict resolution has its own area of concentration, given the significant number of students who want to conduct work in currently violent or postconflict situations, this seems to be an area in need of significant improvement.<sup>67</sup> Graduates of such programs may be going into the field to do work without the training or awareness they need regarding such a critical issue.

International humanitarian and development organizations have begun to improve support for their staffs in terms of stress and self-care, as they have begun to witness and understand the effects of long-term burnout on their staff. For example, UNICEF has produced 'Managing the Stress of Humanitarian Emergencies',<sup>68</sup> a useful guide that includes suggestions on self-care and how to manage and support employees, and World Vision has published a book on dealing with stress and trauma among humanitarian workers.<sup>69</sup> The peace-building field needs to take similar steps and initiatives.

## CONCLUSION

In violent conflicts over resources, identity, and power, parties often resort to severe methods to achieve their goals. Groups can be subjected to traumatic incidents that can have long-term negative psychological effects. Peace-builders need to devote more attention to developing trauma-sensitive approaches to their work. It is possible that some may be doing harm by not fully integrating a trauma-sensitive approach into our work.<sup>70</sup> Many individuals in the field are confronted by the challenges of secondary trauma, which can have long-term detrimental impacts on health and emotional well-being. Although most practitioners do receive informal support from their colleagues, there exists a responsibility to systemize learning and practice in this area. This is particularly relevant in training future generations of practitioners, to help ensure that they are aware of this challenge and able to respond to it. There is also a responsibility to ensure that local practitioners are provided the support and training they need, particularly because they often do not have the luxury of leaving conflicted areas.

Conflict resolution practitioners can also benefit from expanding their cooperation with colleagues from other sectors who are working on trauma-related issues. Working in partnership with psychologists and other mental health professionals directly in conflict regions can facilitate valuable learning and linkages. Peace-builders need to develop better tools and practices to recognize trauma among populations and also to develop clearer ethical guidelines for the field.

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67. For this survey, ten program Web sites were reviewed for current core courses and electives.

68. 'Managing the stress of humanitarian emergencies', UNICEF, 2001, [www.the-ecentre.net/resources/e\\_library/doc/managingStress.pdf](http://www.the-ecentre.net/resources/e_library/doc/managingStress.pdf).

69. J. Fawcett (ed.), *Stress and Trauma Handbook, Strategies for Flourishing in Demanding Environments* (Federal Way, Washington, World Vision, 2003).

70. M. Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—Or War* (Boulder, Colorado, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999).



# Building Peace through Sport in Western Cape, South Africa

*Marion Keim*

The United Nations, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations around the world increasingly see sport as a means of conflict prevention, peace-building, social transformation, and development. Whether sport can in fact fulfill such a role depends to a large extent on the way in which relevant programmes are organized and carried out. Kicking for Peace, a grass-roots initiative of the Western Cape Network for Community, Peace and Development, uses sport and examines its potential role as a local and global tool in these areas in the communities of the Western Cape province of South Africa. The project is a collaborative initiative between civil society organizations, local government, and a tertiary institution, the University of the Western Cape, and includes a strong component of participatory research. With a strong developmental and cross-cultural emphasis, the project aims to promote an educational process that will generate greater awareness and understanding of the complexities of sport as a vehicle for efforts toward social transformation and peace-building, particularly among youth and including the cultural and traditional dimensions of sport, to promote education, health, and development, as well as peace. This article examines the development of the Western Cape Network and Kicking for Peace as a joint venture with a potential multiplier effect so that others might undertake similar projects in a creative and collaborative way.

Sport is a universal language. At its best, it can bring people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs or economic status. And when young people participate in sports or have access to physical education, they can experience real exhilaration even as they learn the ideals of teamwork and tolerance. That is why the United Nations is turning more and more to the world of sport for help in our work for peace and our efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

—UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, 5 November 2004

**VARIOUS UNCONVENTIONAL TOOLS ARE AVAILABLE** for addressing conflict transformation and peace-building. The earliest attempts at using sport as a tool for peace can be traced to the ancient Olympic Games of 776 B.C., for which the Olympic truce, or Ekecheira, was respected and observed by Greek city-states before, during, and immediately after the event. Today, the United Nations as well as governmental and nongovernmental institutions view sport as a potential ‘beacon of hope’ for peace-building and development efforts throughout the world.

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A number of international initiatives have been launched in response to the call in 2000 for implementing the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and with the creation of the UN Task Force on Sport for Development and Peace in 2002. For example, the International Military Sports Council, comprised of the armed forces of 127 member countries, held the seminar 'Preventing Conflicts, Maintaining Peace: The Role of Sport' in March 2005 in Mantova, Italy. In December 2005, the second Magglingen Conference marked the culmination and conclusion of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education with 400 participants from seventy nations and all sectors of society calling on sports organizations, governments, the UN and other multilateral organizations, armed forces, development agencies, civil and private sectors, research institutions, and the media to actively use and promote sport for development and peace-building in their respective fields.<sup>1</sup> In April 2006, the International Conference on Sport and Development at the University of the Western Cape (UWC) in Cape Town reiterated this call, with Adolf Ogi, special adviser to UN secretary-general Kofi Annan on sport for development and peace, stating, 'Sport, with its joys and triumphs, its pains and defeats, its emotions and challenges, is an unrivalled medium for the promotion of education, health, development and peace. Sport helps us demonstrate, in our pursuit of the betterment of humanity, that there is more that unites than divides us.'<sup>2</sup> Walter Fust, director-general for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, asserts, 'Where other means have failed, sport has proven to be effective in building bridges to overcome conflicts and cultural barriers or to improve the integration of minorities and marginalised groups.'<sup>3</sup> Qualter Berna agrees, based on practical experience with the United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF): 'Sport is providing children affected by conflict and former child soldiers with a positive outlet and a sense of belonging. With families dispersed by conflict or disaster, children are reintegrating back into their communities and sport is the means to provide them with a safe, family-like, team environment.'<sup>4</sup> Recognizing the importance of sport in this regard, more than eighty UNICEF offices have developed partnerships with national sport associations in their respective countries to offer programmes to children and youth.<sup>5</sup>

Sport programmes can take societies forward, but if not properly conceived, managed, and assessed, they can reinforce old prejudices, stereotypes, and divisions, undermining community buy-in and causing multistakeholder collaboration and sustainability to fail. South African nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and tertiary institutions are striving to strengthen the work of conflict transformation and organizations engaged in it by forming an active network and taking a holistic ap-

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1. 'Magglingen call to action, 2005', outcome document of the Second Magglingen Conference, 'Development through Sport: Moving to the Next Stage', 4–6 December 2005, Switzerland, [www.magglingen2005.org](http://www.magglingen2005.org).

2. Recorded at the International Conference on Sport and Development, University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, 10 April 2006.

3. Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, *Sport for Development and Peace*, 2005, p. 4, [www.magglingen2005.org/downloads/sdc\\_sport\\_e.pdf](http://www.magglingen2005.org/downloads/sdc_sport_e.pdf).

4. A. Qualter Berna, 'Sport as human right and as means for development' in Yves Vanden Auweele et al. (eds.), *Sport and Development* (Uitgeverij Lannoo Campus, 2006), 37.

5. *Ibid.*, 36.

proach that includes unconventional methods, such as sport, as vehicles for peace-building.

## CURRENT CHALLENGES TO CONFLICT WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa's recent transition to democracy has brought social and economic benefits to many of its people, with numerous untold advances having been made in bridging past divisions once entrenched by the apartheid system. Unremarkable for a nation in the infancy of democracy and experiencing multiple levels of rapid and sometimes overwhelming change, old and new tensions and inequalities have contributed to high levels of conflict around issues ranging from employment, land, and access to education and health care to a lack of adequate resources and facilities. Although nations in transition face numerous conflicts particular to change, in South Africa the pre-1994 struggle to end apartheid has been replaced by a post-1994 struggle of NGOs and educational institutions to build a better society, in part through conflict transformation and peace-building initiatives. They, however, face many challenges.

