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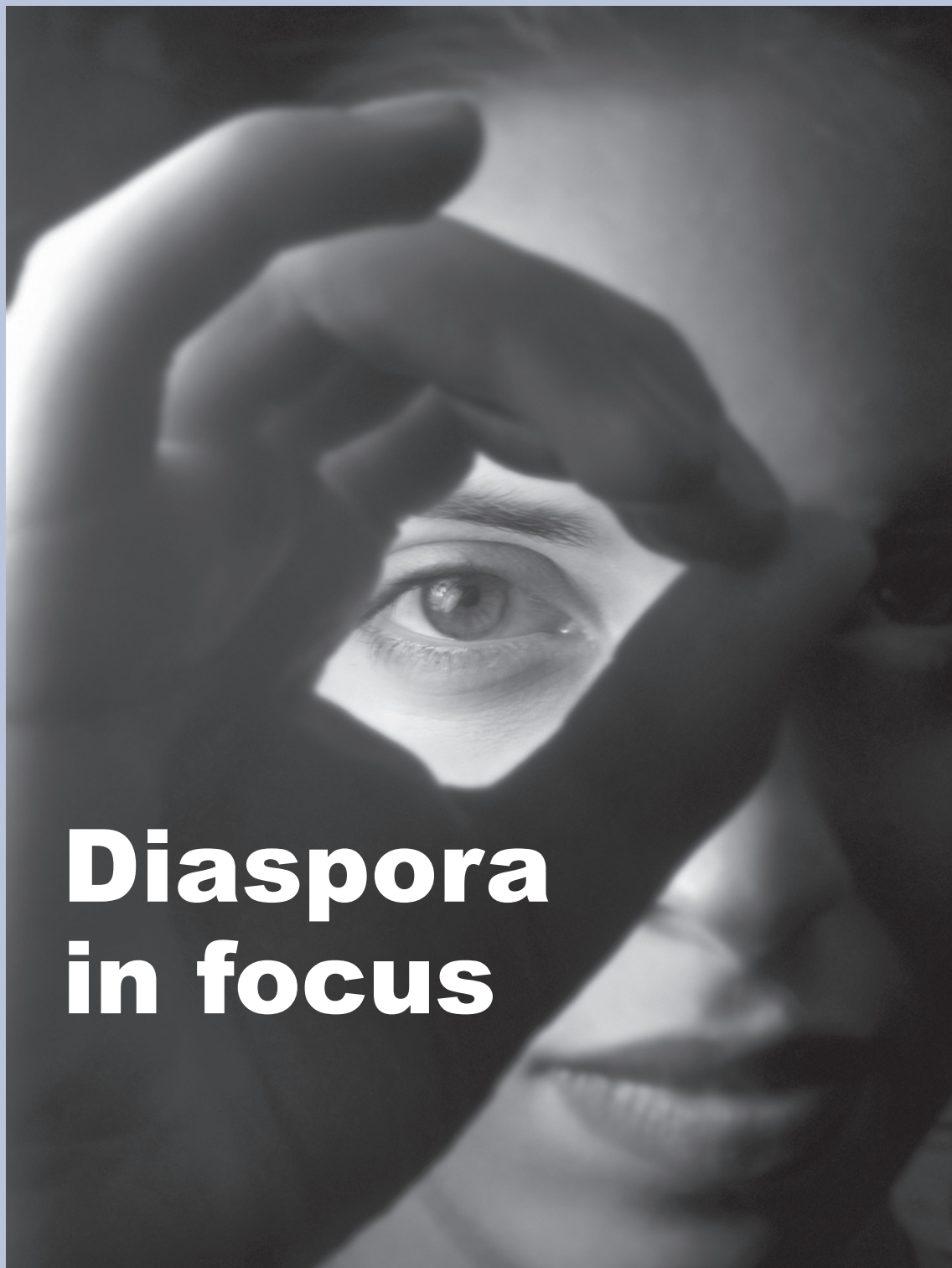
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New Routes

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**Diaspora
in focus**

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Peacebuilders in Diaspora

To be sown out over the whole world – a definition of the word Diaspora? Yes, if you look at the literal origin of this Greek word, 'speiro' means to sow and 'dia' over. But think of Jews, Armenians, Kurds, Palestinians and Sudanese, just to mention a few examples, and history, past and present, tells us that this 'sowing out' is often connected with violence and brutality, a displacement being forced on certain groups or peoples.

People living in Diaspora often have a close relation with their country of origin, both with friends and relatives and with tradition, culture and politics. The socio-political roles of Diaspora communities for peacebuilding and rehabilitation deserves to be further explored, says Wolfram Zunzer in his article. In her study of the Palestinian Diaspora in Europe, Margret Johannsen also sees the need for more research on this issue.

Yacob Tesfai in his article points to the fact that migration has often been instrumental in reducing poverty, but on the negative side bears the guilt of the serious brain drain of the African continent.

Basil NS Nyama and Shane Quinn reflect on the peace agreements in Sudan and Somalia, respectively, both examples of the vital importance of Diaspora for promoting peace and reconciliation.

A country still struggling to keep the peace process alive is the Democratic Republic of Congo. The peace agreement was not realistic and did not allow time for sufficient consultations with communities, says Hans Romkema in his article.

Hundreds of millions of people live in Diaspora over the world. Whether they have any intentions to return to their country or not, many of them play a key role in ongoing peace processes. There is much more to be learnt about their potential. Here we give a few examples from a field of great importance and interest for future peacebuilding.

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Potential peace actors outside their home land

Over the last ten years immigrants to many Western countries have come from countries with protracted civil wars and have thus had to apply for refugee or asylum status. A crucial question is, then, to what extent these groups can contribute to supporting conflict transformation in their countries of origin. The author points out that the socio-political roles of Diaspora communities for peacebuilding and rehabilitation in their home countries need to be further explored and discussed.

According to the Global Conflict Panorama 2003 by Heidelberg Institute on International Conflict Research, more than 90 percent of the ongoing violent conflicts in the world are intra-state wars, many of which produce large numbers of refugees regionally and internationally. In many cases, external conflict transformation initiatives exist with little prominence in the international public arena. A number of dialogue and problem-solving interventions by NGOs, INGOs, political foundations and development agencies have frequently emerged. These peacebuilding initiatives by non-state actors have a less visible impact than military approaches to peacekeeping in the Western world.

The connection between civil conflict transformation initiatives in conflicts which are politically below the external (UN) intervention level and Diaspora groups needs to be further explored. The underlying assumption is that there is a potential to make better use of the capacities of specific Diaspora communities for supporting conflict transformation in their home countries.

Policy-making and social research in Western industrialized countries have mostly focussed on the impacts of refugees on their societies, on asylum and on ways of strengthening integration in the host countries. Given this background, there is some empirical knowledge on economic migrants, but very little data are available on the role, attitudes and activities of refugees and asylum seekers vis-à-vis host and home countries.

One aim of this document is to develop the concept of Diaspora as a research approach and bridge-building model. The following definition of Diaspora seems especially suited for application in empirical research and policy: "(...) that segment of people living outside the home land".¹

In Germany, the majority of Diaspora communities with protracted wars in their home countries arrived as refugees/asylum seekers. The general pattern of war at home as a major factor for being accepted into the EU and an unclear residence status for a medium time-frame seem to be the common situation for them in most European countries. The key question

is this: To what extent can they contribute politically and economically to their countries of origin? It is crucial to consider how and to what extent economic migrants and involuntary migrants with strong connections to their home country can contribute to peacebuilding, post-conflict reconstruction and, in the longer run, socio-economic development.

Different conflict situations

Cyprus

The population of Cyprus consists of approximately 80 percent Greeks and 18 percent Turks. The island witnessed cycles of civilian unrest between 1963 and 1974. The territory was divided after military intervention by the Turkish army in 1974.

As many as 100,000 Cypriots either of Greek or Turkish origin have settled in London. It is remarkable to note that divisive politics at home have not resulted in more social divisions abroad. If differences of opinion exist, both sides have learned to live together. Whether they speak Greek or Turkish, they are Cypriots first. Both groups in London want to see the island of their origins reunified.

There have been many activities in the past which have influenced the political process in Cyprus. With regard to the recent defeat in a referendum amongst Greek Cypriots of the peace proposal which was worked out by all stakeholders and facilitated by the UN and the EU, one can assume that the "near Diaspora" of Greek Cypriots living in Greece has played a conservative role that has maintained the status quo. But there have been many interesting cases of pro-active Diaspora involvement over recent years, which have not attracted as much media



For some people living in Diaspora, the new country offers them a freedom from oppression and poverty that outweighs the bonds with their homeland. Photo: Peter Williams/Photo Oikoumene

coverage as the interim cessation of the diplomatic peace initiative.

One example is the German-Cypriot Forum, which was actively involved in lobby work on the level of the German and European Parliaments to sustain the dynamic of the peace-building efforts in the last couple of

years. Many initiatives were launched by the Cypriot Diaspora communities to internationalize and Europeanize all conflict resolution attempts through lobbying and gate-keeping.

Palestine

Another case is the Palestine Diaspora,

which is part and parcel of the Middle East conflict with Israel and Palestine at its heart. Changing military offensives and affiliations amongst armed groups over the last 40 years as well as a completely deteriorated socio-economic situation in the Palestinian areas have prompted waves of Palestinians to leave for neighbouring Arab countries such as Lebanon, Jordan and Syria, and have created long-distance communities living in the US and in European countries such as England, France and Germany. The socio-economic situation of some of the communities is quite bad and relations between, for example, groups in Lebanon and other groups living in Western countries have deteriorated.

Given the protracted struggle between Israelis and Palestinians the prospects of mobilizing Palestinians abroad to become a more pro-active factor in peacebuilding are rather unlikely. As fundamentalists have established strong positions in many parts of the home country and in Diaspora communities, a more realistic goal seems to be to support liberal forces in sustaining their position in the Diaspora communities.

Somalia

The case of Somalia is particularly interesting, as remittances are of very high economic importance domestically, and much of the expertise and resources for sustaining the ongoing peace process come from the Diaspora communities in the West². After the Siad Barre regime was ousted in January 1991, factional fighting and civil war followed for twelve years in Somalia. In the same year, Northern clans declared an independent Republic of Somaliland. Although not recognized by any government, this entity has maintained a stable existence, aided by the overwhelming dominance of a ruling clan and economic infrastructure left behind by British, Russian, and American assistance programmes.

