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Professor Alpaslan Özerdem

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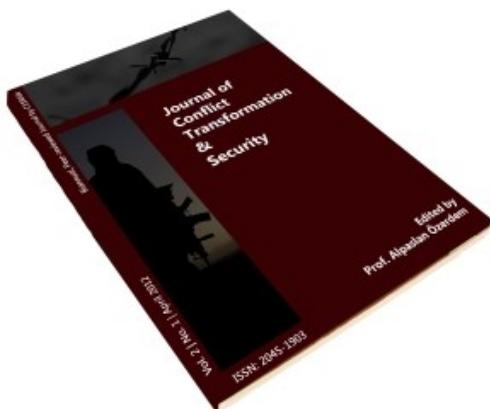
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Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security

Unarmed Civilian Protection and How Women's Participation Increases the Sustainability of Peace

By Eliška Jelínková*

Abstract

Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) deserves to be considered as a valid approach to peacebuilding, and gender mainstreaming should also form an essential part of all future peacebuilding efforts. This article compares the success of missions that have used armed approaches with those where UCP was employed. The benefits and limits of both approaches and their probability of achieving self-sustainability are assessed along with the factors that have contributed to successful UCP missions. All-female UCP units, a recent example of gender mainstreaming, are identified as being in a unique position to contribute to the sustainability of peace. Further, UCP is recognized as having the potential to replace an armed approach thanks to the variety of methods through which it helps to address the roots of conflicts, work towards conflict prevention, and build local resilience.

Keywords: Peacebuilding, Peacekeeping, Conflict, Gender mainstreaming, Unarmed Civilian Protection, Sustainability.



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Unarmed Civilian Protection and How Women's Participation Increases the Sustainability of Peace

Introduction

Peacebuilding is vital in a world where the number of people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection has nearly doubled in the past decade: figures have risen from an average of 30 to 40 million people per year to an average of 50 to 70 million. The Global Peace Index, which is produced annually by the Institute for Economics and Peace, noted in 2015 that while “levels of peace remained stable over the last year [...] they] are still lower than in 2008. The indicators that have deteriorated the most are the number of refugees and IDPs [internally displaced persons], the number of deaths from internal conflict and the impact of terrorism”;¹ in fact, the only two indicators out of 23 that show noticeable improvement are those that count the number of external conflicts fought and the amount of funding being spent on UN peacekeeping.² The nature of conflicts has significantly changed in the last 100 years, and in today’s conflicts, which are predominantly intra-state, the overwhelming majority of casualties—between 75 and 90 per cent—are women and children. Perpetrators have understood that the most effective way to break up communities, to prevent the restoration of peace, and to postpone the return of normalcy is to target women, who are still left out of most peace processes.

It is essential that peacebuilding mechanisms are developed to respond to these changes in conflict and the new challenges they pose. This article begins by asking whether the current peacekeeping approach taken by the United Nations (UN) could be substituted or complemented by the approach taken by Nonviolent Peaceforce and Peace Brigades International, two organizations which engage in Unarmed Civilian Protection as an alternative method for addressing conflict. I go on to consider whether the involvement of women helps to sustain peace and whether or not the mentality with which we approach conflict has a significant impact on the outcome of the conflict itself. While conflict is inevitable, violence can be significantly reduced if armed approaches, the reliance on armed threat for deterrence, and the employment of power are replaced by an inclusive, arms-free strategy that focuses on the building of relationships and conflict prevention. In fact, the abuse of power decreases drastically if unarmed approaches are employed and multiple armed actors are excluded from the scene of conflict.

The status quo of UN peacebuilding

UN peacekeeping operations

In 2007, the Secretary General’s Policy Committee described peacebuilding as:

A range of measures targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development. Peacebuilding strategies must be coherent and tailored to the specific needs of the country concerned, based on national ownership, and should comprise a carefully prioritized, sequenced, and relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objectives.³

The first-ever UN peacekeeping mission was an unarmed military observer mission that the UN Security Council deployed to the Middle East to monitor the Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours in 1948. In total, there have been 71 peacekeeping operations worldwide since then, the vast majority of which have been carried out within the last 20 years. The basic principles of UN peacekeeping involve the consent of the parties involved, impartiality, and the non-use of force except in self-defence or in defence of the mandate. UN Peacekeeping has unique qualities: these include legitimacy, which stems from political consensus in the Security Council and international legality; burden sharing; and an ability to deploy and sustain the presence of troops and police drawn from anywhere around the world. UN operations are able to call on large numbers of readily available peacekeepers who are contributed by member countries on a voluntary basis to advance the organization's increasingly multidimensional mandates. In the UN's earliest interventions, its work involved monitoring ceasefires, setting up demilitarized zones, and ensuring post-conflict security (For the composition of UN peacekeeping forces see Charts 1.1., 1.2., and 1.3).

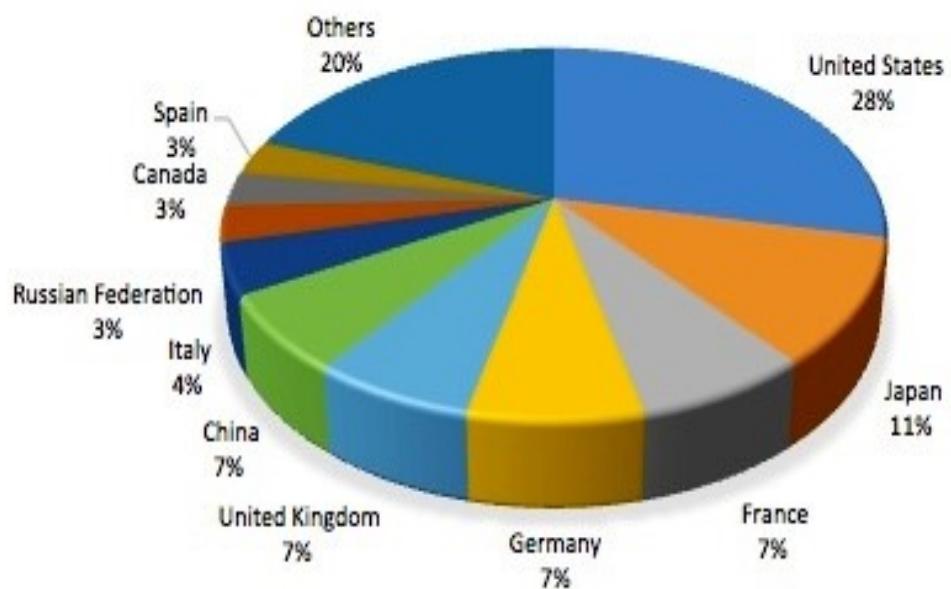


Chart 1.1. The top 10 providers of assessed contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations in 2013-2015.

Source: United Nations <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml>

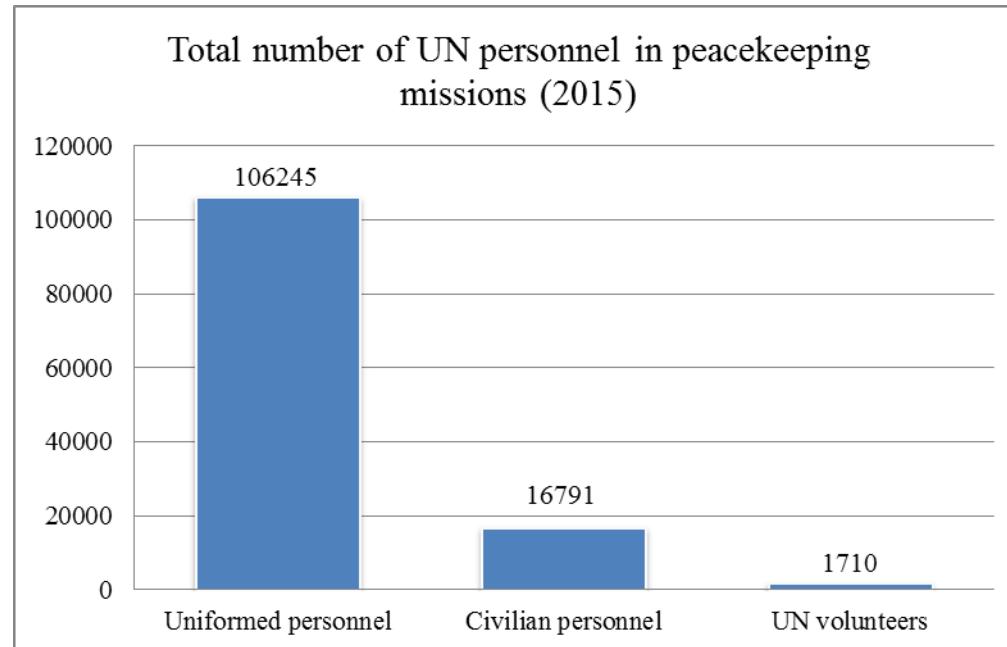


Chart 1.2. Total number of UN personnel in peacekeeping missions (2015)

Source: United Nations <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml>

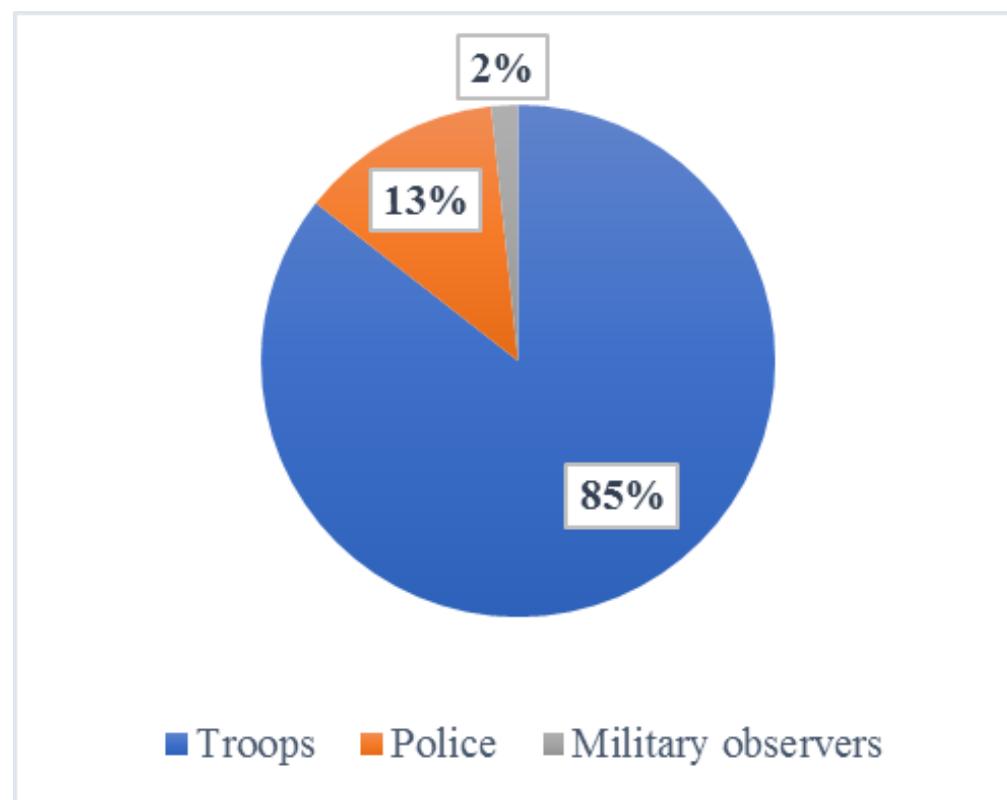


Chart 1.3. Uniformed personnel composition (2015).

Source: United Nations <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml>



Today, UN peace operations also include more complex military interventions, civilian police duties, human rights interventions, election oversight, and post-conflict reconstruction. Due to their flexibility, peace missions have been deployed in many types of situations over the past two decades, and, despite the principle of impartiality, UN peacekeepers have been tasked with offensive operations against designated enemy combatants in Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo, two war zones where the UN's operations did not secure the consent of all of the main parties.⁴ The success rate of peacekeeping missions is disputed; however, notably successful missions have included UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone (1999-2005), UNAMIC and UNTAC in Cambodia (1991-1993),⁵ ONUSAL in El Salvador (1991-1995), MINUGUA in Guatemala (1997), ONUMOZ in Mozambique (1992-1994), UNTAG in Namibia (1989-1990) and UNMOT in Tajikistan (1994-2000). Peacekeeping failures have included operations in Somalia in 1993, Rwanda in 1994, and Srebrenica in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995. MINUSCA in the Central African Republic (2014-ongoing) is likely to be added to future lists of failed missions.

Interventions that lack impartiality might be justified in certain cases; however, they represent a dramatic shift away from the doctrine that the United Nations does not wage war. The generally agreed principle has been that UN peace operations should not include a mandate to enforce peace outside of limited circumstances. UN forces have been expected to focus instead on assisting countries as they shift from conflict to negotiated peace and from peace agreements to legitimate governance and development. These principles have been discarded at times, and the more aggressive UN missions that are required in these circumstances demand significantly more resources, management, and personnel than less complex operations. Since the beginning of the 21st century, the UN has been conducting analysis of its peacekeeping experience, and it has been introducing, though not always implementing, a series of reforms to strengthen its capacity to manage and sustain peace operations.

The success of peace missions should be evaluated in terms of a number of considerations which might include the sustainability of the peace that exists after the withdrawal of peacekeepers, cost-efficiency, the number of civilian and uniformed fatalities, whether the aim of the mission was achieved, and whether peacekeepers followed their code of conduct. A crucial measure of achievement for today's multidimensional missions, which often include a high degree of collaboration with the local population, must also be that peace missions should be perceived as legitimate and credible by the communities that they affect. All major stakeholders at national and local levels also need to be able to take ownership of the peace process in their countries if long-term peace, sustainable without outside involvement, is to be achieved. An effective political strategy that brings all adversaries together to work towards peace is essential, and clear, credible, and achievable mandates, carried out by well-trained personnel with adequate funding, are indispensable (See Chart 1.4 for the contributions made to UN peacekeeping budgets between 2013 and 2015 by the 10 highest-contributing countries). Any budget deficiencies could be compensated by unity of purpose within the United Nations Security Council, which is increasingly difficult to achieve, and active support for UN operations in the field is also necessary for their success.

Addressing misconduct, mismanagement, and fraud

The UN's reputation has been tarnished since the 1990s by allegations that sexual abuse has been committed by UN peacekeepers. The UN has done very little to right its wrongs. Not only has it conducted investigations behind closed doors, but it has also prosecuted the UN workers who reported the abuse or brought new evidence to light. In theory, the UN welcomes whistle-blowers and protects the identities of people who are trying to expose problems within the UN's mechanisms, but the UN's Ethics Office, which examines complaints of retaliation against whistle-blowers, received 297 such complaints between 2006 and

2012.⁶ A recent case involved a director of field operations for the office of the high commissioner for human rights in Geneva. The director was suspended and investigated for breaching UN protocols on confidential documents because he had divulged to French authorities a confidential UN report which contained interviews with children who were abused.⁷ Instances like this remind us that the UN is far from perfect. In this particular case, media coverage helped lead to the complete exoneration of the whistle-blower after an internal UN investigation was conducted in January 2016.⁸

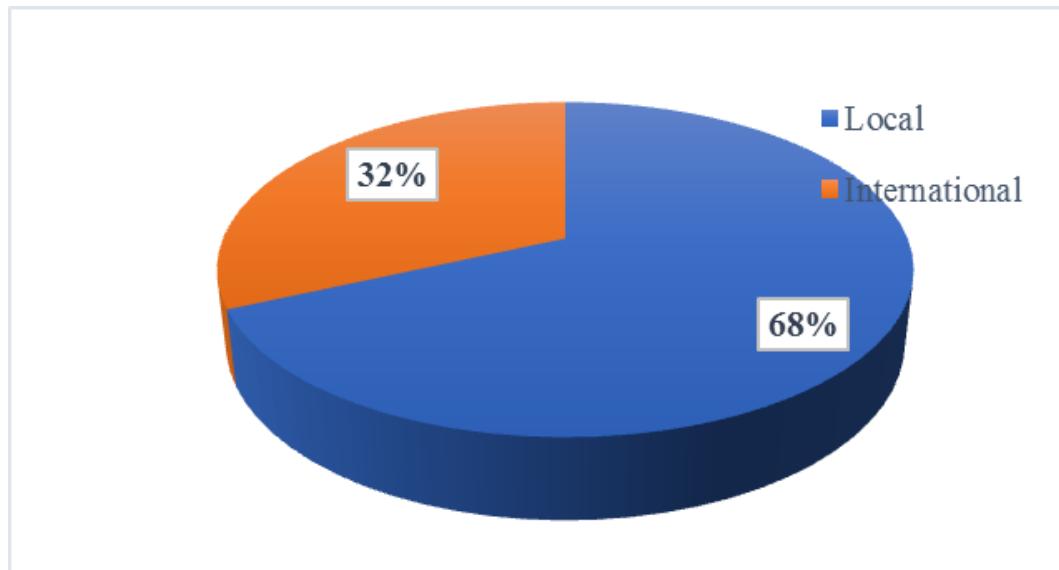


Chart 1.4. Civilian personnel composition (2015).

Source: United Nations <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml>

Even though the UN has a code of conduct that UN peacekeepers are obliged to abide by, it is unable to prosecute them because peacekeepers are only accountable to their country of origin and not to the UN, this in despite of the fact that they are acting on orders from the UN Security Council. Article 46 of the 1990 Model Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) declares that all UN peacekeeping staff are immune from legal process in respect of acts that they perform in their official capacity; meanwhile, Article 47(b) states that if the accused is a member of the military, he or she “shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of their respective participating states in respect of any criminal offences which may be committed by them in [the host country or territory].”⁹

As early as August 1996, a UNICEF report on the impact of conflict on children noted that, in six out of 12 country studies about the sexual exploitation of children during times of war, the presence of peacekeeping troops led to a rapid rise in child prostitution. As long ago as 1996, Mozambique’s former Education Minister, Graça Machel, expressed frustration with the treatment of peacekeepers who were known to be guilty of misconduct: “We immediately repatriate those troops to their countries. However, it’s up to the national authorities to take disciplinary action. The UN does not have, beyond sending them home pretty much in disgrace, any capacity to take disciplinary action.”¹⁰

A fairly recent event does seem to have provoked a shift in how the UN deals with allegations of sexual abuse. On 11 August 2015, the UN Secretary General requested the dismissal of the head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic after serious allegations came to light in relation to abuse carried out by the United Nations Peacekeeping troops in the Central African Republic. The UN is currently trying to implement strategies to prevent future abuses, and new measures include the establishment of Immediate Response Teams within peacekeeping missions, the adoption of



strict timelines for the completion of investigations into sexual exploitation and abuse, and the development of a complaint reception framework. This framework will ensure that mechanisms exist within host communities to empower people to come forward in confidence to raise complaints that relate to United Nations personnel.¹¹

Mismanagement, corruption, and misconduct are some of the other problems that necessitate fundamental reform of the UN peacekeeping structure to improve its accountability and transparency. One continuing problem is created by the absence of a truly independent inspector general. This issue highlights the UN's unwillingness to extend the mandate of the independent UN Procurement Task Force, which took steps to uncover mismanagement, fraud, and corruption in UN procurement. The UN needs more independent oversight, especially since the volume of procurement it undertakes has increased rapidly in line with the expanding mandate of its peacekeeping missions. The Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services Activities for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 shows that some progress has been made in managing staff vacancy rates overall, but they remain high, particularly in the Investigations Division. Efforts to recover fraudulently used funds and to prosecute perpetrators of these crimes have not yet been successful. Troubling reports also suggest that staff members in the organization avoid responding to allegations of misconduct and frequently avoid accountability altogether by taking paid sick leave.¹²

The sustainability of peace after armed interventions

Armed interventions, such as those carried out by UN Peacekeeping missions, rely on armed threat for deterrence. These missions are often long term because their success relies on the ongoing presence of peacekeeping troops. The building of local capacities and improvements in resilience are crucial if permanent peace is to be achieved. Reliance on outside help is risky, especially if that help takes the form of an armed intervention, since harmful abuse is most likely to occur when weapons and armed actors are involved. When sustainability is established as a key measure of success, it becomes clear that peacekeeping operations need to be part of a multi-faceted peacebuilding strategy that is capable of bringing about conflict resolution and reconciliation through strategies such as mediation, negotiation, and unarmed peace enforcement.

There are currently 18 ongoing UN peacekeeping operations deployed on four continents. The oldest of these is the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO), which has been in operation in the Middle East since 1948, and the most recent one is the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which began in April 2014. The UN has carried out half of its peacekeeping missions in the past 20 years, and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations' budget, which accounts for less than 0.5 per cent of the world's military expenditure, as well as its management capacities, are becoming increasingly strained. The department's responsibilities initially involved its staff in providing political and executive direction to UN peacekeeping missions and staying in contact with all of the actors in a conflict during the implementation of Security Council mandates; it now also requires them to integrate the efforts of the UN, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations, into that work. Staff are also expected to provide guidance and support to local military personnel and police organizations, deal with mine action, and tackle other issues that are relevant to UN political and peacebuilding missions.

Gender mainstreaming in peacebuilding

The unfulfilled promise of UNSC Resolution 1325

Dr. Saisuree Chutikul, current adviser to the United Nations sub-committee on Security Council Resolution 1325, which concerns women, peace, and security, has said that the



"Greater participation of women in peace and security can contribute to women's empowerment across society."¹⁴ Women who are actively engaged in peacebuilding are making a big contribution to women's empowerment because they are changing the perception of a woman's role in society and thus contributing to the advancement of gender equality. Resolution 1325, which was passed in 2000, calls for equal participation by women in the maintenance and promotion of peace and security; it also calls for gender perspectives to become part of the mainstream of work in relation to conflict prevention, peace negotiations, peacekeeping operations, humanitarian assistance, and post-conflict reconstruction. It was followed by Resolution 1820 (2008) which demanded that efforts should be enhanced to facilitate the equal and full participation of women at all decision-making levels. A further measure, Resolution 1889 (2009), called not only for the development of global indicators to track the implementation of Resolution 1325, but also for greater attention to be paid to the gender dimensions of post-conflict planning and financing. Progress has remained slow in all of these areas since these resolutions were passed.

Women's presence at peace talks provides one useful indicator of the levels of progress that have been made to date. Between 1992 and 2011, only nine per cent of negotiators at peace tables were women.¹⁵ In the past few years, some advances have been made in understanding the link between women and peace, and, in the summer of 2014, six women ambassadors served on the UN Security Council. This brought women's representation to the unprecedented level of 40 per cent, and half of all peace agreements signed in 2014 included references to women, peace, and security.¹⁶ This is significant because, when women participate, the probability of peace agreements lasting at least two years increases by 20 per cent. Women's involvement also increases the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years by 35 per cent.¹⁷ The percentage of UN field missions headed by women has fluctuated between 15 and 25 per cent since 2011.¹⁸ However, Radhika Coomaraswamy notes that "only 13 per cent of stories in the news media that covered topics related to peace and security included women as subjects, and women were central to the story in only six per cent of cases since the passing of Security Council Resolution 1325. Only four per cent of the stories reviewed portrayed women as leaders in conflict and post-conflict countries, and only two per cent highlighted gender equality issues."¹⁹

In all fields of peacekeeping, women peacekeepers have proved that they can perform the same roles to the same standards and under the same difficult conditions as their male counterparts. While the UN encourages and advocates the deployment of women to uniformed functions, responsibility for the deployment of women in police and military roles remains with Member States; this explains why, in 2015, 97 per cent of military peacekeepers and 90 per cent of police personnel were men.²⁰

Zainab Hawa Bangura, who is the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, has noted poignantly that "the new wars are being fought on the bodies of girls and women."²¹ Today, women in conflicts are being targeted on purpose. As aggressors strive to break up communities and change ethnic ratios, women are being detained as sexual slaves or as bargaining chips by rebel groups in armed conflicts. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by sexual violence as is shown in reports from the Democratic Republic of Congo: they reveal the extent of conflict-related sexual violence which ranges from 18 per cent to 40 per cent among women and girls and between four and 24 per cent among men and boys.²² Data from 40 countries shows a positive correlation between the proportion of female police officers and the rates at which sexual assault is reported.²³

Violence and other forms of conflict also have a serious impact on girls' health and education. For example, girls in conflict situations are more likely to be married in childhood.



Approximately half of all children of primary school age who are not in school live in conflict-affected areas. Girls, whose adjusted net enrolment rate in primary education is only 77.5 per cent in conflict and post-conflict countries, are particularly affected.²⁴ During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the average age for marriage for a girl was between 20 and 25 years. In the refugee camps during and after the genocide, the average age for marriage was 15 years.²⁵ The rate of early marriage (below the age of 18) among Syrian refugee girls in Jordan is 51 per cent;²⁶ this compares to a rate of between 13 and 17 per cent inside Syria before the war began.²⁷ One in four households occupied by Syrian refugee families in Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, and Jordan is headed by a woman.²⁸ In Mali, more than 50 per cent of displaced families are headed by women.²⁹

Given that these problems and challenges exist, it is notable that women gain disproportionately less benefit from international aid efforts than men do. In 2014, women only received 35 per cent of the benefits that could be gained from the temporary employment activities offered through disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programmes.³⁰ “In 2014, only one per cent of bilateral official development assistance for security system management reform targeted gender equality as a principal objective, and only 26 per cent targeted it as a significant objective.”³¹ In Sierra Leone, when a survey asked predominantly male ex-combatants to identify those people who had played a significant role in helping them to reintegrate, 55 per cent named women in their communities.³²

Women have different viewpoints about conflict situations because they experience conflict differently to men. They have distinct needs and context-specific priorities and are vulnerable in different ways; they also tend to take on roles in response to conflict that reflect those priorities. For example, women often choose to act as civilian ceasefire monitors because they are major stakeholders in their communities and the role is compatible to some extent with the traditional view of them as keepers of the community as well as care-givers. Where women have been deployed in a variety of police, military, and civilian positions, they have made a positive impact on peacekeeping environments and have been able to support the role of local women in building peace and protecting women’s rights. It is an operational imperative that the UN should actively recruit and retain female peacekeepers and thereby fulfil some of its obligations under Security Council Resolution 1325.

Female peacekeepers act as role models in local conflict-affected environments, inspiring women and girls in often male-dominated societies to push for their own rights and for participation in peace processes. The increased recruitment of women is critical for the empowerment of women in host communities. The presence of women peacekeepers can help to reduce conflict and confrontation, and it also broadens the skill set available within a peacekeeping mission. Women peacekeepers can help to address the specific needs of women ex-combatants during processes of demobilization and reintegration into civilian life, and they can also help to make a peacekeeping force approachable to women within a conflict-affected community. Women peacekeepers are also able to facilitate interviews with survivors of gender-based violence; they can mentor female cadets at police and military academies; and they can also interact with women in societies where women are prohibited from speaking to men.

The first all-female Formed Police Units were deployed to Liberia in 2007 and proved to be very successful. Survivors of sexual violence feel comfortable talking to female peacekeepers about their experiences, and often communities are quick to embrace female peacekeepers because they are seen to be less physically threatening than their male counterparts. There are many stereotypes attached to female peacekeepers, who are often regarded as being naturally nurturing, communicative, and unintimidating. These stereotypes can produce some advantages when they are interpreted as emphasizing the peacekeeper’s responsibilities to



restore peace and stability without intimidating or taking advantage of the local population; however, they can also inhibit people's recognition of the full range of roles that women need to play in peacebuilding work. Women, and particularly young women, who participate actively in their communities are often vitally important in helping those communities both to address the causes of particular conflicts and to avert new outbreaks of violence.

Unarmed civilian protection

Background information

Unarmed civilian protection (UCP) is a strategy that has been used successfully in peacebuilding operations since the 1990s, and it has already been successfully implemented in the Philippines, Sri Lanka, South Sudan, Colombia, Guatemala, and Nepal; however, it is only now being recognized by the UN and the international system as a relevant approach that can yield positive results. Civil society organizations such as Witness for Peace and Peace Brigades International have not only pioneered UCP but have helped to develop and refine it since the early 1980s. A recent study by the Mir Centre for Peace at Canada's Selkirk College found that over 50 civil society organizations have applied UCP methods in 35 conflict areas since 1990.³³ Recently, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe have made successful use of unarmed civilian protection in operations that have included the deployment of unarmed civilians. Today, there are dozens of international civil society organizations engaged in unarmed protection in conflict zones around the world. Among them are Cure Violence, Nonviolent Peaceforce, and The World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Israel and Palestine. The UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, convened an Independent High-Level Panel on Peace Operations in June 2015 to review UN peace operations, and the panel put forward unarmed protection as a strategy that should be at the forefront of efforts to protect civilians and to transform the way the world responds to conflict.³⁴

How does UCP work?

Unarmed Civilian Protection is executed without the use of weapons. It focuses on the building of relationships rather than the employment of power, and it seeks to achieve three goals: the direct protection of civilians, the prevention of violence, and the strengthening of local peace infrastructures.³⁵ This approach is diametrically opposed to the classical militarized approach which involves either providing arms in conflict zones to moderate proxies whose behaviour can be very unpredictable, or relying on armed threat for deterrence as is the case in many UN peacekeeping missions.

UCP methods are selected on a case-by-case basis to suit the specific needs of the local population, the type of conflict, the context, the mandate, and the capacity of the implementing organization. UCP works in situations where there are no UN peacekeepers as is the case in Colombia, Myanmar, and the Philippines, or it can work alongside them as happens in South Sudan. UCP in practice has the potential to temper both sides in a conflict, especially if the actors are armed. It can lead to reductions in shootings and killings and the elimination of retaliation killings.³⁶ UCP places emphasis on key sources of guidance such as international humanitarian law, and it employs key skills such as humanitarian negotiation.³⁷

UCP protectors are constantly engaged in networking and in building multi-layered relationships with key actors, including those who are armed, in order to open new channels of communication. Their perseverance and high levels of interaction increase their chances of being accepted by other actors, and this in turn makes their work in the field safer because they rely on the community's protection. UCP can be applied at all stages of a conflict but can be particularly effective at an early stage when it can prevent or mitigate the escalation of violence. It is also valuable after violent conflict has subsided when it can support the transition to a peaceful society.



Unarmed protectors live among the people that they have come to protect, often for long periods of time, so they can build high levels of trust and gain people's respect. Their very presence sometimes serves as a deterrent to armed actors as it can change the dynamic of a conflict on a psychological level; it also helps civilians to feel that they are not alone. Armed actors who would not normally think twice about either engaging in conflict, putting civilian lives at risk, or actually targeting them, are less likely to attack if there is an international presence, even if it is unarmed. UCP units also help to raise the status of local humanitarian organizations. They enter a situation at the request of these groups and only respond to their requests for help if the local groups can demonstrate that they are themselves employing peaceful approaches to the conflict. The presence of UCP units and their peaceful actions in the middle of high-intensity conflicts show civilians that there are alternative ways of responding to tensions and violence.

UCP involves an on-the-ground, hands-on approach. Unarmed protectors accompany civilians as active participants rather than as passive observers when negotiations are held; they can help to establish an environment in which peace talks can take place, and they also engage in "shuttle diplomacy".³⁸ Third-party mediation often offers the most suitable way to convey information back and forth between opposing factions, especially if the third party is seen to be unbiased. The position of UCP units right in the centre of a conflict gives them the opportunity to identify and understand the sensitivities and vulnerabilities of local actors; it also helps them to identify points of leverage. In addition, the link that UCP units offer to the outside world means that local actors may well start to take into consideration how their actions will be perceived elsewhere. When local actors are concerned about their personal or political reputations, fear legal prosecutions, worry about forfeiting international aid and political support, or want to avoid repercussions including blame, retribution, or sanctions, these factors can influence their behaviours over and above any individual, moral, or religious concerns they might have.

The success of many UCP missions depends on gender mainstreaming, which is a strategy that places gender equality at its core. The practice involves careful consideration of how policies impact differently on men and women, and it focuses attention on the ways in which a conflict's most vulnerable parties can best be protected. Civilian protectors pay particular attention to the needs of women and children and often focus on the issue of child soldiers as well as on the safety of women in camps for Internally Displaced Persons where women are at high risk of sexual violence. Special workshops are organized where women can share their views, and in these environments some women are able to talk freely for the first time about how they are affected by conflict. These workshops can offer individual women unique opportunities to talk to a neutral actor about their own security and to learn about nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution. They also offer a platform for human rights defenders who have an opportunity to connect with other local defenders and learn from their experiences. All of these participatory training models are organized in ways which allow them to be replicated by local UCP units; the re-use of these models is encouraged as part of peacebuilding efforts, and local people can continue to use them in other local contexts without outside help.