Fourteen years after the transition to democracy in South Africa, and despite remarkable progress in some communities, poverty remains rife, and the socioeconomic conditions of the majority of the population disappointing to many. Violent conflicts appear to be on the rise, ranging from intrapersonal and interpersonal to intragroup and intergroup confrontations. Children and women constitute the majority of the victims of rising crime rates.<sup>6</sup> According to a study conducted by the University of Cape Town in 2004, the rate of violence against women in South Africa was at the time the highest in the world. A woman was raped in South Africa every minute.<sup>7</sup>

One social phenomenon factoring into conflict is the lack of solidarity among different cultural groups that continues to typify day-to-day life: 'Conceptions of race and belonging are central both to the violence of South Africa's past and the relative peace of its present.'<sup>8</sup> Tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding could hardly have developed under apartheid conditions. Such mindsets therefore must be developed through an often long and difficult process that includes healing, forgiveness, community leadership, and the cooperation of assorted stakeholders. The formation and work of the Western Cape Network for Community, Peace and Development reflects such an attempt.

## STRENGTHENING CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION WORK

The Western Cape Network for Community, Peace and Development began its work in August 2005 in response to the need for coordination and communication between various NGOs and the creation of early warning systems for community-based and related conflicts and conflict situations. The network is a collectively guided, independent organization initially organized by the German embassy in South Africa and the

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6. E. Stoddard, 'Africa woman killed by partner every 6 hours—study', Reuters, 24 May 2005, [www.peacewomen.org/news/SouthAfrica/May05/Study.html](http://www.peacewomen.org/news/SouthAfrica/May05/Study.html).

7. *Die Tageszeitung* (Berlin), 11 November 2004.

8. S. Pillay, *The Radical Imagination of Peace: Belonging and Violence in South Africa's Past and Future* (Durban, ACCORD, 2005), 11.

University of the Western Cape in response to the need for coordination and communication between German-funded organizations dealing with conflict management and crime prevention. The need for further networking became evident and was followed up by the subsequent expansion of network membership among South African organizations with vast expertise operating in the Western Cape. The network currently consists of thirty-two affiliated member organizations with the support of two government departments as well as the city of Cape Town.

The common values and concepts of network members were recognized as binding principles. These include empowerment, youth development, peace-building, conflict management, democracy, sustainable development, human dignity, diversity, integrity, transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination. These shared values and the will to create conflict-free and sustainable communities provide the platform for network activities, which have at their core the following objectives:

- acting as a civil society early warning system on issues and areas of potential conflict
- building conflict resolution and peace-building capacities involving civil society
- establishing stronger relationships between civil society, academic institutions, government, and the media.
- exchanging ideas, approaches, and work experiences in the field
- implementing joint programmes revolving around community initiatives, training, youth projects, and research
- becoming a replicable model for other provinces and countries and providing guidance to others to establish similar networks in a creative and collaborative way

The outcomes of the Western Cape Network thus far have been as follows:

- establishment and support of a provincial network for organizations, academic institutions, and governmental departments striving for community peace and development
- analysis of training needs as well as training capacity of current network partners
- access to service providers through the network who can provide training and any other support concerning community peace and development
- seminars and forums to discuss areas of interest among similar organizations and to build stronger networks and relationships among them
- mobilization of communities to address issues of gang violence, violence against women and children, youth at risk, and social transformation and healing
- implementation of community-based programmes for children and youth involving sport as a means of conflict prevention and transformation, peace-building, and social change

Expected future outcomes of the network include the following:

- identifying areas of conflict, community challenges, and development issues within member groups' respective areas and allowing for the streamlining of government and civil society responses as well as the expansion of opportunities for cooperation between groups
- analysing training needs and increasing the standard of service delivery of organizations involved
- accessing service providers through the network who can provide training, mediation, advocacy, or other support with regard to community peace and development

- developing new, reliable, and useful ways of training and empowering members so that they can become highly skilled in service delivery
- mobilizing communities to address service delivery issues, human rights, crime, poverty, and political conflicts as well as providing a platform and forum where civil society, communities, and government can find joint solutions
- providing advocacy and awareness through the media, election monitoring, and commentary on legislation affecting communities
- establishing linkages and partnerships with other service providers, government departments, academic institutions, and organizations in these areas to establish best practice models, create standardized and accredited training material, and outline agreed-upon service standards

The Western Cape Network is set to establish a precedent for similar networks in other provinces in South Africa and hopes to become a model for initiatives in other countries. Two of its main achievements in the Western Cape province thus far have been to examine and challenge the role of universities in conflict transformation and peace-building and to implement a Sport for Peace Programme through the Kicking for Peace Initiative, which engages youth from various communities in soccer while examining in a participatory manner the role that sport can play in peace-building and social transformation.

## UNIVERSITIES, CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION, AND PEACE-BUILDING

By 2005 the Western Cape Network for Community, Peace and Development had become a driving force in the call for improved cooperation between civil society and tertiary institutions, recognizing that there were three important universities in the province and challenging them to join in partnership with civil society to cooperatively address issues of conflict transformation and peace-building. Discussions within and outside the network revealed the necessity of critically looking at the role that tertiary institutions play in the fields of conflict transformation and peace-building in South Africa. This issue was subsequently addressed at the International Seminar on ‘The Role of Universities in Conflict Transformation, Reconstruction and Peace-Building’, held at the University of the Western Cape as part of the Nelson Mandela Seminar Series in September 2005. Sixty-five representatives—from eighteen nations, African and international universities, government, and civil society involved in conflict resolution—came together to explore the role that tertiary institutions can play in conflict transformation and peace-building in Africa and beyond.

Among the numerous outcomes of the seminar was a call for linking civil society practitioners with tertiary institutions and government departments to broaden research opportunities, expand training resources, promote fieldwork collaboration, and develop community leadership capacities. Participants recognized the potential of strengthening links involving conflict prevention and peace-building between universities and civil society; such connections had been missing in the past regarding peace-building in the South African context, but remained vital for building connections in post-apartheid South Africa.

The seminar participants agreed that important lessons could be drawn from the experiences of practitioners and from models developed within communities to man-

age local conflicts as they arise and to promote peace-building. They acknowledged a need to expand the academic and intellectual discourse into interactive learning (and possibly joint curricula development) to inform practice and practitioners and to provide academics with the space to draw lessons from experience and practice. This kind of cross-fertilization could help resolve some of the shortcomings of the many uncoordinated initiatives in peace-building in Africa, addressing the need for networking and information sharing, interconnectedness among institutions of tertiary education and the rest of civil society, and partnerships among civil society organizations.<sup>9</sup>

Through networking and exchange, material causes of conflicts, involving access to resources and economic factors, as well as non-material causes of community conflict, including race, culture, ethnicity, tradition, religion, gender, and differences in value systems can be addressed in more holistic and systematic ways. The seminar participants agreed on the necessity of focusing on youth participation in community development and peace-building efforts and suggested finding various methods for involving and engaging them.

The Mandela seminar expanded the Western Cape Network's sense of its potential and provided an opportunity for it to advance its work. After the seminar, the network served as a platform for facilitating discussions around the outcome of the gathering, generating ideas for possible interventions and joint innovative approaches to counteract the negative impacts of past and present divisions, lack of social interaction, poverty, crime, and violence. The network also engaged in efforts to promote social transformation and peace-building in the communities of the Western Cape.

On-going discussions after the seminar revealed that a number of civil society organizations with an interest in youth and children were involved with sport in their respective communities. Six of them had been active in seven formally segregated communities, offering sport programmes for children and youth at a recreational level, but not on a multicultural one. The aim of the organizations was primarily to keep youth off the street and provide them with a healthy alternative to drugs, crime, and boredom. Representatives of the New World Foundation, Children for Tomorrow, and Women for Peace had reported on the particular interest in soccer among male and female youths. At the same time, the University of the Western Cape had been training students from surrounding communities to become physical education teachers and had in the past been involved in community outreach and sport programmes in which UWC students ran coaching clinics and other events in the very communities that these civil society organizations operated in or in which they ran outreach projects.

The network members eventually developed a plan to involve civil society and university structures to look at sport as a means of social transformation and peace-building in the communities of the Western Cape. They formed a sport committee, consisting of representatives from civil society, tertiary institutions, and local government, as a subcommittee of the network to examine the possibility, viability, and potential challenges of operationalizing the plan. The subcommittee addressed a number of issues and questions in its discussions, such as *Why sport? Why sport in the South African context?* They looked at South African history and the history of South African sport in detail, which served as points of departure in many of the discussions

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9. 'Conference statement', 2005.

and meetings, given that the effects of both remain visible and palpable in communities across the country and on its playing fields on a daily basis.

## SPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA: A MIRROR OF SOCIETY

Sport can be seen as a reflection of society, a microcosm of its miseries and successes, socioeconomic challenges, and values. Although sport was divided along racial lines under South Africa's apartheid government, it was and continues to be an important part of the country's culture; as a dynamic part of civil society, it played a crucial role in the abolishment of apartheid. In the 1950s, black South African sport organizations brought to the world's attention the racial exclusivity of white sport organizations and how this situation violated the principle of equality as enshrined in the Olympic Charter. During the next two decades, a number of factors forced the apartheid regime to modify its stance on segregation. Among these factors were the principle of equality with regard to race, religion, and creed in international sport; the social significance of sport to 'White South Africa'; and the effective campaign by the South African Council of Sport (SACOS) for the international isolation of the country's racially exclusive white sport associations.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1980s and 1990s, the opposition to apartheid in sport had gathered enough national and international momentum for its advocates to claim victory over racial segregation in this arena. As noted in Lincoln Allison's *Taking Sport Seriously*, 'In few countries could institutions of civil society (such as sport) outflank and manipulate what appears to be a powerful state in this manner; in no other country, perhaps, could sporting institutions have played so large a part in forming the direction that the state would take'.<sup>11</sup> In 1994 the new, democratic South African government issued a draft white paper assuring access to sport to all men and women in the country regardless of their skin colour.<sup>12</sup>

In post-apartheid South Africa, politicians, athletic officials, and ordinary people view sport as a means for overcoming race and class barriers and for forging social transformation, national identity, and development. The late Steve Tshwete, a minister of sport and late minister of community safety, noted that '[s]port exerts an immeasurable influence as a unifying force for reconciliation and for the process of nationbuilding'.<sup>13</sup> South African respondents in studies on nation-building and sport have seen the advantage of sport in the fact that 'it speaks a simple language, is able to change attitudes and to create role models. In this way it can increase people's self-esteem, and help the disadvantaged to discover and experience their own strengths'.<sup>14</sup> The role of soccer has been repeatedly mentioned, particularly the support among all populations and culture groups for national teams and recently for the World Cup to be held in South Africa in 2010.

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10. M. Keim, *Nation-Building at Play: Sport as a Tool for Social Integration in Post-Apartheid South Africa* (Oxford, Meyer and Meyer Sport, 2003), 29–41.

11. L. Allison (ed.), *Taking Sport Seriously*, 2nd edn (Oxford, Meyer and Meyer Sport, 2000), 69.

12. Department of Sport and Recreation (ed.), 'Sport and recreation in South Africa: A national policy framework', draft white paper, Pretoria, 1995, 2.

13. Keim, *Nation-Building at Play*, 171.

14. *Ibid.*

There are, however, critical voices, with some warning that because of the ‘historical, social, economic and cultural legacy of South Africa’s conflicting pasts, the impact of globalization—and sport is a principal front of globalization, generating vast economic revenue and creating intolerable pressure to succeed—as well as post-apartheid discrepancies in economic and social conditions are all making it difficult to forge a united national culture, despite the attempt to use sport for the “mythic enactment” of a collective South African identity.’<sup>15</sup> Nonetheless, members of the Western Cape Network felt that on the whole, South Africans believe in the potential of sport in conflict transformation, peace-building, social transformation, and development. Network members noted the positive public reactions after 1994, when sport was seen as a ‘tool for nation-building’<sup>16</sup> and the enthusiastic atmosphere in the country during the 1995 Rugby World Cup, hosted by South Africa, and the 1996 Cricket World Cup. These sentiments were confirmed by outcomes of community-based research conducted by this author in the Western Cape in 2003 and 2006.<sup>17</sup>

### THE POTENTIAL OF SPORT FOR PEACE-BUILDING AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN THE WESTERN CAPE

Community research has revealed that if administered properly, sport can be a potential and manifold benefit to South African communities.<sup>18</sup> In formal and informal discussions and opinion surveys, members of the Western Cape Network for Community, Peace and Development, students of Sport and Community Development at the University of the Western Cape, and sports administrators from the Western Cape identified the following as areas in which sport has the potential to make a positive impact on communities:

*As a means of mobilization and communication*

Sport motivates people, including some who would not be involved otherwise, and is a communication tool through which can be conveyed relevant messages and around which can be structured campaigns.

*As a means to promote health and education*

Sport promotes awareness of the benefits of fitness, nutrition, general health, and other issues, including HIV/AIDS.

*As a means for training and social mobility*

Sport offers the opportunity to train community members as coaches and referees, leading to employment possibilities and talent identification.

*As a means of crime prevention*

Sport offers a healthy alternative to boredom, drugs, crime, and other anti-social behaviours.

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15. V. Padayachee, A. Desai, and G. Vahed, ‘Managing South African transformation: The story of cricket in KwaZulu Natal, 1994–2004’, *Patterns of Prejudice* 38:3 (September 2004), 253–78.

16. *Weekend Argus*, 5/6 March 1994.

17. Keim, *Nation-Building at Play*.

18. Keim, *Nation-Building at Play*, 197–211.

*As a means for inclusion*

Sport allows the potential participation in various capacities of all members of communities at the grass roots, including sometimes neglected groups, such as the disabled, women, and street children.

*As a means for empowerment and personal development*

Sport assists in the development of self-esteem, responsibility, and social skills.

*As a means for social transformation*

Sport can lead to new friendships and improve existing ones, encourage and build citizenship and sportsmanship, and develop leadership capacities.

*As a means to improve infrastructure*

Sport offers the potential of business opportunities and employment.

*As a means for conflict transformation*

Sport can improve or facilitate social integration and bridge building to help overcome cultural, ethnic, religious, social, economical, and political divides.

*As a means toward democracy and peace-building*

Sport can foster fair competition, teamwork and respect, understanding, unity, tolerance, and peaceful, nonviolence coexistence<sup>19</sup>

During the past three decades, several scholars and sport and government agencies have arrived at similar findings, including Jay J. Coakley,<sup>20</sup> H. Harms,<sup>21</sup> Conrad C. Vogler and Stephen E. Schwartz,<sup>22</sup> Grant Jarvie and Joseph Maguire,<sup>23</sup> Hennie Swanepoel,<sup>24</sup> Lincoln Allison,<sup>25</sup> the Magglingen Call to Action,<sup>26</sup> the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation,<sup>27</sup> and Yves Vanden Auweele and others.<sup>28</sup> There remains, however, a lack of international, national, and local research and qualitative and quantitative assessment to ensure that internationally stated social and transformational goals for sport, peace-building, and community development are met. Also of note is the lack of inclusion of civil society organizations and community members in research processes themselves.

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19. Keim, *Nation-Building at Play*, 97.

20. J.J. Coakley, *Sport in Society: Issues and Controversies*, 4th edn (St. Louis, Missouri, Times Mirror/Mosby College, 1990), 203-23.

21. H. Harms, 'Die soziale Zeitbombe ist noch längst nicht entschärft, zur möglichen Funktion des Sports bei der Integration der ausländischen Arbeitnehmer und ihrer Familien', *Olympische Jugend* 12 (1982), 7.

22. C. Vogler and E. Schwartz, *The Sociology of Sport: An Introduction* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1993).

23. G. Jarvie and J.A. Maguire, *Sport and Leisure in Social Thought* (London and New York, Routledge, 1994), 2.

24. H. Swanepoel, *Community Development: Putting Plans into Actions* (3rd edn, Pretoria, J.L. Van Schaik, 1997), 2-10.

25. Allison, *Taking Sport Seriously*, 53.

26. 'Magglingen Call to Action 2005.'

27. Swiss Agency for Development, *Sport for Development and Peace*.

28. Vanden Auweele et al., *Sport and Development*, 35-39.

Taking into account the outcomes and findings above, the Western Cape Network embarked on a unique project to include civil society in the research process and to work in partnership with the University of the Western Cape in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation stages of Sport for Peace, a holistic programme for children and youth from diverse communities. Responding to the interest of local youth and children in soccer, and in the light of the anticipation surrounding the 2010 World Cup, the network's sport committee decided to begin by focusing on soccer. Thus it established the Kicking for Peace initiative.

### KICKING FOR PEACE

In August 2006, the Western Cape Network inaugurated the Sport for Peace programme with Kicking for Peace, a grass-roots initiative involving not only civil society and UWC, but local communities, local government departments, and the City of Cape Town. Kicking for Peace was conceived to promote peace, development, and social transformation through recreational soccer training and tournaments for boys and girls in formerly segregated communities in the Western Cape, where no or few extramural programmes or recreational activities existed. The organizers sought to use the training programmes and tournaments as vehicles for teaching life skills, such as communication, problem solving, conflict transformation, leadership, health, and well-being.