Beginning in 1993, a two-year UN humanitarian effort was able to alleviate

famine conditions, but when the UN withdrew in 1995, order still had not been restored. Numerous warlords and factions were still fighting for control of Mogadishu and the other Southern regions. The mandate of the Transitional National Government, created in August 2000, expired in August 2003 and a new interim government was created at the 14th round of peace talks in Nairobi, Kenya.³

Many Somali participants at the conference came from Western Diaspora communities in Australia, Canada, England, Italy and the USA. All factions brought their experts from the Diaspora to advise them politically on all issues on the agenda, from questions of power-sharing to approaches to rural development.

There is a great gap between first generation refugees and second generation migrants: While the first generation is still highly politicized and interested in Somali affairs, the second generation has hardly any interest in even visiting the country. Yet the Diaspora is currently a very important political factor, providing expertise to all factions and functioning as a bridge to the international actors supporting the peace process.

Afghanistan

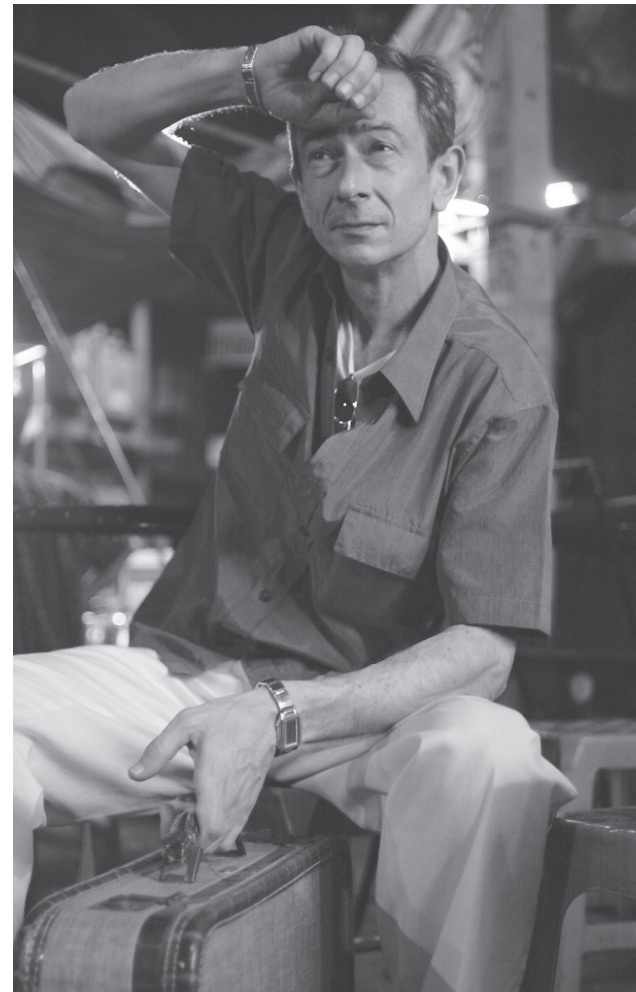
In Afghanistan, violent conflicts have created a huge Diaspora of refugees since the late 1970s. Most people left during the fighting between the Mujaheddin and the Soviet-backed Kabul regime, but the exodus continued as the fighting among the Mujaheddin groups increased. Initially, most Afghans went to neighbouring countries such as Iran and Pakistan. The Diaspora was originally dominated by various Mujaheddin groups, which took control in Afghanistan after the departure of the Soviet forces and the fall of the Soviet-backed regime in 1992.

Similarly, the Taliban later emerged from the Afghan Diaspora in Pakistan, sweeping away the split Mujaheddin groups and controlling the country

from 1996 until late 2001. Since 2002, a large-scale return has taken place, with millions returning to Afghanistan, especially from Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan.

Given this situation, and excluding the remaining Afghans in neighbouring countries, attention must therefore focus on the post-9/11 Western-based Afghan Diaspora communities. Germany has the largest Afghan Diaspora community in Europe with 100,000 persons. From all major Afghan Diaspora communities, considerable contributions have been made to peacebuilding and reconstruction in Afghanistan, and key politically influential figures amongst them were involved in the talks on the transitional government that took place in Bonn. At the talks at the end of 2001, four important political factions or groupings from Afghanistan and abroad were present, although they did not represent all of the highly differentiated worldwide Afghan Diaspora.

Since 2002, there have been at least four initiatives by international organizations for involving Diaspora members. Firstly, a trust fund was set up by the World Bank, aimed at hiring professional expatriate trainers and experts and providing money for their salaries. Major delays arose as the government of Afghanistan could not agree on usage in the first instance. Secondly, the World Bank Afghanistan Directory of Expertise facilitates the identification of Afghan professionals, as well as non-Afghan professionals, to be employed in the reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Thirdly, there is a programme run by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), called Return of Qualified Afghans. The latter only provides personal information on candidates, and IOM staff do the 'matching' themselves. Fourthly, a discussion forum by the Swiss Peace Foundation has been co-organizing a process of Afghan civil society and Diaspora involvement since the Petersberg Talks, also using Internet fora for fostering dialogue amongst civil



A time of waiting – for what? The uncertainty of the future puts a heavy pressure on many refugees and displaced persons.

Photo: Christoph Wilhelm/Pressens Bild

society members, government agencies and the international community.

Relations between returnees and the Afghans who stayed in the country during the years of violent conflict are not necessarily easy and in the worst case may form yet another fault line in Afghanistan's fractious society. There is a risk of significant tensions if those who have not lived in Afghanistan for decades are perceived as dominating the debates and decisions about reconstruction.

The Diaspora played a significant political role in organizing a peaceful transition after the Nato military intervention in 2001–2002. Diaspora members played an important role during the Petersberg Talks, in the ongoing Bonn process of political

transition, and as connectors between the international community, the national administrations, international civil society and the private sector.

In terms of transforming major conflict lines in Afghanistan, the most significant potential of the Afghans living abroad is the possible increase in engagement – for example on a time-limited basis – by those who have been educated in Western countries and who feel committed to the principles of multipartiality and democratic dialogue to solve the country's political, social and economic problems.

Furthermore, the Diaspora plays an important economic role through remittances transferred through the Hawala system. The economic importance of the Diaspora communities was recognized by the international community and the Afghanistan transitional government from an early stage on. What remains under-researched is the question whether the transfer of funds from the Diaspora has a conflict-increasing impact or de-escalating effect. Without this knowledge, it is literally impossible to prevent increasing socio-economic inequalities which may result in greater regional conflict. In particular, there is a danger that monetary and human resource contributions from the Diaspora communities may only be felt in Kabul, reinforcing the long-entrenched division of Afghanistan into “Kabul” and “the rest of the country”.

Diaspora as bridgebuilders

What these conflicts – with the exception of Afghanistan, but including the conflict in Sri Lanka – have in common is that they are politically below the external (UN) intervention level, have Diaspora groups living in various host countries, and that some kind of civil conflict transformation initiative is in place. Beyond these factors, there seems to be a somewhat generic pattern in the relationship between violent struggles for independence, the emergence of Diaspora communities and initiatives for civil conflict transformation.

Political groups striving for self-determination are in an asymmetrical power situation. The war with the government or governments regularly produces refugees and other migrants. The violent conflict itself and subsequent effects such as human rights abuses, increasing crime rates and poverty are central factors driving migrants or refugees from their home⁴. Given a relatively swift improvement in living conditions for some of them abroad, there is potential for strengthening civil, cultural and military aspects of the civil war party itself and its fellow citizens in the home country. Taken together, this improves their strategic situation vis-à-vis the respective state and may result in the political and military escalation of the violent conflict.

Given the overlap of interests in processes of globalization, renewed security concerns since 9/11, and institutions in the international system based on democratic values, this more often than not triggers diplomatic and civilian efforts to find a negotiated settlement. At the same time, Diaspora communities are perceived as a cultural and economic challenge to host countries that needs to be regulated by increasingly strict immigration policies. A more constructive approach would be to perceive and work with the socio-economic, cultural and political potentials of Diaspora communities to build functional bridges and thus create win-win situations both for host and home societies. If and to what extent a Diaspora community can be empowered to play the role of a proactive peacebuilder depends at least on these factors:

- geographical distribution and self-organization structures of Diaspora communities in the host country,
- legal status and living conditions in the host country,
- political attitudes towards the conflict at home and shared identity: common ground vs. unbridgeable differences,
- motivation and capabilities for

constructive engagement in the home country,

- access to key political actors and resources at home and abroad.

What has not been adequately explored so far is the question how a more active bridge-building role of Diaspora groups and key individuals in the peace processes and reconstruction efforts in their home countries could be encouraged by national and international organizations in Europe and North America. This is certainly not a functionalistic or short-term endeavour. The more politically prominent the tasks taken over in the political arena in the home country, the more risks are associated with the identification and time-limited support for the employment of experts from the Diaspora in their home countries, for example. Yet only reasonable political progress in states with protracted conflicts can create governance structures which are able to ensure that national and international development efforts are not immediately reversed by recurrent cycles of civil war.

Wolfram Zunzer
Abbreviated and edited
by *Kristina Lundqvist*

*This article is an excerpt from the report *Diaspora Communities and Civil Conflict Transformation* by Wolfram Zunzer, Berghof Occasional Paper Nr. 26, 2004, Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.*

¹ Safran, William (1989): *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return*, in *Diaspora* 1.1.1989

² Koser, Khalid and Van Hear, Nicholas (2003): *Asylum Migration and Implications for Countries of Origin*, p. 9, in: United Nations University / WIDER Discussion Paper No. 2003/20, Helsinki.

³ In late autumn 2004 a new Somali government was elected, but because of the unstable situation in the country, it is, so far, based in Nairobi (Editor's comment).

⁴ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies/Walter, Jonathan (eds.) (2003), p. 114: *World Disaster Report – Focus on Ethics in Aid*, Geneva

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African Diaspora: Reducing poverty - worsening brain drain

Hard times have always forced people to search for a better life in new places. In their new surrounding many members of the Diaspora are able to contribute to a better living standard among those who stay behind in their homeland. This is true for the African continent, as well as for other regions.

A problem is, however, the mass of people who spend a lot of money to go abroad to get a high education. Many of them stay in the new country and thus, the cost and effort of their education is never paid back to the country that sent them out. Powerful measures are needed to address this issue, which will otherwise continue to drain the continent of money and professional workers.