One of the main goals of international UCP organizations is to ensure the sustainability of local UCP capacities. Local individuals and peace infrastructures are often well-informed in terms of the cultural knowledge that is needed when assessing what kind of approach to take, but they may lack knowledge and understanding of UCP strategies, or they may need to be trained in unarmed protection methods. Workshops help to build local actors' confidence in their own abilities, so that they are able to make the best use of existing local institutions to pursue peaceful solutions in conflicts.

Nonviolent Peaceforce

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is an unarmed, paid, civilian protection force that employs third-generation UCP (See Diagram 1). The organization, which was founded in 2002 and deployed its first team to Sri Lanka a year later, now has headquarters in Brussels and an office in Minneapolis. Their field teams are presently working in the Philippines, in South Sudan, Myanmar, the Middle East, and Ukraine. Their field staff comprises conflict zone veterans and experienced peacekeepers, as well as highly trained and skilled professionals. The organization's credibility and its reputation for being unbiased is crucial to its work and so Nonviolent Peaceforce only responds to invitations proffered by reliable local organizations that are committed to non-violent solutions. Only after an invitation has been received and available funds have been secured is a mission dispatched.



Diagram 1. 3rd Generation UCP.

Source: Nonviolent Peaceforce <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/unarmed-civilian-protection>

The form of unarmed UCP employed by Nonviolent Peaceforce differs from that used by other organizations in that it relies solely on dialogues conducted with the armed actors themselves in a bid to help them behave in ways that will reduce violence and protect civilians. This approach depends on actors building relationships of mutual trust and understanding, and it forgoes the 'naming and shaming' method that other forms of UCP favour. Gender mainstreaming has formed a crucial part of NP's efforts. Women's peacekeeping teams have been formed and trained to carry out accompaniment, dialogue, rumour control, and early warning/early response work. Some women help with the return, integration, and protection of children who have been abducted, while others interrupt plans

for child marriages, advocate for girls' education, encourage women to report rape, and accompany them throughout the legal process that leads to prosecution of their abusers.

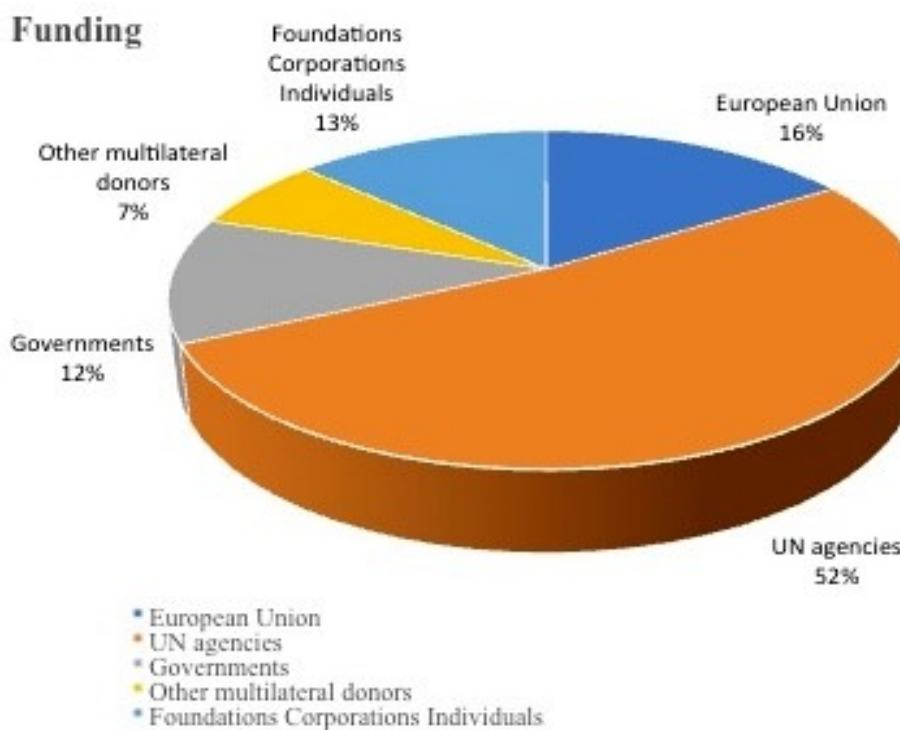


Chart 2.1. Donors by percentages to Nonviolent Peaceforce from July 2014 to July 2015.
Source: Nonviolent Peaceforce <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/background/funding>

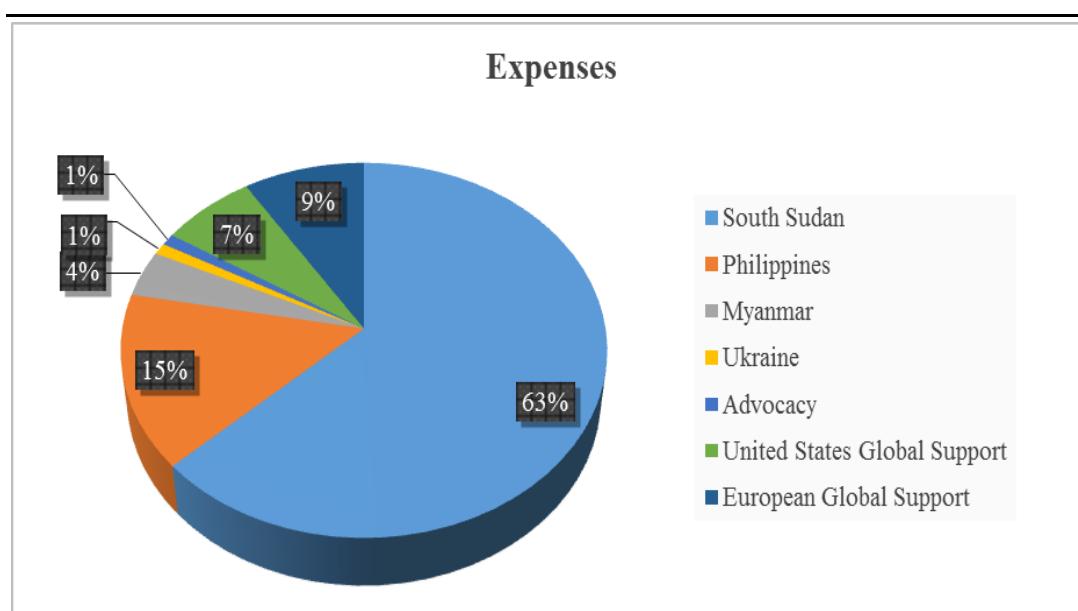


Chart 2.2. Total expenses for Nonviolent Peaceforce - US\$11.5 million for the time period from July 2014 to July 2015.
Source: Nonviolent Peaceforce <http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/background/funding>



Nonviolent Peaceforce was nominated for the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in recognition of the organization's continued commitment to violence prevention in conflict zones as well as for its work in relation to the protective accompaniment of children and human rights defenders.³⁹

Case Study I: Nonviolent Peaceforce in South Sudan

South Sudan offers a good example of a country where UCP methods have worked well while Nonviolent Peaceforce remains on site, even though South Sudan is a young and increasingly unstable country in the throes of a humanitarian crisis. NP initiated a project in what was to become South Sudan in 2010 after receiving a request from local organizations. Its initial mission was to stave off the violence that was in danger of erupting before an upcoming referendum. However, it became clear that a much greater threat to civilian safety was being posed by intra- and inter-clan clashes which, in 2012, turned into interethnic fighting in Jonglei and other regions. Three people were shot two days after NP's forced evacuation from Pibor County in October 2012, and this violence made it clear that more time was needed to establish the foundations for self-sustainable UCP in the region. Despite worsening safety conditions, NP expanded its mission in South Sudan in 2013.⁴⁰ There are now over 150 staff members operating across 11 field sites and at the Juba headquarters; of these, about 40 per cent are South Sudanese and 40 per cent are women.⁴¹

From the very beginning, NP's aim was to establish a broad network of relationships in every region where it was at work. These relationships brought community leaders together to undergo early-warning and early-response training, and community protection committees were developed. NP has helped to negotiate peace agreements between fighting clans and sub-clans, and its staff have also engaged in patrols and protection work within IDP camps and accompanied people in and out of the camps. In the year from June 2014 to June 2015, NP provided over 1,000 accompaniments for vulnerable people, most of whom were women and children.

Despite the best efforts of NP and other organizations, the situation in South Sudan continues to worsen. More than two million people have been displaced over the past three years and tens of thousands of people have been killed. A new unity government has been formed and a fragile peace deal is in the process of being implemented.⁴² According to the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, who visited South Sudan in May 2016, crimes of sexual violence during South Sudan's brutal civil war have been so bad that they need to become a key focus of reconciliation efforts. Nonviolent Peaceforce has recognized the importance of strengthening women's participation in peacebuilding and of reducing the prevalence and impact of conflict and gender-based violence. On International Women's Day 2016, NP launched a new, \$8 million project in partnership with the Kingdom of the Netherlands through the Dutch Embassy in South Sudan. The project seeks to build on the fact that women who are active participants in peacebuilding in their communities are less likely to experience gender-based violence. The project will be implemented in five sites in South Sudan.

Peace Brigades International

Another well-established organization engaged in UCP is Peace Brigades International (PBI) which was founded in 1981. PBI currently has seven field projects, 12 country groups, and an international office, all delegated by the General Assembly. It has carried out projects in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Sri Lanka, North America, Haiti, Nepal, and the Balkans, and it has current field projects in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, and Nepal. PBI's vision is of "a world in which people address conflicts non-violently, where human rights are universally upheld and social justice and intercultural respect have become a reality."⁴³ They act on requests from local non-violent groups that are working for human rights and social change in regions where there is oppression and conflict.

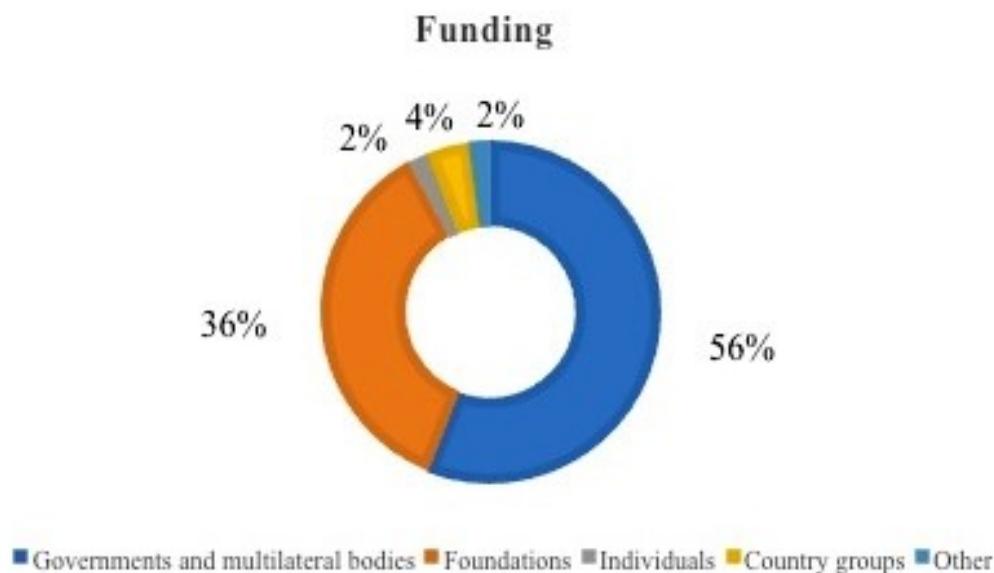


Chart 3.1. Peace Brigades International Total Income in 2014: US\$2,864,157.

Source: *Peace Brigades International, "2014 Annual Review"*

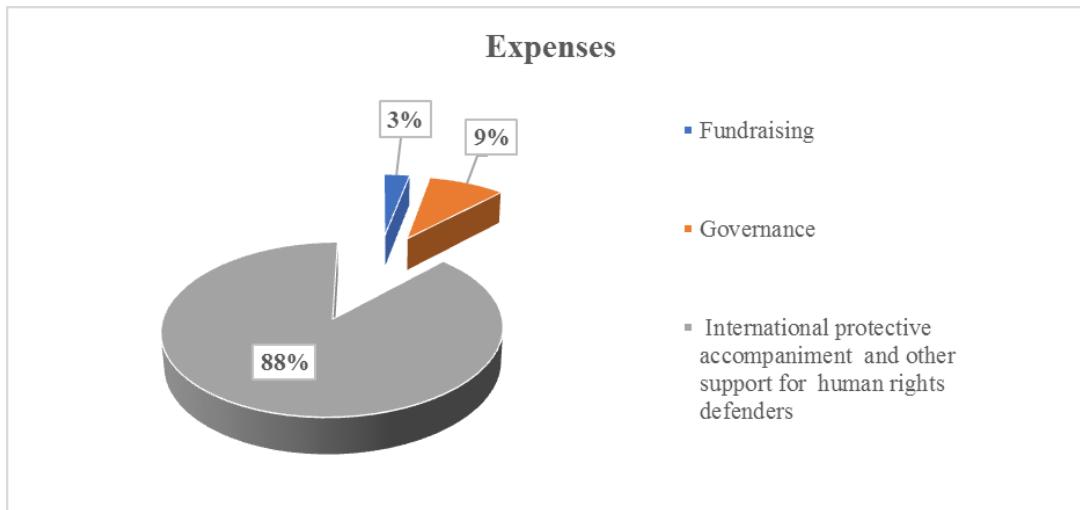


Chart 3.2. Total Peace Brigades International expenditure in 2014: US\$2,474,271
(Does not include the accounts of PBI country groups which are separate legal entities). Source: *Peace Brigades International, "2014 Annual Review"*

PBI's international presence serves "to accompany both political and social processes through a joint strategy of deterring violence and promoting active non-violence,"⁴⁴ and its international teams of volunteers carry out protective accompaniment and peace education, as well as independent observation and analysis of conflict situations.

Case Study II: Peace Brigades International in Buenaventura, Colombia

PBI has carried out international accompaniment and observation work in Colombia since 1994. It has been present in an area that was made Colombia's first designated urban Humanitarian Space in 2014, thanks to the efforts of local families. No illegals or armed actors



are allowed in the area, which is located in a small neighbourhood called "La Playita"⁴⁵ on the poverty-stricken island of Buenaventura, and since the PBI arrived it has become the safest neighbourhood on the island. This follows years of violence that was caused by two paramilitary groups which occupied two different neighbourhoods. The groups were in control of most of the island and put 302 families in constant danger of erupting violence. The PBI came to the area at the request of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission to help highlight the importance of defending human rights and the hard task of being a human rights defender in places like Buenaventura.

PBI's principal requirement is that their employees have to be foreigners in the country where they work in order for their missions to be successful. This ensures that none of the workers are biased or are perceived to be so during a mission. The presence of international workers makes any aggressor think twice before attacking them or the people that they have come to protect, even if they are unarmed. However, there is still a protective police presence working alongside PBI's staff in Colombia; it works to protect the Humanitarian Space from within and to fend off the threat that the neighbourhood might be taken over by one of the paramilitary groups. PBI puts a strong emphasis on the inseparability and equal importance of physical and psychosocial accompaniment if peace is to be built. People do not only need to be safe, it is also crucial that they feel safe, and PBI's presence provides this umbrella of protection. Furthermore, an international presence increases the visibility and raises the status of the Inter-Church Justice and Peace Commission (ICJPC). PBI and ICJPC receive frequent threats because they are also engaged in political advocacy in relation to the security situation in the region. Jorge Molano, who is a lawyer and human rights defender, notes that "PBI's accompaniment is extremely important in the country because the Colombian State has not provided guarantees for human rights defenders to carry out our work. PBI's accompaniment enables many defenders to stay in the country and not have to abandon our work."⁴⁶

PBI strives to highlight this kind of community-based peaceful alternative to violence, and it aims to make these efforts self-sustaining by putting mechanisms in place which, it is hoped, the local population can make use of in the future. In September 2014, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights awarded protective measures to the 302 families that reside in the Humanitarian Space, and its success in Buenaventura is a great example of how UCP can work alongside a local NGO as well as in collaboration with armed protective police forces. Jose Alvear Restrepo from the Jose Alvear Restrepo Lawyers' Collective (CCAJAR) has acknowledged the progress that has been made thanks to PBI's presence: "For the 15 years that we have had PBI accompaniment, we have been able to become more respected in judicial and other spheres of our activity, a very important prevention mechanism. I believe that PBI's presence and accompaniment in Colombia has saved many lives and prevented many attacks against human rights defenders, especially human rights lawyers."⁴⁷

All-female UCP units

The deployment of all-female UCP units represents a relatively new phenomenon. Female protectors offer living proof that women can do jobs that were previously seen as too dangerous or complex for a woman to do. Female protectors can change the mentality of a whole community, and they are in a better position than men to address some issues that are particularly prevalent or relevant in conflict and post-conflict situations and were previously seen as taboo; these include child marriage, sexual violence, reproductive health, and girls' education. In addition, female protectors are perceived to have more sympathy and a greater ability to relate to and help local women, some of whom have undergone diverse types of trauma during a conflict, very often including some type of sexual violence, intimidation, or family loss. All-female units are sometimes the only option where cultural barriers prevail, as



is the case when cultural norms mean that there is opposition to the idea of local women being accompanied by foreign male protectors. Also, on a psychological level, women might struggle to discuss the sexual violence they have experienced with male protectors. Female protectors can serve as role models for local women and girls because they demonstrate that women have a role to play in peacebuilding and in human rights advocacy.

Case Study III: An all-female UCP unit in Mindanao, Philippines

Over 40 per cent of unarmed civilian protectors today are women. Female UCP units, like the one discussed in this case study, are fully capable of building capacity to lessen tension, protect civilians, resolve conflicts, and work for peace in their own communities in a sustainable and non-militaristic way. Mindanao in the Philippines has been a point of conflict between the government of the Phillipines and Islamic insurgent movements such as the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) for a long time, and, despite the signing of a political agreement in 2014, the region remains very unstable. Under these circumstances, the Mindanao People's Caucus (MPC), led by Mary Ann Arnado, a human rights lawyer from the region, set up an all-female peacekeeping unit which included women of Muslim and Catholic faiths as well as indigenous women from Mindanao. They faced significant scepticism and resistance on the ground, especially at the beginning, but the group has managed to develop strategies that allow its members to continue their work.

One crucial factor in their success has been the unit's strong working relationship with key actors in the region, including the MILF and the armed forces of the Philippines government.

The all-female contingent has been able to have a positive working relationship with an all-male Islamist militant group that subscribes to traditional gender norms because this relationship developed over a decade of working together. The MILF values the MPC's expertise and local network, and has relied upon them for assistance with inter-faith consultations, and other aspects of the peace process.⁴⁸

However, some of the women involved have reported that they were not being taken seriously by foreign soldiers who were on one-year deployments as part of the International Monitoring Team. Even some of the women protectors themselves were concerned that engaging with soldiers and militants might be against Islamic doctrine. One of the unit's close partners said that women could not work as peacekeepers because it is prohibited by Sharia law. The group was accused of not conforming to local gender realities, not being tough enough, being incompetent, and lacking necessary military and security experience. All these accusations reflect exactly the kinds of gender stereotypes that women's peacebuilding groups everywhere are trying to overcome. Despite these obstacles, the unit continues to play an important role in Mindanao. The group also proves to both men and women in the region that Christian, Muslim, and indigenous people can peacefully coexist and that women have a place on the front lines of peacebuilding.

The limits of UCP

So far, only the benefits of UCP methods and successful projects that use them have been mentioned. However, UCP is not a flawless strategy and it has its limits. UCP's work is very often undertaken in the heart of what are generally armed conflicts where unarmed protectors are at high risk of experiencing direct violence. Involvement in these kinds of missions and environments, which are avoided by many other NGOs, requires UCP actors to remain constantly vigilant and engaged with local networks and to have fast safety response mechanisms in place. Unlike other international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), which often make decisions about security far from the field, UCPs usually have to make



security decisions within the conflict situation itself. All possible risks are carefully calculated using systematic risk assessments, ongoing context analysis, and a close working relationship with other protection actors in the area who can sometimes be UN peacekeepers or specially assigned police units. UCPs use an interactive security model, and they are very conscious of security. The staff's safety and security are based on the same logic that underpins UCP methods for providing protection to civilians. UCP units rely heavily on the efficacy of their extensive, multi-tiered network of relationships, and especially on the relationships they have with affected communities, to assure their own safety.⁴⁹

Organizations that engage in UCP admit that one of the weakness of its methodology is that it renders them unable to work in environments where there is a strong political or religious ideology. Where ISIS or Boko Haram are operating, and in Syria and Yemen, for example, UCP cannot be deployed because units have to be able to connect to an existing network of actors who are willing to collaborate and/or negotiate in a peace process. UCP's legitimacy comes from its deployment in response to an invitation from a civil nonviolent organization, and it cannot proceed without it. A local community also has to be willing to collaborate with and trust the UCP approach in order for the mission to be successful; communities might not be able to do this in cases where there is a context of protracted armed conflict.

Despite these risks and limitations, Nonviolent Peaceforce began a train-the-trainers project in Syria in January 2016 with the aim of changing the norms which assume that violence is necessary to resolve conflict. NP partnered with TAMAS (The Syrian Civil Coalition), Madani (a Syrian civil society organization that promotes a peaceful and democratic Syria) and Cure Violence.⁵⁰ In Ukraine in 2015, following a request from local civil society organizations, NP launched another project which took place over several months and involved 30 Ukrainians who were representing several civil society organizations, community members, and local authorities. The project participants received training on how to provide a protective presence for civilians. Unfortunately, due to insufficient funds, NP was not able to expand its work on the ground, but it continues to be involved in the region through the local partnerships that it has built.⁵¹

UCP is even more difficult to carry out when local police forces are non-collaborative or are part of the problem, or when UN peacekeepers have an overly broad mandate and undo the work done by NGOs and UCPs which are trying to build peace without the use of arms. When there are armed actors present, the possibility that power will be abused increases, as was the case with UN Peacekeepers in the Central African Republic. Still, UCP's principles require the decentralization of power, conciliatory behaviour, and very limited means of coercion, and this means that any abuses that do happen occur on a much smaller scale; they tend to be due to personal rather than institutional failings and have less serious consequences than those of military action: "UCP may not be immune to all types of abuse, [but] it is more likely to arrest war-cycles than feed into them."

The future of UCP—a combined approach

The mentality with which we approach armed conflict must change if UCP is to be used instead of a traditionally militaristic approach. Neither armed nor unarmed approaches on their own offer the solution for all conflict types but, perhaps, if we change the habits of thinking with which we address conflict, we can redirect resources from armed missions towards developing better prevention mechanisms and therefore address root causes before violence takes hold. More use can certainly be made of UCP's violence prevention methods which include proactive presence at potential or actual flashpoints, protective accompaniment of vulnerable individuals, community-based early warning and response mechanisms, rumour management, the creation of local-level safe spaces, and the use of grassroots mediation techniques.



Since UCP methods can easily be used alongside the work of local NGOs and in collaboration with armed actors such as UN Peacekeepers and police protection forces, the “UN should incorporate and scale up unarmed civilian protection in peace operations and development assistance in conflict-affected countries in the framing of mandates.”⁵³ Any such developments also need to be accompanied by the enforcement and implementation of basic human rights by national governments. UCP works on the basis that an international presence serves as a deterrent for violence because international workers generate respect when they are in a foreign country. It should not be the case that, in their absence, perpetrators face no punishments for their crimes against the local population. Every state has a legal responsibility to protect its citizens, and it should not protect them only in cases where it wishes to avoid international embarrassment.

Each conflict needs a different response; certain environments require the presence of armed peacekeepers and others do not. Decisions about responses should be based on the nature of conflict, the cost-effectiveness of each approach, the number of people that are likely to be affected, and the requirements of specific groups in a community, such as women, children, and minorities. Before a mission is dispatched, each environment requires rigorous analysis and a realistic and well-defined mandate. Now that, finally, the UN has formally recognized the legitimacy of non-violent approaches and has acknowledged the successes of organizations that have engaged in UCP over years and decades in some cases, UN Peace Operations should become more field-focused and people-centred.

Unarmed protection is not about the presence or absence of arms in UN peacekeeping activities; instead it is about addressing the vulnerabilities of civilians in armed conflict. The UN should support a permanent roster of organizations and trained personnel from around the world who are available to provide unarmed civilian protection and training, particularly in relation to conflict prevention methods and the use of emergency response tools.

If UCP is to become a well-used and successful approach to peacebuilding, we have to make sure that its key principles are kept intact. Non-partisanship, remaining unbiased, and being invited into a situation by a local peaceful organization are vital principles, and the building of self-sustaining local UCP units is also crucial to UCP’s success. Gender mainstreaming must also continue to be an integral part of each mission in order that the needs of the whole target population are addressed. It makes absolute sense that women should be involved at every step and at every level of peacebuilding. All-female UCP units have proven to be very responsive to and effective in tackling women’s gender-specific needs in conflict situations. It is clear that women’s contributions are crucial to the development of an approach that is safe for protectors and civilians, as well as being gender-sensitive, cost-effective, and sustainable in the long run.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the nature of conflicts and of human rights abuses has changed. UN peacekeeping missions, the UN’s structure, and its peacekeeping mandates are struggling to keep up and evolve fast enough to meet a growing need for the protection of civilians. Meanwhile, outdated, inefficient, vague, and costly peacekeeping missions continue to be commissioned. There is an urgent need for a new and better-suited approach to civilian protection, one which can complement the current approach in certain cases and potentially replace it in some situations in the near future.

Unarmed civilian protection offers innovative methods that can be chosen on a case-by-case basis and they have been proven to be effective over the past decades in a variety of different configurations. Unarmed accompaniment by international protectors has served as a



deterrent and has worked in communities from South Sudan and the Philippines to Colombia. Uses of an unarmed approach have proven that arms are not required to protect civilians, even in situations of armed conflict. It is also clear that UCP methods can be employed by local peaceful organizations which are striving to build sustainable long-term peace. These organizations can be empowered to use mechanisms that can prevent conflict from becoming violent and they can also be equipped to put in place emergency response mechanisms that will help them to deal swiftly with any potential violence.

Unarmed civilian protection changes the mentality that shapes how people respond to conflict. When force is not relied on, and instead relationships are formed with a network of different actors and stakeholders in the field, the local population sees that different ways of resolving differences exist; they also become increasingly confident that they do not need to rely on outside help to employ UCP methods. The mere presence of unarmed protectors changes people's behaviour at a psychological as well as at a practical level.

UCP has made great strides in reducing gender-based violence thanks to its emphasis on an inclusive gender-mainstreaming strategy which is central to the success of a lot of its work, particularly in the area of protective accompaniment. As Security Council Resolution 1325 makes clear in its statements on the inclusion of women in peace processes, women's participation in peacebuilding is not only a matter of women's and girls' rights; instead, "Women are crucial partners in shoring up three pillars of lasting peace: economic recovery, social cohesion and political legitimacy."⁵⁴ Where women are underrepresented in public office, or where women's and girls' rights can be violated with impunity, political legitimacy suffers. The result is declining trust in government, deterioration in the rule of law, and mounting difficulty in enlisting public support for collective action. Each of these conditions undermines any efforts to secure a sustainable peace. Female representation in UCP continues to rise with women today making up about 40 per cent of protectors and more than 50 per cent of volunteers in some of the organizations that employ UCP methods. It is only right that women should actively participate in greater numbers in peaceful protection methods such as UCP since they make up more than half of the world's population. There needs to be a cultural shift away from traditional armed approaches and women can be the trailblazers of that change.



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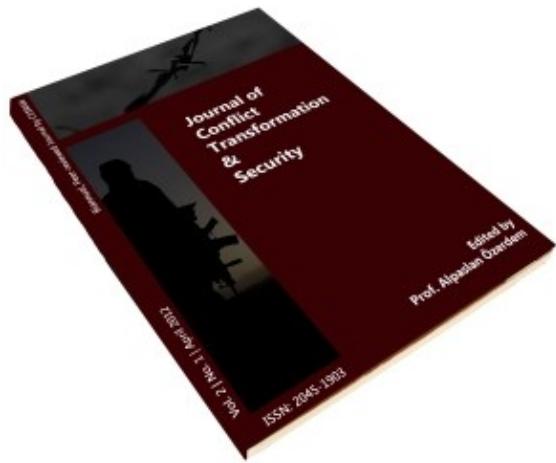


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Non-state Actors and the Diffusion of the Human Security Agenda

By Eduardo Gonçalves Gresse, M.A.*

Abstract

Diffusion literature in International Relations (IR) has mostly focused on explaining patterns of convergence among states and international organizations. While numerous studies have revealed that ideas, norms, institutions, and practices often vary as they diffuse, the perspective of those people who experience the diffusion of global agendas at the local level is still under-researched. The diffusion of the human security agenda is explored in this article with a focus on how it is perceived in different sociocultural contexts. The positive and negative roles that non-state actors play in building human security are also addressed in order to shed light on the opportunities they have to become more effective in promoting the human security agenda. I argue that when non-state actors focus on solution-oriented research, improve communication, and foster interactive and interdisciplinary practices with other members of civil society, they are in a better position to understand and promote people's development and security in a holistic and sustainable fashion.

Keywords: Diffusion, human security, non-state actors, sociology of knowledge, communication, legitimacy.



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Non-state Actors and the Diffusion of the Human Security Agenda

Introduction

After the traumatic experiences of the First and Second World Wars, a series of global initiatives emerged which included the foundation of the United Nations (UN) system and the International Criminal Court (ICC). The trend towards greater prominence for humanitarian discourses gathered pace after the end of the Cold War as ideas about security expanded beyond a focus on the military with the state as its referent object.¹ Indeed, during the 1990s, humanitarian ideas became a principal normative reference for states and organizations as they sought to clarify their international responsibilities and obligations.² It was in this context that the contemporary human security agenda came to the fore. The idea of human security did not emerge from the non-governmental community or from within a state but became evident instead in international organizations such as the UN and, later, the European Union (EU).³ In any case, both state and non-state actors have been crucial to its subsequent evolution and also to the diffusion of the human security agenda.

Much of the literature on diffusion in International Relations (IR) has focused on explaining patterns of convergence in the work of states, international organizations, and transnational organizations.⁴ In addition, research on norm diffusion has tended to concentrate disproportionately on the provider of norms.⁵ While these shortcomings have been addressed in IR and sociological research that focuses on processes such as synchronization,⁶ localization,⁷ subsidiarity,⁸ or collective learning,⁹ still little attention has been paid to the viewpoints and experiences of those people who experience the diffusion of global agendas within their respective local contexts. To help address this gap, this article will briefly review the diffusion of the human security agenda in different sociocultural contexts with special focus on how human security is understood in those contexts. It will also answer questions about how non-state actors might become more effective in promoting the human security agenda in order to broaden discussion on this issue.¹⁰

This work draws on insights informed by the sociology of knowledge, and in particular on the ideas set out in Berger and Luckmann's definitive work *The Social Construction of Reality* (1966).¹¹ The article will explore the positive and negative roles that non-state actors play in building human security, and it will also shed light on the opportunities that they have to become more effective in promoting the human security agenda. A broad range of agents are collected under the term "non-state actors," but the scope is limited here to scholars and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) given their strong potential for helping the UN as well as both state and other non-state actors to promote the human security agenda more effectively. The human security agenda is understood for the purposes of this article to refer to a global plan of action, based on the UN's human security approach and on its inter-linkages with the recently established 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, which seeks to address the multiple threats posed to human security in a holistic and sustainable fashion.¹²

I begin by introducing the concept of diffusion and discussing the emergence as well as the dissemination of the human security agenda. Next, I present an illustrative analysis of how



human security is perceived in three distinct sociocultural contexts, and I then briefly analyse both the positive and negative roles played by non-state actors, and particularly scholars and NGOs, in building human security. Finally, I discuss the opportunities that exist for them to become more effective in promoting the human security agenda. On the one hand, I argue that more solution-oriented research on human security is needed and that new channels of communication between NGOs, scholars, and other members of civil society should be fostered. On the other hand, I claim that it is counterproductive to focus on individual human security concerns and that is necessary to understand and promote people's security in a holistic and interdisciplinary fashion. Last but not least, I discuss the limitations as well as the potential of this work to inspire further research into the diffusion of global agendas across distinct sociocultural contexts.