According to Marius Bluemel, an NGO member and one of the organizers, 'With the prospect of the soccer World Cup 2010 we [were convinced that it would be of the] utmost importance to include those children and parents in these communities to benefit and be part of this global happening and develop sustainable change beyond this event. Therefore, the initiative aims to offer soccer and life skills training for children who are not able to join clubs and train youth to become soccer coaches.'<sup>29</sup> The objectives of Kicking for Peace are as follows:

- provide soccer training for boys and girls
- facilitate coaching clinics and training workshops
- link sport skills with accredited life-skills training
- promote health and well-being in local communities by including workshops on tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, obesity, nutrition, and other pertinent topics
- empower and train youth and parents in coaching, administration, and life skills
- promote mutual understanding, joy for the game, team-building, and fair play
- contribute to social transformation and peace-building by sponsoring soccer tournaments within a multicultural context, bringing together young people and their parents from formerly segregated communities

Since October 2006, some 500 boys and girls aged 9 through 14 have been practicing every week with young soccer coaches, who are sport and recreation students of the University of the Western Cape. Beginning with five communities, the project has now expanded to eleven. During each school holiday, a different community hosts a Kicking for Peace tournament involving more than 350 young people, inviting children and their families to cross formerly uncrossable community boundaries and learn something about and from each other. Kicking for Peace is thus an example of a successful

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29. Interview at the first Kicking for Peace Tournament, Langa Stadium, 9 December 2006.

cooperation of multiple partners from civil society, government, and a tertiary institution engaging local communities and young people by using soccer as a tool for social transformation.

## Research

The research project accompanying Kicking for Peace aims to critically examine the potential role and use of sport as a local and global tool for conflict prevention, social transformation, and peace-building. With a strong developmental and cross-cultural emphasis, the project tries to promote a holistic educational process that will generate greater awareness and understanding of the complexities of using sport as a vehicle for efforts toward these ends. The Western Cape Network has envisioned the development of a participatory approach to research and investigation that involves network members along with civil society and community members in the research process, increasing their capacity and capabilities in formulating and conducting research projects.

### *Objectives and Strategies*

The research project is a longitudinal study with the following goals:

- form a research team consisting of civil society organizations, community members, academics, and youth as direct beneficiaries and collaborators in the research
- look at theoretical and practical approaches to sport and social transformation with a focus on the Western Cape and its various communities
- develop an understanding of the complexity of using sport as a tool for social transformation, peace-building, and development at the local, national, and international levels
- explore the potential of sport in promoting human rights, children's rights, gender equity, human diversity, and social inclusion
- analyse the conceptual and management contexts required if sport is to make a positive contribution to health, education, conflict prevention, social transformation, and reconstruction and development in South African communities
- examine the challenges facing sport in promoting peace and international understanding
- present community development, social integration, and nation-building as an on-going process
- understand the role of sport in dismantling the boundaries that had kept South African communities separated in the past and create multicultural experiences that promote and inspire change

### *Methodology*

Sport and leisure activities form an integral part of social life in all communities and are intricately linked to society and politics; sport is not only a physical activity, but also one that creates space in which people interact socially.<sup>30</sup> Thus Kicking for Peace's

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30. Jarvie and Maguire, *Sport and Leisure*, 2.

organizers felt that interested network members and participating youths and their coaches should be part of the evaluation process and the research team, becoming familiar with such community research tools and methods as focus groups, interviews, questionnaires, and observation. This participatory approach has been embraced by network members and the communities they represent.

After a needs analysis revealed that all of the communities represented in the network could benefit from recreational sport programmes, a weekly soccer training pilot programme was conducted in the communities of Mfuleni and Lavender Hill, with fifty boys and fifty girls participating. The children's coaches evaluated the success and challenges of their programme and submitted written reports to the network's sports committee. After two months of training, two additional communities were included, involving an additional 200 children. The monthly training reports from all the programmes offered the first indications of the success and challenges of the project.

### *Outcomes To Date*

The children, coaches, and NGO network members identified the following needs as outcomes in their first evaluation of the programme:

- distribute food and drinks to the children, as many come without nutrition to the training
- supply soccer kits and balls as well as soccer goals, because the equipment and the facilities were unsatisfactory
- offer transport to tournaments
- find multilingual coaches
- provide honoraria and transport for the coaches

These issues have been addressed by the network members to the satisfaction of the children, coaches, and community. The initial evaluation research also identified the following needs among the communities:

- training as coaches for community youth
- a life-skills and leadership programme
- seminars and workshops on the role of tertiary institutions, government, and civil society in using sport as a tool for social transformation, peace-building, and development

Evaluation of the children's questionnaires revealed that the majority of them thought that friendships could develop through soccer. They also acknowledged, however, that soccer could create hostility within their families, circle of friends, their communities, and between communities. Asked why they chose to take part in Kicking for Peace, the boys and girls offered the following answers:

- I like soccer and learning new skills.
- I represent my community.
- I like to teach others.
- I want to play with children from other communities.
- It can help you to be someone one day.
- It will keep me out of gangsterism.

I want more skills.  
 I like the food and putting on the Kicking for Peace T-shirts.  
 I want to make my dream come true.  
 It teaches me to be a good person.

Asked what they have learned about themselves by participating in the initiative, they offered the following:

To learn to know one another.  
 To respect other players and other people.  
 Everyone is very peaceful when they play.  
 How to communicate with other people.  
 That I have a skill and I am good at it.  
 Not to give up and endure.  
 Trust and love.  
 Discipline and dedication.  
 I learned to respect myself and other children.  
 To be peaceful and communicate with respect.  
 Working like a team.  
 To be a good human being.

A growing awareness of the role sport can play in their lives and communities was identifiable from questionnaires and is summarized as follows:

- The sport and soccer initiatives are communal programmes, which create joy and bring us closer together, and where individuals and groups from all parts of society and from all parts of communities can contribute, feel proud, accepted, and respected as equals, and play on the same team.
- Any joint community initiative requires trust and the building of relationships. The likelihood of any success is reduced in the absence of a minimum of the restoration of relationships in a community. Empathy and understanding, moral outrage, and remorse are often not alone sufficient to restore the basis of a sustainable co-existence between fragmented communities.
- Personal and communal relationships take time to develop and restore. They are dependent on building trust, removing barriers of separation, and people getting to know one another.
- If appropriate, well-established, and participant-related mechanisms are put in place, soccer can be a unique tool to help people in getting to know each other better in addition to being a healthy recreational activity for youth.

## Challenges

Although Kicking for Peace has been extremely successful since its inception in 2006, the Western Cape Network is aware of the necessity to constantly promote it in order to sustain community interest and must deal with the issues of sustainability that commonly face community-driven projects. In many ways, Kicking for Peace's roots were the young people from the disadvantaged areas included in the programme who approached NGOs to begin a soccer league. Parallel to these discussions between young

people and local NGOs, the network was discussing the need for innovative tools to be used in community peace-building. The network's discussions were an extension of the discussions held during the Mandela seminar at UWC.

Although the children and youth advocating for a soccer programme lived in different formerly segregated communities that had had little or no interaction with one another, they shared a common interest—in soccer. Kicking for Peace has been a dream come true for many of the youth, allowing them to participate in regular training and tournaments, and giving them a break from the difficult socioeconomic circumstances and tensions in their communities. Kicking for Peace has provided them hours of joy, the experience of teamwork, interaction with new friends from different communities, something to belong to other than a gang, and a positive alternative to boredom and drug use. The programme's participatory evaluation research indicates that not only have the participants gotten to know others through it, but they have also learned to respect each other and in the process of doing so, discovered positive things about themselves, strengthening their own self-respect, respect for others, trust, love, dedication, and perseverance. It seems as if the concrete benefits and changes regularly experienced by the young people participating in the programme are enough to sustain interest in it, with the number of youth and communities interested in the programme constantly increasing.

To address the issue of the sustainability of skills and training of coaches, in September 2007 the network held its first coaching workshop, accredited by the South African Football Association, for thirty potential soccer coaches from among participating communities, parents, and teachers. The Chrysalis Academy hosted the training, with financial support from the Violence Prevention Through Urban Upgrading project. The participating civil society organizations were asked to identify four or five youths, parents, or teachers already actively involved in the community or in youth projects to participate in the three-day workshop. Successful participants are expected to give the NGOs a minimum of thirty hours of their time before applying, via the NGOs, for a follow-up coaching course. These same coaches and other participants were to have the opportunity in 2009 to attend further courses accredited by UWC.