History shows unequivocally that migration has been instrumental in reducing poverty. Whenever people were threatened by famines, hunger or poverty, they left their homelands to seek their fortunes in other parts of the world. Millions of people traversed oceans and great distances in search of the ideal place that responded to their human needs. In this manner, they forged themselves better lives and created better conditions for themselves and their offspring. In some cases, they even established themselves and benefited their relatives and their kinsfolk who remained in their homeland. One of the clear examples of massive migration was the case of Europe in the nineteenth century.

In the 1800's, the Rev. Thomas Robert Malthus shocked the British intelligentsia through his unusually

negative prediction of the future. He argued that the future may turn out to be grim in view of some developments. He brought forward the argument that at a certain stage the earth may not be able to feed the population which depends for its livelihood on it. The population is growing by leaps and bounds, noted Malthus. But the earth does not reproduce itself in the same measure. Therefore, if the population continues to grow, there will come a time when the earth's production will not meet the needs of the population. There will be famines and hunger on an unprecedented scale (Heilbroner, 1953). Many of Malthus' contemporaries were predicting a rosy future. Some of them were even foreseeing the abolition of war altogether. But he differed from them all and stood in contradiction to them.

According to Paul Kennedy, the predictions of Malthus had to be taken very seriously. One only had to look at the situation in Ireland to realize this. In the 1850's, Ireland had only one fifth of its original population. Millions of people had perished due to hunger or emigrated.

Kennedy argues that England and Europe escaped the Malthusian trap through three doors:

1. Emigration: Millions of Britons and Europeans left the continent for Africa, Australia, New Zealand and the Americas. Through their massive exodus, the people were leaving valuable space for those who were left behind. Kennedy states that "between 1815 and 1914, around 20 million Britons left the country, a massive exodus relative to the overall population" (Kennedy, 1993). This migration was not confined to Britain alone; it included Europe as well. "Between 1846 and 1890, people emigrated from Europe at an average rate of 377,000 per year, but between 1891 and 1910 emigration soared to an average rate of 911,000 per year. Between 1846 and 1930, over 50 million Europeans sought a new life overseas" (Kennedy, 1993, -45).
2. Remittances from the Diaspora: Once the emigrants settled in their new countries they did not forget their countries of origin. In their adopted countries, they produced more than they consumed. Therefore, they sent their surplus production to the continent which needed them most. All kinds of

foodstuffs were being transported from these new emigrant communities to the continent of origin.

3. The third door that led out of the Malthusian trap was the Industrial revolution.

The African Diaspora

The first wave of Africans who left the continent for various countries were mostly slaves who were transported to countries not of their own choice. They may be referred to as 'victim Diaspora'. There is a number of characteristics that this Diaspora shares with all others:

1. It harbors painful memories. Whatever the reasons behind one's detachment from the motherland, the separation is often felt as a rupture, a wound that seems never to heal. The Diaspora is often torn between the present and the past. Most of the time, maybe as a means of survival, the motherland is idealized.

Just to take an example, Ethiopia became a powerful symbol for many emigrants. Be it in the United States, the Caribbean or South Africa, the name Ethiopia, especially because of its biblical connections, acquired a distinct meaning. Many religious groups associated it with black freedom and emancipation from situations of racial discrimination. The apogee of the vision is captured by the Ras Tafari movement in Jamaica. It saw the late Emperor Haile Selassie as the embodiment of the divine. The Bob Marley's, their followers and their admirers sung of the lost and found country.

2. The idea of return: The idea of return to the country of origin continues to inspire many of the African Diaspora. The most powerful personality in this connection was Marcus Garvey. Even though



Seeking new opportunities - sometimes an exciting adventure, sometimes a heavy burden, even without too many belongings. Photo: LPI

he lived in the United States, he made the return to Africa his most ambitious project. Before leaving, though, he tried to organize people by creating systems of chieftaincy, which in his own mind imitated that of the fatherland from which he was taken away. He organized the possible return of Africans to their continent in a very elaborate and detailed manner.

The second wave of African Diaspora

Modern Diaspora differs from the 'victim Diaspora', even though there are some elements that tie them together. The first is the permanent nostalgia of the country of origin. In their attempt to be themselves in a foreign land, the immigrants find that there are obstacles to reaching the goal. Small provocations or actions and words touch sensitive nerves which render one uneasy and uncomfortable.

Over and above this, some attest to the fact that Europe, for example, is increasingly becoming "a fortress Europe ... a stronghold for whites to defend their interests against the

surging crowd from outside." On the other hand, the natives may feel threatened by the growing presence of what they consider outsiders. The newcomers on their part may feel not being part of the land which they have chosen to be their new home.

Most members of the Diaspora are now referred to as 'economic migrants'. Many countries in the African continent suffer from economic problems. One way of escaping them is to leave the country and settle elsewhere where there are better opportunities for work and better salary.

Whatever their reasons for leaving their countries, one of the most interesting things about the majority of the African Diaspora is that they continue to remember the country they left behind, although this is not unique to Africans. One of the most tangible way in which this is expressed is their regular remittance of considerable amounts of money. According to one study an estimated US\$ 4 billion was transmitted by the African Diaspora in 2003. This is as much as half of the debt which Africa pays to its creditors every year. It is also equivalent to the amount of aid it gets.

Diaspora and poverty

It is evident from many studies that the Diaspora contributes a lot towards the welfare of the African continent. As has been indicated above, the visible sign of this is the remittances that the Diaspora sends and through which many people's existence is maintained. There are also other expenses from which the continent benefits. But, in the face of this fact, there is also the overwhelming evidence that the Diaspora contributes to the poverty and underdevelopment of the continent. This takes place as a result of what has been called 'the brain drain'.

Various studies indicate that many African countries spend millions of dollars to educate parts of their population. Some of them are also sent abroad for higher studies. But the fact is that, once the students complete their studies, they decide to remain in the new country. The financial remunerations and the better conditions of life that may be offered in the country of exile most often prove attractive. Some also remain behind due to political problems at home and violent conflicts situations, which had prompted them to leave their countries in the first place.

This individual decision has far-reaching repercussions for the country concerned. On the one hand, the amount of money that has been invested in the education of the individual is lost without any return. On the other hand, the services that have been expected to be rendered to their country of origin have been lost. The most serious problem is that those who could have contributed to the development of the continent through their specialized skills are simply not there. Aryeetey gives the following details:

"African countries are losing their human capital. Ndulu (2001) has indicated that 'Africa is a capital-scarce region, and loss of this limited resource is widely considered detrimental to the prospects of sustained growth and development.' An UNCTAD report estimated an annual cash value of each African professional migrant, based on

1979 prices, at \$184,000. This brings the value of the estimated 95,000 African professionals in the US to an annual amount of US\$17.5 billion, far in excess of the US\$4 billion technical assistance the region receives each year from all sources.

My own way of presenting the enormity of the problem is that, of every graduating class from the University of Ghana Medical School since 1985, 50 percent of the graduates will leave Ghana within two years and a total of 80 percent will leave within five years" (Aryeetey, 2003).

What has been said above may be augmented from many other quarters. One writer put it this way:

"There are more Malawian doctors in Manchester, England, than in all aids-ravaged Malawi ... In 2001, 473 nurses, out of 737 that graduated, from Zimbabwe registered to work in Britain ... In Zambia, of more than 600 doctors trained since independence in 1964, only 50 are still in the country" (Johnson, 2004).

As high as 89 percent of the Diaspora in the US express the desire to go back home. But it is very few who take the decisive step. Many, however, maintain a close relationship with those who remain behind. A few also feel a sense of responsibility to contribute something towards the development of the country which they left. There are many who visit the country of origin regularly, often with their families. In this way they also contribute to the tourist industry in their country of origin.

But if one looks at the larger picture, namely the overall development of the African continent in relationship to the Diaspora, the result is dismal. When one considers the amount of money that was spent on their education and other related expenses, the sum is huge. When one adds to this the financial equivalent of the services that they would have rendered to their countries, had they returned, it is again considerable. When one calculates the benefits of the return of the Diaspora

with what they remit, it is simply disproportional. The cost of what they would have invested in their countries through their presence and varied services and the loss generated by their absence is enormous.

One of the original ideas that could contribute to the development of the continent and the reduction of poverty then is to harness the potential of the Diaspora. Any country which recognizes the loss of the capacity of the Diaspora has to devise ways and means of utilizing whatever they can offer in one way or another. There is no doubt that many programs and projects have been tried. There have been many meetings to tackle this very issue even on the continental level. But until concrete ways are found to harness the great human resources that this group possesses, the continent will certainly suffer.

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Palestinian Diaspora: Part of the problem, part of the solution

It is a well-known fact that Diaspora communities over the world influence conflict situations in their respective home countries. A more uncertain question is to what extent the Diaspora plays a role in a peacebuilding process. Recent research shows that Diaspora groups often have the facility of utilizing personal and institutional contacts to support peace constituencies in the conflict region.

Studying involvement in constructive conflict transformation of the Palestinian Diaspora in Western Europe will contribute to the efforts by actors at different levels to support the parties to the conflict in their attempts to achieve sustainable peace.

While primary responsibility for overcoming violent conflict lies with domestic populations of the countries in question, external assistance may be required due to a depletion of indigenous resources for peacemaking (Miall et al 1999, p. 219). Hence, constructive conflict management is often associated with the involvement of external actors. It is in this context that a special role can be envisioned for Diasporas acting as “in-betweeners”, i.e. something between an internal and external actor.

Conflicts worldwide show that Diasporas¹ can exert considerable influence on the conflict dynamics back home. There are numerous cases in which refugees and immigrants² support war constituencies in their places of origin and provide them with support of various kinds, such as collecting money for paramilitaries, procuring arms and spreading hate propaganda as well as influencing public opinion in their

countries of domicile or lobbying the government. For the resolution of violent conflict, a Diaspora whose activities from abroad exacerbate the conflict constitutes part of the problem. Thus, the question arises as to whether Diasporas can also become part of the solution.

Migrant-sending states as well as institutions for global or regional development have long discovered Diasporas and/or their capital as relevant factors for the development strategies of their countries of origin. But, apart from instances of individual action (Wolleh 2001a), little is known about cases of positive Diasporic inputs into conflict management. This may explain why hardly any attention has been paid to the Diaspora as a potential resource, in academic, governmental and grassroots discourse about constructive conflict management.

It is here that idle potential and its possible development can be suspected, since strategies aiming to transform

armed struggle can principally be applied anywhere where people are affected by conflict - in the immediate center of the conflict as well as afar from the conflict zone. Diaspora groups have the facility of utilizing their personal and institutional contacts with their country of origin to support peace constituencies in the conflict region. Winning over those groups for nonviolent modes of conflict can complement local initiatives and strengthen capacities for indigenous constructive conflict management.