This paper contributes to the literature on human security by advocating the importance of a broad, interdisciplinary and solution-oriented approach. The work involved in improving awareness about human security and facilitating the empowerment of individuals and communities to build it effectively relies on inclusive, democratic communication and constant interactions among distinct international and local agents such as intergovernmental organizations, policymakers, scholars, NGOs and other civil society groups. The article also seeks to encourage the development of empirical research and cooperative actions on human security, both within and beyond the academic realm. This approach is relevant, not only for non-state actors and civil society, but also for state actors and for UN authorities, as it offers opportunities for a range of global and local actors to reflect on how they might promote the human security agenda, along with its vast objectives, more productively. The issues raised and the challenges identified by this work may also inspire a general reflection on the crucial roles played by non-state actors in the diffusion of the human security agenda.

The diffusion of the human security agenda

Diffusion is conceived as a process through which ideas, practices, normative standards, or policies and institutions spread across time and space.¹³ The process of diffusion takes place within and across societies, countries, or other jurisdictional units, and among a wide range of public and private actors.¹⁴ Social science scholars have developed and/or advanced numerous approaches to diffusion research.¹⁵ For reasons of space, however, this article is focused on the emergence of distinct understandings of "human security" and on how they might influence the diffusion of the human security agenda worldwide.

Kingler-Vidra and Schleifer point out that norms, ideas, and practices can be reframed, reinterpreted, and modified in order to increase their fit with a particular local environment.¹⁶ While norms may influence the behaviour of states on a global scale, it is also true that they are likely to be misinterpreted or discarded in the absence of social recognition.¹⁷ Research on norm diffusion in International Relations should, therefore, focus not only on those actors who establish and promote normative standards but also on those people who experience them. As far as the human security agenda is concerned, the sociocultural contexts in which its norms and practices are promoted must be taken into consideration in order for us to analyse and better understand the diffusion of this global agenda.

The first steps were taken toward the creation of the contemporary human security agenda during the 1990s, and they were accelerated after 1994 when the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) issued a *Human Development Report* (HDR) in which human security was, for the first time, explicitly and somewhat systematically articulated.¹⁸ This report marked a significant turning point in the trajectory of international development



and security agendas as it expanded the notion of security and placed special emphasis on human security as a new framework for understanding development and security issues in relation to seven key dimensions of human experience; these were categorized in terms of food and health, as well as economic, environmental, personal, community, and political needs.¹⁹ Human security later evolved into an even broader approach that incorporated three freedoms (freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity) as well as five principles (human security is intended to be people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific, prevention-oriented, and concerned with protection and empowerment).²⁰

Although the human security agenda was initially articulated as part of efforts to influence debates and state policies during the preparatory phase of the 1995 UN Conference on Social Development in Copenhagen, neither the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development nor the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development assigned much relevance to the idea that human security could be a guiding principle for security and development.²¹ Since then, there has been little consensus on how to promote and translate the human security agenda into practice. As a result, different approaches have been employed over time.

The Canadian and Norwegian governments, for instance, have adopted narrow definitions of human security, focused on the idea that the term should be understood in terms of “freedom from fear.” This approach was reflected in the operations of the Human Security Network which emerged out of a Canadian-Norwegian partnership and involved 12 other nation states working with them to influence the international security agenda.²² Meanwhile, the government of Japan, the UNDP, and many prominent scholars have advocated a broader understanding of human security which would be attentive to many aspects of people’s security and not just to their physical safety and survival.²³ The government of Japan and the United Nations Secretariat also launched the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS) in March 1999 with the aim of translating the UN’s human security approach into practical actions. In a similar vein, initiatives such as the Friends of Human Security forum have called for a comprehensive approach to human security focused on its three main aspects: “freedom from fear”, “freedom from want” and people’s ability to “live life in dignity.”²⁴

The concept of human security places people at the centre of development and, in doing so, makes an innovative contribution to the UN’s and its Member States’ development and security agendas. Moreover, it recognizes and encourages the participation of non-state actors in the process of implementation of these global agendas at the local level.²⁵ Human security also involves a fundamental departure from an orthodox international relations security analysis as it gives primacy to human beings and their complex social and economic relations instead of focusing on the state as the exclusive primary referent object.²⁶ This does not mean, however, that the human security agenda ignores the role of the nation state. At the same time that it accommodates the significant involvement of local communities, civil society, and other non-state actors, it embraces the state’s importance, and these actors are expected to work together on developing long-lasting solutions to the interdependent threats that affect human security.²⁷

Indeed, as Krause reveals, a wide variety of non-state actors have been inspired by the human security agenda.²⁸ Prominent NGOs such as the Arias Foundation, Oxfam UK, and the Worldwatch Institute have been working with the concept of human security. Furthermore, numerous university-based research centres and study programmes on human security have been established,²⁹ and multiple reports have been published.³⁰ Human security has been also the object of numerous recent debates and studies on global governance and world politics.³¹ These developments reflect a growing understanding of the salience of the

discourse of human security. It is clear, therefore, that the concept has been widely disseminated as one of the key ways of framing and describing the insecurities that individuals face both domestically and internationally.³²

Although the human security agenda has been widely diffused throughout the last two decades, and notwithstanding numerous efforts to promote the human security agenda at the field level, the number of UNTFHS projects has dramatically decreased in recent years (Chart 1).³³ In the academic debate, many scholars have been criticizing the role and/or the significance of human security.³⁴ Indeed, considering the difficulties faced by the UN in designing a systematic definition of “human security,”³⁵ criticism of and differences in its interpretation are to be expected. In order to understand the diffusion of the human security agenda and the potential that the UN and non-state actors have to promote it more effectively, it is therefore important to analyse the ways in which it is perceived in distinct sociocultural contexts. The next section provides a brief review of the ways in which human security has been interpreted in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Southern Africa.

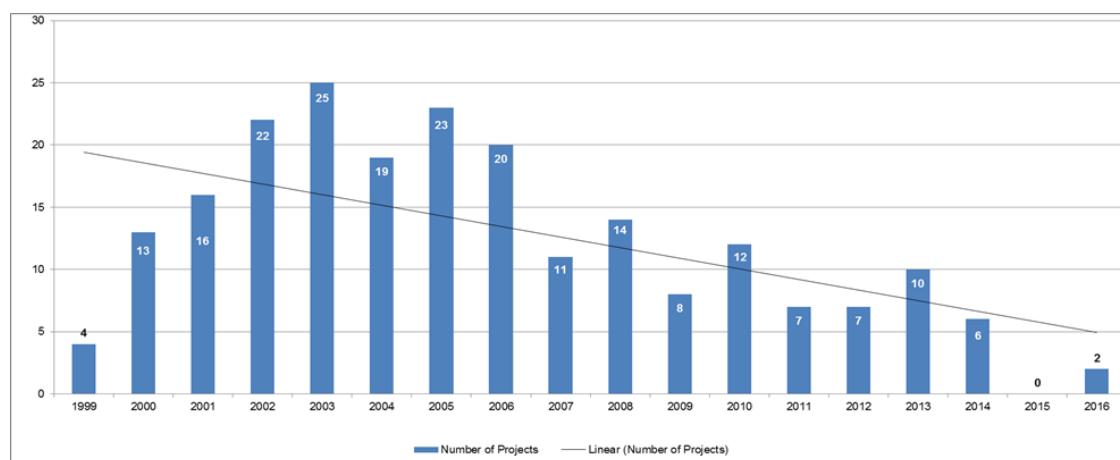


Chart 1. Establishment of human security projects funded and/or supported by the UNTFHS over time

Human security in different social-cultural contexts

Numerous studies have shown that there is significant variation in the diffusion of normative standards across different regional and local contexts.³⁶ Berger and Luckmann understand “humanness” as being variable across different sociocultural contexts. According to their view, there is only human nature in the sense of anthropological constants that delimit and permit people’s sociocultural formations.³⁷ In addition, they demonstrate that the processes of socialization and knowledge transfer are interrelated with the social worlds within which these interactions take place.³⁸ Following this logic, it is to be expected that the persuasiveness and significance of the human security agenda will vary depending on the sociocultural contexts within which this agenda is being promoted. Therefore, any investigation of the diffusion of human security as a global agenda should analyse and take into consideration the respective local perspectives on “human security”.

There are three main reasons for the decision here to focus on how human security is perceived in the sociocultural contexts that exist in Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Southern Africa. These post-colonial regions share historical experiences that help to explain some of the current socio-economic patterns and human insecurities they face, which include poverty, high social inequality, and violence, and yet there are fundamental sociocultural differences between them. The diversity of ethnic groups, religions, languages, and traditions



within and across these three regions can be expected to produce different ways of thinking about and acting upon the human security agenda. Finally, these regions are all of strategic importance in relation to UN initiatives on human security, and a large part of the work funded by the UNTFHS is focused on projects in these areas.³⁹

In Latin America, the idea of human security has been contested mainly because of the various security challenges that arise at the domestic level and because of the importance given by Latin American states to the Westphalian principle of sovereignty.⁴⁰ In order to understand how Latin Americans perceive the idea of human security, it is necessary to take into account the continent's recent past during which military dictatorships have subsumed any focus on aspects of social life under policies, such as censorship and suppression of the freedom of association, which prioritized the fight against communism and the need for "national defence."⁴¹ Bonner's study on the Argentinian case reveals that "[s]ecurity [...] has consistently been used by governments and the police in a manner that emphasizes domestic threats."⁴² In addition, the foreign policies of Latin American countries in the twentieth century were largely preoccupied with the value of national sovereignty because of the latent fear produced by the interventionism of the United States (US).⁴³

Resistance to the adoption of a human security agenda as a new framework for dealing with security issues in Latin America also arose because "national security", "citizen security", and other similar concepts were already being used by domestic actors in ways that gave them culturally specific meanings.⁴⁴ Bonner and Gómez further argue that the widely used concept of "human rights" has been found much more persuasive by both states and civil societies in this region than has the notion of "human security."⁴⁵ These views confirm the ongoing validity of Sorj's claim that "the majority of human rights NGOs and the academic community in Latin America have [...] tended to be critical of the concept of human security." Sorj also notes that the human security agenda is often perceived in Latin America as an attempt to locate all social problems within the scope of security, a move that risks leading to the "resecuritization" of social life.⁴⁶

The human security agenda is also perceived with scepticism in Southeast Asia. According to Caballero-Anthony, an alternative, broader view of security is not novel or uncommon among Asian countries, and this is particularly true in Southeast Asia, a region that has, historically, witnessed some of the worst violence (for example, dictatorial regimes, genocides, and internal conflicts) of the twentieth century.⁴⁷ Caballero-Anthony reveals that the concept of "comprehensive security", first developed by Japan, had already been current during the Cold War, and some countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have even developed their own versions of it.⁴⁸ Yet, the human security agenda has found strong resistance in Southeast Asian states where governments, like those in Latin America, remain strongly wedded to the primacy of national or state security.⁴⁹

Another reason for the contestation of the human security agenda in Southeast Asia relates to the fact that some initial Western articulations of the concept associated it with intervention, especially in its humanitarian form.⁵⁰ When this kind of involvement is regarded as a Trojan horse operation rather than as a bid to improve human security, it is easily dismissed on the grounds that it runs counter to the regional norm of non-interference.⁵¹ Against this background, the consequences of the Asian financial crisis, the 9/11 attacks, and other terrorist threats have all strengthened the significance of national security and the centrality of nation states in bids to address security issues in the region.⁵²

This trend notwithstanding, and in contrast to the stance states have taken in relation to the human security agenda, civil-society groups have been actively promoting emancipatory discourses on security, linking security with development and pushing the envelope on



human rights and human security towards the governments of the region.⁵³ The proposals set out by civil-society actors, particularly in relation to human rights and human development, have engaged with the emancipatory idea of security, a broad vision that argues against the divisions and exclusions that other ideas of comprehensive security have been used to justify.⁵⁴

In Africa, Beebe and Kaldor argue, perceptions of security have been very different from those in other parts of the world and differ especially from those developed in the West.⁵⁵ Beebe and Kaldor argue that Africans understand security in a very particular and immediate way which sets aside the military notion of security; instead African concepts of security and insecurity are best defined as being conditions-based thanks to their focus on issues like security-sector reform, health, food shortages, poverty, and the environmental shock caused by climate change.⁵⁶ Bah reveals that this broad view of human security, which is particularly diffused in Southern Africa, is closely associated with the recent history of struggles against white-minority rule as well as with the numerous political, economic, and social challenges that the region faces.⁵⁷

In the 1990s, even before the 1994 UNDP report was published, Southern African governments adopted a new security paradigm which closely associated security with development.⁵⁸ In 1993, the member states of the South African Development Community (SADC) published a *Framework and Strategy* document which called for the building of common political values based on democratic norms and for the establishment of what was called a “non-militaristic security order”; the document also stressed the need to address non-military sources of conflict and threats to human security, such as poverty and domestic political repression.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, according to Beebe and Kaldor, the many and persistent social challenges that African societies face—as well as the use of inadequate approaches, often compounded by a lack of political will—expose both the powerlessness of NGOs and of African states and their inability to address threats to human security.⁶⁰

The human security agenda offers an alternative and holistic approach, one that focuses on the security of individuals in their respective local environments in its efforts to address threats to human security worldwide. Yet, while the human security agenda makes for a compelling normative framework within which human insecurities can be addressed, states and non-state actors do not automatically enact it at the domestic level. The promotion of the human security agenda undoubtedly represents an enormous challenge for both state and non-state actors in all of the regions highlighted above, and possibly in all other sociocultural contexts worldwide, because threats to human security are complex and extend over multiple borders. A declining number of projects are being supported and/or funded by the UNTFHS (Chart 1) and, at the same time, increased attention is being given to non-state actors as strategic partners at the local level. In this context, it is important to reflect on both the positive and negative roles that non-state actors play in building human security as well as on how they can become more effective in promoting the human security agenda.

The role of non-state actors in building human security

The human security agenda emerged as a response to the traditionally realist understanding of security in International Relations. In its promotion of an alternative set of norms and practices that are engaged with the security of individuals and communities, the agenda eschews the traditional sole focus on the security of states, and, as a consequence, both state and non-state actors are implicated in the agenda and are expected to be involved in its dissemination and implementation. Nation states are often the cause of human insecurities or limit the introduction of innovative policies associated with the human security agenda,⁶¹ and so non-state actors are arguably in strategic terms crucial promoters of the human



security agenda. Although they do not always play positive roles in building human security and frequently reinforce old mindsets about sovereignty and security concerns, non-state actors are, nevertheless, flexible, multifaceted, and far-reaching and they have enormous potential to challenge top-down approaches and help locals build human security through innovative practices.⁶²

For the purposes of this article, I define non-state actors simply as individuals, organizations, or any other agents, outside the realm of the state. The focus here is limited to those non-state actors engaged in scholarship or operating through NGOs because of the strong potential of their work to help both state and other non-state actors as well as the UN promote the human security agenda and foster initiatives that can address human insecurities worldwide. In this section, I critically explore the positive and negative roles that these non-state actors play in building human security, and afterwards I assess the opportunities that exist for them to become more effective in promoting the human security agenda.

Scholarship plays a number of fundamental roles in the development of human security. Not only do scholars produce concepts and diffuse knowledge; they also promote debates and provide society with valuable information. Prominent academics such as Mahbub ul Haq, Amartya Sen, Des Gasper, and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh have been fundamental in shaping and promoting the idea of human security to the extent that we can recognize the human security agenda as the product of academic work as well as of international relations. Moreover, empirical studies on human security produced by academics have shed light on the types of progress, as well as the limitations, and challenges that have had an impact on the human security agenda worldwide.⁶³

Notwithstanding the positive roles scholarship can play, it can also hinder the human security agenda if its focus on detail encourages actors to consider human security concerns in terms of discrete issues at the expense of a more holistic approach. Many academics advocate narrow interpretations of human security⁶⁴ and, as a result, they reinforce old mindsets and ineffective approaches to addressing human insecurities instead of taking advantage of innovations in the human security agenda and pursuing systematic solutions to address its shortcomings.

Drawing on Bourdieu's theory about the social role of scholars, Golsorkhi *et al.* emphasize that social researchers should take responsibility, not just for developing complex knowledge, access to which is likely to be limited for non-specialists, but also for diffusing this knowledge.⁶⁵ Scholars, as experts with significant social legitimacy, have power, but they also need to weigh important responsibilities when they are advocating one approach or another. When academics promote narrow understandings of human security or simply disdain the idea without providing alternative solutions, they have a negative effect on the building of human security because they restrict awareness of more positive aspects of the human security agenda which can encourage and promote the holistic understanding of people's security and the issues that affect it in various contexts.

NGOs also play very important roles in building human security as they draw attention towards, provide information about, and lobby for appropriate responses to human insecurities in various parts of the world.⁶⁶ Furthermore, NGOs offer services that governments and international agencies are unable to provide. NGOs have also become significant political actors in international politics and, at the individual level, help to provide information, consciousness-raising education, and resources to individuals that can then support and sustain them in their efforts to live better lives.⁶⁷ Among the achievements associated with the role of NGOs in building human security is, for instance, the ratification of the Ottawa Treaty which sought to ban the use of anti-personnel land mines worldwide.⁶⁸



NGOs may, however, also play negative roles in building human security. According to Beebe and Kaldor, NGOs are frequently associated with problems that include those generated by inefficient approaches, lack of transparency and accountability, and even their bad reputations which arise because “not all NGOs are purely humanitarian.”⁶⁹ Beebe and Kaldor also criticize what they call the “artificial NGOs based on Western models” which use top-down approaches and are, therefore, unable or unwilling to understand the demands of locals.⁷⁰ To put it differently, NGOs that act on the basis of old mindsets and security paradigms and fail to take into consideration the perspective of local agents in relation to issues such as security and development are bound to fail when they try to build human security at a local level.

Indeed, the challenges that non-state actors encounter as they strive to build human security are numerous, and they include issues related to accountability, communication, legitimacy, resources, and other factors. In addition, Schittecatte insists that the inclusion of non-state actors in intergovernmental settings only occurs in areas that do not challenge dominant economic world views and their attendant policies.⁷¹ Nevertheless, non-state actors have been challenging the dominant idea of state-centric security and raising issues of human rights protection, social justice, and equitable development.⁷² In fact, non-state actors—and particularly scholars and NGOs—have enormous potential in terms of their ability to improve the viability and levels of adoption of the human security agenda as a framework for promoting security and development in distinct sociocultural contexts. But how can non-state actors become more effective in promoting the human security agenda?

Promoting the human security agenda more effectively

The challenges and opportunities involved in promoting the human security agenda are interrelated. Problems posed by poor or non-existent resources, communication, and accountability, as well as the advocacy and use of inadequate approaches, thwart both the diffusion and the promotion of the agenda. However, these drawbacks can be mitigated in three ways. Firstly, while critical perspectives are, of course, vital to the further development of “human security” as a concept and agenda, and indeed might lead to the establishment of alternative valuable approaches to security and development, there is a strong need for more solution-oriented types of research into human security. Secondly, improvements in communication and the fostering of interaction in various forms between policymakers, NGOs, scholars, and other members of civil society would be hugely positive; and thirdly, non-state actors should avoid any practices that shrink or segregate human security concerns into fragmented compartments; instead, it would be more productive to understand and promote people’s security in a holistic and interdisciplinary fashion.

In a nutshell, solution-oriented research, improvements in communication strategies, efforts to understand the perspective of local agents and to interact with them, and the use of a comprehensive and interdisciplinary framework for addressing human insecurities are fundamental actions that can be leveraged to promote and then build human security in any sociocultural context.

Writing in the 1960s, Berger and Luckmann claimed that science, as one of the most historically dominant forms of conceptual machinery, had become the property of specialist elites whose bodies of knowledge were increasingly removed from the common knowledge of the society at large.⁷³ If scholars constantly criticize or even disdain the human security agenda instead of thinking of it as an opportunity to achieve social progress by providing societies with knowledge and guidance, the “distance” between the academic world and society at large might grow further. Bearing in mind that academics need to balance the requirement to disperse their research knowledge with their efforts to maintain the



complexity of its reasoning,⁷⁴ more solution-oriented research on human security can provide an optimal solution to address these gaps.⁷⁵

Interaction between NGOs and scholars, as well as between them and other non-state actors, the UN, and policymakers, will, like any social interaction, produce knowledge.⁷⁶ According to this perspective, communication is the bridge between knowledge and legitimization and can play a crucial role in the diffusion of normative standards. After all, local actors may want to understand why, and to what extent, specific (and often “foreign”) norms and practices are relevant to them before they implement them and make changes to the status quo. In this sense, only through inclusive and democratic communication can global norms be better assimilated, improved, and legitimized at the local level. Initiatives that aim to promote human security should create new channels whereby local actors can, not only make their voices heard, but also participate in implementation processes as well as become more conscious of the social structures in which they are implicated. Moreover, dialogues on specific norms and practices have to consist of horizontal interactions among “promoters” and “beholders” and to situate them both as “learners.”⁷⁷

Beebe and Kaldor argue that to build human security it is necessary to promote a “community social conscience” as well as to secure the participation of civil society actors who are “key to understanding what is happening” because security-building is “about communication and knowledge and helping to establish a common basis for legitimate governance.”⁷⁸ Berger and Luckmann emphasize the importance of language as an essential means for any understanding of the reality of everyday life.⁷⁹ Accordingly, I claim that to promote the human security agenda effectively, NGOs and scholars should interact with other members of civil society and make sure they are “speaking the same language” as the people their work affects.⁸⁰ Improvements in communication may empower non-state actors to promote the human security agenda more effectively and can help too as they press governments to help them build human security according to the demands of locals.

According to Tadjbakhsh, policymaking can make use of a networked, flexible, and horizontal coalition of approaches that correspond to complex situations and account for their specificity: “to hierarchize and prioritize among human insecurities may be a futile exercise, as threats are interdependent and the eradication of any one of them in isolation is of little effect.”⁸¹ Amartya Sen also argues that fragmented responses to human insecurities cannot be effective, insisting that stronger and more integrated responses from communities and states around the globe are necessary to build human security.⁸²

Given that the human security agenda is focused on diverse, situation-specific, and interacting threats and how they affect the lives of ordinary people, human security requires a holistic and, at the same time, context-specific approach that attends to how things are seen by people “on the ground.”⁸³ An interdisciplinary framework is also required then, and in fact the promotion of the human security agenda should involve a wide and interdisciplinary range of non-state actors from different fields of expertise. Academics working in different areas of expertise, and representatives from NGOs working on issues such as the environment, education, poverty, and refugees, among other salient topics, are among those who need to be involved. This level of engagement is imperative if we are to capitalize in a holistic way on the innovations and insights enabled by the human security agenda.

Finally, it is vital to consider local perspectives on human security because “sustainable security in particular areas can only be established by people who live there.”⁸⁴ Outsiders working in a specific territory can at best facilitate people’s empowerment and establish safe spaces, setting preliminary conditions in order to mitigate insecurities that inhibit people



from freely determining their own futures. If non-state actors want to retain relevance and legitimacy in the eyes of the locals, they must be aware, before they come into the field with “turnkey solutions,” that local people should be consulted and their perspective and participation taken into consideration.⁸⁵ When this participatory approach is taken, outsiders can contribute in a positive way to alleviating the security challenges faced by individuals and communities in their everyday lives.

Conclusion

Two decades after its international debut, there is no doubt that the concept of human security has been widely used by state and non-state actors around the globe. The diffusion of the human security agenda is real, notwithstanding the declining number of UNTFHS projects and significant variations in the agenda’s definition and implementation. However, as Alpaslan Özerdem mentioned in his Welcome Note at the Istanbul Human Security Conference in 2015, many people are still unaware of issues of human security, and the role of non-state actors in promoting and building human security has been neglected.⁸⁶

I present my arguments and recommendations mindful of several limitations. I shall cite three. First of all, this study does not provide detailed empirical research into the diffusion of the human security agenda in distinct sociocultural contexts. Instead, the analysis here is based on case studies that illustrate how human security is perceived within specific sociocultural contexts. Secondly, my critiques of the negative roles played by scholars and NGOs are based on a limited range of studies and debates and should not be generalized. Finally, the recommendations provided here should be understood, not as definitive claims, but as the source of inspiration for further research and other concrete actions that will address human security both within and beyond the academic realm.

This article has reviewed the diffusion of the human security agenda and analysed how human security is perceived in three distinct sociocultural contexts: Latin America, Southeast Asia, and Southern Africa. Although limited by its illustrative analysis, this review generates four interesting findings. First, while human security is often perceived with scepticism in Latin America and in Southeast Asia, it has not been highly contested in Southern Africa, because in Africa security was understood in a broad sense even before the 1994 UNDP report was published. Second, while NGOs in Southeast Asia have been engaged with broader ideas of human security, Latin American NGOs tend to be critical towards the concept of human security and focus instead on the concept of human rights. Third, in all cases, the use of specific notions such as “national security” and “citizen security” (Latin America), and variations on “comprehensive security” (Southeast Asia) and “non-militaristic security order” (Southern Africa), indicate that the concept of “human security”, though widely diffused, is still not persuasive in the eyes of many people. Finally, the scepticism towards the notion of “human security” or the use of alternative concepts in these regions, where the majority of human security projects funded and/or supported by the UNTFHS were established, might offer a plausible explanation for the decline in the establishment of such projects throughout the last decade (Chart 1).

To translate global normative standards into practice at the local level is a very challenging task, but the opportunities that arise from the diffusion of the human security agenda are numerous. While state actors often cause human insecurities or limit the development or implementation of innovations in relation to the human security agenda, non-state actors are strategically important promoters. The roles that non-state actors can play in helping to build human security, discussed here in relation to just two types of non-state actors, are myriad and have great potential. However, in order for this potential to be realized, more solution-oriented research on human security as well as multi-stakeholder initiatives involving NGOs,

scholars, and other members of civil society should be fostered. Scholars and NGOs need also to articulate human security goals in an interactive and intelligible manner if they want to facilitate the empowerment of individuals and communities and promote the human security agenda more effectively.

A broad view of human security has numerous advantages over a narrower perspective because it creates strong potential for security concerns to be addressed in a holistic and systematic fashion in any sociocultural context.⁸⁷ In addition, the interconnectedness of issues and solutions relating to human security has gone beyond the academic realm and involves a wide range of agents.⁸⁸ A holistic and interdisciplinary framework is therefore ideally suited to addressing human insecurities as it looks at specific people's lives and vulnerabilities and, at the same time, takes their interconnections and the ways they intersect into account.⁸⁹ Governments and non-state actors should therefore stop trying to impose the ideas that they perceive to be "right" about security.⁹⁰ Instead, they must, first and foremost, listen to what local people have to say, understand their perspectives and demands, include them in implementation processes, and promote the human security agenda in ways that are responsive to their hopes and needs. Only then can human security be built effectively.



Notes

1. Suhrke, "Human Security and the Interests of States".
2. Ibid., 268-69.
3. Mary Martin et al., *Routledge Handbook of Human Security*, 3.
4. See, for example, Alter et al., "Nature or Nurture?"; Börzel et al., "Diffusing (Inter-) Regionalism" and "From Europeanisation to Diffusion"; Jetschke et al., "Diffusing Regional Integration".
5. Cf. Wiener, "In the Eye of the Beholder", 213.
6. Syväterä et al., "The Construction and Spread of Global Models".
7. Acharya, "How Ideas Spread".
8. Acharya, "Norm Subsidiarity and Regional Orders".
9. Krüger, "The Global Diffusion of Truth Commissions".
10. I am grateful to my colleagues Caio Moreira, Daniel Peters, Fernando Mattos, and Sassan Gholiagha for providing valuable feedback on an earlier version of this article. The article has also greatly profited from discussions at the Istanbul Human Security Conference 2015 and at the Workshop on "Southern Democracies and the R2P" at the Institute for Theology and Peace in Hamburg. The responsibility for the article remains with me.
11. Peter L. Berger et al., *The Social Construction of Reality*.
12. See UN Trust Fund for Human Security (UNTFHS), "Human Security Handbook", January 2016, http://www.un.org/humansecurity/sites/www.un.org.humansecurity/files/hs_handbook_03.pdf (Accessed 21 February 2017).
13. Gilardi, "Transnational Diffusion"; Strang et al. "Institutional Conditions for Diffusion".
14. Gilardi, "Transnational Diffusion", 454-455.
15. Börzel et al., "From Europeanization to Diffusion"; Deephouse, "Does Isomorphism Legitimate?"; Anita Engels, *Die geteilte Umwelt*; Krüger, "The Global Diffusion of Truth Commissions".
16. Klingler-Vidra et al., "Convergence More or Less", 271.
17. Wiener, "Enacting Meaning-In-Use", 179.
18. Although the concept of human security promoted by the UN was first coined in the 1994 UNDP report, the idea of developing and promoting broader understandings of security was not necessarily new. The process of redefining the international security agenda in more humanitarian terms is part of a larger process that began in the 1970s and 1980s. See, for example, Alt, "Problematizing Life under Biopower", 144; UN General Assembly, *Human Security Report of the Secretary-General*, 13.
19. United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report*.
20. UNTFHS, *Human Security Handbook*.
21. United Nations, *Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development*; Krause, "Critical Perspectives on Human Security", 80.
22. Ibid., 85. The Human Security Network was established through the Lysøen Declaration on Human Security which was signed in 1998 by the former Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, and the former Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Knut Vollebæk.
23. Mary Martin et al., *Routledge Handbook of Human Security*.
24. See, for example, Obuchi, "Opening Remarks", 18-19. The Friends of Human Security was established at the UN in 2006. Co-chaired by Japan and Mexico, it comprised 34 Member States and provided an informal forum for the discussion of the concept of human security, as well as for the exploration of collaborative ways to bring it into the mainstream of UN activities. See Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, "Friends of Human Security", 9 February 2016, http://www.mofa.go.jp/policy/human_secu/friends/ (Accessed 19 August 2016).
25. The human security agenda recognizes the crucial role of non-state actors in promoting and building human security and incorporates roles for them in its strategic plans. See,



- for example, Human Security Unit, *Strategic Plan 2014-2017*; UNTFHS, *Human Security Handbook*.
26. Thomas, “Global Governance, Development and Human Security”, 161.
 27. UNTFHS, *Human Security Handbook*; Bombande et al. “Can Human Security Drive Global Governance?”, 20 September 2013, <http://theglobalobservatory.org/2013/09/can-human-security-drive-global-governance> (Accessed 21 January 2017); Black, “Civil Society and the Promotion of Human Security”.
 28. Krause, “Critical Perspectives on Human Security”, 81-82.
 29. See, for example, the Human Security Research Group at Canada’s Simon Fraser University, the Ford Institute for Human Security at the University of Pittsburgh, the Master’s Degree Program in Human Security at the University of Aarhus, and the PhD Program in Global Governance and Human Security at the University of Massachusetts.
 30. See, for example, the reports issued by the Human Security Report Project, an independent research centre that is affiliated with Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. Human Security Research Project, “Human Security Research Project”, <http://www.hsrgroup.org/> (Accessed 22 March 2017).
 31. Black, “Civil Society”; Breslin et al., “Has the Human Security Agenda Come of Age?”; Gasper, “Human Security Analysis as a Framework”; Gasper et al., “Human Security Thinking in Practice”; Murphy, “Dignity, Human Security, and Global Governance”; Tadjbakhsh, “Human Security Twenty Years On”.
 32. Krause, “Critical Perspectives on Human Security”, 81.
 33. The data was gathered from the UNTFHS website at <http://www.un.org/humansecurity/trust-fund> (Accessed 6-14 June 2016).
 34. See, for example, Buzan, “A Reductionist, Idealistic Notion”; Chandler, “Human Security”; Ryerson, “Critical Voices and Human Security”; Homolar, “Human Security Benchmarks”; Paris, “Human Security” and “Still an Inscrutable Concept”; McCormack, “Power and Agency”.
 35. Even the Human Security Unit has admitted that ambiguities exist around the meaning of human security. See Human Security Unit, *Strategic Plan 2014-2017*, 5. Recently, after numerous other attempts to clarify its meaning, the UNTFHS published a *Human Security Handbook*. The handbook treats human security as a practical and policy-oriented approach to supporting Member States in their efforts to address multiple threats to human security and achieve sustainable development. See UNTFHS, *Human Security Handbook*, 5.
 36. See, for example, Börzel et al., “From Europeanisation to Diffusion”; Grugel, “Democratization and Ideational Diffusion”; Domínguez, “Diffusion of EU Norms in Latin America”.
 37. Peter Berger et al., *The Social Construction of Reality*, 49.
 38. Ibid., 66-67.
 39. UNTFHS, “Trust Fund Achievements”, <http://www.un.org/humansecurity/trust-fund> (Accessed 17 March 2017); UNTFHS, *Human Security at the United Nations*, 18.
 40. Gómez, “Visiones Alternativas Sobre Seguridad en América Latina”.
 41. Sorj, “Security, Human Security and Latin America”, 43.
 42. Bonner, “Applying the Concept of ‘Human Security’”, 17.
 43. Sorj, “Security, Human Security and Latin America”, 43.
 44. Bonner, “Applying the Concept”.
 45. Ibid., 23; Gómez, “Visiones Alternativas Sobre Seguridad en América Latina,” 33.
 46. Sorj, “Security, Human Security and Latin America”, 43.
 47. Caballero-Anthony, “Revisioning Human Security in Southeast Asia”, 160; Amitav Acharya, *Promoting Human Security*, 17-18.
 48. Caballero-Anthony, “Revisioning Human Security in Southeast Asia”, 160-61.
 49. Amitav Acharya, *Promoting Human Security*, 19.



