Civil resistance and 'people power' movements: beyond regime change

Today it is obvious that unarmed popular movements are able to overthrow authoritarian regimes, even militarized and dictatorial regimes that have controlled countries for decades. Through mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, noncooperation, strikes and boycotts some 30 dictatorships have fallen during the last decades. We have more recently seen how entrenched authoritarian regimes have fallen within “the Arab Spring” in Egypt and Tunisia, and previously similar dramatic transitions have happened throughout Latin America, Easter Europe, Western Africa, as well as in South Africa, Iran, Indonesia, the Philippines, etc. All these examples point towards the people power or nonviolent revolution that Gandhi was instrumental in developing during the struggle in South Africa and India. However, it is also obvious today that these regime changes point towards a number of problems and challenges, some of which our theme group want to engage with.

It seems today equally obvious how difficult it is to get a really different and more just society after that the regime collapses. Probably the recent 96 % election of the military leader Asisi in Egypt in an election that had problems to gather enough voters is the clearest example of this. But other examples are plentiful. The recent second regime change in Ukraine also illustrates the problem. The new rule after the Orange Revolution became not only less democratic and more corrupt than what the opposition imagined, but the old ruling elite came back after an election victory, and now with the “second Orange revolution” the country seems to be violently divided between a Russia oriented East and EU oriented West. This tragic development also risks bringing us a second Cold War. Furthermore, already the first recognised nonviolent revolution, the Indian liberation from colonial rule of Britain, also did lead to a depressing development. India joined the nuclear weapon club, the force behind the liberation, the Congress, developed a kind of family rule and system of endemic corruption, centralized large-scale industrialization, maintained the caste system and accepted permanent poverty. The result was quite the opposite of what Gandhi worked for; the disempowerment of the rural villages that Gandhi viewed as the basis of a future decentralized village republic.

In Kirigistan the old elite seem to keep hold by exchanging the persons in power. In Eastern Europe the people gained political freedom but lacks the social security they had during the communist era, and now neo fascists and the extreme right are gaining popular support. In South Africa the fall of the racist apartheid regime was indeed a success. The political revolution did produce a different society with universal suffrage, increased media freedoms and a rule of law, but at the same time, the economic and social inequality is in many ways even worse than before. The ANC turned into a neoliberal and market friendly party, and the poor black majority that were the backbone of the struggle against apartheid are still waiting for the change.

Therefore, a key problem we see in these regime changes is the difficult transformation of society, particularly the lack of real democratic change, equitable economic development, and justice.

Another linked problem is the lack of broad based unity behind the new regimes; instead...
we see even outright endemic divisions emerging from the transitions. In Egypt the revolutions that ousted the militarised regime of Mubarak, celebrated last year the military coup against the newly elected Muslim Brotherhood regime. The opposition against the Brotherhood was so massive that the military did mainly confirm an already ongoing unarmed revolutionary movement. Today, thousands of Muslims are in prison and hundreds were killed by the military in protests against the military take over. In a similar way Thailand is deeply divided between the Red Shirts and Yellow Shirts, which takes turn in making the society ungovernable. What evolves in the Venezuelan society seems to be something similar: a majority elected regime with massive popular support, but with an opposition that is a powerful minority that uses unarmed resistance as part of their repertoire. And the result is a more and more divided society, and a less governable country. But in Thailand the problem is worse since the military and the courts are on the side of the Yellow shirts and against the Reds, despite that every election gives the majority to the parties of the Reds.

Perhaps not all these situations should be understood in the same way, contexts are very different and so will also the answers be to the questions these societies face. However, the point here is that if nonviolent activism was ever the articulation a “good” people in a fight against “evil” rulers and elites, the situation today is far more complex and even contradictory. There is a necessity to elaborate on how unarmed resistance movements are linked to the construction of a different and more just society.

There seems to be a need to revisit and more critically examine the role of how these movements conduct their struggles. What is the role of the context or the kind of groups that are involved, how they organize, their strategies or how they are funded? For those of us that are interested in true human liberation the issue is acute. We have to recognize that the overthrow of a dictator is not enough, it is just a step in the work to be done.

One key problem is the role of the international community. The IMF a Britain in solidarity with South Africa and the World Bank moves in already before the dust of the regime collapse has settled. They offer loans and support, but with conditions and terms that make the new regime prisoner to the present global financial world order. This is not easy to deal with. Also a revolutionary regime needs to pay the salaries of the state employees and the money needs to come from somewhere ...