The City of Cape Town has recently proposed entering into a partnership agreement with the network to assist Kicking for Peace. Such a step would not only increase the project's chances for sustainability, but would provide the network with access to a platform through which it can possibly influence policy and improve the delivery of youth development programmes involving sport by local government.

## CONCLUSION

The need for peace-building and community development in South Africa, and all of Africa, is as important as ever. The initiatives and efforts of NGOs, community-based organizations, tertiary institutions, and government dealing with conflict resolution and community peace-building are numerous and wide ranging. The strength of the collaboration discussed here rests in common values, regular exchange, mutual assistance, and joint initiatives. Evaluation and assessment of the initiative includes an innovative participatory approach. Kicking for Peace, with its focus on youth, offers an example of a way forward in addressing the needs of various organizations in the field of conflict resolution, peace-building, and development in a creative and collaborative

way. Continuous participatory research will remain a core component of the programme and has been identified by network members as necessary for continuing to assess how recreational sport at the community level can be used effectively for development, reconciliation, and peace. Community ownership and multistakeholder collaboration in the management, implementation, and assessment of the programme remain vital.

It is hoped that the Western Cape Network for Community, Peace and Development and the Kicking for Peace initiative will have a multiplier effect and that other provinces and countries will undertake similar projects so that a continent-wide platform can be created to exchange and discuss best practices and challenges in the area of social transformation, community peace-building, and sport. In this way new strategies addressing such peace-building and developmental issues as sport hold within them the potential to influence policies and thus expand the frontiers of conflict transformation and peace-building throughout Africa. As South African archbishop Desmond Tutu maintains, 'Through properly organized sport we can learn to play together with respect and with laughter, we can learn to all be on the same team, and in the process, we can contribute to building a new South Africa that is a just nation for all'.<sup>31</sup>

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31. Keim, *Nation-Building at Play*, 1.





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# Zambia: In Search of a People-Driven Constitution

*Patrick Rankhumise*

SINCE OBTAINING INDEPENDENCE IN 1964 ZAMBIA, formerly Northern Rhodesia, has amended its constitution four times. Each amendment process has been an exercise in the political survival and monopoly of the ruling party over other political actors. The opposition parties and elements of civil society have now begun to pressure the government to broaden the constitution-making process, allowing for significant input from the broader population. The most recent such effort began in 2003 and took a new turn in 2007.

## THE 2003 CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW

When Levy Mwanawasa became president in 2001, he promised the people of Zambia a 'New Deal': His government would ensure an amendment of the constitution to suit the interests and reflect the will of Zambians. Contrary to the recommendations made by the Constitution Review Commission in 1970, 1990, and 1993, the amendment process held in 2003 was conducted in a manner perceived by most ordinary citizens as being favorable to the ruling political elites.

Zambia's Inquiries Act gives the president the power to appoint members of the Constitutional Review Commission and to accept or reject the commission's recommendations. The review commission's suggestions have usually centered on limiting the powers of the president and have called for the creation of a constituent assembly—consisting of civil society groups, church organizations, farmers unions, nongovernmental organizations, and members of parliament—to legitimize constitutional amendments, rather than having this authority rest with the National Assembly. These recommendations were often overruled; instead, constitutional amendments continued to be enacted by the president after approval by the assembly. Parliamentarians in

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the ruling party, at the expense of other parties and the rest of the population, have easily rejected recommendations viewed as limiting their political monopoly.

Mwanawasa's pledge to be inclusive and solicitous in the constitutional process appeared to open a new era in the formation of democracy in Zambia. This seeming willingness to engage more citizens in the process earned him accolades within and outside Zambia. His promise to expand the political space could lead to transparency in governance and more legitimacy for the government. In April 2003, Mwanawasa instated a Constitutional Review Commission headed by Wila Mung'omba.

These constitutional commissions must be viewed against the background of the popular dissent generated by the 1996 constitution and electoral act. Contentious amendments to the 1996 constitution included, among others, forbidding people born of non-Zambian parents from contesting as presidential candidates; disqualification of traditional leaders as presidential candidates; and granting parliament the power to accept or reject constitutional recommendations before enactment by the president.

The Mung'omba-led commission, like its predecessors, recommended the adoption of an inclusive process in the form of a constituent assembly to amend the constitution and also suggested setting limits on the executive powers of the president. Other recommendations of the commission included the right of individuals living in Zambia before the adoption of the constitution to become citizens; the right of individuals with at least one Zambian parent to be considered citizens of Zambia; the right of traditional leaders to contest elections; and recognition of fundamental human rights, including for women and children.

In addition, the Electoral Review Commission recommended replacing the system of electing presidential candidates with a 'fifty-plus-one' system. Under the standing system, a 'first past the post' approach, the president could be elected if he or she did not receive at least 50 percent of the vote. This meant that the incumbent merely had to get a higher percentage of votes than a challenger.

Mwanawasa—taking advantage of the authority that the 1996 constitution gave him vis-à-vis the constitutional amending process, and knowing that he had won the 2001 presidential elections because of the design of the electoral system—decided to delay both processes until after the elections scheduled for 2006. Approving the recommendations of both commissions would have been political suicide. Mwanawasa argued to the people that undertaking all three processes—elections, passage of the electoral act, and other constitutional amendments—would require too much money and time. It would be better to concentrate on the elections first, which he promised would be free and fair, and then take care of the two other issues.

Convinced of the president's commitment to his 'New Deal' for the people, Zambians allowed the elections to proceed ahead of the enactment of the recommendations made by the Constitutional Review Commission and the Electoral Review Commission. Mwanawasa's 2006 electoral victory confirmed Zambians' confidence in his commitment to realize the consolidation of democracy, starting with the creation of an environment that would allow for a more open constitution-amending process. Of interest, Mwanawasa won with less than a majority of the vote. He received 42.98 percent, while his closest rival, Michael Sata, received 29.37 percent.

## THE NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE ACT OF 2007

After the 2006 elections, the political debate shifted to the need to bring the constitutional review and electoral review processes to conclusion. As the discourse developed from public statements by various stakeholders, it became clear that the country was divided on whether to make the National Assembly or a constituent assembly the forum for amending the constitution.

As noted, a constituent assembly had been the preference of the Constitutional Review Commissions as the body to lead in revising the constitution. Smaller parties and civil society organizations also preferred the constituent assembly, viewing it as providing the best path toward inclusivity and transparency in debating and agreeing on the final parameters of the constitution. Under this scenario, the constituent assembly would issue a draft constitution that would then be put to a national referendum. Once approved by the people, the president would enact it as the supreme law governing the country.

The government—basically, the ruling party—preferred, however, having the National Assembly take the lead in the process. Previous experience had demonstrated the government’s penchant for rejecting all recommendations not favoring the ruling party, thus rendering the whole constitutional review process useless and a waste of money and time. The constituent assembly option provided for the accommodation of a broader range of actors than did the National Assembly approach. The latter involved an elitist approach that would allow political officeholders to finalize the national constitution and the president to act as a rubber stamp.

Amid controversy, the government rejected the constituent assembly option and passed the National Constitutional Conference Act of 2007, instituting a National Constitution Conference as the mechanism through which amendment activities are to be conducted. The process is to be held under the auspices of the Zambia Centre for Inter-Party Dialogue. There has been concern about the act and the Zambia Centre as the facilitator of the process envisaged because they are both viewed as structured in a manner that would allow the constitutional amendment process to benefit or be manipulated by the ruling party. Some civil society organizations, including the Law Society of Zambia and the Zambia Federation of Trade Unions, have indicated their intention to participate in the conference.

Thus, forty-three years after attaining independence from Britain, Zambia continues to grapple with the development of a people-driven constitution. The prevailing tendency has been for the political elite, especially the ruling party, to mastermind constitutional developments based on its personal political survival. Meanwhile, the majority of the Zambian population remains outside the process, allowing such political manipulation to continue. In recent years, however, elements of civil society have issued more vocal calls for an inclusive constitution-making process. So far, however, the ruling party continues to determine the direction and content of the process.



## Conflict, Peace-Building, Human Security, and Democratization in Lesotho

*Patrick Rankhumise, Kgothatso Shai, and Mompheleleng Maphunye*

Academics and practitioners of peace studies and conflict resolution have long emphasized the need to establish a nexus between conflict, peace, and development to better understand the state of human peace and security. These links are key to addressing and resolving a myriad of human conflicts, especially on the African continent. The tenuous sociopolitical and human security situations in Lesotho provide a rich backdrop for a discussion of such linkages and the possible solutions to which an understanding of them might lead. A review of what can be done to alleviate the plight of the people of Lesotho—specifically, how to prevent the escalation of conflict, to successfully manage conflict to a peaceful resolution when one does occur, to generate economic development, and to obtain food and medical assistance—points to the conclusion that democratization and the laying of a foundation for sustainable democracy are the likeliest paths to human security in Lesotho.