50. Ibid., 21.
51. Caballero-Anthony, "Revisioning Human Security in Southeast Asia", 170-71.
52. Ibid., 178. See also Pitsuwan and Caballero-Anthony, "Human Security in Southeast Asia".
53. Caballero-Anthony, "Revisioning Human Security in Southeast Asia", 168; Pitsuwan and Caballero-Anthony, "Human Security in Southeast Asia", 203.
54. Caballero-Anthony, "Revisioning Human Security in Southeast Asia", 186.
55. Shannon D. Beebe et al., *The Ultimate Weapon*.
56. Ibid., 171-73.
57. Alhaji M.S. Bah, *Toward a Regional Approach*.
58. Ibid., 6-8.
59. Southern African Development Community (SADC), *Southern Africa*. See also Alhaji M.S. Bah, *Toward a Regional Approach*, 6.
60. Shannon D. Beebe et al., *The Ultimate Weapon*, 176-177.
61. The latter is particularly evident in those discourses around the "Responsibility to Protect" (R2P) which favour the narrow definition of human security developed by the Canadian government. In Canada's pursuit of this kind of human security agenda, the country has taken an ad hoc approach to humanitarian issues and has given little attention to many fundamental aspects of security and conflict. See Shannon D. Beebe et al. *The Ultimate Weapon*, 6; Blackwood "Human Security and Corporate Governance", 87.
62. Shannon D. Beebe et al., *The Ultimate Weapon*, 104; 124-25. See also Shamima Ahmed et al. *NGOs in International Politics*; Pitsuwan et al., "Human Security in Southeast Asia".
63. See, for example, Alhaji M. Bah, *Toward a Regional Approach*; Sorj, "Security, Human Security and Latin America"; Amitav Acharya, *Promoting Human Security*; Bonner, "Applying the Concept of 'Human Security'"; Caballero-Anthony, "Human Security in Southeast Asia"; Liotta et al. "Why Human Security?"; Kim et al., "Human Security in Practice".
64. For example, Paris, "Human Security", and King et al., "Rethinking Human Security".
65. Golsorkhi et al. "Analysing, Accounting for and Unmasking Domination", 790.
66. Shannon D. Beebe et al. *The Ultimate Weapon*, 124-25.
67. Shamima Ahmed et al., *NGOs in International Politics*, 54.
68. Sandra J. MacLean et al., *A Decade of Human Security*.
69. Shannon D. Beebe, *The Ultimate Weapon*, 125.
70. Ibid., 104.
71. Schittecatte, "Toward a More Inclusive Global Governance".
72. Caballero-Anthony, "Revisioning Human Security in Southeast Asia", 172; Black, "Civil Society and the Promotion of Human Security".
73. Peter Berger et al., *The Social Construction of Reality*, 112.
74. Golsorkhi et al.; "Analysing, Accounting for and Unmasking Domination", 791.
75. For interesting insights and arguments on the importance of more solution-oriented approaches in social science, see Watts, "Should Social Science be More Solution-Oriented?".
76. Peter Berger et al., *The Social Construction of Reality*.
77. Paulo Freire, *Extensión o Comunicación?*; Bordenave, "Communication of Agricultural Innovations", 138.
78. Shannon D. Beebe et al., *The Ultimate Weapon*, 104.
79. Peter Berger et al., *The Social Construction of Reality*, 37.
80. Paulo Freire, *Extensión o Comunicación?*, 76. Berger and Luckmann define language simply as "a system of vocal signs" (Peter Berger et al. *The Social Construction of Reality*, 36-37). Without restricting this definition to formal languages, I would argue that "speaking the same language" means, above all, interchanging knowledge and experiences in a mutually intelligible way.
81. Tadjbakhsh, "In Defense of the Broad View of Human Security", 46.

82. Sen, "Birth of a Discourse", 26.
83. Gasper, "Human Security: From Definitions", 39.
84. Shannon D. Beebe et al., *The Ultimate Weapon*, 197.
85. Ibid., 172-177. See also, Ian Smillie, "Whose Security?", 27.
86. Professor Alpaslan Özerdem is Professor of Peacebuilding and Co-Director of the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University, UK.
87. Tadjbakhsh, "In Defense of the Broad View of Human Security", 48.
88. Newman, "Human Security and Constructivism", 250.
89. See Gasper, "Human Security: From Definitions", 37.
90. Shannon D. Beebe et al., *The Ultimate Weapon*; Sandra MacLean et al., *A Decade of Human Security*.



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**Building Human Security through Humanitarian Protection and Assistance:
the Potential of the International Committee of the Red Cross**

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Abstract

Current academic literature neglects the relationship between human security and humanitarian protection and assistance, and does not consider engagement with the law and practice of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as a tool to realise human security. This article examines the protection and assistance mandate of the ICRC and its expansion from humanitarian aid provision to long-term projects. Doctrinal research and primary data collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews are used to ascertain whether the ICRC contributes to the transformation of conflict-affected communities into more secure environments, with a particular focus on the Democratic Republic of Congo. Although the ICRC's mandate does not expressly provide for initiatives focused on human security, many of its actions contribute positively towards the progressive realization of secure environments during and after armed conflict.

Key words: Human security, humanitarian principles, International Committee of the Red Cross, human rights, International Humanitarian Law.



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Building Human Security through Humanitarian Protection and Assistance: the Potential of the International Committee of the Red Cross

Introduction

The historical development of human-centric legal frameworks, from international humanitarian law to human rights law, shows a willingness by States to protect their own citizens and those outside of their borders. The growth in attention paid to human security is also reflective of such an approach. However, this willingness to consider human needs is often subverted by politics, military action, conflict, and lack of resources. This research assesses humanitarian protection and assistance initiatives in terms of their potential to contribute to the establishment of human security. That potential is assumed to exist because humanitarian actors have unparalleled access to individuals and communities on the ground that are living through or recovering from armed conflict. Moreover, humanitarian principles, such as neutrality, facilitate access that other actors cannot guarantee.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has a mandate to provide humanitarian protection and assistance. In terms of protection, the provisions of the Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV 1949 enable the ICRC to bring humanitarian aid to victims of war, exchange messages between prisoners of war and their families, trace the fate of disappeared people, and care for the wounded and sick.¹ Humanitarian assistance tends to refer to methods that are used “to alleviate human suffering during wartime,”² and the stated “aim of the ICRC’s assistance programmes is to preserve life and restore the dignity of individuals and communities affected by armed conflict or other situations of violence.”³ The protracted nature of many armed conflicts has necessitated the development of activities and projects that address the ongoing needs of combatants and civilians, and so the ICRC has developed its activities by moving beyond its traditional focus on the mere survival of victims of war. It now performs a more comprehensive assistance and protection role, which seeks not only to protect victims of armed conflict, but also to provide for their basic needs. Bilkovà states that “this approach corresponds to that held by the proponents of human security, in its broad definition.”⁴

Noting the ICRC’s expanded remit, this article seeks to explore the potential role of the organization in building human security through humanitarian protection and assistance. It will question the legal mandate that the ICRC has and the actions that it takes. It is critical to understand the unique status of the ICRC on the international stage as an organization which has relationships with the UN, States, local communities, and national societies. There is remarkably little literature available on the relationship between ICRC roles and human security, and scholars neglect to consider the synergies between humanitarianism and human security in terms of actions taken on the ground. This study therefore attempts to align the concept of human security with specific roles undertaken by the ICRC to illustrate the potential that the ICRC has to create security on the ground. The ICRC does not publicly engage with the concept of human security, nor does it explicitly operate within a human security framework, and so this author interviewed a number of ICRC delegates in Geneva in April 2014 to enquire into their theoretical and legal conclusions about the relationship between the ICRC’s mandate and human security.



This article has four constituent parts. The first outlines the research methods utilized, while the second examines the protection and assistance mandate of the ICRC and provides a historical and theoretical overview of the links between humanitarianism and human security. This section looks in particular at the Geneva Conventions of 1949 (I, II, III, and IV) and the ICRC's "right of humanitarian initiative." The third section shows how the ICRC's mandate maps onto the categories of human security promulgated in the *Human Development Report 1994 (HDR)*.⁵ Finally, interview data is used to test the theory that there is a natural nexus between humanitarian protection and assistance. The interview data is set out in an independent section because it highlights the ability of one action to impact on a number of human security areas. For example, the data collected shows synergies in ICRC practices that involve supporting early recovery, focusing on the needs of communities, entering into dialogue with all factions, and establishing links with local communities; the compound effect of these activities is that secure spaces are created both during and after conflicts.

Methods

This research examines what the "law in context" or "law in action" looks like.⁶ It uses semi-structured qualitative interviews with ICRC headquarters delegates who have experience of working as field staff in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and it uses their responses to help determine whether humanitarian protection and assistance can assist in the establishment of human security. The interviews discussed here focused on the ability of the ICRC to leverage its mandate to break new ground; they also investigated the possibility that its practices might help in establishing human security for people in conflict zones.⁷ The interviews, which tested the theoretical conclusions drawn in earlier research, took the form of open questions that facilitated in-depth questioning and enabled interviewees to contribute their unique insights, as well as contextual details and real-life experiences.⁸ The interviewees were culturally elite and confident about leading the discussions and imparting knowledge and anecdotes from the ICRC's headquarters and the field.⁹

In terms of recruitment, the author used the snowball sampling method, partly because of the opaque and confidential nature of the ICRC.¹⁰ The ICRC is a habitually discreet organisation. My contacts and interviewees remained anonymous in view of the personal and professional risks they were taking in providing information; nevertheless, they freely volunteered to take part in the interviews.¹¹ One of the criteria for the selection of interviewees was that they should have field experience in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which was selected as a case study because the ICRC has been continually present in the DRC since 1978 and has developed its projects in accordance with changes on the ground there. The sample size of five participants allowed for sufficient data to be gathered on the relationship between the ICRC mandate and human security,¹² and the process confirmed Bauer and Gaskell's prediction that, while there may be striking differences in opinion in the first interviews, common themes will nevertheless appear and the interviewer's understanding will develop progressively.¹³ This observation was accurate in terms of this author's experiences.

The protection and assistance mandate of the International Committee of the Red Cross

The ICRC started out as a neutral and independent humanitarian organization that provided medical assistance to wounded soldiers, traced families of combatants, and visited prisoners of war. After World War One, its mandate shifted to include the protection of civilians. This priority has continued to inform the practice of the ICRC over the past century or so, not least because of the proliferation of non-international armed conflicts and the exponential increase in protracted armed conflict and situations of violence during that time. In order for the ICRC to work to its full potential in these situations, it is critical that States, communities,



and individuals recognize the principle of humanity, which is in turn crucial to the concept of human security.

It is worth remembering throughout this analysis that the human-centric concepts of humanitarianism and human security are effectively synonymous in the international legal system.¹⁴ This synonymy is reflected in the ways in which the ICRC was characterized by its president in 2012. Maurer stated that “the motivation behind our work has not changed since the final pages of Henry Dunant’s groundbreaking book ‘A Memory of Solferino’. What changes, however, is how the organization adapts its response to different patterns of conflict and different contexts.”¹⁵ Drawing implicitly on the discourse of human security, Maurer explained further that “the working method of the ICRC is to be close to victims, root action in response to needs rather than political agendas, to contextualize the humanitarian response and reunite assistance, protection and prevention.”¹⁶

The Geneva Conventions, which effectively established the ICRC’s mandate, were drafted at the end of World War Two at a time when the people who drafted them could not have anticipated the woeful impact that conflict would increasingly have on civilians. Since then, it has become more challenging to maintain neutrality and independence and provide humanitarian protection and assistance to those tied up in conflict; meanwhile, the needs of the populations affected by it have become more severe and protracted, particularly given the cycles of armed conflict, violence, unrest, conflict and so on, that affect many countries today. This article asks whether the emergence and development of the concept of human security, as a seemingly parallel elucidation of human-centric concerns on the international stage, enhances or damages the legal framework that guides the work of the ICRC. Is human security, as a concept championed by the UN, too fraught with political connotations to be utilized as a framework for action by the ICRC, or, on the other hand, is the ICRC, as a unique humanitarian actor, key to the legitimization of a human-centric concept that is increasingly permeating international discourse? This article explores these questions in order to assess the significance of the ICRC in the “big picture” of humanitarian protection and assistance, human security, and humanity.

The Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV 1949 “not only place primary legal obligations on warring parties, but legitimize the role of “impartial” humanitarian organisations, such as the ICRC, in promoting the protection of and providing relief assistance to, non-combatants.”¹⁷ The activities that the ICRC can undertake are provided for in Common Article 3, Article 9 Geneva Conventions I, II and III 1949, and Article 10 Geneva Convention IV 1949. In terms of international armed conflicts, Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV 1949 each state that: “The International Committee of the Red Cross or any other impartial humanitarian organisation may, subject to the consent of the Parties to the conflict concerned, undertake for the protection of wounded and sick, medical personnel and chaplains, and for their relief.”

Further, the commentary to Article 9 Geneva Convention I states that “All humanitarian activities [emphasis added] are covered in theory, and not only those for which express provision is made. They are, however, covered subject to certain conditions with regard to the character of the organization undertaking them, their own nature and object and, lastly, the will of the Parties to the conflict.”¹⁸

In addition, Article 81(1) Additional Protocol I 1977 states that the ICRC “may also carry out any other humanitarian activities [emphasis added] in favour of these victims, subject to the consent of the Parties to the conflict concerned.” Under Common Article 3(2) Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV 1949, “an impartial humanitarian body, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, may offer its services [emphasis added] to the Parties to the conflict”. This provision is somewhat open-ended; it therefore affords the ICRC wide



discretion to act in non-international armed conflicts (NIAC). Article 18(2) Additional Protocol II provides that:

If the civilian population is suffering undue hardship owing to a lack of the supplies essential for its survival, such as foodstuffs and medical supplies, relief actions for the civilian population which are of an exclusively humanitarian and impartial nature and which are conducted without any adverse distinction shall be undertaken subject to the consent of the High Contracting Party concerned.

Finally, the Seville Agreement (1997) introduced the idea of a “Lead Agency” into the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (IRCRCM). It means that the ICRC has specific areas in which it will take the lead in relief operations.¹⁹ Under Article 5(1), the term “direct results of a conflict” specifically includes periods “beyond the cessation of hostilities and extends to situations where victims of a conflict remain in need of relief until a general restoration of peace has been achieved”.

This mandate has clear connections with the human security needs identified in the *Human Development Report* (HDR) which was published by the United Nations Development Programme in 1994. Those needs are deemed to include the provision of food stuffs, healthcare for the wounded and sick, economic security, and personal and community security—all of which can be seen to fall within the ICRC’s mandate to provide humanitarian protection and assistance—as well as environmental security which might also be regarded as falling within the ICRC’s humanitarian purview. The HDR (1994) also declares political security to be a human need but this falls beyond the mandate of the ICRC given its principles of independence, impartiality, and confidentiality. The ICRC is very careful to distance itself internally and publicly from political matters, and, critically, it enjoys immunity from legal process, which protects it from judicial and administrative proceedings.²⁰ Nevertheless, beyond the HDR’s needs-based list of the seven elements of human security, the report’s broader framework for human security, set out in the “Common Understanding” section, offers a nuanced interpretation of human security, which the ICRC’s mandate might well be extrapolated to accommodate.

Under the Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV 1949 and Additional Protocol I, the ICRC, as a neutral humanitarian organization, also has the mandate to carry out functions traditionally performed by protecting powers.²¹ A protecting power is intended to secure the supervision and implementation of the Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV 1949 and their Additional Protocols. Traditionally, a protecting power was appointed by a State which was party to a conflict to safeguard their respective interests during the dispute. The ICRC can replace a contracting power and perform its functions, or it can enjoy protecting power status; in either situation, it is afforded automatic powers to carry out its activities and this puts the ICRC on the same footing as a State, with the sole distinction being that the ICRC is neutral and must work in the interests of all parties. Indeed, under Article 6 of its statutes, it is mandated to “maintain relations with government authorities and any national or international institution whose assistance it considers useful.”

Organizations that undertake humanitarian action “must be concerned with the condition of man, considered solely as a human being without regard to the value which he represents as a military, political, professional or other unit. And the organization must be impartial.”²² Its activities must be purely humanitarian in character; they must be concerned with human beings as such, and it is also vital that they must not be affected by any political or military considerations.²³ These stipulations, in the first instance, give humanitarian organizations criteria for authorizing their involvement in conflict; arguably, they also provide the apparatus for organizations to secure humanitarian access as happens, for example, when the ICRC uses



its reputation for neutrality and independence to gain access to those in need. It also encourages States to cooperate in the provision of humanitarian aid. When used successfully, therefore, the provision of humanitarian protection and assistance can contribute to the economic security of people on the ground during and after conflict, perhaps ultimately leading to their freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity.

In addition to the right to provide humanitarian assistance, the ICRC has the right to take the humanitarian initiative. This is a much broader right than that contained in the legal provisions discussed above. Under paragraph 4(2) of the Statutes of the ICRC, “the ICRC may take *any humanitarian initiative* [emphasis added] which comes within its role as a specifically neutral and independent institution and intermediary, and may consider any question requiring examination by such an institution.” This right is reiterated in the Statutes of the IRRCRM, which state that “within its role as a specifically neutral and independent institution and intermediary”, it must “endeavour at all times—as a neutral institution whose humanitarian work is carried out particularly in time of international and other armed conflicts or internal strife—to ensure the protection of and assistance to military and civilian victims of such events and of their direct results.”²⁴

This right to humanitarian initiative is flexible and therefore practical as “no one can foretell what a future war will consist of, under what conditions it will be waged and to what needs it will give rise.”²⁵ It is therefore right that “a door should be left open to any initiative or action, however unforeseeable today, which may provide effective help in protecting, caring for, and aiding the wounded and sick.”²⁶ Ratner states that “this significant grant of authority, while not legally binding on States—which must consent to the ICRC’s involvement—has permitted the ICRC to visit detainees in countries not experiencing war and work in States and on issues where human rights law, not IHL, is the governing legal framework.”²⁷ The ICRC has the authority, taken from international law and agreed to by State Parties, to provide humanitarian protection, assistance, and initiative in host states.

The right to humanitarian initiative is a unique attribute of the ICRC, but the question arises as to whether this idea can legitimately be interpreted in terms that include practices that seek to provide human security. This article will now consider whether human security will become an inevitable lens or framework through which future humanitarian protection and assistance operations will be conceptualized and operationalized. Is it necessary, or indeed possible, to expand the concept of humanitarian initiative so that it can directly address human security concerns on the ground; and what would such a development mean for the principles of the ICRC and particularly for its commitment to and reputation for neutrality and independence?

The ICRC and the Human Development Report (1994)

The concept of human security provides a lens through which we can view humanitarian protection and assistance. The abolition of threats to security, and the establishment of the mutually reinforcing concepts of freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity, are critical for the security of people’s livelihoods during and after conflict, disasters, and other violent situations. The United Nations (UN) has spent the past 21 years defining and refining the concept of human security and, in doing so, building on the human-centric ideals postulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948).²⁸

The invocation of human security represents a normative plea for people rather than States to be placed at the centre of decisions about security. In identifying seven components of human security, including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security,²⁹ the HDR stated that the proof of security is “a child who didn’t die, a



disease that did not spread, a job that wasn't cut, an ethnic tension that did not explode into violence, a dissident who was not silenced.”³⁰ In itself, the HDR serves as evidence of a “broader normative shift leading to the strengthening of the position of individual human beings at the international scene”.³¹ Human security therefore joins together freedom from fear, freedom from want, and freedom to live in dignity through people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific and preventive strategies of security.³² Ultimately, it is about making the vulnerabilities and needs of every person everywhere the focus of policy decisions on security.³³ The “Common Understanding Resolution” states that “human security recognises the interlinkages between peace, development and human rights, and equally considers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.”³⁴

Generally speaking, the concept of human security understands threats to people as taking either narrow or broad forms. The key threats, in narrow terms, are the use of force, armed conflicts, and perhaps mass violations of human rights. The means to protect individuals from these “narrow” threats primarily involve militaristic responses, and therefore this kind of security should be provided by the State or, if the State is unable to step in, the international community.³⁵ The narrow or minimalist theory of human security is enunciated most obviously in the Human Security Centre’s *Human Security Report 2005*, which abbreviated the idea of human security by limiting it to the discourses of political violence that can be used by the State or any other organized political actor.³⁶ The Human Security Centre maps trends in political violence, which it takes to include “torture; extrajudicial, arbitrary and summary executions; the ‘disappearance’ of dissidents; the use of death squads; and incarceration without trial.”³⁷ While the narrow approach focuses on violent threats, a broader view considers insecurity without distinguishing between its sources and defines safety in terms of “safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease and repression,” along with access to “protection from sudden and hurtful disruption in the patterns of daily life.”³⁸ The ICRC is strategically placed to protect and empower people on the ground against the security threats that the HDR identified. Moreover, its mandate, albeit not explicitly, addresses the key principles of human security set out in later attempts to elucidate the concept of human security, which tend to include people-centred, comprehensive, context-specific, and prevention-oriented indicators.

The ICRC mandate explicitly provides for health, food and economic aid, and the types of community and personal security described in the HDR are also encapsulated within the protection and assistance work of the ICRC. In addition, personal, community, and political security require that people should be able to live in a society that honours their basic human rights, which include civil and political rights and economic, social, and cultural rights. To this end, human security, as set out in the framework of the HDR, shares common purposes with human rights and humanitarian protection and assistance work.

In the sections that follow, the conclusions drawn here through exploration of these common purposes will help to support the thesis that the protection and assistance mandate of the ICRC can aid in the building of human security on the ground. The remainder of the article will also address whether this extension of the ICRC’s practice will compromise its principles. It should be reiterated that the ICRC should, by virtue of its fundamental principles, avoid being involved in any moves to achieve political security. This article does not explore environmental security in any depth, as it opens up a breadth of additional theories and legal frameworks which are beyond the scope of this article. Instead, the analysis here focuses on community, economic, food, health, and personal security.

Economic security refers to an assured basic income, threats to which include unemployment, temporary work, precarious employment, self-employment, and low or insecure incomes.³⁹ The inability to ensure economic security can be linked to the need for



education,⁴⁰ and “the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity.”⁴¹ The difficulties which often face individuals, families, and communities are compounded by the impact of conflicts on the environment, land, and natural resources, and on access to safe and nutritious food and water. Human security is a key component in the vocabulary, thinking, and practice of international development; in fact, poverty, socio-economic inequality, and violent conflict are closely linked.⁴² As the Secretary-General noted in “We the Peoples”, “every step taken towards reducing poverty and achieving broad-based economic growth is a step toward conflict prevention”;⁴³ it is also a step towards freedom from want. Hampson et al. note further that “the economic impact of civil wars is massive and it has been borne disproportionately by the poorest countries”.⁴⁴ Economic security is of paramount importance if recovery from armed conflict is to be achieved, and it entails, in its most obvious sense, employment generation and efforts to ensure livelihoods for young people and demobilized former combatants. Socio-economic development can also include the development of social services (for health, education, water, and sanitation); the rehabilitation of basic infrastructure; improvements in transportation, and the reconstruction of roads, bridges, and railways; the promotion of environmental awareness; the return and reintegration of displaced persons and refugees; and transitional justice.⁴⁵ All of these developments should be placed within broader political contexts,⁴⁶ as will become clear in the discussion of the provision of healthcare below. It is also very important that communities should reconcile, re-establish bonds, and develop community dialogue in order to assist in the establishment of community and personal security. This kind of work can result ultimately in people winning freedom from fear and want, as well as the freedom they need to live in dignity.

Since 1949, the ICRC has developed its specific mandate to include actions that aim to ensure economic security, as well as to provide health, water, and habitat security, safety from mine action, and diplomacy and communication, and it gathers these activities under the term “Early Recovery” which refers to actions designed “to meet the needs of people affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence.”⁴⁷ Its work to “promote economic security aims to ensure that households and communities affected by conflict or armed violence can meet essential needs and maintain or restore sustainable livelihoods”.⁴⁸ In these efforts, the ICRC relies on its “statutory right of initiative and on its assessment of the level of organization of the armed groups involved, the scale of humanitarian impact, the support it can provide to National Societies and its own added value.”⁴⁹

Just over a decade ago, the ICRC’s Director of Operations, Pierre Krähenbühl, recognized the need for the ICRC to work in the “full spectrum of conflict situations” and to build the “capacity to sustain longer term commitments in chronic crises, early transitional phases or situations of violence which attract little or no attention” or are out of the spotlight.⁵⁰ In this role:

Its activities range from emergency distributions of food and essential household items to programmes for sustainable food production and micro-economic initiatives. Needs covered include food, shelter, access to health care and education. Economic security activities are closely linked to health, water and habitat programmes. All these activities come within the ICRC’s global mission to protect victims of conflict.⁵¹

Early recovery sits on the conflict to post-conflict continuum, or between emergency relief and development, and it “encompasses the restoration of basic services, livelihoods, shelter, governance, security and rule of law, [and] environment and social dimensions, including the reintegration of displaced populations.”⁵² The ICRC’s “early recovery” work acknowledges the “grey area” between war and peace in the period before development activities fully begin; during this phase, the situation on the ground remains fragile. When the ICRC actively



engages in a country, which has seen “populations largely affected with loss of livelihoods,” it will deploy its EcoSec Unit, which comes under the umbrella of ICRC’s “assistance” activities.⁵³ The ICRC’s early recovery operations are not intended to create a culture of dependency, rather, the “aim is to promote the resilience and self-sufficiency of affected people or communities, and to protect their dignity in a way that food or other emergency relief alone cannot.”⁵⁴ The ICRC will “prepare to withdraw once the entry strategies of development organizations have been clearly set out and followed by concrete actions.”⁵⁵

The HDR stated that “Food security means that all people at all times have both physical and economic access to basic food. This requires not just enough food to go around, it requires that people have ready access to food—that they have an ‘entitlement’ to food, by growing it for themselves, by buying it or by taking advantage of a public food distribution system.”⁵⁶ For the ICRC, “food security has to be considered primarily at the individual and household levels, since conflicts affect individuals and households before adversely affecting the whole country.”⁵⁷ In situations where there are food shortages, people will channel their resources into obtaining food and other essential items, including medicines, clothes, and shelter, and the ICRC provides support for these coping mechanisms. It also continues to be involved in the distribution of food and non-food relief; it establishes public kitchens, and sets up emergency water and environmental health facilities. These roles have expanded to include activities such as agricultural, veterinary, and fishery programmes; general food distribution as a back-up until the next harvest; small-scale credit programmes, and “food-and-cash-for-work programmes.”⁵⁸ The mandate to provide food complements the ongoing obligations of States under human rights law. Under Article 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food.” This is reasserted in Article 11(1) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which decrees that States “will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.”

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) recognizes that, in the case of the right to food, the obligation is to “take the necessary action to mitigate and alleviate hunger [...] even in times of natural or other disasters.”⁵⁹ To this end, the minimum core that must be reached is that States must ensure their citizens are “free from hunger, aiming to prevent starvation.”⁶⁰ Moreover, the right to water provides that priority should also be given to the water resources required to prevent starvation and disease, as well as water required to meet the core obligations of each of the Covenant rights.⁶¹ Barber states that violations of the minimum core obligations as regards the right to food include “hijacking of food convoys, demands for extortion, the holding up in customs of food intended for distribution to the civilian population, or any other form of harassment or restriction imposed on international agencies engaged in food or nutrition programmes.”⁶²

The Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV 1949 provide a mandate for the ICRC to be involved in the provision of healthcare, over and above the provision of food, to those in need.⁶³ Threats to health security include the infectious diseases that result from poor nutrition and an unsafe environment and which pose a greater risk to the poor, women, and children than to other already less vulnerable groups. General Comment 14 explored the core obligations of States as regards the right to health, and included among them a number of requirements: a) to ensure the right of access to health facilities, goods, and services on a non-discriminatory basis, especially for vulnerable or marginalized groups; b) to ensure access to the minimum essential food which is nutritionally adequate and safe, to ensure freedom from hunger to everyone; c) to ensure access to basic shelter, housing, and sanitation, and an adequate supply of safe and potable water; d) to provide essential drugs, as from time to time defined under the WHO Action Programme on Essential Drugs; and finally, (e) to ensure equitable



distribution of all health facilities, goods, and services. A lack of available national healthcare facilities, and especially of primary care and mental health services is an issue for many post-conflict States.⁶⁴ The adequacy of such provisions will also impact on personal and community security.

When the strands of the ICRC's mandate are drawn together, it becomes clear that the mandate of protection and assistance defined within the Geneva Conventions, Additional Protocols, and Statutes, mirrors the concept of human security to a large extent. The human-centric core of each framework means that the two ideas oscillate around a central commonality, that is, the concept of humanity. The mandate to protect and assist, which is legally ascribed to the ICRC by sovereign nations through a myriad of legal agreements, is echoed in the *Human Development Report* and subsequent elucidations of the concept of human security. Critically, these overlapping ideas benefit people on the ground through assistance programs or human security projects. For the people who have lived through conflict situations and who are suffering in their aftermath, the theoretical framework around the provision of economic security, food, healthcare, water, and so on, matters little. What is important, however, is that the international community does have a human-centric framework through which to operationalize relief, aid, assistance, development, and security.

Interviews with ICRC staff on their mandate and human security

The mandate of the ICRC needs to be adaptable to the practicalities of providing humanitarian protection and assistance. The ICRC is guided by the principle of humanity, which embraces notions of survival, livelihood, and dignity, but there is a growing need for solutions to be embedded in local realities and based on actual needs, vulnerabilities, and the capacities of governments and people. There is tension between the mandate in abstraction and the practicalities of providing humanitarian protection and assistance. Human security reflects the concept of humanity and recognizes tangible threats faced by people during armed conflict. The interview questions were designed to elicit testimony from ICRC delegates on the development of ICRC activities, and they took into account the possibility that the ICRC mandate could be interpreted and implemented through a human security lens; that is to say, the questions probed for any understanding that humanitarian protection and assistance can simultaneously develop human security. Interviewees recognized that this development of ICRC activities was enough to raise questions in the international community about its competences, but the ICRC's delegates are humanitarians and their focus is on the assistance of vulnerable people rather than on any unease that assistance might cause for outside observers.⁶⁵ The situations in which the ICRC's roles are enacted are not strictly limited to armed conflict, and the involvement of the ICRC in early recovery work, for example, should help a population to get back on its feet. Practical initiatives in this area often include "increasing the availability of resources or [the] distribution of seeds directly to the community, [...] so that] they can restart farming when they come back from displacement."⁶⁶ ICRC staff are

working with associations [... to provide] basic help such as printing manuals to try and restart associations. Sometimes [ICRC teams] organize fairs in very remote areas, where [they] brings sellers from different parts to increase the level of available goods in the community. [The ICRC is] now starting to think of other forms of support, more linked to emergencies—they can be vouchers, cash transfers... to help communities cope, with the immediate effects of the conflict.⁶⁷

The ICRC's people-centred and context-specific rationale for participating in these kinds of efforts clearly mirrors the concept of human security.