The “deep state” is difficult to get rid of. Behind every regime (that fails) there is a social, political and economic elite structure that has evolved over the centuries. They are able to influence the dynamic, especially in a situation when there is disunity and tensions within the opposition. It seems the courts, the military and the state apparatus together with the business sector are to be able to transform the revolution in their interests.

What we need is an unarmed liberation movement that addresses the ‘deep change’ of society, rather than (only) the quick fix of regime change. But what does that involve and how could it be done?

Gandhi proposed a ‘constructive program’ and emphasized that it was more important to liberation than resistance, but few within the Indian anticolonial movement understood or agreed with him. Is that what is needed?

Some propose that a nonviolent resistance movement need to have a more sophisticated and diverse strategy, more of training and preparation, in order to be effective. Few movements have more than a rudimentary knowledge of nonviolent theory and strategy. They are pragmatists and look for what is available, and trainings are difficult to carry out during repressive situations. Strategies evolve according to lived experience of what works and what does not work. And who is able to convince a repressed population that they should not hurry and not focus on how to get rid of the hated regime? Who is able to convince people that they have to work on what society they want and develop new institutions before they are ready to resist?

Often oppositional movements are surprised of the victory when it suddenly comes. Suddenly the momentum is there, people are on the streets, and the pressure builds up and the regime falls. A revolution happened! Then the difficulties begin (again). What kind of society is it people want and how is it going to be constructed? How to form the ruling alliances and manage the tensions, different interests and aspirations?

No surprise
US in solidarity with East Timor then that after a time of infighting between oppositional groups and fractions, after economic decline and political insecurity and international pressures, people start to long for the strong leaders that are able to create stability and progress…. Like in Egypt today that elects the military coup general in a free election, and where political apathy spreads. No wonder that there is a moment when people get tired of never ending protests and unfinished processes of negotiations.

The challenges:
Basicallly the challenge is to find ways of how to build a sustainable society after a regime change that is (at least more) just, democratic, developed and secure for humans and their rights:

To deal with the divisions after a regime change (the old elites, the different social/ethnic groups and earlier tensions, etc.)
To find the resources and finances to run the country after regime change without being hostage to IMF and the World Bank (very few countries have succeeded to avoid the power of these finance institutions and their pressures of “liberalization”)
To prevent a counterrevolution, return to old politics or fear of (more) change in society
To make new alliances within and outside of the community in order to stabilize the revolution and get the needed support (Cuba as an example, had to forge ties with a whole set of new countries and stakeholders in order to survive when the US and some right wing Latin American countries decided to isolate and boycott)

Punishing the crimes and criminals of the previous regime and/or reconciling a society? (There is most likely a limit to how much criminal proceedings a society might take before renewed tensions arising or risks of civil war evolve. Many countries tend to not punish much at all, not making rule of law powerful and letting old elites and criminals be, even giving them seats in the new regime alliance)

How to avoid that the eruption of opposition against a repressive regime evolves into a chaos of different strategies by different groups and even a civil war situation? (There are those both inside and outside that might take advantage of a stalemate and existing opening, as in the civil war in Syria.)

The theme
The challenges for nonviolent and antimilitarist struggles is to find ways to not just resist and counter the violent actors and structure of a present situation, but to take into account what could be done in order to avoid getting into an even more difficult situation later, when the regime control collapse and the existing elites mobilise their forces out of fear, revenge and attempts of fighting out the insecurity of a new situation.

It is basically about understanding that it is not enough to overthrow the old regime. The regime comes from somewhere, and its institutional roots and forces are not gone just because their (present) leader(s) are killed, imprisoned, absconded somewhere abroad. There was a reason for a particular configuration of social, economic, military, judicial and political forces to settle for a certain regime and to uphold it, despite their internal tensions and various interests, and in a new situation, with the (perhaps) unwilling acceptance of a (violent or nonviolent) regime change, there is a new territory to control and fight out, new
alliances to make, and interests to protect. These elites have always had international connections, and these flows of resources do not stop just because a dictator is falling down. Basically, some of these elites will see a new force to make alliance with (as the business elites, IMF/WB and ‘international community’ did in the new South Africa, when ANC came to power), while others will look for other ways to restore and reconstructed version of the old regime (like in Thailand repeated times), or we might get in influx from opportunistic violent resistance groups that use the revolutionary opening to their own interests (as in Syria).