One should, however, not limit such attempts to actors that are already committed to nonviolent conflict resolution, since violence-prone groups and those profiting from violence also have to be persuaded to undergo behavioral changes if a lasting reduction in violence is to be achieved. Furthermore, the Diaspora could offer the opportunity to make contact with violent actors in the conflict zone. Projects of conflict management which require contact with regular as well as irregular violent actors (police forces, military, militia, profiteers etc.) may be approached with reduced risk through an interposing of forces from the Diaspora that have access to those circles.

Studying involvement in constructive conflict transformation of the Palestinian Diaspora with residence in Western Europe will contribute to the widespread efforts, by governments, international organizations and non-governmental actors, to ameliorate the situation on the ground and support the parties to the conflict in their efforts to achieve a sustainable settlement. The relevance of the issue needs not be elaborated in much detail: a) The conflict

over Palestine has repercussions far beyond the region and is the subject of intensive governmental and track two diplomatic endeavors as well as grassroots activity. b) Palestinian communities worldwide are committed to the Palestinian cause and engage in conflict related activities, including support for armed struggle and terrorism. c) As a regional conflict of extraordinary symbolic weight, it carries with it a high potential for cross-border mobilization which can be manipulated for the purposes of transnational terrorism (Legrain 1997, p. 161; Voll 1997, p. 242; Hesse 2002, p. 102; Körper 2002, p. 5).

An underlying assumption of the approach is that nonviolent strategies in the Palestinian struggle could significantly influence Israeli perceptions of its legitimacy and thereby could contribute to conflict resolution. Palestinian critics of the second Intifada and its heavy reliance on armed struggle largely argue along these lines. Recent polls have shown that there is significant support in the Palestinian society for a large-scale nonviolent protest movement. At the same time, a clear majority of Israelis are convinced that the Palestinians have a legitimate right to seek a Palestinian state provided they use nonviolent means. However, both publics are sceptical that nonviolent action will be adopted (Kull 2002). For nonviolent action to become an asset in the battle for the hearts and minds of both publics, it is of utmost importance that the Israeli public recognizes Palestinian nonviolent action. Projects and programs, which reach out to Palestinians and Israelis alike, would enhance such recognition.

Palestinian Diaspora in Germany

Germany hosts a large Palestinian community. German sources estimate a number of 100,000 (Schmalz-Jacobsen and Hansen 1997, p. 120). An accurate number is difficult to come by, due to a disputed status of Palestinian refugees and migrants, which remains a contentious issue to date (Hammer 2001, p. 24). Many either hold Jordanian, Lebanese, or Syrian

passports, are registered as asylum seekers originating from their last place of residence or as stateless. Palestinians are omitted from many official German statistics (Commissioner for Foreigners 2000). In others they fluctuate heavily and thereby occur in an incomprehensible manner (UNHCR 2001, pp. 350-361) that appears to reflect political decisions regarding the respective status granted by their host countries rather than actual movements.

The first flows of Palestinian migrants came to Germany in the 1950s and early 1960s and were mostly students and businessmen. In the late 1960s the first influx of Palestinian refugees followed. Refugees and migrants that had contacts in Western countries predominantly went to England, France and Southern Europe. Those with relatives in Germany and more importantly those without any contacts abroad came to Germany. The highest population of Palestinians are in Berlin, with an estimated figure of 15.000 to 35.000.

In the years 1979-1990 more than 50.000 Lebanese and nearly 20.000 Palestinian asylum seekers came to Germany. In the 1990s in light of an intensification of the guerrilla war in South Lebanon, Germany introduced an emergency clause according to which Palestinians were granted the right of residence. Throughout the Lebanese civil war Palestinian and Lebanese refugees often came as clans and chose to more or less remain in such clusters, often avoiding interaction with other Arabs as well as with their German hosts (Isoplan 2001). This development affects the way in which the community acts and is organized as a whole today. The community is organized into numerous organizations, but appears to generally lack centralization and shows little cooperation.

Yet, cases in which cooperation has fruited into a conciliatory impetus for the peace process exist as well. The manner in which division and cooperation co-exist can be illustrated by an apt example. Before uniting in September 2003, there used to be two principle Palestinian Communities in

Berlin, originating from the city's former division, with their respective roots in former West-Berlin and former East-Berlin. They were in disagreement about their political orientations but had, nonetheless, an overarching Coordination Committee. In 2002, this joint committee issued an appeal directed at the Jewish community in Germany suggesting increased cooperation in an attempt at preventing a direct adoption of the intransigent attitudes that separate the two peoples.

The Palestinian Community Germany was founded in 1996 and today represents quite a number of regional Palestinian communities. However, some rather large communities have remained outside the roof organization, such as the above mentioned community in Berlin as well as those in Bremen, Hamburg, Frankfurt and Munich. The Palestinian community has plenty of organizations, which are shaped around a plethora of themes. There are political, cultural, and religious organizations. The political representation of the PLO is the General Delegation Palestine. It is in charge of consular matters as well as political, cultural and economic relations.

Restrictions and empowerment

There has been a considerable amount of investigation into Islamic organizations in Germany out of fear for Islamic radicalism (Ministry of the Interior North Rhine-Westphalia 2001; Federal Agency for Internal Security 1996). Links and cooperation between Islamic groups can be assumed irrespective of these being apparent or not. Here, the dislocation from the conflict zone and the vicinity between these groups as well as the freedom of movement that exists in Germany may allow for alliances that are unconceivable in the conflict arena.

For a systematic investigation into the subject four sets of variables need to be examined that constitute favorable or unfavorable conditions for participation of Palestinian Diasporic

groups in constructive conflict transformation. The four sets can be categorized as referring to 1. *structures*, 2. *perceptions*, 3. *activities*, and 4. *opportunities/constraints*.

1) *Structures* refers to the resources (organizations and networks) which can be mobilized by the Palestinian Diaspora for the purpose of intervention in the conflict. They are based on personal ties, social contacts as well as political and religious affiliations, i.e. all the channels which serve as means of communication between those who left and those who remained.

When researching the networks, relations between Palestinian communities, across states among which they are dispersed, need to be considered (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 2000, p. 357). Especially after the terror attacks of 11 September 2001, cross border networks of Arab communities have become a key issue in the international efforts to combat transnational terrorism. These networks could also be regarded as utilizable towards managing and resolving conflict.

2) *Perceptions* refers to the political orientations that can be associated with these organizations and networks and their views on the conflict. It is assumed that their fragmentation, in part, reflects the divisions of the Palestinian society. The internal divisions mirror not only those in the Palestinian territories, but also a specific Diasporic experience. It is assumed that successful social and cultural integration into a majority society which, in general, stigmatizes violent action in a conflict, is conducive to a positive attitude towards constructive conflict management. Conversely, immigrants whose legal status implies vital insecurity and/or who are marginalized in terms of education, income or living environment may respond favorably to violent strategies.

3) *Activities* refers to the actual use the Diaspora makes of its organizations and networks. As noted above, the main impact of the Palestinian Diaspora on the conflict seems to be one that results in a hardening of positions and prolongation of the conflict. Taking note

of activities in this vein contributes to the goal of the study in significant ways: Besides helping to realistically assess the chances that Palestinian communities abroad actually commit themselves to supporting peace constituencies in the Palestinian territories, efforts towards constructive conflict management could be aided, if activities from abroad, which exacerbate conflict back home, were to diminish or cease. It should be added that because of the sensitivity of this issue, a comprehensive account cannot be realistically accomplished.

4) *Opportunities/Constraints* refers to the conditions in the country of residence. Here, we point out that the Diaspora's actual use of its organizations and networks is not only an expression of its intentions but also of its limitations, since it is dependent on the scope allowed and the restrictions set forth by the host country.

Foreign political as well as domestic aspects may play a role. As to the foreign political dimension, Germany's attitude towards the conflict can be concluded from the Middle East agenda of the European Union, principles governing relations with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, projects and programs in the framework of bilateral aid, and finally, the general activities of the German government in the autonomous territories, in connection with NGOs and other actors of the Palestinian civil society. Regarding the domestic political dimension, the constitutional rights are of primary importance. However, Palestinian communities in Germany are also subject to a set of restrictions by the Aliens Act, internal security laws etc. If the Diaspora is put under surveillance or is prevented from articulating or representing its interests, its leeway for use of its networks, especially for undesired purposes (e.g. support of terrorist groups), can be limited. In extreme cases, for instance, when Diaspora organizations are forced to go underground, restrictions may also lead to radicalization of Diasporic groups.

Rejection or inclusion?

The document known as the Geneva

Accord (signed on 1 December 2003) and its reception by the Palestinian Diaspora illustrate the challenge that lies ahead when envisaging a role for exiled communities in civil conflict management. The Accord, drafted by a group of Israeli and Palestinian experts and politicians, can be seen as an unofficial blueprint for a Permanent Status Agreement. With respect for the resolution of the refugee question, it puts forward five options for implementing the right of return contained in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194. Refugees can choose between returning to the State of Palestine or to areas that will be transferred to the State of Palestine under land-swap agreements, settling in third countries, remaining in their present host countries, or taking up residence in Israel. The right to settle in Israel shall, however, be at the sovereign discretion of Israel.

Among Palestinians of the Diaspora, the Geneva Accord was widely seen as a sell-out of the right of return, largely due to the means suggested for resolving the refugee question. For example, at a conference organized by the Loccum Evangelical Academy in November 2003, this view was expressed by a member of the Palestinian Right of Return Coalition. However, to other Palestinian participants, this attitude was an expression of the "it-is-not-the-right-time" syndrome and instrumental in preserving the right of return as an untouchable, non-negotiable goal (Johannsen 2004, pp. 24-26).

The issue is not only one of the most sensitive matters of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is also of central relevance to the Palestinian Diaspora. Instead of viewing refugee lobbies as simply intransigent and an obstacle to be overcome, it might be worthwhile for track-two diplomats to reach out to the exiled communities and involve them, for example, in their deliberations on repatriation, resettlement and compensation policies and schemes.

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¹ The term “Diaspora” is used in a wide sense to denote such national or ethnic communities who have been dispersed from their original homeland to foreign regions, but entertain significant social and symbolic ties to the country of their origin (Cohen 1997, p. 26). This includes such communities who have suffered some kind of traumatic event such as flight, expulsion or persecution and entertain visions of a lost or imagined homeland (Safran 1991), but would also apply to migrant workers such as the Turkish community in Germany (Joppke 1999) who lack such experience and do not yearn to return to their homeland (Faist 2000).