During the interviews conducted for the purpose of this research, this author asked the interviewees whether they considered changes in the role of the ICRC to be indications of “progression” within the organization, or, rather, as signs of movement away from the activities of the ICRC in relation to armed conflict that were set out in the Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV 1949 and the Statutes of the ICRC. In light of concerns that any such developments might compromise the principles of the ICRC, it was asked whether such changes risk the sustainability of the ICRC’s principles and particularly its commitments to independence and neutrality. The interviewees carefully rebutted such suggestions, arguing instead that “needs” were the relevant consideration in any assessment of appropriate action: one interviewee stated that “I don’t see that there’s a risk as long as you target the right needs, and then, as long as you have identified the needs, the whole issue is how you address these needs and do you address the needs with a short-term or long-term solution.”⁶⁸

This analysis goes on to highlight the synergy between “needs” in the context of humanitarian protection and assistance, and the seven needs of human security, with particular reference to the Democratic Republic of Congo. In the DRC, the ICRC works to enable families that are affected by conflicts to meet their own basic needs.⁶⁹ From the perspective of the ICRC delegates, the fact that the situation in the DRC changes over time and from place to place is evidence of the necessity of a context-specific approach.⁷⁰ When situations are less violent, communities might try to plant and grow food in the hope that the situation will remain stable until it is ready to harvest.⁷¹ In terms of distributing seeds or assisting with farming, for example, “every activity is based on a direct assessment of the needs of the people but also the environment and the perspectives of the people on the move who have been displaced for a long time and will probably remain displaced in a camp for a long time.”⁷² In the Eastern Congo, displacement is usually a short-term phenomenon: people spend three or four days in the bush before going back to assess the situation and determine whether they can return.⁷³ In such volatile and shifting environments, it is difficult for the ICRC to establish the kinds of activities that can benefit people who have been in a camp for months and can be predicted to remain there for a substantial amount of time.⁷⁴ The interviews showed that the ICRC has to be able to adjust to constantly changing situations.⁷⁵ An adaptable ICRC will work with local people by approaching a community and talking to individuals in order to grasp their precise needs; it will then develop a response that will include as many people as possible because they are all affected by the same situation. This kind of people-centred approach simultaneously protects and empowers people threatened on the ground.

As noted earlier, economic instability is a well-recognized root cause of conflict, and, therefore, work to address it at a context-specific level may eliminate, or at least temper, the threat it poses to human survival, livelihoods, and dignity within the human security framework. When interviewees were asked further questions about economic assistance, they were keen to explain that the initiatives undertaken by the ICRC are on a very small scale.⁷⁶ The ICRC focuses on giving families the means to survive for the next three to six months,⁷⁷ and one interviewee noted specifically that the ICRC is not involved in any large-scale economic impact projects.⁷⁸ Any initial assessment undertaken by the ICRC when staff are working within these situations will focus on determining whether a particular community would benefit from agricultural support or from the provision of food parcels.⁷⁹

As part of its economic security mandate, the ICRC facilitates Micro-economic Initiatives (MEI) for farmers; each initiative offers “an income-generating programme that is implemented through a bottom-up approach, whereby each beneficiary is involved in identifying and designing the assistance to be received.”⁸⁰ One interviewee provided an example of a project in which the ICRC helped local people to develop seeds that are resistant to diseases



prevalent in the DRC.⁸¹ In the project's first year, the Congolese farmers involved in the primary association affiliated with it were able to draw on their history of working together, and, luckily, the seeds grew well. In the second year, however, the farmers involved in the project were more opportunistic and only wanted the economic incentives provided by the ICRC. They did not, therefore, repeat the growing of seeds that year.⁸²

Similar problems arose in relation to MEIs for women who were victims of sexual violence; many asked for money to start small shops or tailoring businesses, but the women who received the money really needed it for something else, and the businesses were never started or closed very quickly. The ICRC could not provide constant financial support to the women, and the MEIs failed.⁸³ One interviewee argued that, while the ICRC is still keen to support economic projects that provide a kind of "social safety net", the lesson has been learnt that money for this kind of work should be provided in stages.⁸⁴

Overall, therefore, attempts to establish economic security in the DRC involve the ICRC in a quagmire of difficulties. Traditional protection and assistance models, such as dissemination, detention, and healthcare, are coupled with economic support and initiatives to try and help people get back on their feet, but the majority of people in the DRC are still in survival mode, and this means that the ICRC has to try to sustain its work amid high levels of corruption, while being hampered by a lack of basic infrastructure. Given the difficulties involved in sustaining ICRC action in these kinds of circumstances, the initial aims of the ICRC are being amended in practice.⁸⁵

One interviewee was keen to emphasize the importance of including local populations in economic security projects on the ground.⁸⁶ The interviewee argued that a wholly top-down approach includes so many stakeholders that the average person at community level rarely feels the benefits and, in some cases, does not even understand what is happening. The interviewee stated that "if there is not a sense of ownership within the community, then it is doomed to fail. I am pretty sure about that."⁸⁷ However, another interviewee explained that the EcoSec Unit is primarily designed to support the assistance department, and that it is the first division to scale down its work and withdraw from a situation.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, it is important, in this period of time, to help people to get their heads above the waterline, which is already good for the population.⁸⁹ The intention of the ICRC is "to be as close as possible to the field... to get its own understanding of what is going on."⁹⁰ This is only possible if the ICRC retains the capacity and logistics, as well as the staffing levels, required to continue dialogue with all actors on the ground in order that it can discover where needs are going unmet, often, at least in part, because other actors are unable to intervene. These issues affect where the ICRC works; it has purposely chosen, for example, not to be involved in Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps because, as soon as there are settlements close to urban settings, there are a huge number of organizations willing to work there.⁹¹

The interviewees involved in this research identified the possibility that the ICRC might also utilize economic projects to bring communities together, thus facilitating the re-establishment or development of community security. Projects, such as these, can work towards, not only the provision of human security, but also the prevention of future recurrences of hostilities. In the Kivus, for example, for a period of two to three years, the ICRC ran vaccination and animal treatment programmes separately in two communities; one was predominantly made up of people of Rwandan heritage and the other Congolese. Through this work, an interviewee noted, the ICRC was trying to benefit the two communities and also improve their attitudes towards each other.⁹² Moreover, interviewees recognized that the ICRC has to take the security of local communities into account when it makes assessments as to the kinds of support that can be made available.⁹³



The ICRC is in a unique position to open a dialogue which involves both the armed groups and the authorities in a region;⁹⁴ in fact, one interviewee stated that “the protection the ICRC can provide is more thanks to the contacts we can have with the different parties [..., that is to say, with the] high-ranking military officers on both sides.”⁹⁵ The establishment of a dialogue is always carried out in fully transparent ways, and the security of the beneficiaries is taken into account before assistance is provided, as the ICRC does not want to exacerbate problems on the ground.⁹⁶ In terms of security, therefore, what is interesting is that the ICRC, in starting a dialogue with armed groups or those in authority, will not necessarily talk to them about the Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV 1949 and their IHL obligations.⁹⁷ The ICRC is more pragmatic than this, and so its staff discuss instead the impact of the groups’ activities on the living situation of the people in an area.⁹⁸ The ICRC will opt to use such humanitarian arguments when it is apparent that talking about breaching specific laws will not make the group sensitive to the people around them.⁹⁹

Dissemination now takes a more practical form than it might have done in previous years. The humanitarian goals of the ICRC take priority over the dissemination of specific provisions, and the organization’s activities have evolved accordingly. If we consider the proliferation of academic commentary on the increasing intertwinement of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law, and particularly on their shared understanding of a “human” core, it is logical that the ICRC can depend on discourses that move beyond the strict dissemination of IHL in its practice.¹⁰⁰

An issue to keep in mind when considering the practicalities of the ICRC establishing a dialogue with key actors in the DRC is the sheer number of armed groups involved in conflict there; the UN has recorded 54 armed groups in the Kivus alone. These armed groups are forming and reforming or gaining representation at the political level, and the means employed by the UN to establish dialogue with these groups varies from one to the other.¹⁰¹ When they are in control of particular areas, it is very easy to suggest and then to advocate that those in authority should take responsibility for providing basic services and ensuring that people can get food and water, and in these situations the ICRC is able to engage in a dialogue.¹⁰²

The ICRC’s direct links with locals are greatly enhanced by the national societies of the Red Cross which help to increase the local impact of ICRC protection and assistance work, due to their proximity to armed conflict and their knowledge of local issues that pertain to human insecurity. The ICRC works with its national societies when it is seeking to re-establish family links for people who have been displaced during military operations, for example, and this work can include repatriation, family reunification, and sometimes cross-border family reunification.¹⁰³ Interviewees frequently referred to the relationship between the ICRC and national societies and created the impression that they are relied upon, or perhaps used, more frequently than the ICRC’s current website information suggests.¹⁰⁴ One interviewee stated that a national society’s “network and number of volunteers scattered throughout the country is huge and allows [us] to reach out [to] a lot of families... When it comes to cross-border issues [the ICRC] will engage the national societies on both sides [of the conflict].”¹⁰⁵ It also became apparent in an ICRC interview that the UN also engages with these national societies.¹⁰⁶ The ICRC interacts and works with communities and individuals on the ground to try and bring protection and assistance to those in need.

Interviewees at the ICRC recognized the potential for the ICRC to contribute to human security;¹⁰⁷ they provided specific examples of situations in which protection activities that provided food security and physical security helped to prevent people from being attacked, and they noted that the ICRC is “trying to build an environment that is safer for the people. In that sense maybe it’s something that’s at the junction of the concepts.”¹⁰⁸ The first thing the



ICRC does when it arrives in an area is to “have a discussion with the community to understand what their perception of the problem is.”¹⁰⁹ This is to ensure that projects are not wholly designed elsewhere, which is a mistake that the ICRC and others have made in the past.¹¹⁰ If an organization is offering to help a community in an area which is either suffering conflict or in the post-conflict stage, then the community will say “yes” to everything.¹¹¹

The ICRC has to think about the long-term sustainability of projects: for example, if it agrees with a community to restart agriculture in a volatile environment, it needs to consider the likelihood that farmers will flee when fighting restarts.¹¹² The ICRC therefore has to engage with local people while also maintaining a broader perspective. In some cases, for example, the local community will ask the ICRC to prioritize healthcare. This will require thinking about building primary healthcare facilities, and it will involve recruitment of and salary provision for doctors and healthcare professionals, but it will also require interaction with a Ministry of Health and the provision of and collaboration in healthcare plans for entire communities.¹¹³

Conclusion

The UNDP concept of human security, published over twenty years ago in 1994, has undergone various studies and formulations. Human security itself does not have a legal framework, but it does now have an agreed definition. The “Common Understanding Resolution” provided an opportunity to make human security an underlying principle of international law; meanwhile, General Assembly consensus arguably made it a soft law, or perhaps evidence of *opinio juris* and State practice. Perhaps eventually the requirements to create human security will be considered customary. This could be supported by the overlaps in human security, human rights, and IHL, highlighted throughout this analysis. However, “Common Understanding Resolution” paragraph 4(h) shows that State sovereignty remains a limiting factor in the pursuit of human security. For now, at least, the publication and agreement on the “Common Understanding” of human security marks the end of the progressive realization of human security as law.

The ICRC has always recognized the centrality of human beings, and it has built upon its historical experiences with soldiers, prisoners of war, and the shipwrecked. The organization has had to increase its protection and assistance activities in light of the protracted nature of contemporary conflicts and the proliferation of non-international armed conflicts in particular. In these types of situations, the needs of the civilian populations involved are ongoing, and the threats to their security include those to food, health, and the economy. There are also threats to personal, community, political, and environmental security. Critically, the principle of humanity, which was once restricted to IHL and Red Cross work, now permeates discourse on the international stage and is reflected at the normative level in the “Common Understanding” of human security. The ICRC has continued to focus on its traditional mission while constantly adapting to new situations of armed conflict, new actors in those conflicts, and the changing needs of civilian populations. The ICRC has worked to develop the law and its activities to reflect the humanitarian needs of people on the ground., and it is well-placed to understand the dynamics behind violence and why some actors choose to ignore IHL. The ICRC’s protection and assistance roles have also expanded to take economic security into account.

Each of these phases of ICRC action has extended the activities mandated to it in the Geneva Conventions I, II, III, and IV 1949 and the Statutes of the ICRC. In addition, it should be recalled that under Article 81(1) Additional Protocol I, the ICRC may also “carry out *any other humanitarian activities* in favour of these victims, subject to the consent of the Parties to the conflict concerned.” Can economic security and early recovery be considered to be “*any other humanitarian activity*”, or do they go beyond humanitarianism into new activities



entirely? The ICRC works “in other situations of violence”, it undertakes long-term projects beyond the cessation of hostilities, and it has clear links to the provision of economic security. In terms of its right to “humanitarian initiative”, the ICRC may be responding to the “needs” of the people on the ground, but it is walking a fine line in terms of its neutrality. At this moment in time, the ICRC appears to perform a grand balancing act between the two, but it is this aspect of its mandate which is most likely to see consent for its operations revoked by States.

Notes

1. See ICRC, Convention (I), Convention (II), Convention (III), Convention (IV), Protocol I, Protocol II, Statutes of the ICRC, 3 October 2013. The present Statutes replace the Statutes of the International Committee of the Red Cross of 21 June 1973, revised on 20 July 1998 and 8 May 2003).
2. K. West, *Agents of Altruism*, 13.
3. ICRC, "Assistance for People Affected by Armed Conflict", 2, 13.
4. Bilková, "Ensuring Human Security", 38.
5. UNDP, *Human Development Report*, 1994.
6. M. Salter et al., *Writing Law Dissertations*, 119, 150-53.
7. The Interview Guide is on record with the author.
8. D. Silverman, *Interpreting Qualitative Data*, 113; Byrne, "Qualitative Interviewing", 182; C. Robson, *Real World Research*, 228.
9. B. Gillham, *Case Study Research Methods*, 63-64; L. A. Dexter, *Elite and Specialized Interviewing*, 19.
10. See R. Maisel et al., *How Sampling Works*.
11. S. P. Thomas et al., *Listening to Patients*; J. W. Cresswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*; I. Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, 47-48.
12. Interview material will be attributed to IV1 (interview one), IV2, and so on. All interviews were conducted on a personal basis in April 2014 in Geneva.
13. M. W. Bauer et al. *Qualitative Interviewing*, 43.
14. See, in particular, ICRCRCM, "Strengthening the International Red Cross".
15. Bernard, "Interview with Peter Maurer", 2.
16. Ibid., 3.
17. Torrente, "Humanitarian Action under Attack", 205.
18. See also ICRC, "Article 9 Commentary", 12 August 1949, <http://www.icrc.org/ihl/1a13044f3bbb5b8ec12563fb0066f226/bcb0d20422c82f18c12563cd00420459?OpenDocument> (Accessed 19 February 2016).
19. Council of Delegates (ICRC), "The Seville Agreement", 4.3, 4.4, 5.3.1, 5.4 and 6.1.2.
20. Jeannet, "Non-disclosure of Evidence".
21. ICRC, Geneva Convention I art 10; Geneva Convention II art 10; Geneva Convention III art 10; Geneva Convention IV art 11; Additional Protocol I art 5(3)-(4).
22. ICRC, Article 9 Commentary, n.18.
23. Ibid.
24. ICRC, "Statutes of the ICRC", art 5(2)(d) and 5(3); Statutes of the ICRC art 4(2).
25. ICRC, Article 9 Commentary, n.18.
26. Ibid.; See Jakovljević, "The Right to Humanitarian Assistance-Legal Aspects", 471; ICRC, "Guiding Principles on the Right to Humanitarian Assistance".
27. Ratner, "Law Promotion Beyond Law Talk", 464.
28. Eberhard et al., *Constitutional Limits to Security*, 117. Upadhyaya, "Human Security, Humanitarian Intervention", 72; Collins A. (ed.), *Contemporary Security Studies*, 91-109; Common Understanding, para 4(e).
29. UNDP, *Human Development Report 1994*; See also F. O. Hampson et al., *Madness in the Multitude*; Hubert et al. (eds.), *Human Security and the New Diplomacy*.
30. UNDP, Human Development Report 1994, 22; H. Eberhard et al. (eds.), *Constitutional Limits to Security*, 112.
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Reassessing the Sunshine Policy in the Light of Conflict Transformation Theory

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Abstract

This paper critically assesses South Korean President Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy in the light of conflict transformation theory that synthesizes and further develops pre-established theoretical assumptions about conflict management and resolution. The Sunshine Policy is often discredited due to its failure to change North Korea's belligerent attitude and behaviour, but I argue that, in fact, it had considerable transformative effects on inter-Korean relations and South Korea's perspectives toward North Korea by proactively engaging with Pyongyang through economic cooperation projects. However, the policy fell short of dismantling the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula, primarily because it did not effectively address relations between the United States and North Korea, the epicentre of the destructive Cold War structure.

Key words: Sunshine Policy, conflict transformation, inter-Korean relations, Kim Dae-jung, Kim Jong-il.



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Reassessing the Sunshine Policy in the Light of Conflict Transformation Theory

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, Northeast Asia has undergone profound changes. Inter-Korean relations have also experienced drastic changes since the late 1990s, especially during and after the Kim Dae-jung (DJ) administration, during which South Korea redefined its national interests and sought a new national security strategy. The concurrent development of internal and external factors in and around South Korea resulted in an overall shift in South Korea's foreign policy outlook, national identity, and the manner in which it conducted foreign affairs. Kim Dae-jung's Sunshine Policy has played a catalytic role in accelerating these trends.

With the inauguration of President Kim Dae-jung in February 1998, South Korea launched a new peace initiative and took bold measures to ease military tensions with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) by fostering exchanges and cooperation. President Kim Dae-jung declared that, as long as North Korea did not resort to military provocation, he would relinquish the old policy of advocating that Korea be unified through the absorption of the North. At the same time, he emphasized the importance of promoting exchanges and cooperation through the revival of the Basic Agreement on Non-aggression, Reconciliation, and Exchanges and Cooperation, which was signed in 1991. In sum, the Sunshine Policy represented a paradigm shift in South Korea's policy toward North Korea.

Nevertheless, Dae-jung's policy has been fiercely criticized, mainly because it obviously failed to ameliorate North Korea's attitude and its policy toward South Korea. As Chung-in Moon wryly observes, "The critics often deprecate the policy and portray it as a non-reciprocal appeasement in a one-sided love affair."¹ However, a close examination of the Sunshine Policy reveals that several of its components go beyond simple engagement and proactively aim to develop peaceful coexistence and cooperation.

The principles as well as the strategies of the Sunshine Policy were congruent with a conflict transformation approach, especially in their attempts to build a new and constructive relationship through peaceful means by severing the chain of negative reinforcement between the two Koreas. Substantial research has been conducted on the Sunshine Policy by numerous scholars and practitioners, but most studies are basically descriptive reports or offer policy recommendations rather than analytical research based on theoretical frameworks. Some scholars examine the policy through the lens of identity, but none of them capture the transformative dimensions of the Sunshine Policy. When these dimensions are examined, the policy can be seen to represent an outgrowth of the philosophies and strategies of conflict transformation.

The overall objective of this paper is to critically assess South Korea's Sunshine Policy and to provide answers as to whether the engagement policy enhanced the process of conflict transformation on the Korean peninsula. I provide an empirical analysis of the transformative elements of the Sunshine Policy and the external and internal restraints that acted on its transforming effects. Using the newly emerging theoretical framework of conflict transformation, this paper aims to examine the Sunshine Policy in its entirety, addressing its



transformative components, as well as factors that the Kim Dae-jung administration failed to consider attentively when it formulated and implemented the policy.

Since conflict transformation is currently better understood as an informed perspective on the empirical study of international relations rather than a fully fledged theory, the paper attempts to sharpen and identify the core components of the conflict transformation approach in order to make it testable. To construct a comprehensive theoretical framework, the paper takes an eclectic approach and draws primary elements of conflict transformation from the existing literature on peacebuilding approaches as well as from international relations theories. To elucidate significant conditions and social settings that affected the transformation of states' attitudes and behaviours, I occasionally make reference to historical facts drawn from a German context, as Germany is generally regarded as offering an example of a state where conflict transformation processes have been successfully carried out.²

Given North Korea's political situation, the scarcity of any hard information with regard to the country's activities may pose a methodological limitation to the research. The analysis of public discourse and activities is generally regarded as essential for a clear articulation of conflict transformation, and so problems in accessing the perspectives and activities of the North Korean population represent a secondary limitation when we attempt to clarify North Koreans' attitudes and perspectives. Nonetheless, the paper is able to offer some insight into current conflict transformation discourses, and its findings will be useful to practitioners and policymakers who are looking to overhaul their engagement strategies with North Korea for the sake of peaceful transition on the Korean peninsula.

Conflict transformation theory

The mainstream literature on conflict intervention or peacebuilding usually centres on three principal discourses and they relate to management, resolution, and transformation. The terms conflict management, conflict resolution, and conflict transformation are often used separately and interchangeably. However, each theoretical framework is built upon different theoretical assumptions about conflict; thus, each focuses on different actors, and recommends different strategies for implementation. To map out a more comprehensive framework for understanding conflict transformation, this section will review the literature on conflict intervention approaches and establish some form of criteria which can be used as a set of transformative engagement strategies to provide an empirical analysis of the Sunshine Policy.

Conflict management and conflict resolution

Though some scholars argue that the term conflict management has a wider meaning than containment or settlement, the conflict management approach generally refers to outcome-oriented strategies.³ The conflict management frame perceives conflicts as a negative force, and an eradicable consequence of incompatible values and interests, and/or competition among individuals and groups over scarce status, power, and resources.⁴ Within this frame, the alternative to violence can be settled through some sort of bargaining process which continues until all involved parties give consent to mutually agreeable conditions regarding the cessation of violence and how to redistribute the resources.

Conflict management is usually proffered in the form of a political agreement between the conflicting parties, which might end or at least contain direct violence. The principal actors in this field are official, diplomatic, and governmental actors at Track I level. Most of the strategies they employ range from non-coercive measures such as good offices, fact-finding missions, facilitation, negotiation, and mediation to more coercive processes such as sanctions and arbitration.⁵ The conflict management approach has mostly been criticized because of its tendency to overlook the root causes of conflicts and its lack of a set objective

for longer-term peacebuilding.⁶ The critical problem of this resource frame is that, because the underlying causes of the conflict are not addressed or dealt with, they may well erupt again at a later point.

To overcome the shortcomings of conflict management, conflict resolution has evolved to address the root causes of conflict through relationship-building and long-term resolution strategies.⁷ Conflict resolution begins by defining protracted conflict as a natural result of unmet human needs and it rejects the notion of competitive resource framing. The key is, thus, to make the parties aware of their underlying needs for identity, security, recognition, and participation, and then to encourage the parties to redefine their interests and positions.⁸ Conflict resolution aims not to eliminate the conflict, but to resolve its destructive manifestations. Expressed bargaining positions are simply understood as more or less concrete expressions of unmet needs, desires, and fears, even though conflicts may be couched in terms of demands for resources.⁹

Burton and others, have proposed that non-coercive and relationship-oriented strategies such as facilitation or consultation in the form of problem-solving workshops can help achieve conflict resolution.¹⁰ Engagement in this kind of discussion will usually help the conflicting parties to clarify their own needs, interests, and perceptions, and it can also diminish some of the hostility and mistrust that underlies a conflict situation.¹¹ This area of practice is typically represented by Track II-level actors, a category which encompasses non-official and non-governmental parties, including academic institutions; all forms of civil mediation; and non-governmental organizations focused on international conflict resolution. The main criticism of the conflict resolution frame is that it does not necessarily bring a dispute or violence to an end.¹² Another criticism is that conflict resolution leaves out the social structures and destructive cultural patterns that contribute to changing or unchanging patterns of violence.

Unlike their counterparts in the schools of conflict management and resolution, analysts working within the conflict transformation frame do not see conflicts as problems to be resolved or even managed. Instead, they argue that conflicts offer opportunities for growth, adaptation, and learning.¹³ Yet the task of defining conflict transformation is not made easy by the fact that those who advocate the use of transformation procedures have a wide variety of views, not only about what should be transformed, but about how, when, and by whom transformation can be brought about.

The one central thing that most analysts and practitioners agree on is that transformation approaches go beyond their management- and resolution-focused equivalents when coping with destructive and intractable conflicts.¹⁴ A commitment to conflict transformation implies that simply finding a solution to one set of conflicting interest and values is not enough. A transformation approach needs to bring about *qualitative* changes in some aspects of the conflict or its related socio-political structures.¹⁵ Since empirical studies that address conflict transformation mostly focus on empowering grassroots-level groups to address themselves directly to peacebuilding processes, comprehensive and dynamic features of conflict transformation are often undervalued or neglected. In the following section, key elements of conflict transformation will be examined to identify framework conditions which can be used to analyse whether the Sunshine Policy has transformative and sustainable peacebuilding elements.

Short-term responsive and long-term strategic actions

Since the early 1990s, an analytical focus on inter-relatedness and interdependence has emerged that acknowledges the dichotomy in conflict intervention studies. From the mid-1990s onwards, we can observe a shift in the literature that stresses an interdisciplinary and complementary approach to conflict management. It emphasizes the need to combine conflict settlement strategies, such as mediation and negotiation, with conflict resolution



strategies, such as facilitation and consultation.¹⁶ The essence of the argument is that different types of intervention are appropriate at different levels as a conflict progresses or de-escalates.

Conflict transformation approaches, which arise from these hybrid frameworks, stress the need to resolve the dilemma between the short-term objectives associated with crisis management and the longer-term goals that focus on promoting peaceful relationships by addressing the underlying causes of conflicts. Paffenholz states that conflict transformation discourse aims to overcome overt forms of direct, cultural, and structural violence, as well as to transform unjust social relationships in an effort to promote conditions that can help to create cooperative and constructive relationships.¹⁷

This view is conceptualized in detail in Lederach's *Transformational Platforms*.¹⁸ What is required, he argues, is a change of focus. Lederach explains that conflicts are often "episodes" within a larger pattern of relationships that tend to reproduce more episodes over time. On the basis of this assumption, Lederach attests that conflict transformation should include processes that "1) provide adaptive responses to the immediate and future repetition of conflict episodes, and that 2) address the deeper and longer-term relational and systematic patterns that produce violent, destructive expressions of conflict."¹⁹

While conflict transformation addresses and finds solutions for imminent issues, this approach clearly assumes that major structural changes will always and inevitably be necessary conditions for a sustainable and transformative peace process. Only through such structural changes can it be ensured that conflicts will not be reproduced from similar sources in the future. As Mitchell explains, while the conflict resolution approach clearly allows for necessary structural change, conflict transformation assumes that an explicit commitment to some level of structural change, either political or socio-economic, is essential if a conflict is to be permanently transformed.²⁰ The assumption here is that, without structural change, conflict resolution may result in temporary, "win-lose" outcomes for the conflicting parties.

Multi-track participation

While conflict transformation incorporates flexible approaches and aims to tackle the epicentre of each conflict, the approach is also concerned with empowering and connecting people. Reimann claims that the conflict resolution approach missed the opportunity to develop and build vertical relationships that encourage dialogue and cooperation between actors of unequal status.²¹ Conflict transformation takes up this opportunity and places emphasis on the engagement of people who operate at different levels within a conflict situation. Conflict transformation emerges, then, as a process and an outcome, and it necessitates multi-level participation in practice, engaging all social levels of all the parties from top decision-makers through social opinion leaders to grassroots constituents.

Here, it is worth referring to the conceptual framework called *The Progression of Conflict*, formulated by Adam Curle. The matrix shows the progress of conflicts in terms of the levels of power that obtain between the parties involved, and the levels of awareness that exist in relation to their conflicting needs and interests.²² Conflict moves along a continuum from unpeaceful relationships, characterized by unbalanced power and low awareness, to peaceful relationships which involve balanced power and increasing awareness. The matrix (See Figure 1) helps indicate which conflict resolution functions and activities may be appropriate at any given moment in a conflict's progression.

When the conflict moves from a *confrontation* phase, in which the conflict is no longer latent, to a *negotiations* phase, conciliation and more formal mediation processes can have primary roles in efforts to balance power between conflicting parties.²³ Successful negotiations and mediation may lead to a restructuring of the system to increase justice and establish more

peaceful relations, and this is where the roles of Track III actors become more prominent in the dynamic process of conflict transformation.²⁴ Yet, more importantly, to generate a continuous and dynamic process in conflict progression, all tracks must be interdependent and complementary when conflict is being handled (See Figure 2).

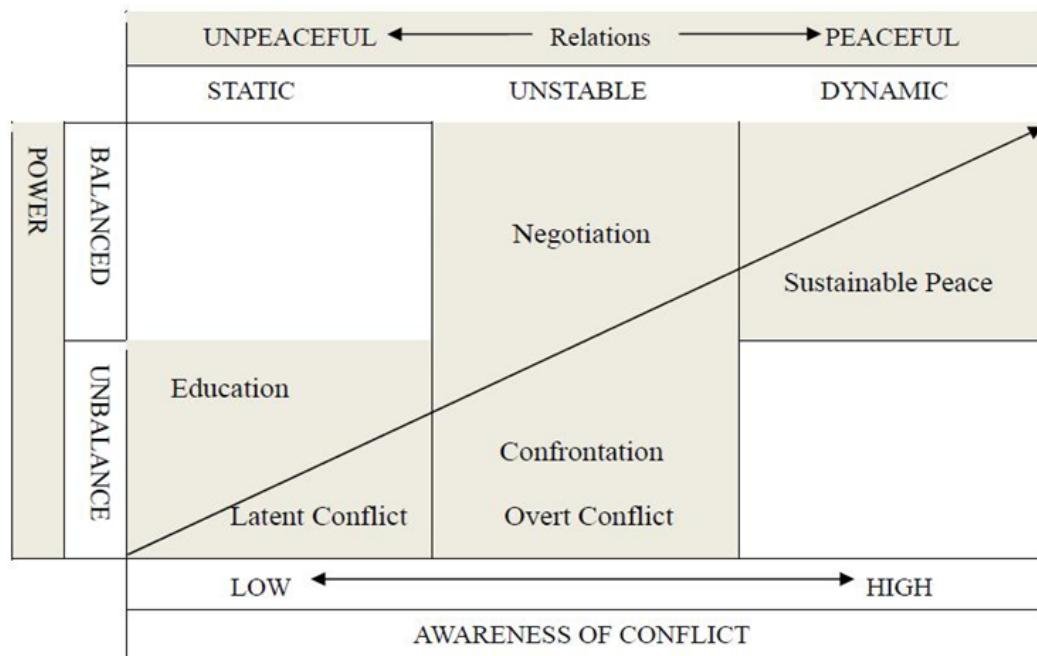


Figure 1. The progression of conflict. Source: Adam Curle, *Making Peace*.

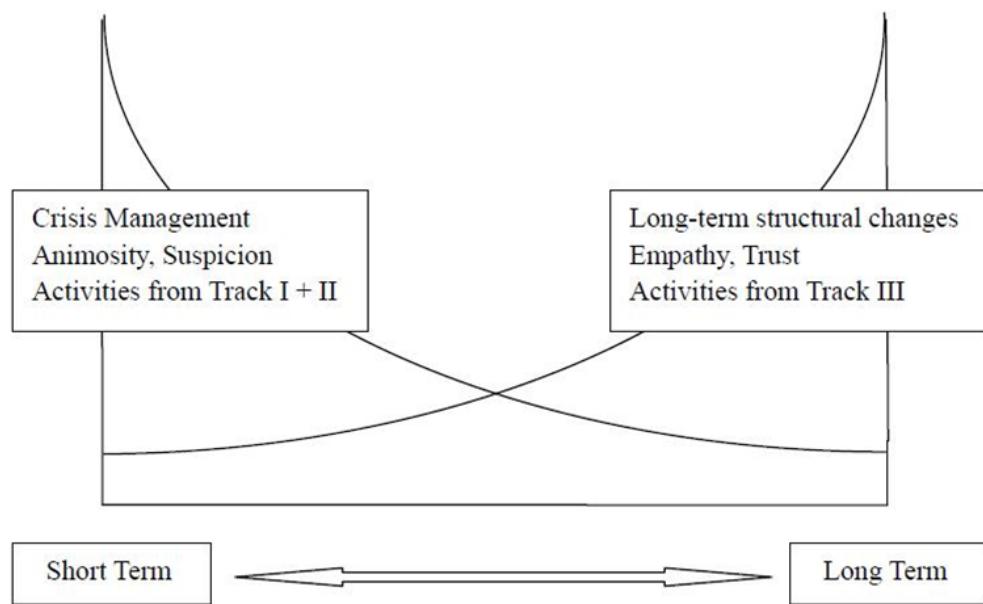


Figure 2. An integrated framework of conflict transformation.