**THE SHIFT TO A UNI-POLAR WORLD ORDER** has precipitated a rise in new forms of human conflict that pose serious challenges to the protection of civilians by the state. New human security threats are manifest in conflicts that result from, among others factors, complex emergencies (Darfur), terrorism (Afghanistan and Pakistan), resource wars (Niger Delta), politico-economic greed (Zimbabwe), and tensions between traditional and modern systems of governance (Swaziland). Conflicts in Lesotho can be classified as emanating in subtle ways from all of the above, with the exception of complex emergencies. In all of these conflict scenarios, human security is seriously compromised.

In the post-cold war period, the international community continues to grapple with bringing or restoring peace to various parts of the world. Some of these efforts are highly visible, as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe, for example. Although the conflicts in these countries differ in content and cause, central to each are the implications of conflict with respect to threats to the lives and livelihoods of civilians. Less visible to the broader world is the conflict in Lesotho, a country of slightly less than

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2 million people where the current political environment is fertile ground for an escalation of hostilities that if not properly managed could lead to intensified conflict and widespread human suffering.

## DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

The concepts of conflict, peace-building, security, and democracy and democratization are key to a discussion of Lesotho and the challenges it faces.

### Conflict

The term *conflict* refers to a situation of hostility between individuals, groups, or states resulting from competition over resources, power, or opposing interests in other areas. According to the theory of realism, human relations are fundamentally conflictual, so conflict is inevitable in every community. This theory has been challenged by scholars who argue that individuals, groups, and states exist to cooperate.<sup>1</sup> Both propositions raise the issue of whether conflict is desirable. The two concepts of conflict and cooperation are, in fact, related. This implies that conflict can generate cooperation and vice versa. For example, during the apartheid era in South Africa, a number of liberation movements—the African National Congress (ANC), Azanian People's Organization (AZAPO), and Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC)—put aside their ideological differences to unite under the umbrella of the United Democratic Front (UDF) to fight a common enemy. Cooperation, however, can also lead to conflict. Lesotho is a case in point—political parties form coalitions (i.e., cooperate) during elections to gain power, but then quite often disagree over an appropriate distribution of that power and so parry (i.e., conflict) over the allocation of parliamentary seats.

Individuals need each other for survival; along the way conflict is unavoidable. What is important for all parties is that differences be reconciled without resort to violence. Jonathon Goodhand and David Hulme note that 'conflict is only a problem when society cannot represent, manage or resolve its different interests in a productive manner, thus initiating a degenerative or destructive cycle of physical violence'.<sup>2</sup>

### Peace-building

Peace-building as a process derives from the concept of 'peace'. In order to have a clear understanding of what constitutes the process of peace-building, it is necessary to first define peace. The term *peace* refers to a state wherein individuals, groups of people, or nation-states co-exist in harmony. Peace does not necessarily mean the absence of conflict, but rather the absence of violence in the process of settling conflict. Peace-building therefore entails the adoption of mechanisms intended to bring about an amicable end to hostilities and confrontations between and within various institutions and structures of society.

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1. R. Jackson, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2003).

2. J. Goodhand and D. Hulme, 'From wars to complex emergencies: Understanding conflict and peacebuilding in the new world order', *Third World Quarterly* 20:1 (1999).

## Security

The definition of security has shifted in recent years with the demise of the bi-polar world order. Security had been defined traditionally as the capacity of the state to safeguard its territorial integrity against foreign aggression. This capacity was measured in terms of the size of the state's defense force and the quantity and quality of its weaponry as well as the number of international and regional security alliances it had forged. In the post-cold war era security, however, is no longer defined in military terms. Today, the term *security* is interpreted as the well-being of a state's citizens and the extent to which a state is able to protect them from internal and external threats.

This new definition of security represents a shift from military concerns to other aspects of human existence, including personal safety, access to basic needs, and the right to exercise basic freedoms. This new focus dovetails with the two-fold definition of human security established by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). First, it views human security as the protection of people from chronic maladies (such as disease), famine, oppression, and other conditions. Second, it highlights the need for what Keith Muloongo, Roger Kibasomba, and Jemima Njeri Kariri describe as 'protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life.'<sup>3</sup>

## Democracy and Democratization

Since 1990 democratic regimes have become preferred forms of government. Despite this, politicians, legal practitioners, political scientists, international relations experts, sociologists, and others with an interest in democratization have not adopted a generally agreed-upon definition of democracy. Here, the term *democracy* refers to a government of representatives who have been duly and fairly elected by the people through the electoral vote. It is important to remember, however, that democracy is a complex concept that goes beyond the mere conduct of regular elections. In fact, a country may hold elections regularly but not be accorded democratic credentials if it is found that fundamental freedoms are not respected or protected adequately.

For the purposes of the present study, it is necessary to move beyond definitions to look at bringing democracy to a state. The process commonly referred to as democratization is the transition from state-centric governance in the form of military rule, dictatorship, or one-party state, among others, to governance derived from free and fair elections. Such a transition widens the political space to accommodate divergent views and promote inclusivity in governance. Key features of a democratic order include universal suffrage, regular elections, a civil society, and adherence to the rule of law. Because of the complexity of this process, quite often democracy as an attainable goal is difficult. As noted, democracy is more than holding regular elections. Like Botswana, South Africa is said to be a classic democratic African state. In fact, the centralization of power in the ANC is a cause for concern because the party's power diminishes the role of the opposition in government affairs. However, the practice of 'floor crossing'—which allows a political office bearer to move from one party to the

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3. K. Muloongo, R. Kibasomba, and J.N. Kariri (eds.), *The Many Faces of Human Security: Case Studies of Seven Countries in Southern Africa* (Pretoria, Institute for Security Studies, 2005), 43.

other without forfeiting his or her seat—offers freedom of choice to individuals, which is an important principle of democracy.

Democratization can also be understood as a transitional phenomenon involving a gradual, mainly elite-driven transformation of the formal rules that govern a political system. It is thus not an end game, but rather a means to an end—democracy. Countries democratize so that they may one day be regarded as full-fledged democracies. Democratization might also be described as a stage in the evolution of a country wherein the rules governing power alternation and state society relations, though ostensibly based on democratic ideals, have not been fully internalized.<sup>4</sup>

In the African context, the phenomenon of democratization has mostly resulted from pressures arising from a variety of sources, including domestic civil society and the international community. Democratization in late twentieth-century Africa has been part of the worldwide process of political transformation in the aftermath of the cold war. Its origins lie not only in the fact that sub-Saharan Africa is an integral part of the world system of nation-states, and therefore not insulated from sociopolitical, cultural, and even philosophical influences from elsewhere, but also because African societies themselves are undergoing profound internal changes.

Two distinct phases may be identified in a democratizing regime, although one does not guarantee the other. The first phase, sometimes called political liberalization, occurs when leaders of a country open the political system to competition.<sup>5</sup> In Africa, where the one-party state held sway for much of the postcolonial period, this step has involved amending constitutions to permit opposition parties to operate legally and establishing timetables for multiparty elections at various levels of government. The second phase involves creation of the conditions that lead to the rule of law. It is more difficult than the first phase and spans a much longer period. In postcolonial Africa, formal state-society relations were asymmetrical and favored the state. Relations among state institutions were unbalanced as well, with the executive branch, usually with the support of the military, dominating the legislative and judicial branches. African executives enjoyed extraordinary powers, and until the 1990s, they were typically heads of state, heads of government, and heads of their ruling parties. They were able to appoint at least some members of the legislature, as well as judges and top civil servants. The lack of limits on executive prerogative encouraged arbitrary behavior; citizens were treated as appendages to the national leader's extended household. Jean-Germain Gros and other scholars considered Africa's postcolonial regimes 'neopatrimonialist'.<sup>6</sup>

## THE HUMAN SECURITY LANDSCAPE IN LESOTHO

Lesotho is a small, landlocked, and under-resourced country. It gained its independence from Great Britain in 1966. During the struggle for independence, nationalist leaders promised the populace democratic governance and a better life. Despite many years of self-rule, Lesotho's government remains far from fulfilling its electoral prom-

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4. Jean-Germain Gros, 'Understanding democratization' in Jean-Germain Gros (ed.), *Democratization in Late Twentieth Century Africa: Coping with Uncertainty* (Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 1998), 2.