² For the purpose of this paper, the term “refugees” includes recognized refugees and their relatives, other refugees who have not been given a formal refugee status, and asylum seekers. The term “immigrants” includes foreign residents engaged in or seeking employment or holding a student’s visa.

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Somali hope: After fourteen years and thirteen attempts

A peace agreement has finally been signed in Somalia. In the ongoing process to build a democracy on the grounds of a war-ridden country, the role of the Diaspora cannot and must not be overlooked. Their perception of the past and present and their expectations on the future may deviate from those who stayed in the country, but their experiences and influence certainly have an impact on the development in Somalia and Somaliland.

In a time when many conflicts are slowly edging toward peaceful conclusions, the actual participants in these peace agreements tend to come into focus to a greater extent. Suddenly, not only is it the prerogative of those on the ground who have been in protracted violent conflict with each other, but it is also that of other interested parties. In this respect, it is not the influence of external parties that comes to the fore. That is already a given. Rather, it is those who have been misplaced, forced to flee or chose to flee at the onset of the conflict that are asserting themselves as a potential force in the rebuilding and reconciliation processes. This Diaspora phenomenon has developed in such a way, as to make the signing of peace agreements without them almost unavoidable. They have patiently watched from the sidelines – albeit indirectly influencing events in both constructive and detrimental ways.

This is particularly the case in relation to the Somali Diaspora. After fourteen years and thirteen attempts of trying to find peace – this recent

fourteenth attempt which brought about a new government is hopefully the last – there is a concerted push for those who have previously fled their homeland in the face of conflict, either to return or to have a voice in domestic affairs. However, in its quest to have a say in the running of the country, those in the Diaspora have played a sometimes implicit, sometimes benevolent role. From constructive activities, such as supporting family members financially, mediating in minor conflicts and generally encouraging civil society efforts for sustainable peace, to the harmful way of exacerbating conflicts, promoting clan rifts and refusing to acknowledge human rights abuses, all contribute to the rather distorted view the Diaspora has of the old country then and how it fits into its new clothes in the present day. It is this balancing act between time and the process of moving forward, which is a fundamental aspect of the Diaspora and its perception of both itself and the evolving nature – not to mention dynamics – of Somalia as a country. For the Diaspora, it is a veritable struggle

to achieve parity in this respect. Nonetheless, the influence and knowledge that the Diaspora possesses should never be underestimated, particularly in relation to those of the Somali Diaspora residing in Sweden.

In many cases, families who have been residing in Western countries for ten years or more cannot resist the pull of the old country and tend to move back, often without taking into consideration the disparate levels in basic living requirements. This may sound



Sahra Bargadle, a Somali living in Sweden, spoke at a consultation in Härnösand, Sweden, on the role of the Diaspora in the Somalia peace process. Photo: Jesper Wiklund/LPI



Building a new home in a new place, leaving memories behind and hoping for a better future. Photo: LPI

naïve, but in general, families that decide to move back to places like Belet Weyne or Banadir encounter difficulties settling in. This is not on account of the security situation, which tends to be rather adequate in most areas of Somalia. It is more to do with how these families have lived previously in addition to having all the benefits of countries like Britain or Sweden, i.e. healthcare and social security.

From war to democracy

In relation to Somaliland, the Diaspora has played a leading role in not only providing a modicum of stability, but also for injecting renewed confidence into the private sector. Compare this upturn with the smooth transition from a war-ridden situation to a democracy based on proportional representation with traditional foundations in the form

of the assembly of elders (*Guurti*), and it is easy to see why many Somalis in the south look to Somaliland as a model for good governance and accountability. Recently, however, elections that were set to be held for the end of March 2005 may be postponed. This rather ominous development is at variance with the progress achieved so far and represents a blow to long term hopes for international recognition.

The oft mentioned role for the Diaspora about bringing the knowledge and expertise gained abroad back home is very much in evidence in the case of Somaliland. In Hargeisa, the effects of the returning members of the Diaspora are abundantly clear. Land prices have shot up and there is increased investment within the city as a commercial hub. On the flip side, and however this economic upturn is good

for the self-proclaimed republic, it compares rather starkly with the relatively cash-strapped government that continues to rule the country with limited resources. Despite the feel-good effects of this burgeoning democracy, there is much still to be done to regulate this new found investment and for the government to assert itself more through what we in the West see as fundamental institutions, such as the setting up of a functioning tax authority. Moreover, intermittent conflicts over property rights are part and parcel of the sudden influx of returning Diaspora, but – although it creates tension – this should be seen as only one negative side effect of the peace and stability that has been achieved since the Borama process in 1993.

So, when it comes to the Diaspora actually taking the decision to move back, many things should be taken into account, and the realisation of sustainable peace is naturally high on the agenda. In fact, if there are viable signs of peace emanating from the people in Somalia in general, it seems likely that a sizeable return of Diaspora in the near future is a distinct possibility. These days, it appears that return could come to pass, as the newly formed government has already carried out assessment missions within the country itself and even produced a plan for the relocation of most governmental institutions. Recently, a peace agreement has been reached between the warring factions of northern and southern Galkayo in the Mudug region, which has been an area of protracted conflict over a long period. These are the first of many steps that Somalis will have to take to bring about stability and a rejuvenated country. However, those members of the Diaspora intent on returning home – as well as us concerned members of the international community – can only hope this upturn continues in the same vein.

Shane Quinn

Sudan: Hope for peace across the country

Tears of joy rolled endlessly. Ululations soared thunderously. Scores of Sudanese - delegates and refugees or exiles - colourfully thronged the Nyayo Sports Stadium in Nairobi, Kenya. They came to witness the ceremony of the signing of a historic Comprehensive Peace Agreement on January 9, 2005.

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) attracted great numbers of Sudanese as well as thousands of foreign envoys. They included tens of heads of states and former heads of states, and hundreds of regional as well as international observers and dignitaries. The CPA was most obviously significant, partly because it publicly announced a cease-fire between the two foes. It meant an official declaration of the end of the war in the South!

Sudan, Africa's largest country, is less known for peace than for its violent internal conflicts. The conflict between the North and the South is as old as Sudan's place in the great Nile valley civilisation. But the clash between the North and the South has lasted for as many years as from before Sudan's independence, when Arab traders migrated to settle in between the 13th and 19th century, and throughout Sudan's existence as an independent country.

Almost all previous peace agreements signed between the North and the South were unilaterally abrogated as easily as they were signed. Decades of civil strife contributed to

erode the little trust that ever existed between the government in Khartoum and the people in the South. It is against this background that the January 9 signing of the CPA is most welcomed.

The civil war in the South has already caused massive losses. Observers estimate that it has claimed over two million lives, most of them from war-related famine and disease. The war in the South has displaced over four million people and rendered them homeless. Over four million others have fled to resettle in safer countries, including the USA, Europe, Australia, Canada, and across Africa.

The signing of the CPA was also timely. It came at a time when Sudan's public and international image is greatly wanting. Human rights groups have lashed out at Khartoum for its role in what they perceived as the perpetrations of incidences of gross violations of human rights. These accusations have put Sudan's moral credibility in the spotlight. The civil war in the South as well as in other parts of the country has made the name "Sudan" synonymous with anarchy, repression, and terrorism.

As a means of ending the conflict in the South, the CPA appears to offer the Sudanese people great

opportunities for the creation of a sustainable peace, both in the South and across the country. The CPA offers an opportunity to redress the problem of equality and civil freedoms. The Sudanese people in the South applauded the agreement because it avails the freedom of worship. This means that Khartoum will not impose its Islamic Shari'a rules on the people in the South.

More important is that the CPA gives the people in the South the opportunity to benefit from the national cake. This is because the CPA entails provisions of how the country's wealth – which includes massive oil reserves in the South – will be equitably shared and how the revenue is supposed to be redistributed. Another silvery edge of the CPA is that it empowers the people in the South including the SPLM to set up a government known as Government of South Sudan, and in six years' time they can vote to either remain part of Sudan or become a separate country.

Talented Diaspora

Essentially, this agreement is impressive in that it offers the Sudanese Diasporas the privilege to return and join in the post-war reconstruction of the nation. Many of them have acquired vital skills and trainings in varied professions. Many are professionals who possess a well-seasoned wealth of experiences from years of work with international and/or foreign organisations. The rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development of the nation, especially South Sudan, will require such and sundry talents.

Similarly, the conflict in western



Dancing people from the Kuku community, southern Sudan, celebrated the peace agreement together with community members in Khartoum. Photo: Roger Marklund/IKON

Sudan is an apparent resentment of what is perceived as Khartoum's deliberate marginalization, oppression, suppression and under-development of the region. As a matter of fact, a huge segment of the Sudanese Diasporas is made up of people from Darfur. Thus, a comprehensive peace agreement between the GoS and the disgruntled groups in Darfur, or any of Sudan's other conflict regions for that matter, would help to restore security and bring about a sustainable peace. A peace agreement between other dissident groupings across Sudan would contribute to address the fundamental grievances.

In turn, a comprehensive resolution of Sudan's various conflicts would help to stop the country's ongoing brain drain and trends of massive resettlement in other countries. Peace across these conflict regions would promote remobilization of resources, skills, and talents for post-conflict peacebuilding and reconstruction.

Describing the current state of affairs in southern Sudan, SPLM leader Colonel Dr John Garang de Mabior said that the South has not seen any tarmac roads since the creation of the world. It has no infrastructure. There

are no meaningful hospitals or running water, let alone clean and safe drinking water. The South has no electricity, and women must walk several miles to fetch firewood and a few gallons of water.

The civil war in the South has been a resistance to frantic attempts to compel the people in the South to live under fanatically interpreted Shari'a (Islamic laws). The SPLM has relentlessly decried efforts to impose Islam, or any religion for that matter, on the people.

In this regard, it is good to understand that Sudan's demographic features indicate a multiplicity of entities. Sudan's ethnical contrasts are as distinct as its geographical differences between the North and the South. There are Sudanese who perceive themselves as Arabs, though the bulk of such an entity would qualify more for Arabised Africans than Arabs in the truest sense of that word. Nonetheless, they choose to be closer to the rest of the Arab world than to an African identity. It was this fact that made the government in Khartoum declare Sudan as an Arab nation.