When these interdisciplinary characteristics of conflict transformation are understood, it is possible to deduce three important implications from the conflict transformation approach. First, conflict transformation must address, not only immediate problems, but also the broader destructive, relational, and structural patterns which continuously generate a series of negative interactions between conflicting parties. Second, conflict transformation requires flexibility in response to the complexity of a conflict, and this will involve incorporating both short-term solutions and long-term strategies, contingent upon the nature of the conflict, the parties involved, and the stage to which the conflict has progressed. Third, the timely involvement of relevant actors across the various levels of a society must be encouraged and allowed in conflict transformation efforts so that the whole society is able to gain an understanding that the peacebuilding process is everyone's job.

Transformative components of the Sunshine Policy

Guided by a belief that peace work necessitates engagement in solid theoretical reflection, this article will go on to examine the Sunshine Policy through the lens of conflict transformation. This article's primary concern relates to whether or not the Sunshine Policy effectively and consistently addressed the relational and structural issues that have aggravated the intractable situation on the Korean peninsula. In addition, we need to examine whether the Sunshine Policy pursued short-term conflict management and longer-term conflict resolution approaches in an appropriate and timely manner. The analysis here takes into consideration the role of the actors who were involved in and contributed to the process of conflict transformation. The analysis begins with a step-by-step examination of the Sunshine Policy which uses elements from the conflict transformation approach presented in the previous section. It employs the criterion set out above to assess how far the Sunshine Policy consisted of the factors that characterize the conflict transformation approach.

Improving strained inter-Korean relations

The "Sunshine Policy" was an umbrella term for the DJ government's North Korea policy which had as its stated objective the intention to lay the "foundation for peaceful Korean unification by severing the vicious cycle of negative and hostile actions and reactions through peaceful co-existence and peaceful exchanges and cooperation".²⁵ The DJ government believed that proactive engagement with the North, rather than confrontation, was the only way to avoid another Korean war and to promote reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. DJ's Sunshine Policy is often seen as an extension of the earlier engagement policy of the Roh Tae-woo government's *Nordpolitik*, but it is qualitatively different from previous efforts. While the Roh Tae-woo administration's *Nordpolitik* sought to pressure the North by normalizing diplomatic relations with North Korea's communist allies, Kim's Sunshine Policy attempted to create an international as well as domestic environment conducive to opening and reforming the North.²⁶

The most prominent transforming element of the Sunshine Policy was its attempt to dismantle the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula which has been a barrier to improved inter-Korean relations. Lim Dong-won, the architect of the Sunshine Policy, identifies three important factors for promoting the dissolution of the Cold War structure as inter-Korean rapprochement, cross-recognition of North Korea by the United States (US) and Japan, and the removal of North Korea's weapons of mass destruction (WMD).²⁷ The DJ government was interested in dismantling both the inner (inter-Korean) and outer (international) layers of the Cold War structure without ignoring the imminent threat of WMD.

In a practical bid to improve relations with the North, the DJ government offered a helping hand toward Pyongyang by pursuing inter-Korean economic cooperation. First and foremost, the Mount Kumgang tourism project was initiated. In October 1998, the South Korean

conglomerate Hyundai and its North Korean business partner, the Korean Asia-Pacific Peace Committee (KAPPC), signed a contract to establish a tour programme to Mount Kumgang which is located in Kangwon province in North Korea. Furthermore, Hyundai Asan Corporation was established on 5 February 1999 as a subsidiary specializing in inter-Korean economic cooperation projects, including tourism, the establishment of an industrial park, the improvement of North Korea's infrastructure, and sports and cultural exchanges.²⁸ In return for its exclusive rights to operate the tour programme, Hyundai agreed to pay US \$942 million to North Korea in monthly installments by 2005.

Critics have relied on a strictly economic cost-benefit calculation to argue that the Mount Kumgang project caused more problems than could justify its contribution to inter-Korean reconciliation.²⁹ In fact, Hyundai Asan accumulated unofficial losses of up to 1.35 trillion won (\$1.15 billion) and defaulted on its monthly payment to Pyongyang from 2001 until the DJ government stepped in with a rescue package in 2004.³⁰ However, what sceptics miss is that the Mount Kumgang project was not set up merely as a tourism business to make profits. It was launched as the first step towards reducing tensions and building confidence between the two Koreas.³¹ It represented an investment in a more peaceful, secure future, but the effect was also immediate. While the resort was in operation, at a cost of about 1 billion won a month, South Korea was able to gain *practical and psychological security* because the North Korean government had to open its militarily fortified mountain and move its important military bases in order for the joint tourism project to proceed.³²

Furthermore, it catalyzed opportunities for inter-Korean trade, and it enabled reunions of separated family members, as well as a series of cultural exchanges between Seoul and Pyongyang.³³ Above all, the Mount Kumgang project "opened the way for a landmark inter-Korean summit held in Pyongyang on 13-15 June 2000".³⁴ By recognizing North Korea's system, the DJ government showed its willingness to recognize two different legitimate sovereignties in Korea, and this unprecedented move by South Korea helped to construct an environment conducive to the development of a peace regime in the region.³⁵

President Kim Dae-jung and Chairman Kim Jong-il signed a historic Joint Declaration which specified five steps toward the peaceful reunification of the nation. While sceptics criticized the declaration as a mere scrap of paper that would not guarantee Pyongyang's compliance, in reality, the summit initiated more economic and political contacts than ever between the two Koreas.³⁶ Several events that enabled the reunion of separated families were held, the overland route through the demilitarized zone to Mount Kumgang was opened, and nine rounds of ministerial talks and other dialogue channels were established.³⁷ The summit was greeted with euphoria in the South, and this noticeably dissipated the disdain and distrust that had marred relations with the North for decades.³⁸

Though the joint tourism project with the North and the inter-Korean summit failed to bring major changes at the level of individual leaders and citizens, they certainly created conditions that promoted a cooperative relationship between the two governments and they represented a paradigm shift away from the logic of conflict management toward the logic of recognition and dialogue. Given that any lasting transformation of the conflict must involve a change in the relationship between the adversaries, the DJ government's persistent efforts to engage North Korea with an understanding attitude was undeniably consistent with a conflict transformation approach.³⁹

Attempts to overcome disparities

In 2004, the Kaesong Industrial Complex (KIC), another fruit of the Sunshine Policy, was established just across the demilitarized zone (DMZ) in North Korea. In its narrowest sense, the KIC was a business venture in which participants were seeking profits and business advantages, but, in a wider sense, the KIC provided a channel for rapprochement between



the DPRK and South Korea. It could be viewed as a measure to reduce disparities between the two Koreas by empowering both states at a time when the gaps between them had been considerably widening. Like the extensive economic interchange between China and Taiwan, the KIC was expected to provide a bridge for communication and a catalyst for cultural interaction across a demilitarized zone.⁴⁰

The DJ government took several further drastic measures to facilitate inter-Korean economic exchanges and cooperation; these included the expansion of the list of comprehensive approval items, the deregulation of import permits and the upper ceiling on investment in the North, and the adoption of a negative list system on joint ventures, economic exchanges, and cooperation.⁴¹ The investment fields diversified beyond their traditional focus on textiles and clothing to including agriculture, fishery, and advertising. A telecommunications network between South Korea and Jangjin harbor in North Korea was also established for tourists visiting Mount Kumgang.⁴²

Humanitarian aid was implemented and its operations were justified in discourses that focused on national sentiment and human rights. President Kim commented that the solution to the North's chronic food shortages did not lie with yearly food aid from outside but would be found in "comprehensive reforms in the delivery of quality fertilizers, agricultural equipment, irrigation systems, and other elements of a structural nature".⁴³ It was desirable for South Korea to provide assistance to resolve North Korea's food crisis not only for reasons connected to humanitarianism and brotherly love, but also in the interests of promoting security on the Korean peninsula.⁴⁴ This was why the DJ government also provided development aid in the fields of medicine, health, and agriculture in order to enhance fundamental living conditions in North Korea.⁴⁵ Notably, the government allowed non-governmental organizations to initiate their own campaigns for humanitarian aid to North Korea to enhance civilian participation in the inter-Korean exchange that used to be monopolized by the government.⁴⁶

All of the strategies identified here represented the DJ government's attempts to overcome the structural imbalance between the two Koreas, to rectify structural discrepancies, and to actualize peaceful coexistence on the Korean peninsula.⁴⁷ Adam Curle, who asserts that relational change is a prerequisite for the conflict transformation approach, defines the characteristics of peaceful relationships in terms of "equality or balance of capability, mutuality and the sense of equal degree of concern between people, and reciprocity in the sense of a balanced exchange of material and non-material goods."⁴⁸ Given the vast differences in the political, social, economic, and psychological profiles of the two states, Kim Dae-jung took a cautious yet pragmatic approach which favoured "economic first, politics later" in South Korea's dealings with the North. The DJ government separated economy from politics where necessary to maximize flexibility. It also strove to further promote inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation by promoting a vision for a more balanced relationship with the North, which had the potential to become a foundation for a permanent peace regime on the Korean peninsula.

Focusing on economic cooperation was also a strategic move to overcome psychological obstacles. In explaining the transformation of East-West relations in Europe, Ole Wæver discusses the way in which the German policy of *Ostpolitik* "minimized security by narrowing the field to which the security act was applied."⁴⁹ He explains that, by engaging with East European regimes in the context of the status quo, German *Ostpolitik* "removed some threats to and thereby some excuses for the regimes in the East" which regarded "most all interaction with the West as potentially dangerous and threatening."⁵⁰ Like *Ostpolitik*, the Sunshine Policy entailed a conscious attempt to build a new relationship with the North, grounded in an alternative identity that acknowledged North Korea as a necessary partner for reconciliation and cooperation.



In particular, the establishment of the Mount Kumgang Tour project and KIC in the centre of a militarily sensitive area must be seen, not just as instances of unprecedented economic cooperation in a conflict which had lasted for half a century, but also as initiatives designed to transform the confrontation zone into a place for communication and learning. Thanks to their exposure to North Korean society, a limited but growing number of South Koreans were able to change their perceptions and come to understand that North Korea's threat was derived from its weaknesses, which arose from the instability of its system and its fears of absorption, rather than from its military strength.⁵¹ The Sunshine Policy and the inter-Korean summit obviously facilitated South Koreans' strong desire to end unnecessary inter-Korean confrontation, and more importantly, they resulted in enhanced feelings of identification and brotherhood with North Koreans.⁵²

In fact, to some extent, the maintenance of an engagement option by the DJ government was possible because of this shift in perception from fear to kinship affinity which allowed South Korean citizens not to be gripped by their sense of crisis. Even North Korea's admission that it had a nuclear weapons programme in October 2002 did not cause South Koreans to feel any direct threat, and this represented a marked shift from the responses to the first nuclear crisis in 1994.⁵³ This change in South Koreans' sense of the threat emanating from North Korea serves as further evidence of a shift in South Korean perception vis-à-vis the North in the new social setting emerging after the inter-Korean summit in 2000.

In addition, the inter-Korean summit created an environment amicable enough to encourage other neighbouring countries to reconsider the status quo and their North Korea policies. The inter-Korean summit was followed by substantial progress in terms of changing US-North Korea relations. From 9-12 October 2000, the North Korean Vice Marshal, Jo Myong-rok, visited Washington to discuss the security issues that involved both countries. After the meeting, the US-DPRK Joint Communique was released.⁵⁴ In the Communique, both governments recognized the changed security environment on the Korean peninsula created by the historic inter-Korean summit and decided to take steps to improve their bilateral relations and to enhance peace and security in Northeast Asia.⁵⁵ Russia's President Vladimir Putin also visited North Korea in July 2000, signalling a thaw in Moscow-Pyongyang relations, which had been icy since the Soviet Union established relations with South Korea in 1990. These diplomatic moves have placed even greater pressure on Tokyo to improve relations with Pyongyang.⁵⁶

The Sunshine Policy had made quite evident its potency as a force for the transformation of Cold War structures, the relationship between the two Koreas, and the relationship between North Korea and a host of other nations. Rounds of formal ministerial talks, normalization talks between North Korea and Japan, and summit meetings with the leaders of China and Russia offered remarkable signs that the Cold War structure had been weakened.

Unfortunately, in subsequent years, the Sunshine Policy has been accused of being an appeasement policy and its reputation was tarnished by the 2000 inter-Korean summit payment scandal. Its critics alleged that the Hyundai group secretly paid \$500 million to North Korea on behalf of the DJ government for the preparation of the summit. However, it was later revealed that the money was transferred for Hyundai's exclusive rights over seven different inter-Korean economic projects for 50 years.⁵⁷ The only illegal part of the transaction was that the National Intelligence Service of Republic of Korea provided convenient currency exchange services for the DJ government. The claim that the Sunshine Policy was a policy of appeasement was also insubstantial. The DJ government did not lose its moral ground, nor did it overlook North Korea's military provocations in order to avoid confrontation with the North. From a conflict transformation perspective, the real limitations of the Sunshine Policy stemmed from rather more fundamental issues such as mutual distrust and animosity between Washington and Pyongyang and an ideological rift in South Korean society.



Limits and restraints on the Sunshine Policy

Though the Sunshine Policy proactively sought to overcome the Cold War anomaly and to some extent break the impasse in both North-South relations and the North's relations with the US, the policy was not astute enough to overcome the lingering residues of the Cold War's structure and identity that inhibited the progress of conflict transformation on the Korean peninsula. This section will discuss the reasons why the Sunshine Policy failed to exert lasting and transformative effects.

Non-responsiveness to the conflict's epicentre

If a policy is to be truly transformative, it should be able to provide "adaptive responses to the immediate and future repetition of conflict episodes [... by] addressing [...] deeper and longer-term relational and systemic patterns".⁵⁸ However, the Sunshine Policy failed to address the repetitive patterns that had triggered similar conflict episodes, such as the issue of the Northern Limit Line (NLL) and North Korean nuclear provocations. The most contentious element of the Sunshine Policy related to whether or not it was successful in addressing the epicentre of the destructive Cold War structure—the relationship between the US and North Korea. If North Korea's provocations were "presenting problems", the primary cause of those issues was the never-ending blame game between the US and the DPRK.

In particular, the process of reconfiguring South Korea's policy toward the North resulted in intense diplomatic manoeuvring on the part of the United States. After coming to power in January 2001, the George W. Bush administration brought about a decisive shift in the US-DPRK policy that had existed in the Clinton years. Tension reached its peak in January 2002 when President Bush included the DPRK in the "axis of evil" he identified in his State of the Union address.⁵⁹ North Korea's response was furious, and the state criticized the speech as one that fell "little short of declaring a war" on the North. Bush's "axis of evil" remark had a devastating effect in terms of reinforcing the Cold War structure and, from a conflict transformation perspective, the DJ government failed to manage the imminent crisis at this juncture in a way that would have contributed to achieving its long-term goal of structural change on the Korean peninsula. If we think of this incident as a conflict *episode*, to use Lederach's term, the South Korean government should have recognized and dealt with US-DPRK relations as an *epicenter* or *context* of the conflict, particularly after the Republican Party won the presidential election in 2000.

Since the very people of the US Republican party had been denouncing the Agreed Framework for some time—openly criticizing the deal as "groveling appeasement and proof of Clinton's weakness on foreign policy"⁶⁰ - the South Korean government had anticipated the adversarial attitude of the Bush government. Given that any change in perception or attitude involves a long-term process, and US support was crucial for the success of the Sunshine Policy, the DJ government could have better calibrated its policy, placing greater emphasis on the commonality of interests between the Sunshine Policy and the Bush administration in terms of "reduction of military tensions and economic reforms by the North Koreans."⁶¹ It would have been even more astute of the South Korean government to have decelerated the pace of its engagement process with the North. However, the South Korean government expanded the Sunshine Policy without being able to improve US-DPRK relations.⁶² Due to a fundamental difference in approaches, Washington-Seoul disputes over North Korean policy further widened the cleavage between the two governments and consequently delayed the implementation of the agreements made between the two Koreas.

The establishment of peaceful relations between conflicting parties is pivotal in conflict transformation because it creates an environment which can mitigate security dilemmas and eventually transform a destructive structure into a constructive one. However, the DJ government and the subsequent Roh Moo-hyun government which inherited the Sunshine



Policy fell short of creating the kind of international environment that would have guaranteed the security of North Korea, whether through bilateral talks or through the multilateral initiatives such as the Six-Party Talks which consequently led to the repetition of a similar crisis. The South Korean government, which stood as a party in the crisis, failed to undertake the kind of leading role that might have paved the way for a peaceful resolution of the issue of North Korean nuclear weapons programmes, which was intimately related to the deterioration of US-ROK relations.

The South Korean government became so focused on the success of the Sunshine Policy that engagement with the North started to become an end in itself rather than one of the strategic plans for the peacebuilding process in the Korean peninsula. The government found itself in what Christopher Mitchell refers to as a “malign conflict spiral” in which various determinants begin to militate against efforts to change course.⁶³ Acknowledging how important Washington’s stance toward Pyongyang was for successful engagement with the North, the South Korean government could have put more effort into carrying out delicate diplomatic manoeuvres between the US and North Korea.

Conflicting identities

With its primary objective of dismantling the Cold War structure, Kim Dae-jung’s Sunshine Policy represented an effort both to change South Korea’s traditionally combative relations with the North and to secure peaceful co-existence. To achieve this objective, the South Korean government needed not only to improve US-DPRK relations but also to resolve the two conflicting identities of its own citizens. South Korean society was badly polarized along ideological lines, and the government needed to create a consensus on its North Korea policy among both progressives and conservatives; it also needed to resolve the state’s contested identity which was organized around the alliance security bond with the US and the nationalistic bond with North Korea.

Wendt explains that issues of identity are fundamental to the protection of a sense of self and group needs,⁶⁴ and so it is natural that people aligned with different identities should pursue and demand different outcomes to presenting issues.⁶⁵ When a society is starkly divided by along identity lines, the challenge is to lower the level of negative reactivity and to enhance people’s capacity to address their own fears and misunderstandings as well as to understand others.⁶⁶ To achieve these goals, a society needs to cultivate *safe spaces* within which people can be encouraged to reflect deeply on the nature of the situation, as well as their responsibilities, hopes, and fears. However, South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and his advisors did not make efforts to create new spaces, or a *zone of respect and mutuality*,⁶⁷ within South Korean society in the process of implementing the Sunshine Policy.

South Korea’s polarized domestic politics and the government’s obsession with symbolic achievement undercut the effectiveness of the Sunshine Policy, the purpose of which, in the long run, was to bring about a transformation in North Korea’s identity as well as its behaviour.⁶⁸ Unlike West Germany, which had used *Ostpolitik* to promote non-partisan, consensus-based gradual engagement with East Germany,⁶⁹ the DJ administration tried to persuade the South Korean public by making use of its privileged institutional platform rather than building a consensus by seeking appropriate forms of interaction or exchange in an ideologically polarized society. Since the different identity groups in relation to North Korea were not called on to engage in proper interaction or exchange, polarization reasserted itself in even stronger forms after the glow of the inter-Korean summit had dimmed.

Closed and delinked tracks

Critically, the Sunshine Policy failed to further open up North Korea’ reclusive society. Although the policy did bring about drastic changes, North Korea’s authoritarian and



centralized system, as well as lack of coordination among tracks, represented significant challenges to the South Korean government's effort to advance relations. While the Sunshine Policy received decent support from South Koreans, in Pyongyang, it was perceived with caution or even fear.⁷⁰ Because of the defensive and opaque character of the North Korean regime, the Sunshine Policy struggled to reach Track II or Track III actors, and, for the same reason, it is difficult to find sources that verify whether the Sunshine Policy influenced or brought any changes in perspectives inside the North.

The Daily NK, which tended to rely on North Korean defectors for its sources, suggested that most North Koreans were disappointed and frustrated with President Kim Dae-jung and his engagement initiatives vis-à-vis the North. Their hostility toward the dovish South Korean president, or any kind of conciliatory gestures from Seoul, grew from their belief that thousands of tons of food sent by the South Korean government were only being used to strengthen the North Korean People's army.⁷¹ The defectors argued that the Sunshine Policy did not change the North's aggressive and oppressive regime and only weakened the South's national security. It is rather difficult to verify North Korean defectors' claims, but their arguments imply that the Sunshine Policy was not largely welcomed by ordinary people in North Korea.

Moreover, because of the political and historical dynamic of North-South relations, South Korea's direct contribution to capacity building in North Korea was mostly blocked. Despite the prominent role that South Korea has been playing in assisting North Korean development under the Sunshine Policy, even economic development aid was rarely delivered in coordination with South Korea's own economic planning goals. While the NGO community could play a unique role as a bridge between donor and recipient countries, and to some extent offered a context for interpreting the overall situation, the lack of vertical coordination between stakeholders on different tracks meant that there was little room for other actors in South Korea outside Track I to contribute to the Sunshine Policy's confidence-building process.

In addition, because the process of building a new relationship between adversaries is inevitably slow and time-consuming when North Korea's totalitarian features add an extra layer of difficulty, an entire decade of pursuing an engagement policy provided insufficient time to generate desirable outcomes. Since the inauguration of Lee Myung-bak in February 2008, South Korea's government has suspended most of its cooperation projects and civic exchanges with the North on the basis that it plans to carry out an emphatic re-evaluation of the North Korea policy adopted by previous governments.⁷² This stance has been reiterated by the current Park Geun-hye government which has taken a hard line toward North Korea and has yet to resume inter-Korean talks.

It cannot be denied that the North Korean regime's rigidity was the main factor that hindered the Sunshine Policy from penetrating North Korean society and creating an environment that would allow the full engagement of diverse groups of people. However, from a conflict transformation perspective, it is also significant that the Lee and Park governments failed to understand that engagement with the North was supposed to be a mid- to long-term process intended to deal with deeper relational and structural patterns. Considering that there were several thousand South Korean visitors in the North dealing with various governmental and civic projects under the DJ and Roh governments,⁷³ the engagement policy could have had profound effects if it had been implemented for a longer period of time. Therefore, despite the shortcomings in the Sunshine Policy's efforts to cope with the US-DPRK relationship or South Koreans' conflicting opinions regarding engagement with North Korea, we cannot definitely conclude that the problem of delinked and closed tracks illustrates the limitations of the Sunshine Policy itself.



Conclusion

The Sunshine Policy fell far short of transforming the Cold War structure on the Korean peninsula and could not achieve full inter-Korean reconciliation. However, it has definitely brought about noticeable changes in some aspects of the socio-political system in which the conflict is embedded. If we remind ourselves that the core concept of conflict transformation involves a *qualitative shift* rather than a quantitative alteration in degree, the Sunshine Policy did induce some formidable transformations in Korean society.

The most profound change it has brought, at least to the South, is that it has introduced the idea of *war aversion*.⁷⁴ At present, most South Koreans reject war as a means to resolve North Korean issues, whether they are proponents or opponents of the engagement policy. This perception change was mainly brought about through the Sunshine Policy's political reconciliation between the two Koreas and the inter-Korean summit, and it worked as the structural cornerstone for other regional powers' bids to reconsider their containment policy toward the North. The policy also achieved attitudinal and cognitive changes, at least on one side, by increasing awareness of the nature of the conflict and the relationships involved in it, and this led to a change in South Koreans' perceptions of North Koreans. One key effect of the policy was that South Korea's major inter-Korean economic projects showed the potential of efforts to generate initial platforms for balancing capabilities and enhancing integration between the two Koreas.

While a conspicuous shift was brought about by the Sunshine Policy, the group cohesion it produced was generated by nationalistic rhetoric rather than by mutual, interactive education, and this strained the US-ROK alliance and later hindered fundamental change in South Koreans' collective identity vis-à-vis North Korea. As a result, a large portion of South Korea's population still doubts North Korea's willingness to integrate itself into the international community. The tendency of the DJ government to overcommit was another issue that eroded the policy's original aspirations. When the DJ government did not put in enough effort to convince the Bush administration or to secure cohesion among domestic actors, Kim Dae-jung's commitment to engagement soured public opinion on the Sunshine Policy and on the relationship with the US which was crucial for dissolving the Cold War structure.

The conceptual framework of conflict transformation clearly proves useful for understanding which aspects of the DJ government's Sunshine Policy exerted transformative effects and where its approach was short of being truly successful. In particular, the integrated model used in this paper draws attention to the hitherto neglected issue that forms the epicentre of the conflict. One of the main reasons why the Sunshine Policy could not achieve its ultimate goal of reconciling the two Koreas was because it lacked direction and specific plans to ameliorate the hostile relationship between Washington and Pyongyang. The conflict transformation approach also problematizes the view, set out in previous critiques of the policy, that the Sunshine Policy was mistaken in its assumption that direct engagement with the North is an appropriate step in efforts to transform destructive relations between the two Koreas. The existing literature on the Sunshine Policy has confused people about whether the DJ government's approach toward North Korea was or was not adequate to the task of achieving its goal of building a peaceful relationship. An assessment of the policy based on the framework of conflict transformation makes clear which components of the policy deserve to be embraced and which areas need to be improved before future implementation. In this sense, a conflict transformation approach helps actors to move beyond the dichotomy between dovish or hawkish policies.

This case study on the Sunshine Policy also contributes to the ongoing discussion about conflict transformation itself. Though it is sometimes effective to delimit a definition of



conflict transformation in order to avoid confusion over how it differs from other conflict management strategies, this study shows how important it is to emphasize that conflict transformation integrates diverse components from different approaches so that highly sophisticated and appropriate tools can be put to use in a timely manner when conflict occurs. In addition, besides the general criticism of conflict transformation, a serious gap in the conflict transformation literature appears to be that it has hardly ever been applied at the macro level where states are involved as conflicting parties. Because the conflict transformation approach tends to neglect or put less emphasis on power and interest, it often comes up with vague and abstract forms of analysis or interpretations of states' behaviours when dealing with issues of state identity and security. If the conflict transformation approach takes the concept of power and interest into account more seriously, it will be a more congruent framework for documenting the nature of conflicts systematically.

Lastly, regarding the policy of South Korea toward the North, after the Lee Myung-bak administration upended most of the engagement policies of his predecessors—Kim Dae-Jung and Roh Moo-hyun—nearly all diplomatic connections between the two Koreas have been suspended. In giving the ROK-US relationship primacy, while risking the relationship with North Korea, the current Park Geun-hye government confines itself to the same destructive structure where no party feels safe and secure. As the Iran Nuclear Deal has shown, under the Six-Party Talks, South Korea still has the potential to revitalize relations with North Korea and transform the security structure of the Northeast Asian region and beyond. The future South Korean administration must make and seize the opportunity to keep the dialogue going, so some new positive interactions may begin among the concerned states.

Notes

1. Chung-in Moon, *Kim Dae-jung Government*, 13.
2. Peter Wallensteen, *The Resolution and Transformation*, 130.
3. Ahmad Azem Hamad, *Reconceptualisation of Conflict Management*.
4. Niclas L. P. Swanstrom et al., *Conflict, Conflict Prevention*.
5. UNHCR, *Framework for Conflict-Sensitive Programming*, 18.
6. Thania Paffenholz, *Understanding Peacebuilding Theory*, 3.
7. Ibid., 4.
8. Cordula Reimann, *All You Need Is Love*, 7.
9. Ibid.
10. Burton, *Global Conflict*, 1984.
11. Christine Bigdon et al., *Role of Development Aid*, 6.
12. Thania Paffenholz, *Understanding Peacebuilding Theory*, 4.
13. John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*.
14. Christopher Mitchell, *Conflict Analysis, Conflict Resolution*, 9.
15. Ibid., 11.
16. Some good examples of this can be found in Glasl, “The Process of Conflict Transformation”; Fisher et al. “The Potential Complementarity of Mediation”; and Prein, “Guns and Top Hats”.
17. Paffenholz, “Understanding Peacebuilding Theory”, 4.
18. John Paul Lederach, *Preparing for Peace*.
19. Ibid., 45.
20. Christopher Mitchell, *Conflict Analysis, Conflict Resolution*, 9.
21. Cordula Reimann, *All You Need Is Love*.
22. Adam Curle, *Making Peace*.
23. John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace*, 65.
24. Ibid., 67.
25. Soon-young Hong, *Thawing Korea’s Cold War*.
26. Yong-ho Kim, *The Sunshine Policy*.
27. Chosun Daily News, “냉전 종식의 길 (A Way to Dismantle the Cold War Structure)”, 13 June 2000.
28. Key-young Son, *South Korean Engagement Policies*, 84.
29. Jaime Koh, *A Case of Promoting Peace through Tourism Or a Meaningless Distraction?*
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31. Won-sup Lee, 햇볕정책을 위한 변론 *Pleading for the Sunshine Policy*.
32. Hankyoreh News, “Mt. Geumgang Is More Than Just a Beautiful Site,” 1 November 2006.
33. Tae-hwan Kwak, “Inter-Korean Relations and Northeast Asian Security”, 220.
34. Scott Snyder, “The Korean Peninsula: On the Brink?”, 271.
35. Young-chul Cho, *International Environment, State Identity*.
36. Gabriel Jonsson, *Towards Korean Reconciliation*, 72; Kyu-sup Jeong, “대북정책 재정립 방향과 정치군사분야의 과제 (Revisiting South Korea’s Political and Military Dimensions of North Korean Policy)”, 6.
37. See Jong-moo Lee, *The History of South Korean Aid to DPRK* and James E. Hoare, *Why the Sunshine Policy Made Sense*.
38. Choong-nam Kim, *The Sunshine Policy*, 589.
39. Christopher Louis Yeomans, *Protracted Structural Conflict Transformation*.
40. Mark Manyin et al., *Kaesong North-South Korean Industrial Complex*, 16.
41. Chung-in Moon, *Kim Dae-jung Government*, 49.
42. Ibid., 123.
43. Don Oberdorfer, *North Korea’s Historic Shift*.



44. Samuel Kim, *Seoul's Sunshine Policy*, 204.
45. Ibid.
46. Ki-jung Kim et al., *Beyond Mt. Kumkang*, 130.
47. Hong-yung Lee, *Domestic Determinants of South Korea's Policy*, 324. The administration's intention to transcend mere humanitarian support is well summarized in Kim Dae-Jung's Berlin declaration, in which he noted that "the time is ripe for government cooperation" on much larger projects of social infrastructure, including expansion of highways, harbours, railroads, and electrical and communications facilities.
48. Mitchell, "Beyond Resolution", cited in Adam Curle, *Making Peace*, 15-16.
49. Ole Wæver, *Securitization and Desecuritization*, 60.
50. Ibid.
51. See Yong-shik Choo, *Handling North Korea* and Scott Snyder, *South Korea's Squeeze Play*.
52. See Sung-joo Han, *Korea's New Century* and J. J. Suh, *Bound to Last?*, 161-162.
53. Choong-nam Kim, *The Sunshine Policy*, 156.
54. Henry C. K. Liu, *China and the US*.
55. Social Science Research Council, "North Korea Chronology 2008", 31.
56. Mark E. Manyin, *North Korea-Japan Relations*, 2.
57. Jae-chun Choi, "조선, 스스로 뒤집은 '정상회담 대가 5억불 (Chosun Daily News Went Back on its Previous Argument of Cash-for-Summit)", *OhmyNews*, 6 August 2010.
58. John Paul Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation*.
59. Liu Lin, *North Korean Nuclear Test*, 10.
60. Peter Symonds, *Bush Sets Course for Confrontation*.
61. Albert J. Suh, *The Bush Administration*.
62. Jeremy Page et al., *North Korea Removed*.
63. Christopher R. Mitchell, *Conflict, Change and Conflict Resolution*, 90.
64. Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 377.
65. John Paul Lederach, *Little Book of Conflict Transformation*, 56.
66. Ibid.
67. John Paul Lederach, *The Moral Imagination*, 98.
68. Sung-chull Kim et al., *Engagement with North Korea*, 13.
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**Navigating Identities and Emotions in the Field:
a Local Researcher's Strategies in Northern Ireland**

By Rachel Rafferty*

Abstract

Divided societies like Northern Ireland present methodological challenges for researchers due to the roles that mutually-opposing group identities play in shaping social interactions. These challenges, which are heightened for local researchers due to their status as insiders to the conflict, can be overcome to some degree through the careful development of methodological strategies based on a reflexive approach. This article presents the case of a qualitative interviewing project undertaken by a local researcher that involved different identity groups in post-violence Northern Ireland. It examines the methodological challenges encountered because of the identified and emotional nature of the research, and it shares successful strategies both for building rapport with a wide variety of participants and for eliciting responses during the discussion of sensitive topics. A reflexive approach is shown as important in enabling local researchers in divided societies to conduct rigorous and trustworthy research.