Partly the problem is, of course, a matter of how to conduct postrevolutionary governance, but partly, and that is our concern in this theme group: it is a matter of how you conduct the resistance while in opposition. Are there differences in how you can and should make the resistance in order to prevent or lessen the risk of new catastrophes after the regime change?

In that sense the theme group works on the question on the question of how to do the resistance. It is about the possibilities of going beyond mere resistance. If resistance is possible to conduct in a way that also builds the solidarity and alliances needed for the time after change.

To run a country/community has its particular challenges: to regularly paying the salaries of those that work for the government, to deal with conflict issues (in a different and more fair way), to deal with the compensations of past crimes and violations, to forge (new) alliances with other states and business sectors, to secure law and order and human safety, to stop those that take advantage of the power vacuum and tries to forge criminal activities, etc. etc

South Africa in solidarity with Zimbabwe
Among those that perhaps can be seen as having done their struggle differently are, for example MST and the Zapatistas. They belong to the Latin American autonomist tradition, the political trend that refuses to take over state power, and instead tries to forge less dependent societies, regenerating their own resources, and build a different society irrespective of what regime that formally controls the country. In a way that is a rejection of the whole idea of regime change. But where are those that have done their transition differently and in a way that is inspiring us to learn? Cuba? Certainly not India. But perhaps there are things to learn from South Africa? In terms of a political revolution they have quickly and amazing quickly, consolidated their liberal democracy. However, in other respects they must be seen as mostly a failure, or...?

Working on the theme
What is the role of the constructive program? To Gandhi it was the most important aspect of the struggle. To build your own institutions and organizations, the capacities to run schools, media, production, economic activity, political decision making, yes, even cleaning of waste in the community. However, few within the Indian liberation movement understood or appreciated this effort. Most felt it was something that would be easier to do once the British were gone, and the state power in the hands of a domestically elected government. But was it? Was it easier or more difficult? What models of development and governance were developed and sustained? What leadership existed, on a national, state and local level? In our discussion we have an ongoing illustration and give examples of challenges and possibilities from West Papua.

What other cases of ongoing struggles or post-regime change situations do we have, from where we can learn?

Questions and problems to discuss:
What alliances matter for forging a strong opposition?
Is it the same kind of alliances that are needed in order to govern and develop after a regime change?
Could the alliances be forged in a way that serves both purposes?
What kind of resistance strategies are needed to effectively fight the repression and authoritarian regime?
Is it the same strategies that are needed to govern and develop the society towards a more just, democratic and rights-based society?
Could the way and forms of resistance adapt to the needs of governance and development already during the struggle?
What kind of models of alliances, regimes, governance and development are celebrated and evolving in the oppositional movement? Could they be refined, tried out and trained on somehow during the struggle?
Should the same kind of people and groups that have been successful in overthrowing a regime be the ones governing after the revolution?
What kind of lessons could be drawn from the present situation of regime changes, challenges and possibilities?
Is a negotiated outcome, where the regime and the opposition agree on a transition process, better for creating a more just, democratic and rights-based society, or is it rather more difficult (since the elites are still within the transition, having a stake and forging the terms of change)?

There have been some 30-50 regime changes today, as a result of unarmed popular movements. There seems to exist a tendency to have less risk of civil war and more chance of liberal democracy if the struggle is clearly nonviolent in character. But what could we learn from the differences in outcome?

Our theme group will start by making an inventory of the experiences and resources of knowledge among the participants, and then work on the theme through a problem presentation, and discussions and evaluations of experiences in different contexts. A recurrent illustration will be the struggle in West Papua. Our aim is to develop a number of recommendations and questions for movements to consider, and ideas of projects that could help us understand possible solutions.

Stellan Vinthagen
Economy: coming out of crisis?

The world has known dozens of economic crises over the centuries. Among the great weaknesses of capitalism is its inability to steady itself, its tendency to generate bubbles that burst with terrible effects. Its strength seems to be its surprising ability to recover – and usually without major structural reform. The banking collapse of 2007-9, followed by the Eurozone crisis, has had severe economic and social consequences especially in the Global North, leaving unemployed great swathes of the population (especially among the young) notably in the peripheral states of the EU.