On the contrary, just as northern Sudan is vastly a desert, the South is lushly green with extensive fields, pastures, forests, and much rain. The

majority of the people in the South are ethnically black Africans. Many embrace and adhere to Christianity and/or to their respective African traditional religious beliefs. This portrays the war in the South as a resistance to what the people see as a calculated attempt to forcefully convert them into Muslims and/or Arabs culturally. They suspect Khartoum's desire to drive them out of their ancestral land. Thus, the people in South Sudan are closer to the rest of their Africans in the neighbouring countries, a fact that has led to counter-support-accusations, for example, between Khartoum and Kampala (Uganda) or between Khartoum and Addis Ababa (Ethiopia).

Resolving other conflicts

Many people see the settlement of the North-South war as a modality for resolving the conflict in western Darfur, as well as conflicts in other parts of the Sudan. The Darfur conflict resembles the North-South civil war in that it is being waged by government supported-pastoralist militia tribes called Janjaweed against predominantly Muslim but African Sudanese tribes. Some of the grievances cited include marginalisation, injustice, inequality, and



War, violence, hunger and poverty force crowds of people to leave their home country under very difficult circumstances. Photo: LPI

oppression. The struggle has led to genocide-like fighting, causing what UN Secretary General Kofi Annan describes as “hell on earth”.

The move by Darfur’s wandering cattle and camel herders (who view themselves as Arabs) into lands where farming communities (of people who consider themselves Africans) traditionally lived, was perceived by these farmers as acts of impounding property with impunity. A rebellion against Khartoum was propped, but the response was the indiscriminate bombing of villages.

The UN cites that Khartoum has given guns and other support to groups of Arab fighters, to terrorize the region, burn villages, and attack and kill people. That way, the Janjaweed militia were able to drive away most of the Sudanese African tribes from their homes into cramped refugee camps. Currently, humanitarian aid groups are grappling with the crisis, especially on how to save the displaced African tribes from starving. The death toll of those who succumb to diseases, starvation and outright killings has been rising by the day. The parties to the Darfur conflict have not been able to reach consensus on the development of a declaration

of principles on how to approach and address the outstanding issues.

The peace agreement between the GoS and the SPLM is actually the climax of building consensus on the declaration of principles, on which several peace protocols were realised. With the resemblance of the civil war in the South and the civil strife of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army rebels in Western Darfur region, the CPA is likely to impact on the rest of the country. In the South, the struggle has over the years focused more on the control of the region’s natural resources, including oil reserves, forests, and the fertile agricultural land. In Darfur, the conflict is largely about an African Muslim people’s resistance against a hard-handed control and/or monopoly of the area’s natural resources, as well as marginalization from every aspect of equitable access to the nations’ economic and political benefits. Darfur is really about the need for equitable sharing of wealth: access to land for pasture and farming, water points for human and animal consumption between the pro-government pastoralists, Janjaweed Arab militias and the more sedentary farming African tribes.

The tensions in western Darfur did not start in February 2003. They go back as early as the 1970s when drought aggravated the competition over scarce resources. An important theme in the CPA is an attempt to redress the very issues that have led to the two civil wars in the South. With this approach, it is possible for Khartoum and the SPLM to model a peace deal over Darfur in the fashion that the CPA was negotiated and produced. If carefully implemented, the payoff effects of the CPA could help to snuff off the blazing fire of the hell that Darfur has become. The CPA is not only a public declaration of cease-fire but a decisive move to amicably and mutually commit efforts and resources to the very issues of equality and equity, justice, security, and peace, participation and representation, as well as access to and sharing of the nation’s wealth and power. This is where hope resides. This is where post-conflict reconstruction may be assured to take off and be sustained. Above all, this is how January 9, 2005, will be remembered for a long time to come.

Basil BS Nyama

No democracy without the people

The political 'transition' in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The peace agreement of the Democratic Republic of Congo is unrealistic in its expectations to build a democratic state without the real participation of the people. Lack of infrastructure in the country, lack of competence among the leaders and lack of time in the transition process contribute to the impossibility of the task, according to Hans Romkema. The peace accord defines that local elections should be held before national elections, something that is of utmost importance for the solution of many problems. Therefore, it is discouraging to note that the issue is very unfairly treated in the media, says the author.

At the end of 2002, a peace agreement was signed in South Africa between the Congolese parties that fought a bloody war since August 1998. The peace agreement provided for a transitional period during which all the former belligerents would have seats in a government of national unity. To accommodate all former belligerents, an unprecedented structure, comprising one president, four vice-presidents (the so-called 1 + 4 formula), 65 ministers, 500 parliamentarians, 100 senators and several thematic commissions, was created. The international community invested heavily, both in the negotiation process, which lasted for months with over 500 participants in the South African resort town of Sun City, and in the succeeding transition that started on the 17th of June 2003.

Since the start of the transition there has been fear, amongst the transitional authority, the international community and in particular amongst the Congolese population that it would

end in violence. Indeed, the agreement is a very delicate compromise in which none of the parties is really comfortable. The result has been that few of the authorities put their shoulders under the transition process.

The international community, represented in the DRC most prominently by the MONUC and the CIAT¹, observed the process closely, applied from time to time pressure on the Congolese parties to accelerate, but hardly ever offered solutions. The focus remained on implementing the agreements signed in South Africa and in particular on preparing the elections.

This article argues that the peace agreement, the « *Accord Global et Inclusif sur la Transition en République Démocratique du Congo* », was not realistic and, because it did not allow time for sufficient consultations with communities, at least ambiguous about its objective to build a democratic state. Too much needed to be done in too little time by inexperienced politicians

and administrators. Moreover, the insufficient physical infrastructure, officials that have to function without regular salaries and lack of competence across the board² make the transition process, as it was designed by the Congolese and their international backers, logistically a near impossible task and unrealistic in its aim to build a democracy, as a democracy requires the participation of the population.

Unrealistic expectations

Although the DRC has many additional problems when compared to other countries in transition, there are no examples where a transitional authority was required to develop a new constitution, solve numerous conflicts that were not dealt with in the peace agreement, and hold local and national elections within a two years period. Worse, the agreement suggests that once an elected government is in place, the transition in the DRC is finished. This is either a grave underestimation of the difficulties faced, or a general lack of concern for the well-being of the Congolese people and the importance of building a strong and viable nation-state.

The parties, which under the peace agreement are required to work together, continue to have a deep mistrust of each other. This is worsened by the fact that the upcoming elections are decisive about who gets the full control over the country in the coming years. With the lack of democratic tradition and the examples in the neighbouring countries, the parties are convinced that once elections are lost, the opposing party will certainly try to hold on to its position, if necessary



*Only if the people in the DRC are involved in the democratisation process can there be peace in the country.
Photo: Tore Samuelsson/LPI*

with illegal means, for several decades. With numerous issues not resolved, from nationality³ to corruption and from cohabitation to the sharing of national resources and the state structure - federal, centralised or something in between - none of the parties is eager to accept handing over its destiny to the will of the people. This is particularly so because there is no guarantee that the elections will be free and fair, and because the elected government could also be considered as the factual winner of the war and, the fear is, can therefore decide about what it does with the losers.

Nonetheless, this is no argument to cancel the elections but an expression of the need to formalise the continuation of the transition after the elections and to postpone the most important decisions till a more representative and legitimate

government is in place. For example, the development of a new constitution or the decision whether to turn the DRC into a federal state or not, should not be in the hands of non-elected parties of whom most came to power because they mastered the military tactics better than their adversaries.

The Congolese people are the biggest losers in the process. During the war, millions died and recently the International Rescue Committee (www.theirc.org) calculated that even now, while there is 'peace', one thousand persons die daily in excess of normal, pre-war mortality. And in return, they are hardly consulted for the new constitution, they are still not paid⁴ and, particularly in the East, insecurity continues.

Local elections important

Before concluding, a side-step will be

made to local elections as opposed to the national elections. The peace agreement defines that local elections should precede national elections, perhaps the only concrete recognition in the entire peace agreement that peace and democracy need to be rooted in communities. I would like to defend that local elections are perhaps more important for local peace than the national elections. In the Kivu, it has become obvious on many occasions that communities can sort out their problems, as long as political parties do not manipulate them. A high degree of decentralisation, preferably federalism and free and fair elections on the local level, are therefore probably the best way to stabilise the country.

However, local elections in the DRC are treated as a minor issue, both by the Transitional Government (TG) and

the international community. When skimming through the Congolese and international newspapers, the CIAT and MONUC press-releases, or e.g. the website <http://www.digitalcongo.net>, there is hardly ever any mention of local elections and when those are referred to, it is usually in a subordinate clause.

Nevertheless, it is only on the local level that the DRC has experience with elections⁵, and it is quite obvious that, without an intensive civic education campaign (and without elaborated and written party programmes), the population will have a difficult task choosing the, for them, best candidates for the national office. The Congolese population is used to waiting in vain for positive action from Kinshasa and, also based on their recent experiences, will assume that this is unlikely to change. Therefore, national elections may have an important symbolic value for the population, but the potential impact should not be exaggerated.

On the local level however, the issues are more concrete and the people often know the candidates from nearby. Therefore, local elections are probably the best chance to build a democratic Congo, whereas the national elections mainly have to happen in 2005 because the Transitional Constitution and the Inclusive Agreement says so, and because the Congolese people and the International Community want to replace the TG and the 1 + 4 formula as soon as possible. Otherwise, there are no convincing arguments why national elections should take place so soon in a country that is still torn to pieces by internal strife, and why those elections receive far more attention than the local ones.

Neglected role of the people

The transition process in the DRC is a chance to break with the past, an opportunity to build a viable and democratic state in Central Africa. However, neither the Congolese authorities nor the international community give the people of the Congo an opportunity to become stakeholders in this process. They will

have to give act-de-présence when the elections take place, they are required to participate in a referendum on the new Constitution, but there is no time for them to contribute, and they will not even have the chance to make real choices when they present themselves at the ballot boxes.

Concerning those choices, the population will, irrespective of its content, approve the new Constitution, as it is a pre-requisite for the elections, and elections are the only way to end the current phase of transition. The people have lost their fate in the transitional government and therefore in the entire process. Even President Joseph Kabila, who during the war was immensely popular in the Kivu, has lost a very important part of his support. In the polls he is lagging well behind the veteran opposition leader Tshisekedi and the Christian Democrat Eugène Diomi Ndongala.

The people blame the leaders of the transition for the continued insecurity and state of war in which they continue living, despite the official 'peace'. The government is even held in part responsible for the Rwandan threat. After all, the DRC remains weak because of the continued strife between the government's components. The Rwandan opposition groups are not dealt with either. Moreover, there are indeed still numerous Rwandans in the ranks of the Congolese army⁶.