Key words: field research, divided societies, identities, emotions, reflexivity.

FIELD REPORT



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Navigating Identities and Emotions in the Field: a Local Researcher's Strategies in Northern Ireland

Introduction

Qualitative field research can be a valuable source of rich, contextualised information about societies affected by protracted violent conflict,¹ but such work does present significant methodological difficulties.² These challenges can be heightened for local researchers who will find themselves in the role of insider and outsider at different times; they will require strategies for both roles, as well as a means to address the tension between these different roles during analysis.³ However, when these challenges are adequately addressed, local researchers in divided societies can be particularly well-placed to conduct research which is informed, but not dictated by, their lived experience of conflict.

This paper provides a reflexive account of my recent experience conducting qualitative interviews with community activists in my home country of Northern Ireland. Reflexivity is an important tool for qualitative researchers. It requires them to look critically at themselves and at their research decisions in order to consider how their social position, personal biases, and emotional reactions may have had an impact on the development of research findings.⁴ However, although there is widespread recognition of the value of reflexivity in qualitative research, accounts of field work conducted by local researchers in deeply divided societies often address this concept either minimally or not at all.⁵

I reflect below on my recent field experiences in order to explore the identified and emotional dimensions involved in researching as a local in a deeply divided society. I share the strategies I developed to build rapport and handle sensitive topics, and I explain how researcher reflexivity helps to address the challenges involved in this kind of project. Reflexivity, this article seeks to demonstrate, enables local researchers in divided societies to develop sensitive and nuanced interview practices that can allow them to collect rich qualitative data from members of different identity groups in their home countries.

I first outline some of the general challenges involved in researching in a divided society such as Northern Ireland, and I go on to relate them to the broader issues involved in reflexivity, researcher positionality, and the conduct of qualitative interviews. I then present the case of my own research experience in post-violence Northern Ireland in 2014. I give special attention to the two primary challenges I encountered during this process; managing identity perceptions (my own and those of others) and confronting the emotional aspects of the research project. Both of these aspects of the research were inseparable from an additional ethical dimension which is examined concurrently with them in this article. I conclude by discussing the insights I gained into the particular issues that local researchers can expect to grapple with in a divided society. This article concludes that a reflexive approach is particularly valuable for local researchers in divided societies as they seek to build trust and rapport with a variety of research participants, and as they strive to address the challenges of being positioned alternately as an insider and an outsider during a single research project.

The challenges involved in conducting field research in a divided society

The term “deeply divided” has been used to describe societies which are shaped around a single polarising identity division; the identity groups involved in the division can find



themselves at any stage in the conflict cycle from full-scale civil war to a post-conflict situation of hostile separation.⁶ While all societies could be said to be divided to some degree, I use the term “divided society” in this article to refer to these types of contexts. Although divided societies may experience different levels of intergroup violence, they share important similarities in terms of their psychosocial dynamics. Common features of these societies include patterns of hostility and segregation between members of different identity groups, and high levels of collective emotions relating to the conflict.⁷

Deeply divided societies present field researchers with some specific challenges.⁸ Even where intergroup violence has abated, at least temporarily, researchers face a variety of difficulties which include gaining access to wary participants and marginalised communities,⁹ and building enough trust between researchers and participants to elicit honest and open accounts in a general atmosphere of low social trust.¹⁰ In these kinds of situations, many topics can be highly emotive for participants and need to be broached with sensitivity to local context.¹¹

While most of the literature that concerns field research in divided societies has been written by scholars who are at least partial outsiders to the conflicts at hand, there has been some consideration of the specific challenges that local researchers face. Locals cannot expect to be free from “ethnic and emotional baggage”,¹² and this “baggage” of identity, with its related emotions and biases, can affect how the local researcher will be perceived by various research participants.¹³ It can also damage the credibility of a project’s findings if the researcher does not have an explicit strategy in place to prevent it from unduly influencing their data analysis process.¹⁴ It is simply unrealistic for the local researcher to expect to be perceived as a neutral outsider by participants, and at the same time they need to be particularly aware of the ways in which their membership of an identity group may challenge their ability to take an objective position during the process of data analysis.¹⁵

As local researchers in divided societies interview participants from different backgrounds, they will find their social position shifting from that of trusted insider to potentially hostile outsider, and both positions present challenges. Researchers of the familiar need to be careful not to over-identify with those study participants who share the same social identity,¹⁶ and neither can they assume that membership of a broad group will result in them being recognised as full insiders.¹⁷ Members of other social groups may view the researcher as a potentially hostile observer,¹⁸ and this will make it particularly difficult for the individual involved to gain access to, and build rapport with, certain respondents.

Local researchers can also face heightened emotional challenges. When a researcher has a personal connection to a topic, it increases the likelihood that they will experience emotional vulnerability and secondary trauma.¹⁹ They must also take particular care not to allow their personal feelings towards research participants to influence how they conduct interviews.²⁰ A further concern is that local researchers need a certain amount of emotional courage in order to engage with topics that they have been socialised to view as sensitive.²¹

Despite these difficulties, a number of local researchers have successfully demonstrated their ability to gain access to participants from other identity groups, including individuals closely connected to the conflict.²² Furthermore, by taking care to reflect on the impact of their social position and potential biases throughout the research process, they have been able to produce findings which meet the expectations for rigour and trustworthiness required for qualitative academic studies.²³

The multiple challenges that local researchers face in a divided society can be overcome, and when local researchers add their voices to the body of scholarship on their home country, they contribute valuable, highly contextualised research findings that are grounded in the lived experience of conflict. These kinds of outcome can only be achieved, however, if



researchers are highly self-aware and explicit about the roles that their identities and emotions play in shaping their research processes, and this is why a strong understanding of reflexivity is vitally important.

Reflexivity and field research in a divided society

The importance of reflexivity in qualitative research is widely recognised.²⁴ Reflexivity involves a continual process of self-reflection by researchers, a process that necessitates a critical appraisal of their social position and personal subjectivities and close scrutiny of how these factors have affected research activities and outcomes. In terms of specific research practices, reflexivity involves the researcher reflecting on how their decisions around collecting and interpreting data have contributed to shaping their research findings.²⁵ The social scientist differs from her colleagues in the natural sciences in that she is not able to observe social phenomena with complete detachment. Whereas the natural scientist can view the behaviour of atoms or the progress of tectonic plate movements from a point of objectivity, the social science researcher is always, by virtue of their membership of the human race, personally connected to the research topic to some degree. In situations where a researcher is from the divided society they seek to investigate, this level of involvement is greatly heightened which in turn has consequences for the research process.²⁶

Reflexivity is often linked to a social constructivist epistemology which understands knowledge about social phenomena as something constructed by the human mind rather than as an inherent fact waiting to be discovered.²⁷ However, approaches to reflexivity fall on a spectrum from relativist to objectivist.²⁸ Objectivist understandings of reflexivity view the process as an opportunity for the researcher to set aside or “bracket” their assumptions and personal biases, as well as to consider how participants’ perceptions of the researcher’s identity may have affected their interview responses.²⁹ This approach would seem to be particularly important for local researchers in divided societies as they confront the tensions between their lived experience of the social divide and a researcher’s responsibility to achieve a certain level of intellectual distance in order to arrive at fair-minded and theoretically-useful findings.

In qualitative studies, the researcher is the instrument through which research is carried out; when their personal subjectivities are made explicit, this can in fact lead to the development of more accurately delineated, nuanced, and trustworthy conclusions than might otherwise have been derived.³⁰ Reflexivity allows for a degree of “analytic accountability”,³¹ and it can provide a pathway for the researcher to move beyond their personal subjectivities towards, not the achievement of universal objectivity, but a situated, embodied attempt at objectivity that is openly acknowledged as such.³² In divided societies, group identities associated with conflict so completely pervade social interactions, cultural practices, and political structures that it is impossible for a local researcher to aspire to, or claim, neutrality, and so reflexivity is clearly highly relevant to research undertaken in these contexts.³³

Reflexivity can benefit local field researchers at all stages of a study, from the design process, through data collection, to the analysis phase. During the collection of data in the field, a researcher’s membership of an identity group can potentially affect both her ability to access certain groups and the quality of interaction with participants.³⁴ Interactions between a researcher and participant take place within the relational dynamics of a particular cultural setting,³⁵ and this makes it particularly important for local researchers in divided societies to consider, during the analysis phase, how interviewees reacted to their identity and how this dynamic may have shaped the quality of conversation. Relational dynamics need to be accounted for in the research audit trail, and, where possible, creative strategies need to be designed in advance to either minimise the impact of these factors on data collection or to include observations on researcher-participant interaction in the data collected. These kinds of measures may actually enhance the accuracy of a study, given their potential to illuminate



fine details of social interactions in a divided society. The position of a local researcher as an insider familiar with the society as a whole may allow her to recognise nuances of behaviour and speech which might not be obvious to a researcher from elsewhere who is much less familiar with everyday social mores.

While many qualitative researchers now acknowledge the value of examining reflexively the impact of their social identity on the research process, the importance of emotional reflexivity has only begun to be recognised more recently.³⁶ Emotions are now considered by a number of scholars to represent an important dimension of field research,³⁷ not least because researcher emotions can influence decision-making around research design and the interpretation of data.³⁸ Local researchers in divided societies need to be particularly reflexive about their personal emotional reactions during the research process in order to achieve an interpretation of the statements made by participants from different backgrounds that is as balanced and fair-minded as possible. Without these kinds of measures in place, the findings of local researchers are vulnerable to accusations of personal bias based on group membership.

An emotionally reflexive approach opens up the possibility that researchers can use their recognition of their own emotions and the interplay of researcher and participant emotions in the discussion of sensitive topics, as valuable data which can illustrate how these factors shape everyday social interactions in a divided society.³⁹ Field notes and research journals can then become not only records of how a research process developed but a source of insight into the lived experience of interactions across identity boundaries in a conflict-affected environment.

Overall, a reflexive approach facilitates the development of appropriate field strategies which can ensure that findings will be found credible within the context of qualitative research; which is to say that findings will be marked by closeness to the topic studied, be true-to-life, and will accurately represent the perspective of those living the experience under consideration.⁴⁰ A local researcher who is dealing with multiple identity groups and varying levels of personal sympathy for the positions taken by respondents will need to be highly aware of the role that her personal history and emotions play in her decision-making. This kind of awareness of how social position and emotions shape interview dynamics creates the opportunity for researchers to develop strategies that ensure fieldwork reflects their academic responsibility to pursue answers to research questions in a spirit of critical self-awareness. The acknowledgement of the role of subjectivities in shaping the interpretation of the social world may, in fact, help to generate insights that cannot be gained via a methodology where researcher objectivity is assumed. Reflexivity can, therefore, enable local researchers in divided societies to come to more robust conclusions based on an explicit examination of the basis of their knowledge claims.

Qualitative interviewing in Northern Ireland

In 2014, I carried out life-story interviews on a one-to-one basis with 29 community activists from a range of backgrounds in my home country of Northern Ireland. The purpose of the research was to understand why some of those activists working on intergroup peacebuilding have developed their motivations. This topic also required me to interview people whose activism was not shaped by a concern for the quality of relations between identity groups, and some among them viewed intergroup peacebuilding with some suspicion. During fieldwork, I had to navigate interview processes with respondents from my own and other social groups, and I needed to address the possibility that the interview topics could be both politically and emotionally sensitive, even after almost 20 years of relative peace. I also discovered my own capacity for reacting emotionally to disclosures made during interviews, and this highlighted the challenges for local researchers in divided societies who strive to separate their professional role from their personal sense of self.



Overview of the research project and context

Northern Ireland is often viewed as a “post-conflict” society, but it is still deeply divided.⁴¹ Although “Protestant” and “Catholic” group identities are better understood as ethno-national rather than religious categories, these terms are still in common local use and delineate divisions which still shape much of social life including how children are schooled, where people live, and with whom they form relationships.⁴² Levels of intergroup violence in Northern Ireland are much diminished, but a state of affairs in which social separation and political hostility continue has been aptly described as one of “no war, no peace”.⁴³

Political violence has greatly reduced since the signing of the 1998 Belfast Agreement, yet this small country of 1.6 million inhabitants is still coping with a legacy of widespread trauma, economic weakness characterised by relatively high levels of deprivation, and embedded patterns of social division between Catholics and Protestants.⁴⁴ There is still a great deal of contention about what caused the conflict and whose use of violence was or was not justified, and the pursuit of social reconciliation remains difficult in Northern Ireland long after the signing of the peace agreement.⁴⁵

Under the terms of a reflexive approach, my biography—constructed against this backdrop—becomes a proper subject for scrutiny when I begin work as a local researcher. I was born and grew up in Northern Ireland in a Catholic family. I was influenced by a father who exposed me to Irish nationalist narratives and culture and by a mother who introduced me to a more liberal worldview. Exposure to these differing worldviews has given me some personal experience of both feeling a sense of belonging to a cohesive social group, and of the freedom that results from choosing to live as a self-defining individual connected to others from multiple backgrounds.

I am old enough to have personal memories of the violence known as “the Troubles”, and, although I was lucky to grow up in an area which saw relatively low levels of direct violence, my childhood was nonetheless overshadowed by army patrols and checkpoints, military helicopters thundering overhead, and the weekly litany of news reports announcing the latest deaths from paramilitary attacks. I grew up as part of a small and publicly acquiescent Irish Catholic minority in a town with a strong Protestant-British identity, and, like most people in Northern Ireland, I was socialised to avoid discussing contentious issues in public, as a matter of personal protection. I also had important opportunities throughout my life to form close relationships with Protestant individuals. As an adult, I worked for five years with a local peace centre where I saw it as my purpose to help break down barriers of fear and prejudice between groups. However, despite this past work, I could not guarantee that respondents would not view me in narrow terms as simply a member of the Catholic community, as my communal background could be guessed from my Irish family name.

My aim in carrying out the research project was to develop a grounded theory, derived from research data, about how the motivation to engage in intergroup peacebuilding arises at the individual level. Grounded theory methodology follows a process of “emergent design” in the early stages, and involves the researcher in taking a carefully structured approach to developing theory through a process in which data is subjected to “constant comparison”.⁴⁶ This inductive research approach, where theory is developed from real-world data, was particularly useful for me as a local researcher as it required me to set aside any pre-existing assumptions and simply observe what patterns emerged as I compared data against data. I also made efforts to minimise the impact of my personal worldview on the research process through strategies which included creating space in interviews for respondents to bring other topics into the discussion, creating full transcriptions of interview recordings and performing member-checking for these transcripts, and writing field notes in which I reflected on the possible impacts of my identities and emotions on the interview process.



Primary data collection took the form of semi-structured, short-form, life-story interviews because identity, values, and socialisation experiences are known to influence activist behaviour.⁴⁷ Each participant gave a single interview which lasted for around one-and-a-half hours. I began each interview by inviting the respondent to give an overview of their life story in their own words. I then followed up with a number of semi-structured questions about their early socialisation processes, “turning point” experiences, values, and motivating goals. Secondary data included my written observations on the interview dynamic between me and the respondent, as well as notes on my personal experience of each interview.

The sample of 29 community activists included many participants who were working for peace, with whom I shared an affinity, as well as many others for whose political positions I would feel little personal sympathy. These individuals included a Republican Irish language activist, a member of the exclusively Protestant Orange Order, and a local politician who represented a party that was opposed to the peace agreement. Additional challenges and considerations stemmed from the fact that the sample contained at least three interviewees who had previously been imprisoned for committing violence, and two former members of the security forces, as well as at least nine people who had had close personal experiences of political violence.

The broad range of participants—including both Catholics and Protestants, moderates and people with more extreme political views—challenged me to navigate the intersections of my own biography with those of the interviewees. The interview format also asked respondents to engage with sensitive topics, both in terms of their individual biographies (such as their relationships with their parents and their religious views), and their experiences of violence and division within our society. All of this required me to develop careful strategies for building trust and rapport and to consider how to manage the emotional impact of the interview process on me and the study’s participants.

Building rapport across identity boundaries

How we see ourselves is not always how others view us, as field researchers have discovered.⁴⁸ A field researcher therefore needs to be sensitive to her social position within the research setting and to consider how others perceive her. Strategies can then be developed accordingly so that she can present a researcher persona which will help her achieve key research goals without engaging in unethical deception.⁴⁹ Finding the means to build rapport with research participants is particularly important when researching sensitive topics.⁵⁰

In a divided society, participants can be hostile to a researcher’s perceived background; they may respond either by clamping up or by using the encounter as an opportunity to promote a political narrative aggressively rather than to give more open, personal responses.⁵¹ A local researcher will therefore need to develop specific strategies to gain access to suitable research participants and to build rapport across identity boundaries; she must also, at a later stage, reflect on and make explicit the extent of her success or failure to engage with the “other”.

The primary challenge that faced me as I entered the field was the need to build a strong level of rapport, not only with respondents with whom I shared many similarities, but also with those from other identity groups. Self-presentation was crucial here, and I was aware that my own biography provided both strengths and limitations in terms of how I could build rapport with respondents. I am probably more experienced than many people in Northern Ireland at building rapport across identity boundaries and I have a useful familiarity with both Protestant and Catholic cultures; however, I also knew that there was a significant likelihood that I would be identified as Catholic due to my family name, a common indicator of group belonging in Northern Ireland. I was also sensitive to the fact that my life had been relatively



untouched by direct violence during the Troubles and that respondents who had experienced violence personally might view me as a naive and privileged outsider.

Researchers in divided societies face a dilemma about whether or not to reveal their social identities.⁵² Transparency is an important ethical consideration, but when a local researcher's identity is revealed it can cause technical problems that affect the conduct of the research.⁵³ I chose not to draw attention to my Catholic background, but I was willing to admit it honestly if questioned by a participant. Instead, I sought to position myself, first and foremost, as a student researcher, a role that is popularly associated with aspirations to be balanced and objective but also with a certain amount of naivety about the "real world". Secondly, I chose to emphasise any identities in which I and a particular participant might share, whether religious, geographic, or gender-based.

My status as a student researcher allowed me to maximise perceptions of my youthful naivety, and this seemed to be offer me the best way to approximate a position of relative neutrality in the eyes of participants. By positioning myself as a kind of *tabula rasa*, I invited participants to impart their intimate knowledge, personal perspectives, and experiences to someone who was genuinely interested in learning from them, and I was careful not to make any statements that would indicate my own assumptions about the conflict.

I was able to leverage my gender, relative youth, and student status to create a way of engaging with sensitive topics. I realised early on in my research that the non-threatening persona I had adopted was encouraging honest disclosure from all participants. I even wore particularly "studenty" clothes for some interviews to try to accentuate this aspect of my persona. In addition, I found that a strategy of cold-calling potential interviewees directly was helpful, as it allowed me to make an instant connection and build some rapport. My softly spoken female voice may also have helped allay any fears that potential interviewees might have had that I had some hostile reason for wanting to research their experiences.

I was always careful to describe my research goal in broad, non-contentious terms, and I positioned the project as one that involved me in simply engaging with a wide variety of community activists in a bid to understand why they were passionate about the causes they worked for. When I interacted with people who were not working towards intergroup peacebuilding, I did not mention directly the potentially contentious topic of reconciliation. A broad explanation of the research goal seemed to be successful in providing the research with enough legitimacy for me to access potentially suspicious participants in a divided society like Northern Ireland.⁵⁴

During interviews, I made mostly non-committal but broadly encouraging responses to participant disclosures. By presenting myself as someone who wanted to learn from participants, I hoped both to inspire confidence in respondents from a range of backgrounds and to offer them an opportunity to educate me about their perspectives and worldview. When probing participants in an effort to engage them with more sensitive topics, I framed challenging questions in ways that separated contentious statements from my own persona and allowed me to retain rapport with the interviewees. I sometimes suggested, for example, that I was "just playing devil's advocate"; at other times, I prefaced questions with caveats such as "I don't think this is true, but some people might say...". This approach allowed me to frame questions as opportunities for participants to express their counter-perspectives. I never openly took issue with a participant's response, no matter how much I personally disagreed with it.

My strategies for building rapport also involved me in attempting to draw attention to any similarities between me and the interviewee, while simultaneously downplaying any possibly contentious identity distinctions. The accent and dialect use of English speakers in Northern Ireland is unique to those six counties and is used by Protestants and Catholics alike, so my



familiarity with local dialect words offered a valuable way in which I could highlight a degree of shared identity between me and the research participants. The Northern Irish are also noted for a wry and black sense of humour, and comedy was widely used as a strategy to foster emotional resilience during three decades of political violence. By laughing lightly along with participants as they recounted sometimes shocking realities, I hoped to show my shared knowledge of the surreal social situation in which we all grew up. Humility is also a shared cultural value across identity groups in Northern Ireland, and so I was careful not to perform the identity of academic expert, instead reassuring participants that I was learning a lot from them.

During this project, I was dealing with people who identified strongly as either Catholic or Protestant, as was evidenced by the roles they were playing in their own communities, and there were times when I felt it would be effective to make subtle changes in how I presented myself and my research. For example, in order to be sensitive to preferences over contentious nomenclature,⁵⁵ I referred to “Northern Ireland” when communicating with Protestants and to “the north of Ireland/ Northern Ireland” when communicating with Catholics. These choices were made so that I was able to show respect for participants’ differing sensitivities; they also helped me to emphasise my willingness to acknowledge each interviewee’s position. When chatting informally with Catholic interviewees before an interview, I would sometimes drop hints about my Catholic background, whereas with Protestants I often mentioned the town in which I grew up and thus hinted that I was well acquainted with Protestant narratives and culture.

Safety is both an ethical and methodological consideration for researchers who are working in a violently divided society.⁵⁶ Even in post-violence Northern Ireland, there is a legacy of socialisation that disposes people to perceive the discussion of certain topics as risky because of their potential to lead to dangerous acts of self-revelation in conversations with people from different identity backgrounds. I therefore took some time before each interview to reassure participants that they were in control of the process and of the information they would impart. I also reassured them that their identities would be kept as confidential as possible if they wished. Some participants raised concerns, but all were happy to proceed.

It was also important to reflect carefully on how interviewees responded to me. To some extent it is methodologically impossible to know how research participants react to a researcher’s perceived identity unless they explicitly express their views.⁵⁷ However, I did gain a number of indications that I had overcome respondents’ reservations and built rapport well by the end of some interviews across a wide range of participants. Interviewees spoke openly about a wide variety of topics which included some that might be considered sensitive or contentious. Many of them exhibited emotional vulnerability, and admitted honestly that they had been imperfect when it might have been easier for them to represent themselves as having conformed to socially desirable norms. Moreover, the interviews finished on friendly terms, and most respondents lingered on a little to chat informally instead of ushering me straight out of the door.

Like any field research project, this study was not unremittingly successful, but a reflexive approach to failure means that when problems arise they can become a source of learning. While I managed to interview a broad range of participants, I was not successful in gaining access to members of more politically extreme social groups. These actors are not easily contacted by telephone or through personal referrals, and I did not find a way to build trust during cursory email exchanges. My sample includes a spectrum of opinion but lacks evidence from people who have extreme views about supporting violence, and this represents an important limitation which will have to be made explicit when the findings are published. A key lesson learnt from this experience was that engagement with marginal groups works best when a lot of time is committed in advance of the interview phase to the development of contacts and relationships.



In reflecting on the research process, I can see that many of my identities, not just my religious background, shaped these research encounters. However, I am also confident that my interview strategies helped me to have as open a dialogue as possible with a broad range of participants within the social constraints that arise in the context of a deeply divided society. I am glad that I was not so intimidated by the challenges involved in interviewing across identity boundaries that I did not attempt it, as I did collect some very useful data from which powerful insights can be drawn. A reflexive approach helped me to recognise that I cannot assume an automatic connection with another human being simply because we share a group identity; at the same time, it also indicated that means exist to build rapport with respondents who identify with a group on the other side of the social divide. In the end, each participant deserves to be engaged with as a unique individual, without researcher expectations and assumptions interfering in the encounter. Researcher reflexivity can facilitate the development of strategies to achieve this person-to-person engagement and lead to more effective field research in divided societies.

Handling the emotional challenges created by sensitive topics

Emotions are generally understood to form a domain which is comprised of subjective experience, expressive reactions, physiological reactions, and certain types of cognition.⁵⁸ These phenomena, which are difficult to record and analyse accurately, have traditionally been viewed with mistrust within academia. However, when research is viewed as a kind of emotional labour in which emotions must be expressed or managed in order for a task to be completed,⁵⁹ a number of important issues are brought to light. This approach acknowledges the emotional challenges involved for anyone who seeks to act as a scientific researcher in a social setting. It highlights how this work involves trying to manage tensions between empathy and objectivity as well as cope with the emotional costs of repressing one's natural responses to participant statements.⁶⁰ When the emotional labour involved in social science research is recognised, it becomes possible to address the emotional reactions of the researcher in fieldwork encounters and to assess how it affects researcher interpretations of different individuals and their narratives.⁶¹

In cases where divided societies exist, especially those which have recently experienced or are still experiencing severe violence, any research topic related to the conflict has the potential to evoke negative emotions in both the participants and the local researcher.⁶² The act of researching topics that pertain to violence or suffering can be particularly emotionally challenging for researchers and can even lead to secondary trauma.⁶³ However, this should not lead researchers to avoid emotionally sensitive topics when they are researching conflict-affected societies as this can have a dangerously sanitising and distancing effect on the production of academic knowledge.⁶⁴

A local researcher in a divided society faces difficult questions about how to address themselves towards topics of violence, prejudice, and division, particularly when they themselves may have had negative personal experiences of these problems. The researcher in these kinds of cases must then be highly reflexive with regards to the role that her own emotions play in shaping research decisions. There is also a need for researchers to develop strategies that help them to avoid becoming overwhelmed by emotions while in the field so that they can successfully complete their projects.

Furthermore, any researcher in a divided society needs to consider carefully how to engage interviewees with sensitive topics without evoking emotional reactions that could re-traumatize a participant and/or lead them to cancel an interview and withdraw from the project. A local researcher in a divided society therefore requires strong emotional awareness so that she can be sensitive, noting, and responding appropriately to, the feelings expressed by participants. Conversely, if the researcher is overly cautious about provoking emotional reactions, the interview may fail to engage with important topics and the research



may inadvertently result in an incomplete portrayal of life in a society affected by violent conflict.

My process of emotional reflexivity began when the design stage for the interview protocol brought certain considerations to light. Firstly, I wanted interviewees to have control over what they revealed so that each participant would be the person to set the emotional tone of their interview. I felt it would be unethical, and probably counterproductive, for me to try and push respondents into addressing life events which were traumatic for them to recall. Secondly, being aware that Northern Ireland has a strong culture of silence—summed up by the common refrain “whatever you say, say nothing”—I wanted to invite respondents to relax gradually into the research interview. I started, then, with very open questions about their lives and only then moved onto more sensitive topics such as group identity or religious belief. Finally, I wanted, as a gesture of reciprocity, to make the interview experience as pleasant as possible for interviewees. I listened attentively and enthusiastically to their accounts, and I ended the interviews on a positive note by asking them to describe what a better future for Northern Ireland would look like to them. The latter strategy was intended to help them leave behind any negative emotions that had been evoked when relating how their life experiences had been impacted by the past violence of the Troubles.

I also found it was important ethically and methodologically to be appropriately responsive to participant emotions during interviews. Mostly, I found it best to mirror respondents’ emotions, listening quietly if they were solemn or laughing along with them if they made a joke. Local cultural knowledge was useful in that I could recognise participants’ light and humorous retelling of violent social settings as a coping mechanism that it would be inappropriate for me to challenge. However, on a few occasions I deliberately intervened to diffuse an interviewee’s emotional response to an anecdote they were relating, particularly when feelings of shame arose and I felt a participant was being unduly hard on themselves. I made it clear that I greatly appreciated their willingness to reveal sensitive memories, but reminded them to view their actions in a wider context. It seemed an important part of building rapport to divert participants from becoming mired in negative emotions as they revisited difficult memories.

While I had spent some time before going into the field preparing to handle participants’ emotions, I had not foreseen the emotional impact of the study on me as a local researcher. I found myself interviewing both individuals who had engaged in political violence in the past and individuals who had suffered personally from this type of violence and this led to me experiencing a strong sense of moral confusion as I sought to make sense of their respective positions. This difficult mental state was undoubtedly exacerbated by the fact that the interviews also triggered some of my personal memories of growing up in a society where deadly violence was an ever-present possibility.

I have identified three negative emotions which presented challenges for me while I implemented this research project and which required me to reflect on how my personal feelings were impacting the research. Firstly, I recognised that fear had the potential to shape sampling. I was conscious that, unlike a researcher visiting from abroad, I could not escape the consequences of mistakes made in the field. I held a certain fear that if I angered individuals with paramilitary connections, this could have negative consequences for me and my family. I also found that, as someone who had been socialised to avoid certain people and areas for personal protection, it was emotionally challenging for me to visit certain parts of Belfast, or to interview individuals with past paramilitary involvement. My principal strategy for overcoming fear was to keep my attention on the research goal. I challenged myself to make contact with people I felt uncomfortable about if interviewing them could contribute towards that goal. I found that the act of writing reflexive research notes offered me a useful process for recognising and setting aside those fears that were not justified. Building rapport



with interviewees also reduced the chances of any respondent coming away from the interview feeling anger towards me.

Another emotion that presented challenges to the research process was aversion. I did not react with equal emotional equanimity to every respondent and to every element of their life stories. At times during interviews I experienced an uncomfortable physical reaction when I heard statements that I saw as supporting or excusing either violence or prejudice. At these times, I needed to make an effort to keep my facial expression neutral and attentive. Later, practising reflexivity allowed me to question to what extent my aversion to the use of violence has been shaped by the privilege of growing up at a relative distance from the violent events that engulfed certain communities in Northern Ireland. Indeed, I now recognise that any desire to judge certain actions is best set aside when acting as a researcher; it is more appropriate, and more useful to the goal of producing useful knowledge, to concentrate on understanding how each individual's unique life experiences have influenced their decisions.

Throughout the study, I also had to cope with personal feelings of sadness and powerlessness. The act of researching the life stories of individuals who had lived through a sustained period of political violence triggered some of my own memories of that time. When confronted directly with the traumatic experiences of others, I experienced a certain shame at my own powerlessness as a researcher to do anything more than just listen. In this case, I found that a process of debriefing, which I undertook by sharing my experience of the emotional impact of the research with a trusted other, helped me to manage my own emotions. Writing reflexive research memos also helped me to acknowledge and process the emotions that were evoked by encountering the lived experience of individuals harmed by violent conflict, even while I implemented a study focused on developing abstract theory.

A constant effort to be cognisant of the contentious nature of some topics and to stay sensitive to the emotional reactions of the people involved were important factors in eliciting honest and emotionally vulnerable accounts from participants. Looking ahead to the process of data analysis, the challenge will be to use my personal connection to the conflict as a means to understand the experiences of others on an empathetic level, without allowing personal feelings to distort the more detached and intellectual process through which findings are deduced. I have been left with an inner tension between my empathy for stories of victimhood and my attempt to understand the perpetrators of violence. While it is personally challenging, I hope that productive insights will emerge out of this tension which do not decontextualize decision-making but rather help to understand individuals' actions in the light of both their antecedents and their consequences.

Discussion and conclusions

My field experiences obviously arise from just a single case of local research, but while my experiences cannot be generalised to produce universal truths, some of the insights that can be derived from my experience are transferable to similar contexts. Challenges similar to the ones I encountered can be anticipated by local researchers in other contexts where the socio-psychological features of divided societies—the powerful impact of group identities on social interactions and the commonality of emotional reactions to conflict-related topics—will also be encountered. This study has drawn attention to some strategies that may be useful to local researchers in divided societies, but each researcher will need to adapt their strategies to take into account their personal identity and emotions and the particular context that their society provides.