5. J. Widener (ed.), *Political Liberalization in Africa* (Baltimore, Maryland, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).

6. Gros, 'Understanding democratization', 2–3.

ises, and human security endures as a major concern. In fact, those small changes that have been made to alleviate the plight of the Basotho, as the people of Lesotho are known, were largely made possible through the provision of foreign aid. Simply put, Lesotho has never enjoyed stable civilian government with sufficient capacity to ensure normalcy and the safety of its people.

The electoral system of Lesotho has historically impeded sustained security. Violent conflict has followed every election in the country. At times, elections have been deliberately delayed by the nation's leaders for personal gain. Not surprisingly, such actions precipitated violence that threatened the lives of ordinary people. From 1965 to 1986, Jonathan Leabua's Basotho National Party (BNP) governed Lesotho. Political and economic chaos characterized this twenty-year period, fueled in no small part by boycotts, strikes, protests, and riots in the neighboring apartheid state of South Africa. Like black South Africans, the Basotho lived in fear of violence and rioting.

To make matters worse, during this period the government of South Africa launched cross-border attacks against its neighbors, who were perceived to be sympathetic to the South African liberation movements. South Africa targeted Lesotho for destabilization because of Leabua's critical stance and in 1986 orchestrated his overthrow. Although it was hoped that the newly established interim government of Lesotho would bring normalcy to the Basotho, the country instead remained mired in the same problems. According to a report by the Electoral Institute of Southern Africa (EISA) Observer Mission on Lesotho's 2002 parliamentary elections, 'the 1986 coup ushered in seven years of renewed instability, corruption and military rule.'<sup>7</sup>

Notwithstanding the impact of a bloodless coup in 1991, the incumbent, Col. Elias T. Ramaema, laid the framework for Lesotho's return to multiparty politics. As a result of those efforts, elections were held in 1993 in which the once-banned Basotho Congress Party (BCP) emerged victorious. Its leader, Ntsu Mokhehle, became the newly elected prime minister. The return to multiparty politics was not properly engineered, however, and the winner-take-all electoral system severely limited the role of opposition parties, essentially casting them as spectators in national affairs. This provoked dissatisfaction among various opposition parties, individuals, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other civil society organizations.

To compound matters, as noted by Khabele Matlosa, in 1994 'the BCP government locked horns in a fierce conflict with various forces including the security machinery, the monarchy' and the BNP, the main opposition party.<sup>8</sup> The return to a multiparty system was no guarantee of peace and stability. Hostilities among different factions in the ruling BCP resulted in the establishment of the Lesotho Congress for Democracy (LCD) under Mokhehle, the former leader of the BCP. Mokhehle had been replaced by Pakalithi Mosisili as leader of the BCP. In the elections of 1998, the LCD came to power, and Mosisili became president. The opposition claimed election fraud, which raised tensions and resulted in a constitutional crisis and civil unrest. Troops from Botswana and South Africa—under the auspices of the Southern African Development

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7. Electoral Institute of Southern Africa Observer Mission, *Lesotho Parliamentary Elections Report*, Johannesburg, 2002.

8. K. Matlosa, 'Aid, development and democracy in Lesotho, 1966–1996', paper presented at 'Aid, development and democracy in southern Africa', a workshop organized by the Centre for African Studies, Cape Town, 21–22 November 1999, 3.

Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defense and Security—staged a military operation to quell the unrest and prevent members of the nation's military, the Lesotho Defense Force (LDF), to accede to power.<sup>9</sup>

The SADC's military involvement highlighted tensions in Lesotho politics. Although its intervention guaranteed the continuation of civilian rule, Lesotho remained politically turbulent, with the attendant implications for human security. That said, by maintaining multiparty politics, Lesotho took a significant step toward democratization. Elections held in February 2007 were widely viewed as 'credible, transparent, free and fair'. Yet challenges to ensure the full protection and safety of Lesotho's citizens endure. The inability of Lesotho to establish a sustainable peace can be attributed to a number of factors.

### Challenges to Human Security

The issues currently challenging human security in Lesotho include drought, a devastating HIV/AIDS epidemic, severe levels of unemployment, poor governance, and politically motivated shootings.

In June 2007, Lesotho experienced violent attacks against a number of its political leaders. Targets included several senior officials of the ruling LCD as well as Tom Thabane, a former minister of foreign affairs and leader of the main opposition party, the All Basotho Convention (ABC). Five people were arrested and charged with treason in connection with these attacks. It is significant that three of those charged were members of the Lesotho Defense Force. This fact reflects the porous nature of Lesotho's security mechanisms. The LDF has been infiltrated to a certain extent with individuals more interested in self-aggrandizement than with the maintenance of peace and security. Such circumstances only serve to exacerbate Lesotho's on-going sociopolitical problems. As noted previously, multiparty elections do not ensure political stability; neither do they translate into economic stability and development, the main concerns of human security.

The June 2007 shootings took the international community by surprise, yet they were certainly the end product of on-going, hostile political relations that emerged from the February 2007 elections. Prior to these elections, a number of political parties had formed coalitions with the intent of ousting the LCD government. When the LCD won the elections in a manner characterized as 'credible, free and fair' by the SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections,<sup>10</sup> deep-seated differences between the ruling party and the opposition parties, and within coalition parties, were vented. The resultant lack of stability, combined with the hostile political climate, makes it difficult to determine the actual motives behind the June 2007 shootings. If the situation is not handled properly, it could readily escalate into a vicious conflict that will reverse the few gains that have been made with respect to democratization.

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9. H. Solomon and M. Muller (eds.), *Contributions towards an African Renaissance* (Durban, ACCORD: African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes, 2000), 39–40.

10. South African Development Community, *SADC Principles and Guidelines Governing Democratic Elections*, August 2004, [www.iss.co.za/Af/RegOrg/unity\\_to\\_union/pdfs/sadc/elecprinciples.pdf](http://www.iss.co.za/Af/RegOrg/unity_to_union/pdfs/sadc/elecprinciples.pdf).

Natural disasters have also contributed to Lesotho's instability. Droughts in particular have a long history of bringing misery to the people of southern Africa. The economy of Lesotho is hydro-agric, so continuous drought only deepens the country's human security crisis. Lesotho has no other industrial development prospects at this time. Western nations, typically donors toward economic development, have labeled Lesotho a 'purely agrarian society', and in so doing have further marginalized it.<sup>11</sup> The current challenges facing Lesotho's economy will only speed its decline, causing even more negative pressures on human security. Future generations will be challenged to meet even half of Lesotho's Millennium Development Goals.

Given Lesotho's weak economic situation, it is not surprising that the country has been hit hard by unemployment. Overall, Lesotho has a 50 percent unemployment rate. Limited development makes it nearly impossible for the government to provide adequate jobs to the citizenry. As a result, Lesotho has become a labour reserve for South African mines, farms, and factories. Those jobs that are available, particularly government jobs, are typically reserved for older, and in some cases retired, people. This trend is perpetuated under the pretext that the young are inexperienced, but such an argument is hardly tenable. Bypassing and denying young people opportunities to accumulate experience produces unemployment crises. The issue of neglecting or sidelining intelligent and productive youth has also resulted in the loss of population through the out-migration of the very talent that Lesotho needs to meet its many challenges. In addition, rebellious and disaffected youth reacting to the dearth of opportunities and the stress and frustration that such a situation produces could one day pose a serious threat to the incumbent government, further compromising human security in Lesotho.

HIV/AIDS has exacted and continues to take a tremendous toll on Lesotho and its people. Almost three-quarters of the adult population is infected with HIV/AIDS and its related, opportunistic illnesses. The high rate of infection is partly attributable to the religious practices and traditional doctrines of the Basotho, yet HIV/AIDS carries with it a baseless stigma. Condom use is discouraged, and polygamy is encouraged. Lesotho is utterly without resources in combating HIV/AIDS, and access to even adequate health care is virtually nonexistent. Such a situation puts the lives of the economically productive at high risk of contracting and ultimately succumbing to HIV/AIDS. The diminished number of economically productive citizens has profound implications for sustainability and human security.

The government of Lesotho has turned to foreign aid as the only recourse in its efforts to secure adequate medical and food supplies. The international community thus far has shown itself willing to help, but this is ultimately an unsustainable solution. At any time, if relations between Lesotho's government and its donors become fraught, the latter can withdraw aid, leaving ordinary people to suffer and perish.