Although there are few Congolese that want to split up their country, there are increasing numbers who want the Kivu to be ruled by the Kivutians, or e.g. Katanga by the Katangese. The people never received a lot from Kinshasa, but they realise that currently their problems are aggravated by the central authority, and therefore it could even be defended that the transition is undermining the unity of the country.

In conclusion, it is argued that the feasibility of the current approach to the Congolese transition needs reviewing and reconsidering. The current approach undermines the objective of rebuilding the country, its

institutions and the unity of the people. Time can be gained by delaying important decisions till after the elections and through the recognition that the first elected government will still be transitional. Those who fear the election result will be comforted by such a formula and may not reach immediately for their arms. When more time is given to the transition, the people can be consulted, the base for change strengthened and confidence between all parties can be built. And the result is more likely to approach the ideal of building a responsible state that manages its human and natural resources properly, is transparent in its decision making, allows the population to exercise its democratic rights and where justice, truth, reconciliation and human rights prevail.

Hans Romkema

¹The MONUC stands for the UN Mission for the Congo, and the CIAT signifies 'Comité International d'Accompagnement de la Transition'. The CIAT is composed of the five permanent members of the Security Council, Belgium, Canada, South Africa, Angola, Gabon, Zambia, the European Union, the African Union and the MONUC.

² See for example Stephanie Wolters. Update on de DRC: Is the Transition in Trouble? Situation Report. Institute for Security Studies, 20 July 2004. Available at <http://www.iss.co.za>.

³ Legally the nationality issue, mainly of interest for the Kinyarwanda speaking population in the Kivu, has been resolved with a new law. However, this law is neither respected by the authorities nor the people. Calls for exclusion or generalising remarks identifying 'all Banyarwanda' of acting against the state (collaboration with Rwanda, undermining the transition, etc.) are regularly made, both by officials and others and have never been punished.

⁴ At least nothing significant; e.g. teachers receive irregularly a pay of 2 US\$ per month.

⁵ Before the wars, Provincial Assembly members as well as the members of territorial and local councils (at the level of collectivité) were elected.

⁶ A delegation from the Presidency found out that in the case of the brigade of Colonel Kalala, deployed between the Ruzizi Plains and Kaziba, only around 180 Congolese could be identified out of an estimated 1500 soldiers!

LPI response to Sida evaluation

The strengths and weaknesses of the Life & Peace Institute's (LPI) field activities, illustrated in an evaluation by LPI donor Sida, were considered and reflected on during the annual international LPI staff days, held in Brazzaville, Republic of Congo, in March. There was a general feeling that there is a great potential in the Institute, which has met many new challenges during its twenty years of existence.

Also ventilated during the staff days was the question what it means for LPI to be a "relevant and valuable resource" in response to the faith-based communities in violent conflicts.

At the end of 2003 LPI main donor Sida commissioned an evaluation studying our field activities in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). One important aspect to mention when it comes to the findings of the evaluation is that the LPI is quite a new body. The Life & Peace Conference took place in 1983, and the Institute was established only two years later. Thus we are celebrating the 20th anniversary of LPI this year.

From the documents that were adopted by the Life and Peace Conference it is clear that LPI of today is quite different from the institute the participants of the conference saw a need for in 1983. The Life and Peace Conference took place in the midst of the cold war, and the Institute was established as a response by the churches to the threat posed by the nuclear arms. Over the two decades that the Institute has existed, the surrounding world has changed dramatically and the Institute has tried to respond to the different trends. It is important to recognise that the agenda of today is different from what it was when LPI started.

So where are we today? One very important step in the establishment and the different phases that the LPI has gone through was obviously when a clear field dimension to the Institute's agenda was amended. This point is expressed in the two operational approaches that the LPI stands for:

- *conflict transformation* activities through assisting and facilitating peacebuilding,
- *research* that will enable the conflicting parties to better understand the causes of the conflict.

We are claiming that we are doing something beyond "do no harm", that we are building peace. This was one of the tasks of the evaluators to address, doing an impact assessment of the LPI program in Somalia and evaluating the effectiveness and partly relevance of our work in the DRC. Due to the security situation the evaluators could not finalise their work on Somalia, but one very interesting aspect they mention is their discussion on a critical mass that was reached by our peace-building activities in Somalia.

The LPI is supposed to "coherently integrate quality research and committed action", as it is stated in the vision statement of the Strategic Plan 2005-2009. To meet this is difficult. The experience so far shows that it is a challenge to try to harbour it in one and the same organisation. The evaluators actually think it is more or less impossible, but my seven months as Executive Director of the LPI has convinced me that it is possible and even desirable. The concept of LPI is valid and we have a very important added value with our approach.

The world has changed considerably since the LPI was established, and so has the agenda of the Institute. The end of the cold war and the changing conflict patterns in the world have been reflected in the different responses that a church related peace research institute such as the LPI is confronted with. It was a major challenge to establish field programs, and it has taken time to find suitable structures. In 1998 Sida financed a capacity study of the LPI, and, as already mentioned, Sida recently commissioned an evaluation of parts of our fieldwork. Many of the shortcomings connected to this development are pointed out by the evaluators. When it comes to contents and achievements, the evaluators are generally speaking very positively to the results obtained. This is of course encouraging and makes it easier to address the weaknesses identified.

Recognised as a valuable resource

An important instrument to enforce strengths and address weaknesses are the steering documents of the LPI, the basic one being, of course, the Mission Statement:

"The mission of the Life & Peace



Staff from LPI offices in Uppsala Sweden, Nairobi Kenya, Bukavu DRC and Congo Brazzaville met for discussions and planning in Congo Brazzaville. Photo: Tore Samuelsson/LPI

Institute is, through action and research, to enhance the capacity of churches, ecumenical and faith-based bodies and other organisations, to actively work for justice, peace and reconciliation.”

The Mission Statement takes some more concrete expression in the Vision Statement. It states that by the year 2009 some of the characteristics of the LPI will be the following:

- Be known for coherently integrating quality research and committed action in and through its conflict transformation programs and its thematic research.
- Be recognised as a valuable resource by the churches, global ecumenical and interfaith communities and organisations.

What does it mean to be a “valuable resource” for those who are mentioned in the vision statement, that is, churches, global ecumenical and interfaith communities and organisations? In which circumstances will the engage-

ment of the LPI make a difference? This can be shown in a couple of examples:

A dimension of what is important to keep in mind for the LPI when it comes to being *relevant* is regarding the response of the faith based communities on violent conflicts. We must strive to improve our capacity concerning the interfaith approach. We sense a lot of interest in this topic and this is one of the two important foci for the coming years of the research efforts of the LPI. There are many misconceptions around the understanding of the role of religion in violent conflicts, and the LPI can provide important knowledge in this regard. We have for example started a very interesting cooperation with Uppsala University and the Church of Sweden on the well-known database of Uppsala University on violent intrastate conflicts.

We need to understand more about

the dynamics of the conflicts from a religious perspective and to analyse further the role of religion. Some important efforts have been started through the Tools for Peace Consultation in October 2003, followed by the Tools for Peace Conference in November 2004.

A very important discussion that is going on at the moment in the international development debate is on *Development versus Security*, in the context of complex humanitarian emergencies. One can often hear the argument that one should do what one is good at. This means, some people would argue, that the humanitarian organisations should take care of developmentally related issues and leave the security issue to the armed forces. I would say that we should not accept this kind of narrow and militaristic definition of the concept “security”. Security is much more than force protection, much more than guns and military intelligence. For

me the concept of human security would more clearly point out what we mean with security, based on the right of each person to live in a just and peaceful world and where the security of the individual has priority over the security of the state.

It is obvious that the agenda of the peace movement and the agenda of the development aid organisations are coming closer. Here we are very close to one of the main challenges when it comes to the second statement of the vision statement, namely that the LPI should be recognised as a valuable

resource by the churches and the ecumenical and interfaith communities.

The LPI is regularly invited to the different meetings of the umbrella organisations of Christian aid organisations. One of the informal working groups that the LPI is coordinating is the PeaceNet, where precisely these questions are dealt with. A second working group coordinated by the LPI is on civil military relations.

The external evaluation of the field-work of LPI has been very useful in the internal process of discussing future long-term engagement and the added

value of the Institute. The processes of developing a strategic plan for the coming five years and the discussion on the findings of the evaluation have supported each other mutually. In that sense we are finding ourselves facing a really interesting challenge to try to integrate the concrete work of transforming conflicts with the analytical work through the research of LPI.

Peter Brune
LPI Executive Director

LPI News

Publications for Peace

The first shipment of books in the Publications for Peace Education project has now been sent to some 90 universities in almost 40 countries in Africa, Middle East, Asia and Latin America. Each participating institution received seven titles, ten copies of each publication for education purposes. In the following distribution rounds, another eight books will be sent. Among the selected publications are reports by Carolyn Nordstrom, John Prendergast and Charles Villa-Vicencio. The project is funded by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Finland.

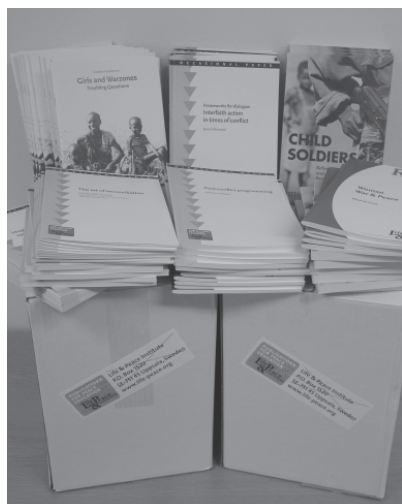


Photo: Tore Samuelsson/LPI

Master programme

A newly initiated Master Programme on religion in conflict and peacebuilding at Uppsala University, Sweden, is open for new students from autumn 2005. Applications to the programme, which is established in co-operation with LPI, should be submitted by April 15. For more information see www.teol.uu.se or contact malin.ekstrom@teol.uu.se

Security and vulnerability

A high level seminar on the theme Vulnerability and Security was arranged in Stockholm in February by the LPI and the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation (SweFOR) in co-operation with Church of Sweden. The seminar, which was sponsored by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Sweden, the Parliament, the military, Red Cross as well as individuals from NGOs and civil society in general. Pros and cons with a widening security concept were discussed, following presentations by Archbishop KG Hammar, MP Håkan Juhold and General Secretary Anna Åkerlund, SweFOR. Professor Kjell-Åke Nordquist from the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University facilitated the seminar.