Necessarily then, the context of Northern Ireland in 2014 and my own biography need to be accounted for before any conclusions can be drawn from the field experiences I have recounted in this article. The sustained reduction in violence in Northern Ireland since the



1990s, and the subsequent proliferation of grassroots peacebuilding initiatives, may have created a particular social moment where sensitive topics can be more freely discussed between people from different backgrounds. I would not have expected to have gained such useful data 20 years ago, and researchers in societies where the conflict is currently more intense may find that they must work harder to build trust across lines of identity division. At the same time, my years of experience as a peace worker meant that I was more accustomed to, and more comfortable than many in, building rapport across identity boundaries.

I have found that the process of reflexively analysing my experiences helped me to learn a number of lessons about the process of conducting field research as a local in a divided society. Local researchers can conduct robust, credible, and qualitative field research if they reflect carefully on their own social positions and personal subjectivities. A reflexive approach also helps the researcher to create effective strategies to build rapport within and beyond her own identity group. Therefore, field researchers should not be intimidated from attempting to engage with different participants due to their own social location. My case illustrates some hope for success when shared identities are made salient and when the researcher presents herself as non-threatening and willing to learn from participants. Rapport is ultimately built between two individuals, and while we should be aware of the impact of our identities in a cultural context, we must also be flexible and responsive to the uniqueness of each encounter. Furthermore, although identities and emotions present challenges to data collection in the field, it should be remembered that reflexive memos written during the field research process can also provide valuable data because they illustrate the lived experience of social interactions in a divided society.

Identities and emotions will inevitably affect the research process, and so it is vital that we should become aware of, and make explicit, our decisions as local researchers in a divided society; this reflexivity can in fact contribute to the development of more trustworthy and credible findings than those which would emerge from less transparent research processes. Self-awareness around our own emotions as researchers allows those emotions to be noted down in memos and then, potentially, incorporated as research data. This process can also help local researchers in divided societies to acknowledge and process their personal emotions so that these feelings do not negatively impact on research encounters or the attempt to analyse data in the most balanced ways possible. When we use a reflexive approach to consider how identities and emotions play out during our research encounters, we can also add rich, contextualised insights about the lived experience of social division to our pursuit of theoretical understanding. Hence, a reflexive approach to field research in divided societies can contribute to the development of academically rigorous knowledge about social conflict that is, at the same time, grounded in an empathetic understanding of violence and division as lived human realities.



Notes

1. Amour, "Practical, Theoretical, and Methodological Challenges"; Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research".
2. Amour, "Practical, Theoretical, and Methodological Challenges"; Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research"; Cammett, "Political Ethnography"; Dixit, "Field Research in Conflict Zones"; Eriksson, "Researching Community Restorative Justice"; Knox, "Establishing Research Legitimacy"; McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing"; Wood, "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research".
3. Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research"; Dixit, "Field Research in Conflict Zones"; Knox, "Establishing Research Legitimacy"; McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing".
4. Berger, "Now I See It"; Munkejord, "Methodological Emotional Reflexivity".
5. Finlay, "Reflexivity and the Dilemmas of Identification".
6. J. P. Lederach, *Building Peace*.
7. Bar-Tal, "From Intractable Conflict"; Bar-Tal et al., "Sociopsychological Analysis"; Kriesberg, "Nature, Dynamics and Phases"; J. P. Lederach, *Building Peace*.
8. Amour, "Practical, Theoretical, and Methodological Challenges"; Bolak, "Studying One's Own"; Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research"; Cammett, "Political Ethnography"; Dixit, "Field Research in Conflict Zones"; McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing"; Wood, "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research".
9. Knox, "Establishing Research Legitimacy"; Lundy, "Participation, Truth and Partiality".
10. Amour, "Practical, Theoretical, and Methodological Challenges"; Knox, "Establishing Research Legitimacy".
11. Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research"; Cammett, "Political Ethnography"; Dixit, "Field Research in Conflict Zones".
12. Arthur, "Elite Studies in a Paranocracy", 205.
13. Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research"; Lundy, "Participation, Truth and Partiality"; McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing".
14. Hermann, "The Impermeable Identity Wall"; McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing".
15. Arthur, "Elite Studies in a Paranocracy"; Finlay, "Reflexivity and the Dilemmas of Identification"; Hermann, "The Impermeable Identity Wall".
16. Berger, "Now I See It".
17. Bolak, "Studying One's Own"; Lundy, "Participation, Truth and Partiality"; Manohar, "Yes You're Tamil"; Oriola et al., "The Ambivalent Insider/Outsider".
18. Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research"; Knox, "Establishing Research Legitimacy"; Oriola et al., "The Ambivalent Insider/Outsider".
19. See J. Chatin, "*I Wish He Hadn't Told Me That*"; Coles et al., "A Qualitative Exploration".
20. McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing".
21. Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research".
22. See, for example, Knox, "Establishing Research Legitimacy"; McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing".
23. As demonstrated by Knox, "Establishing Research Legitimacy"; McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing".
24. Krefting, "Rigor in Qualitative Research"; C. Marshall et al., *Designing Qualitative Research*; Pillow, "Confession, Catharsis, or Cure?".
25. Munkejord, "Methodological Emotional Reflexivity".
26. Finlay, "Reflexivity and the Dilemmas of Identification"; Hermann, "The Impermeable Identity Wall".
27. Berger, "Now I See It".
28. Dowling, "Reflexivity".
29. Ibid.
30. Berger, "Now I See It"; Krefting, "Rigor in Qualitative Research"; Munkejord, "Methodological Emotional Reflexivity".
31. Stanley, "The Mother of Invention".



32. See Haraway, "Situated Knowledges".
33. Arthur, "Elite Studies in a Paranocracy"; McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing"; Brewer, "The Ethics of Ethical Debates".
34. Hermann, "The Impermeable Identity Wall"; Lundy, "Participation, Truth and Partiality"; McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing".
35. Berger, "Now I See It"; Bolak, "Studying One's Own"; Manohar, "Yes You're Tamil!".
36. Munkejord, "Methodological Emotional Reflexivity".
37. Chong, "Coping with Conflict"; Emerald et al., "Vulnerability and Emotions"; Pickering, "Undermining the Sanitized Account".
38. Munkejord, "Methodological Emotional Reflexivity".
39. See Emerald et al., "Vulnerability and Emotions".
40. Krefting, "Rigor in Qualitative Research".
41. Mac Ginty et al., "No War, No Peace"; P. Nolan, *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report*.
42. P. Nolan, Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report.
43. Mac Ginty et al., "No War, No Peace".
44. P. Nolan, Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report.
45. Lundy & McGovern, "Truth, Justice and Dealing with the Legacy of the Past"; P. Nolan, *Northern Ireland Peace Monitoring Report*.
46. K. Charmaz, Constructing Grounded Theory.
47. Nasie, M. et al., "Activists in Israeli Radical Peace Organizations".
48. Manohar, "Yes You're Tamil!"; McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing"; Oriola et al., "The Ambivalent Insider/Outsider".
49. Chong, "Coping with Conflict"; Manohar, "Yes You're Tamil!"; Oriola et al., "The Ambivalent Insider/Outsider".
50. Browne et al.; "Politically Sensitive Encounters".
51. McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing"; Oriola et al., "The Ambivalent Insider/Outsider".
52. Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research"; Oriola et al., "The Ambivalent Insider/Outsider".
53. Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research".
54. See Knox, "Establishing Research Legitimacy".
55. Ibid.
56. Amour, "Practical, Theoretical, and Methodological Challenges"; Oriola et al., "The Ambivalent Insider/Outsider"; Wood, "The Ethical Challenges of Field Research".
57. Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research".
58. Munkejord, "Methodological Emotional Reflexivity".
59. Nutov et al., "Feeling the Doctorate".
60. Chong, "Coping with Conflict".
61. McEvoy, "Elite Interviewing"; Robben, "The Politics of Truth".
62. Brewer, "Sensitivity as a Problem in Field Research"; J. Chatin, "*I Wish He Hadn't Told Me That*".
63. Coles et al., "A Qualitative Exploration"; Emerald et al., "Vulnerability and Emotions".
64. E. Dauphinée, *The Ethics of Researching War*; Pickering, "Undermining the Sanitized Account".



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BOOK REVIEW

Nick Cheesman and Nicholas Farrelly (Eds.)

Conflict in Myanmar: War, Politics, Religion

Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2016, ISBN 978-981-4695-86-2, 390p.

It is rare to find a text which can straddle the interrelated yet complex conflict dynamics of communalism, identity, inequality, and nationalism, and still offer in-depth, critical analysis. *Conflict in Myanmar* is a volume which does just this; its editors and contributors successfully address the significant complexities that affect field research in a country which has been ruled by military dictatorship for 50 years.

This collection of essays builds upon the already excellent “Myanmar/Burma Update” conference’s catalogue, and its editors set out to explore the re-emergence of politics, or “the political”, through an analysis of conflict in three key realms: war, politics, and religion. Nick Cheesman and Nicholas Farrelly organise the book’s 15 chapters into three sections which focus respectively on “War and Order”, “Elections and After”, and “Us and Them”.

The first section, “War and Order”, primarily unpacks and contests the dominant narratives used to rationalise organised violence within Myanmar. The authors posit that a proper understanding of the groups and motives involved in violence is inhibited by the tendency of elite and outside observers to frame disputes as expressions of traditional enmities. The contributors focus on the relationship between conflict and the unequal distribution of political power between groups in an analysis of the re-eruption of violence in the Kachin state in 2011 (Chapter Three); women’s participation in and support for political violence (Chapter Four); why some marginal groups were able to retain power amidst large nation-building projects (Chapter Five); and the decision by some communities to use landmines for protection (Chapter Six). A brief respite from this conflict-centric narrative is offered in Chapter Two which explores peace processes through an analysis of the Myanmar Peace Centre’s mediation efforts between armed groups.

The “Elections and After” section takes a turn away from organised violence to address conflicts that result from the electoral and legislative dynamics within the country. Chapters Seven and Eight unpack the 2015 election to show how local and national entities were instrumental in its success given the high level of political will for peace, transparency within electoral institutions, and compliance by the military (*Tatmadaw*). Chapters Nine and Ten continue the focus on the positive role that local and national factors can have in mitigating conflict. Than Tun advocates the reconceptualisation of the role of religion and ethnicity in Myanmar politics given the relative insignificance of Buddhist nationalism in the election, while Chit Win examines the role of the legislature (*Hluttaw*) in conflict resolution. Win attributes the legislature’s successes to its institutional characteristics which include the strength and role of its two speakers, its non-partisan approach, and its ability to question and oppose the executive. Finally, in Chapter Eleven, Melissa Crouch looks ahead to caution the government’s plans to reform international investment and business sectors. She argues



that these moves could have a negative impact on local communities given the susceptibility of laws to interpretations that legitimise violence.

The final section, which focuses on “Us and Them”, undertakes perhaps the volume’s most ambitious effort in its analysis of communal and religious conflict. Two primary themes are explored within its five chapters, as authors draw on the active construction and distancing of “the Other”, and, to a lesser extent, the historical influences that continue to shape and create divisions within Myanmar’s societies. Matt Schissler argues that growing anti-Muslim sentiment is historically significant in Myanmar and supplanted the Indophobia which was rife during British rule (Chapter 14). Gerard McCarthy makes the case that Buddhist charitable organisations (made influential by the authoritarian regime’s deficient welfare space) have steadily expanded their roles to become informal political institutions which formulate and manipulate politics, often to the detriment of Muslims (Chapter 15).

An appreciation of the social construction of “the Other” is perhaps essential to an understanding of conflict in Myanmar. Though this section is unsurprisingly dominated by a focus upon anti-Muslim sentiment, Helal Mohammed Khan (Chapter 16) broadens its scope by assessing Myanmar’s relationship with Bangladesh; he argues that tensions were caused and have been exacerbated by imperceptible elements of fear “rather than the tangible perception of threat” (p. 345). The construction of “the Other” is also explored by Schissler who situates Myanmar’s growing Islamophobia within the wider post-9/11 world and claims that this resentment has, in part, arisen out of an attempt to position Myanmar within the international community. Chapter 12 delves deeper into the factors that influence these constructions and draws on Gallie’s notion of democracy as a contestable concept;¹ Tamas Wells argues that the Bamar activists’ moralistic and collective conceptualisation of rights clashes strongly with the West’s emphasis on liberalism. In Chapter 13, Bridget Welsh and Kai -Ping Huang find evidence in the 2015 Myanmar Asian Barometer Survey that common ground can be found for communities to work together towards political reform despite the many divisions and tensions that exist between groups.

Conflict in Myanmar is heavily reliant on empirical data. Its 15 papers are grounded in fieldwork from surveys to ethnographic analysis, and it features a wealth of context-specific information; this leaves little room for scholars to reflect ideas back into the wider peace and conflict discourse. Ultimately, what emerges from the text is a snapshot of contemporary Myanmar. It explores a variety of tensions which shaped conflict between 2010 and 2016 while offering only a limited critique of emerging problems and solutions.

This volume does not offer major insights for those scholars who are seeking to anticipate how peace will progress in Myanmar, but, unlike many conference publications, it does not suffer from significant overlap in its arguments and its editors have brought together materials which successfully reflect the myriad complexities apparent in Myanmar’s modern-day politics. The book offers an exceptionally nuanced array of research that explores the social, economic, and ultimately political forces which shape Myanmar’s contemporary conflict. While this breadth may be problematic for readers new to Southeast Asian politics, it provides ample opportunity for further investigation, and the sheer variety of detailed new research it contains ensures that the volume makes a positive contribution to the field and will have value for both new and experienced scholars alike.

Ultimately *Conflict in Myanmar* highlights an unusual dichotomy which Cheesman aptly highlights in his concluding chapter. He reasserts the intrinsic relationship of conflict and politics and suggests that the snapshot of Myanmar presented in the volume points to the re-emergence of politics and “the political”.² The volume not only draws attention to a political space in which Myanmar’s people are contesting and shaping their country and institutions, but also shows how that space is threatened by those who are fearful of violent conflict: in



their attempts to mitigate it, they deny their enemies a political voice and potentially fuel further conflict instead.

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1. Gallie, W. B., "Essentially Contested Concepts", *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Vol. 56, 1956, p.167-198.
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Stephanie Phetsamay Stobbe

Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Laos: Perspective for Today's World

London: Routledge, 2015, ISBN 978 1 138 774766, 180p.

Over the last two decades, locally-driven peacebuilding activity has been promoted in many post-conflict societies as an alternative to mainstream liberal peacebuilding models. Yet, although local ownership has been extensively advocated and justified from normative and ethical perspectives, few empirical studies have been conducted on the nature of these local forms of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Many fundamental questions about local models have therefore remained virtually unexplored. These include questions about what traditional resources might be available for peaceful conflict resolution and how they might differ from Western peacebuilding models in terms of their forms, operational principles, and methods of facilitation. Questions need to be asked about whether traditional strategies are really more effective than existing liberal models, and about how grassroots actors in conflict-affected societies can develop their own peacebuilding models when they may be subject to substantial international intervention and influences.

Given that these questions have been neglected, Stephanie Phetsamay Stobbe's *Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in Laos* represents a welcome addition to the ongoing debate about local models of peacebuilding. As far as I am aware, this is the first publication that extensively describes and analyses traditional or indigenous forms of conflict resolution in Laos. Drawing on the author's own experience as well as primary data collected during Phetsamay Stobbe's field research, this book provides a significant amount of original data that has not yet been disseminated in published form.

The volume consists of two distinct sections. The first five chapters describe the concepts, forms, procedures, and key actors involved in traditional modes of conflict resolution in local areas of Laos. An overview of the relevant social, cultural, and historical backgrounds is provided in Chapter One. Chapter Two then explains the significance of two metaphorical concepts—*face* and *eyes*—which underpin how conflicts (*bunha*) are dealt with in Laos. Whereas “*face*” denotes a person’s public self-image, “*eyes*” express inner shame or guilt. It becomes clear that the various forms of conflict resolution used in Laos are focused on ensuring that people do not lose either face or eyes.

The volume’s third and fourth chapters explain the specific forms and procedures of Lao conflict resolution. *Op-lom* is described as a type of dialogue which offers “a place for educating, advising, talking, discussing, questioning, [and] clarifying” (p. 101) things that relate to the conflict under review, and it emerges as the fundamental form of the Lao conflict resolution system. The system consists of five levels of mediation that are facilitated at different levels by parents and relatives, community elders, village leaders, *Neoy Gai Geer* (an official mediation committee), and the courts. Two traditional rituals are also used to celebrate and reconfirm reconciliation between individuals, families, or communities. *Soukhouan* is a public ceremony which involves the participation of a large number of families, relatives, and community residents, whereas *soumma* is a smaller, private, and family-oriented ritual. In Chapter Five, Phetsamay Stobbe describes how these conflict resolution practices are applied in cross-cultural contexts; she also notes that many microcultures which contribute to the creation of mutual respect between different cultural groups are being developed under existing conflict resolution mechanisms like *soukhouan*.

The highly interesting and insightful discussions in Section One clarify the ways in which key features of the Laotian conflict resolution system are distinct from liberal forms of mediation in Western societies; the book also shows how these distinctive strategies are being utilised to achieve local-level conflict resolution. Phetsamay Stobbe’s discussion about avoidance as a means for conflict resolution is particularly insightful. In many previous discussions, conflict avoidance has gone unrecognised as a type of “action” or has featured in negative ways.



Here, the author asserts that avoidance is a “powerful force” in the Lao context because it helps prevent any “further loss of face and eyes” and helps maintain “social harmony” (p. 39).

The volume’s final two chapters, which form Section Two, attempt to re-examine and understand Lao conflict resolution mechanisms by drawing on comparative and theoretical perspectives. Whereas Chapter Six revisits the features of Laos’ conflict resolution systems by redefining them as bottom-up initiatives generated from the grassroots, Chapter Seven highlights ten tenets or virtues that enable the Lao people to facilitate more effective conflict resolution processes. These chapters are slightly less effective than earlier ones for several reasons. The comparative analysis in Chapter Six could have been presented in a slightly more organised way, for example. The author compares post-conflict social conditions in Laos and Lebanon in order to make the case that sustainable and consolidated peace can best be facilitated by grass-roots actors in a conflict-affected society, but she fails to offer any substantial explanation as to how or why grass-roots groups can facilitate such mechanisms more effectively than other groups. The book also fails to identify the key factors that enable Lao people to develop bottom-up initiatives for conflict resolution while their counterparts in the Lebanon struggle to do the same. Although highly interesting examples are introduced that show how indigenous traditions are being used for conflict resolution in New Zealand and Canada, it is not made clear what these case studies can teach us about Laos or vice versa.

Chapter Seven develops its arguments by assuming that the Lao conflict resolution mechanism proves that a local, community-oriented conflict resolution system can be both robust and resilient and can make a solid contribution to consolidating peace in conflict-affected societies. However, no substantial evidence is provided to show that Laotian society has become more peaceful as a result of the conflict resolution systems that exist in that country. The value of this new publication is not compromised by these minor issues, however.

An outstanding feature of Phetsamay Stobbe’s volume is its originality. It presents many features of the Laotian conflict resolution system that have not previously been analysed by academics. These include the country’s multi-layered local mediation structure, the constructive roles it gives to biased mediation and non-verbal forms of conflict resolution, and the arbitral nature of mediators’ roles. The volume provides invaluable data about Laotian cultural resources and practices, and it will also serve as an important foundation for further comparative studies. Conflict resolution processes in other Indo-Chinese countries like Cambodia, Myanmar, and Thailand share many similarities and precepts with those outlined here, but there are significant differences in the detail of their forms and procedures which might be fruitfully explored further.

Another strength of this volume is the effective presentation of the rich data that Phetsamay Stobbe has collected. The cultural nuances that lie behind different forms and rituals of conflict resolution are often difficult to explain logically, and many researchers struggle to capture important subtleties. This volume successfully overcomes many of the limitations of academic studies by drawing on real examples and folktales from local communities in Laos. The book is highly effective in the way it explores concepts by first presenting a story or real example of a dispute, then analysing relevant features of the Laotian conflict resolution process, and finally explaining how such features are reflected in the example. A highly valuable body of research is presented here in clear and insightful ways, and Phetsamay Stobbe’s book is sure to be widely used as a significant resource for both academics and practitioners in the field of conflict resolution.

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Isak Svensson

International Mediation Bias and Peacemaking: Taking Sides in Civil War

Abingdon: Routledge, 2015, ISBN 978 0 415 66074 7, 158p.

Given that limited attention has been given to the roles and effectiveness of biased mediators in civil wars, Professor Isak Svensson's latest book represents a powerful attempt to deepen understanding of this topic through solid theoretical and empirical observation. As a student of international mediation, I was attracted to *International Mediation Bias and Peacemaking: Taking Siders in Civil War* for two reasons. Firstly, I was interested to learn why it is important to understand the roles and functions of biased mediators in armed conflicts and peace processes. Secondly, I wanted to gain a comparative understanding of whether biased or unbiased mediators are more effective and useful in conflict mediation processes. This book is genuinely enlightening regarding both of these concerns.

Svensson sets out to challenge the conventional wisdom that civil war mediators should be neutral if they are to be effective in their roles. In particular, this book challenges three apparently established facts about international mediation. Firstly, it challenges the established concepts and definitions of mediation success. Svensson argues that previous conceptualisations of mediation success are characterised by three major problems: a lack of clarity around what could, or should, be achieved by mediators which leads to "unmet expectations"; a lack of clarity around how sustainable peace can be achieved; and a tendency to overlook the quality of outcomes. Against this backdrop, the author develops an alternative proposal that would involve mediation success being measured by whether or not a "peace institution" emerges from the content of a peace agreement. Biased mediators, as Svensson illustrates throughout this book, are highly effective in creating peace institutions.

Svensson questions the effectiveness of unbiased mediators and argues that, too often, the primary motivation of an unbiased mediator is to end the war rather than to produce a high-quality peace agreement. He suggests that unbiased mediators are often at their most useful when they address the side issues that affect a mediation process rather than its main concerns. He also argues that unbiased mediators bring few resources to the mediation process.

Finally, this book provides solid justifications for why biased mediators are more effective than unbiased ones. Svensson sets out to prove that "biased mediators are more effective peacemakers since they have leverage over the parties, can deliver their side, possess private information and overcome rebel-sided and government-sided commitment problems" (p. 4).

The book makes a positive case that biased mediators are more effective than their unbiased counterparts, and its core argument is that biased mediators are highly effective in creating "peace institutions" as part of peace agreements. Svensson uses the term "peace institution" to refer to the creation of security guarantees as well as mechanisms for power-sharing and justice. Biased mediators are shown to contribute to the sustainability of peace institutions even though they have no significant role in their effective implementation; they are also credited with making the content of a peace agreement reasonably fair and advantageous for both parties. Svensson goes on to argue that, even if biased mediators favour one party over another, their attempts are often focused on producing sustainable outcomes for a peace process. He suggests that a coalition of government-biased and rebel-biased mediators can function effectively in the mediation process and help to produce better outcomes for all parties involved.

This book offers a solid combination of theory and empirical observation. The first three chapters set out the theoretical basis for Svensson's discussion, and each of the subsequent



seven chapters is based on empirical evidence and highlights a specific theme related to institutional arrangements for peace. These chapters demonstrate why biased mediators are effective in achieving a particular outcome in peace negotiations through mediation; the first is focused on a quantitative study while the rest are presented as case studies of either single or multiple cases. Svensson is therefore able to explore his arguments regarding the effectiveness of biased mediators in relation to empirical evidence in both qualitative and quantitative forms.

This book provides a micro-analysis of the role of biased mediators, usefully distinguishing between government-biased and rebel-biased, as well as source-biased and content-biased, mediators. Svensson describes their usefulness and effectiveness in various conflict settings and pays particular attention to their roles in crafting the content of peace agreements.

Although the core objective of this book is to demonstrate the effectiveness of biased mediators in helping parties to craft a high-quality peace agreement, it also draws attention both to the roles that unbiased mediators play in resolving internal armed conflicts around the world and to their limitations in conflict resolution processes. Svensson stresses that unbiased mediators have an important role to play in conflict mediation processes and acknowledges the contributions they can make. He also shows that, in some exceptional cases, unbiased mediators have been effective in producing high-quality peace agreements which provide peace institutions. Svensson uses as an example Martti Ahtisaari's role in mediating the conflict between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh movement (GAM). Svensson makes recommendations to unbiased mediators regarding their limits and effectiveness in the peace process by establishing a four-part model for peacemaking that involves unbiased mediators (See p. 107). His model requires them to (a) act as biased mediators do, (b) transform external supporters into biased mediators, (c) coordinate and collaborate with biased mediators, and (d) provide a framework to accommodate differently biased mediators.

This book provides an overview of criticisms against the usefulness of biased mediators in mediation processes. Svensson explains why these criticisms are not valid using multiple methods and approaches, and the book is methodologically very sound. In general, he uses four different approaches to explain his thoughts and arguments on the issue related to biased mediation. Firstly, he provides a concrete theoretical explanation of the topic and a review of the existing mediation literature, as well as his own prior research on biased mediation. Secondly, he provides a quantitative analysis of peace agreements using the Terms of Peace Agreements Data (TOPAD) from the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP). Thirdly, Svensson provides in-depth analysis of case studies in order to assess specific aspects of biased mediation. Finally, he adopts a comparative study method to demonstrate how biased mediators outperform unbiased mediators.

Overall, this book makes a novel contribution to the field of mediation research. Svensson concludes that, whether they are biased or unbiased, mediators all have their own limitations as they work to resolve and find durable solutions to conflicts. He concludes that while unbiased mediators are good at ending violent conflicts but often produce low-quality peace agreements, biased mediators are often significantly better at creating effective peace institutions as part of the content of the peace agreements they help to broker.

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Helen Young, Lisa Goldman (Eds.)

Livelihoods, Natural Resources, and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2015, ISBN 978 1 84971 233 0, 518p.

Links between livelihood insecurity, resource scarcity, and warfare have been the subject of academic controversy for several decades. By comparison, little attention has been paid to the role of livelihoods and natural resources in sustaining and strengthening post-conflict peacebuilding efforts. *Livelihoods, Natural Resources, and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding* is a new volume which fills this gap by examining the opportunities and challenges created by post-conflict livelihood and natural resource management worldwide.

The book, edited by Helen Young and Lisa Goldman, is one of a series of six published by Earthscan on issues related to post-conflict peacebuilding and natural resource management. It is an outcome of a joint research programme by the Environmental Law Institute, the UN Environment Programme, the University of Tokyo, and McGill University. The book brings together case studies from an impressive group of contributors in order to explore the opportunities and challenges for peacebuilding that emerge from the use of natural resource-based livelihoods. The case studies, written by over 30 highly diverse practitioners, academics, and experts, cover a geographically wide range of over 20 post-conflict regions worldwide.

In the introductory chapter, the editors argue that a range of factors make it increasingly important for policy debates to focus on the sustainable management of livelihoods. These factors, which are explored in the case studies that follow, include worldwide population growth, the projected consequences of global climate changes, and the growing proportion of rural and even urban populations that are currently dependent on natural resources. The authors argue that livelihoods, which are essential to human needs, can be leveraged to enhance economic recovery and promote peace. The book is divided into four parts with each section contributing to an understanding of the topic's importance from a different perspective.

The chapters in Part One reflect on peacebuilding activities that connect natural resources and livelihoods in conflict-torn regions. Across the case studies in this section, authors argue for the importance of addressing the needs of the most vulnerable populations (often rural) in peacebuilding processes. Post-war situations offer a window of opportunity in which structural inequalities can be addressed as new sustainable livelihoods are created and supported. Different authors show how the neglect of sustainable livelihoods for rural populations has helped to foster contemporary and future conflicts in Afghanistan, Cambodia, and Colombia, as well as in the Karimojong Cluster of Kenya and Uganda.

Innovative approaches to livelihoods are the subject of Part Two which reflects on the opportunities and challenges that emerge from approaches that include the development of transboundary protected areas, ecotourism, youth programmes, and alternative trade chains among other initiatives. Every case study here exemplifies an attempt to recover lost livelihoods after a conflict in order to avoid its endurance or prolongation. The case studies make clear that the re-integration of ex-combatants into society after a conflict represents a key opportunity. War-time skills, such as tracking and remaining self-sufficient in the bush, can be translated into the skills needed for surveying park resources and controlling poaching, for example. When ex-combatants are given work opportunities, they can be incentivised to integrate into a peaceful economy and so contribute to fostering national economic development. The problem of consent-building emerges as the major challenge to the development of innovative livelihood approaches because it is very difficult to persuade stakeholders with different priorities to act jointly on projects. Once a bridge of understanding is built, however, it can prevent a re-occurrence of conflict.



The five chapters in Part Three demonstrate that the development of new governmental structures that focus on natural resources can promote livelihoods, strengthen local economies, and hence contribute to lasting peace. In the aftermath of a conflict, effective institutions and policies are mostly absent. The authors argue that policies and laws on sustainable resource management should be incorporated into governmental structures if a society is to successfully transition from a conflict economy to a peaceful one. Examples of post-conflict reconstruction from Japan, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Mindanao, and Somalia show how effective strategies can encourage economic growth and livelihood creation through institution- and capacity-building, as well as through policy development.

In the book's final chapter, the editors focus on lessons learnt, and their concluding analysis sketches ideas that can be used across the globe in the future. In particular, they address the use of livelihood analyses as a step towards developing a country's specific reconstruction strategy after a conflict is settled. They also consider whether this kind of an assessment can help the wider national economy to profit from livelihood production systems. The editors claim that livelihood approaches should be central to the discourses of development and poverty reduction, which look set to remain prominent in contemporary and future global politics.

The book contributes to the current debate on why and how the natural environment needs to be included in efforts to restore and sustain peace in war-torn areas. The diversity of the case studies in this volume gives readers opportunities to gain a global overview of the topic as well as to focus on one post-conflict region in particular. There is no core argument that connects each chapter. Instead, the book bundles case studies that relate to similar topics, and the remarkably wide range of case studies it offers allow readers to trace similarities between them. For example, it becomes clear that pastoralists in Kenya and Uganda face similar challenges to pastoralists in Afghanistan: all are being forced to move to foreign lands, and this mobility fosters regional conflict that harms local livelihoods substantially. The collection of these diverse case studies gives the reader the opportunity to enhance their understanding of worldwide problems concerning livelihoods, and the book looks set to become a valuable starting point for further research.

Controversy arises in the book's various discussions about both the prominent place that institution-building has in peacebuilding initiatives and the problematic nature of liberal institutionalism itself. Institution-building in post-conflict states is often encouraged or even accomplished by interventions from the countries of the Global North which justify the rationality of their interventions through recourse to their own understanding of state formation. To reproduce this understanding is to emphasise governmental structures and de-emphasise the importance of local actors in the institution-building process. If the critical discussion of institutionalism was embedded in peacebuilding processes, this could help to ward off misunderstandings that generate negative consequences. The book reveals the highly interesting finding that livelihood approaches have been used for decades but have only more recently been adapted to a wide range of humanitarian, conflict, and post-conflict settings thanks to an increasing awareness of the issues surrounding sustainable development and the management of natural resources. Even where livelihood approaches were not an explicit intervention's goal, they have often contributed substantially to peacebuilding efforts.

In the book's final pages, Young and Goldman focus on conflict analysis and assessment technologies. They argue for a comprehensive strategy that will incorporate livelihood approaches from the beginning of the process. The book would have benefitted from more thoughts on how such a strategy could work and how it might best be developed, monitored, and evaluated. Insights on these key issues are necessary if effective policy is to be formulated. Despite the book's many insights, the book does not resolve the problematic



question that dogs this field of research, that is the question as to why certain initiatives or projects work in some regions but fail in others. More research is needed into the transferability of livelihood peacebuilding initiatives so that they can be successfully implemented elsewhere. A clear understanding of the broader nexus of environment and peace would help in the formulation of this kind of work at governmental or policy level. The book's multifaceted case studies, which shape each of the book's chapters, are nevertheless beneficial in that they enable readers to gain a basic understanding of key issues and can serve as key points of departure for future research.

This edited collection can be highly recommended to anyone who is interested in learning about examples of livelihood and environmental approaches to peacebuilding worldwide. *Livelihoods, Natural Resources, and Post-Conflict Peacebuilding* fills a gap in the literature and deserves to be read by academics and practitioners alike.

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