Amid such an array of challenges to human security, poor governance has become the domestic and international scourge of the twenty-first century. In the case of Lesotho, the key features of poor governance are corruption and livestock theft. On top of being a threat to human security, poor governance obstructs every available development path. According to John Dzimba and Matsolo Matooane, livestock theft is carried out through the transportation of animals from one village to the next and eventually

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11. Matlosa, 'Aid, development and democracy', 8.

into South Africa's meat outlets. The syndicates responsible for these thefts oftentimes work in concert with corrupt law enforcement agents. To a notable extent, corruption in Lesotho has been crafted from within, becoming even more sophisticated in its execution with the involvement of outsiders, particularly South Africans.

## DEMOCRATIZATION IN LESOTHO

Given Lesotho's array of serious sociopolitical challenges, its continued democratization is vital if meaningful solutions to its problems are to be found and implemented. It is therefore useful to revisit the general elections of February 2007 to see where their results ultimately might lead. The ruling LCD, headed by Mosisili, and the ABC were the main parties in the elections. The BNP, the Alliance of Congress Parties (ACP), and the Popular Front for Democracy (PFD) also figured prominently.

Lesotho was the seventh country to adopt the SADC principles and guidelines governing elections established in 2004. What is important about the 2007 elections is that not only were they declared free and fair, but they also were conducted under the auspices of the SADC's guidelines and principles, which are deeply rooted in the democratization phenomenon. To pursue democratization, it is necessary that citizens participate in government decision-making processes freely and equally. One of the cornerstones of this requirement involves elections. SADC guidelines complement the notion of democratization by seeking to provide citizens with an equal opportunity to practice the right to vote—and be voted for—and full participation in the political process. Just as important, SADC guidelines call for the acceptance of and respect for election results on the part of all citizens and parties.

The 2007 elections were significant in that they offer one measure of whether the SADC region is indeed on a steady path toward the democratization of its political system. Because the elections were declared credible, free, and fair—with Lesotho as the SADC chair at the time—it is reasonable to assert that the SADC region has in fact made significant strides in strengthening the participation of its citizens in decision-making processes and in consolidating democracy, democratic practices, and democratic institutions.<sup>12</sup> The SADC principles for conducting democratic elections call for elections at regular intervals, as provided by countries' constitutions. Lesotho is abiding by this principle. One of the conditions set out in the SADC guidelines is the requirement that member states conducting elections guarantee equal access for all political parties to state media. Here, too, Lesotho has adhered to the SADC guidelines. Radio Lesotho and Television Lesotho both offer an hour to all political parties to present their political manifestos placed before the public.<sup>13</sup>

## CONCLUSION

For Lesotho to overcome the human security crisis it faces, it is important for the incumbent government to embark on a robust mobilization of resources to alleviate the

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12. J. Ngwawi, 'Lesotho elections "credible, free and fair", LCD returned to power', *Southern African News Feature* 7:13 (2007).

13. *Ibid.*

plight of its people. In specific, programmes that deal with youth issues, particularly massive unemployment, should be crafted and implemented to stimulate economic innovation and development. Further, the government must continue to reach out to and seek economic partnership with the international community to jointly craft solutions for economic development and the amelioration of chronic food and medicine shortages. The international community should use the available continental and regional cooperation frameworks—including the African Union, New Partnership for Africa's Development, Southern African Customs Union, Southern African Common Monetary Union, and SADC—to support Lesotho in its efforts to achieve socioeconomic sustainability. Most important, the processes of democratization should be protected and nurtured so that democratic practices and democratic conduct can take firm root and create an enabling environment for the rule of law.



## *Why Leaders Choose War: The Psychology of Prevention*, Jonathan Renshon

Westport, Conn.: Praeger Security International, 2006. xiii + 221 pages. Bibliographical references and index. ISBN 978-0-275-99085-5. \$49.95; £27.95.

*Reviewed by Mohammed Cherkaoui*

AS THE ADMINISTRATION OF U.S. PRESIDENT George W. Bush appeared to explore military action against an allegedly pre-nuclear Iran four years after launching a war in search of nonexistent weapons of mass destruction in neighbouring Iraq, one might have been justified in feeling that the world had become an undeclared preventive-action-driven reality, outside the legal framework of the UN Charter. Jonathon Renshon's study of preventive war could not have come at a better time, given its examination of the logic of coercion in the minds, perceptions, and worldviews of the leaders of the world's sole superpower. Renshon explains how the strategy of preventive war resulted from the perception that deterrence—long the basis of U.S. foreign policy—was likely to fail.

Renshon presents a comparative analysis of three post-World War II case studies: Britain's attack on Egypt during the Suez Canal crisis (1956); Israel's strike against Iraq's Osiraq nuclear reactor (1981); and the Bush White House's decision to invade Iraq (2003). He also examines two cases in which leaders opted not to launch a preventive attack: the targeting of Soviet nuclear facilities by the United States during the administrations of Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower and decisions by Pakistani and Indian leaders not to demolish the other's emerging nuclear capabilities.

Would U.S. military action against Iran be a preventive or pre-emptive war? Would an attack eliminate the 'Iranian threat' or the source of the threat? To construct an adequate conceptualization of a preventive war theory in the post-9/11 era, Renshon starts with well-referenced definitions involving acting 'preventively', or 'pre-emptively' according to international relations theorists, including Jack Levy and Lawrence Friedman, and some realists, among them Michael Walzer and Samuel Huntington. Friedman, for example, argues that true pre-emption can be 'decisive in motivation and offensive in effect' (p. 3), in which he implies a legal issue centering on a response to an *imminent*

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threat. Renshon captures the divergence of concepts of preventive war from their precursors, looking at reasons and rationales for taking such action: declining relative power, bad faith in the adversary, a conviction of war as inevitable, the perception of a brief window of opportunity in which to act, a situation that appears to favour a first strike, and black-and-white thinking.

Renshon notes that former deputy national security advisor Adams James Steinberg argues for four categories of preventive force: action against terrorists; intervention in failing states; action to eliminate a dangerous capability; and the use of force to effect regime change (p. 4). Renshon asserts that not all preventive actions are wars to maintain the balance of power. Still, one wonders if prevention and pre-emption are two sides to the same coin in dealing with a perceived threat that could be either imminent or expected sometime in the future. Renshon believes that preventive war, driven by a leadership's fear, among other factors, is "a blunt instrument, not a panacea" (p. 165).

In his analysis of leaders who advocate preventive war, Renshon appears to discard the realism of international relations and instead borrows from social psychologists and conflict analysts. Within the leader-or-situation debate, he argues persuasively that psychoanalysis of leaders and their evolving perceptions and narratives can usefully explain their decisions to use coercive force. Renshon lays out an effective assessment of the motivations and drives behind the psychology of leaders who claim to carry the banner of morality in defending their countries' national security from an imminent threat by an untrustworthy and aggressive enemy. He observes that between 10 September and 12 September 2001, what had changed was not the threat of al-Qaida, 'but the lens through which the threat was viewed' (p. 122). An interesting comparison is the distinction between Truman and Eisenhower's decisions not to act militarily against the Soviets during the cold war and the justifications couched in terms of morality for Israel's attack against Iraq's nuclear reactor and the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq as part of the Bush administration's so-called war on terror.

Renshon persuasively confirms the centrality of perception, more so than any other factor, as the driving force in waging preventive wars and escalating conflicts. His publication could be a textbook for analysis on how perceived threats can trigger leaders' aggression, making facts secondary in significance as determining elements. It also offers a revealing assessment of the current international system's weakness, including that the UN Charter does not address fully the legality of preventive action.

Renshon could have pushed his line of inquiry further in analyzing the point at which leaders, known for their resilience to criticism, start to exhaust fear-driven energy and become susceptible to a reality check. In other words, when does the preventive war theory, such as the Bush doctrine, reach its limit? What is likely to follow such a reckoning? Readers would definitely benefit from elaboration on the limitations of the preventive doctrine.

Considering the perspective of the target of preventive or pre-emptive action would have also enriched Renshon's efforts at theory building. What goes through the mind of a leader when confronting the possibility of being the target in such a scenario? Pursuing this line of inquiry would help pave the way toward counter-preventive war theory. What steps, for example, might leaders of 'rogue states' take in defying risk-taking presidents along the lines of Bush? Such analysis would help solve the equation of why leaders choose war, especially in this nuclear age.