Strategic Plan

LPI has produced a strategic plan for the period 2005–2009. The strategic plan, which is supplemented by yearly action plans, is available at the central office in Uppsala or the field offices in Nairobi, Bukavu and Brazzaville.

New board member

Holger Lam has been elected as a Danish representative in the LPI board of directors. He is replacing long-standing board member Uffe Gjerding. The global board has 15 members, representing the ecumenical movement, academia and practitioners in Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa and Asia.

Interns at the LPI



LPI has during the recent months provided for, and benefited from, no less than four interns. From left Ailin Forozin (Iran/Sweden), Darryl Whitehead (Canada), Marijana Cuvalo (Canada) and Juan Carlos Rojas (Nicaragua). Photo: Tore Samuelsson/LPI

Reviews and Resources

Theology and violence

J Denny Weaver: *The Nonviolent Atonement*. Eerdmans, 2001, 246 pp

Two concepts and their relationship are frequent in the discussions about Marxism: theory and praxis. It would probably be an even greater asset if that was also the case in arguments pro et con different theological positions, e.g. the just war theory. Aimed at limiting war and violence it seems in fact to have achieved the opposite and legitimized the use of escalating violence over the years. Every side is claiming its warfare as the last resort for a just cause with just means etc. If not, they would immediately lay down their weapons.

For an outsider it may be difficult to see the relationship between different theological understandings of the atonement and of the societal violence. However, according to the traditional perception of the atonement – formulated by Anselm of Canterbury – the basic relationship between God and human beings is based on the law. The sin of humankind has offended the honour of God and violated the law.

As a contemporary feudal lord God was seen as both a prosecutor and a judge with the task of restoring his own honour and/or fulfil the divine law and justice. As no human could achieve this, Jesus as both God and human had to undertake this task. His death was to be the payment of human debt. Consequently, he was born to suffer and die for humankind; he had no value of his own as he was born to be sacrificed.

In different forms this atonement

theory with its emphasis on punishment came to dominate not only Protestant churches but also the West European judicial system up to modern times and nowadays possibly even more in the US.

The early church theologians tended to emphasize the victory motif. Their point of departure was the concept of a cosmic struggle between good and evil. To begin with, God is losing at the cross but later comes out as a cosmic victor through the resurrection of Jesus, thereby making the atonement possible. The Swedish theologian Gustaf Aulén renewed this line of thinking and launched the concept ChristusVictor.

This approach and its varieties have met an increasing critique after its come back during the 20th century. The very war motif, the dualistic world view in our complex society and the shortage of proof of the divine lordship create together the starting point of this critique.

The most troubling with these atonement theories is that they more or less clearly are based on a violence, initiated or sanctioned by God. As a consequence they also sanction human violence “serving the good”.

A most stimulating and critical analysis of these different atonement theories is given by the American theologian J Denny Weaver – with a background in one of the peace churches – in his book *The Nonviolent Atonement*. He is pleading for a “narrative Christus Victor” theory, according to

which Jesus did not come to die in order to satisfy divine justice but came to present and visualize the reign of God. It was a risk taking which resulted in suffering and death, but the intention was different. The resurrection then restored the balance of power between good and evil. In the Book of Revelation Weaver finds the lion as the symbol of victory and the slain lamb as the symbol of the means of victory.

He finds striking similarities between his own critique of different atonement theories and the ones formulated by black theologians, feminist (white) theologians and womanist (black feminist) theologians. A common feature is their emphasis on the contextual importance to the theological model they develop. The social, cultural, historical environment supplies and influence the existential and theological issues

Weaver’s conclusion is that the abstract, apolitical and ahistorical formulas of the traditional atonement theories have promoted the adjustment of the church to the sword, slavery, racism and patriarchate. With the narrative ChristusVictor he widens the perspective to a comprehensive way to see God’s working in the world, a reading which is shaped by the claim that rejection of violence is intrinsic to the narrative of Jesus. This is therefore in the end a challenging study regarding what kind of God Christians believe in.

Bernt Jonsson

The power of grassroots

Mary Ann Cejka and Thomas Bamat: *Artisans of Peace: Grassroots Peacemaking among Christian Communities*. Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 2003

The past century of human history provided far too many stories of wars and senseless destruction. Countless lives were lost and many more were left permanently scarred by violent conflicts that were seen in nearly every part of the globe. While each of these stories will endure as a black cloud on our collective past, there are in fact many remarkable cases, silver linings one might say, of individuals coming together in the interest of building peace between the communities divided by conflict.

Mary Ann Cejka and Thomas Bamat have drawn together a collection of these uplifting stories and posited them together to demonstrate the power of a society's 'grass roots' in building a lasting peace.

The idea of multi-leveled peace building has arguably been best articulated by Jean Paul Lederach, who

has spoke extensively of a three-tiered system of peace building in his past work. Cejka and Bamat build upon Lederach's approach articulating that, while state leaders and public figures may attempt to build a peace at a state level, it is the grassroots actors who are the true 'artisans of peace,' able to craft meaningful change at the local level.

Artisans of Peace draws together stories of grassroots peace builders from all walks of life. From the community commissioners in Guatemala, to the inter-faith organizations in Northern Ireland, or the networks of women advocating for peace in South Sudan, there are remarkable tales of individuals overcoming past grievances in order to bring an end to cycles of violence.

While the editors believed they had provided a mere snapshot of conflict transformation efforts in various parts

of the globe, the final product was much richer than their modest claims. The work is infused with historical information, quantitative data, thorough exploration of important developments, and even includes a gendered analysis of the various findings.

Artisans of Peace is an excellent read for anyone interested in international affairs. Those new to the field will gain exposure to important theoretical tenants and seven superbly developed case studies. Readers familiar with the subject are introduced to a multitude of peace builders whose inspiring work has not yet received adequate acknowledgment from the international community.

Darryl Whitehead

Analysis of major conflicts

Lotta Harbom (ed): *States in Armed Conflict 2003*. Uppsala University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research Report 70, 2004

This past November the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at the University of Uppsala released the 16th edition of its *States in Armed Conflict* series. A product of highly time-consuming data collection, analysis, and reporting, this work is a great resource for both students and researchers.

States in Armed Conflict gives a description of all conflicts, both inter- and intra-state, dating back to 1946. In each case one can find out the actors involved in the conflict, the duration of the conflict, and the level of violent intensity that was experienced. A more detailed account is given for the conflicts ongoing in 2003.

Also included in this work is an analysis of the patterns perceived within the

major armed conflicts of 2003. The editor noted that the number of armed conflicts had declined from 31 conflicts in 23 countries to 29 conflicts in 22 countries between 2002 and 2003. The 29 conflicts is in fact the lowest level experienced since the 1970s, and the probability of a state being engaged in armed conflict was at its lowest point since the 1950s.

While the decrease in the cases of armed conflict in the world is encouraging news, the report also observed that of the 29 ongoing conflicts, 19 are considered 'major armed conflicts'. As a conflict attains this status when over 1 000 battle related deaths are suffered within a year, the marginal decline in conflicts is rapidly put back into context.

States in Armed Conflict is a valuable resource. It draws together much statistical data and presents it in an easily digestible format. This work also links a reader to a multitude of other resources for further research.

The Department of Peace and Conflict Research has in fact placed the complete list of all the armed conflicts 1946–2003, a detailed conflict database, and a multitude of relevant definitions on its web page, which is in itself a further valuable resource for interested readers. This information can be found at <http://www.pcr.uu.se/database/index.php>

Darryl Whitehead

Halfway to peace?

In 2005 we are halfway through the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV), launched by the World Council of Churches in February 2001 during its Central Committee meeting in Berlin, Germany. Activities are going on and events are taking place around the world.

Each year DOV focuses on a certain region, and in 2005 the light is on Asia. This will be specially noticed during the 12th Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia, taking place in Chiang Mai, Thailand, April 1-6. The theme of the conference is Building Communities of Peace for All. Asia is a vast continent, plural in many ways. Also the forms of violence vary from place to place. 2005 will be an opportunity to highlight the work by churches, organisations and networks to prevent and overcome violence and build peace.

Another major event taking place in the mid-decade is the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism, 9-16 May in Athens, Greece. The conference is also a contribution to the Decade to Overcome Violence, particularly the part with the theme A Reconciling Ministry in a Violent World. Some of the issues taken up under this theme are:

- social and political reconciliation processes
- the churches' role in conflict situations
- the challenges to Christian mission in terms of reconciliation and healing of memories

During the Lenten period before Easter churches and organisations often arrange campaigns to promote peace and solidarity.

"We don't believe violence has the last word" was the theme of an ecumenical fundraising campaign of, among others, the Swiss organisation Brot für alle (Bread for all).

- Horrifying figures say that 500 people are killed daily in wars and armed conflicts. 40 000 people are displaced every day. We share the hope that violence can be over-

come with our partners in the South, who struggle against violence, for justice and reconciliation under extremely difficult circumstances, said the organisers behind the campaign.

In the USA the US DOV Committee stood behind a campaign for fasting from the consumption of violence. The organisers stressed that fasting is not a way to show off a pious face and an ascetic appearance, but the fasting which God requires leads to true transformation and awareness. Therefore they urged people, not least parents with children, to turn off TV programmes that show violence as entertainment, to refrain from going to movies that show films with violence for violence sake and to talk with their children about alternatives to computer and video games that have a hidden violent message.

Make us Tools for Your Peace is the theme of a conference halfway through

the Decade to Overcome Violence to be held in Malmö, Sweden, 3-5 June 2005. It will focus on the role of the churches as tools for peace in a broken world. An issue to be discussed is how the churches in Sweden together can contribute to a culture of peace. The conference is arranged by the Christian Council of Sweden, the Life & Peace Institute, the Christian Council of Malmö and the Swedish Fellowship of Reconciliation.

The situation in the world at the midterm of the Decade to Overcome Violence bears witness that the churches' engagement plays a vital role in arousing hope for a future without violence but with justice and peace.

Kristina Lundqvist

Source: www.overcomingviolence.org



The Decade to Overcome Violence has reached halfway since its international launch, which took place in February 2001 with a symbolic action to bring together soil from seven regions of the world. Photo: Andreas Schölzer/Photo Oikoumene

LPI periodicals

New Routes is the quarterly in-house journal of LPI, offering analysis and commentary on issues of peace, justice and development. The journal provides information on research and programme issues as well as current publications and activities.

Horn of Africa Bulletin is a bimonthly media review covering the African countries of the Horn. The Bulletin provides a survey of current developments, with particular emphasis on issues of peace, development and conflict transformation.