It can be argued that the financial crisis and its aftermath did not greatly affect developing countries, for several reasons: Africa is less integrated in the world market. Latin America and Asia seemed better prepared, since they experienced crisis before. Latin America’s banking regulations are very strict, which is something most Western countries have yet to learn.

On the other hand, with the financial meltdown, other dimensions of the global systemic crisis—notably environment, food and inequality - became more visible. However it has been the political uprisings, notably in the Arab world, that have attracted the headlines over the last 5 years.

Meanwhile globalization continues its seemingly inexorable course: The wealth of the 1% richest people in the world amounts to $110 trillion, 65 times as much as the poorest half of the world. (Oxfam Report 2014: Working For TheFew)

What is disturbing is that the whole upheaval has noticeably not led to mass revolt (outside the MENA region), nor increased support for the left, whose Keynesian approach to reflating the economy might have been expected to win out over those preaching market-led solutions. As a result, right-wing governments in the West are now presiding over a mild improvement in the aggregate numbers, notably in terms of output, and taking the political credit. But this is not translating into a significant drop in unemployment – partly because of the inexorable march of automation and restructuring in industries who no longer need so many skilled workers. What new jobs there have been often been generated at the lower skill levels of the system, and/or are related to developing economies where labour costs are low.

**Question: What models do we have of an alternative perspective: union militancy, workers’ control, social enterprise, coops, community business, alternative currencies, barter systems, etc?**

Ecology: climate, the last chance
While recovery from this multiple crisis has taken the primary place in public debate, the much darker shadow of climate change has gradually come to occupy a central place in political discourse. The realisation is finally dawning that the survival of the biosphere as a liveable system is at stake and that far too much time has been wasted in the crucial years when the levels of CO2 emissions could have been curbed by embarking on a low-carbon economic system. The series of COP meetings have been essentially a long chain of missed opportunities, with next year’s COP 21 (Paris) offering a kind of “last chance saloon” for the world’s governments to cut a deal on CO2 emissions which is not just a lowest-common-denominator compromise but which represents a truly radical socio-economic transformation.

How to achieve this turnaround in 18 months is a mighty challenge indeed for the progressive movements. Yet it is one we have no choice but to grasp.

**Question: How to build effective alliances with environmental movements**

The military: as greedy as ever
Meanwhile militarism is alive and well. Despite the significant drop in resources available to western governments over the last 5 years, and therefore small reductions in national defence budgets, global military spending remains more or less at the highest levels in history; $1,700 bn according to SIPRI. Twenty-five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, this might seem hard to explain if one fails to factor in three key driving forces:

- the permanent lobbying power of the major arms industries and related bureaucracies and institutions (Military-industrial-et… complex);
- the replacement of the USSR as primary adversary of the US and NATO by a) Islamist terrorism, b) a fast-rising China, and c) Russia (again) under an autocratic Putin. Thus 100 years on from 1914 we face the prospect of major war (both interstate and asymmetrical) on 3 fronts.
- potential (and actual) armed conflicts over all key economic resources: oil, gas, water, minerals, precious metals, rare earths, land, fishing zones and undersea resources.

For all 3 reasons, the arms industry (not only in the West) can rub its hands in anticipation of major sales far into the future.

**Question: Does militarism have an Achilles heel and if so where?**

**Connections**
There are a number of important connections between the three areas: economy, ecology and conflict.

It is principally the economy that is destroying the ecology.

Much conflict is caused by inequality and struggles for resources. The system appears insatiable. Its managers lack social vision.

The military system diverts enormous public and private resources that could be used to fix both the economy and the ecology. At the same time it causes huge damage to both when let loose in actual warfare; and ultimately has the potential to destroy all life on earth through nuclear destruction.

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**Responses**
How have progressive people’s movements responded to this moment of multiple crisis? Here is a schematic analysis of some major political movements and trends. Naturally there are mass overlaps, possibilities for collaboration, as well as exceptions.

**Charity**
Food banks…increased role for religious groups of all types.

**Mutual aid**
Traditional credit unions, coops, workers’ takeovers of failing companies. Some new forms linked to Indignés etc.

**Labour struggle**
Traditional strikes for improved wages and conditions, demonstrations against austerity, appeals for regulation of banks etc. In the wake of the Thatcher/New Labour decades they are much reduced in membership and organising/negotiating power.

**Social democracy**
Managing the system, riding the tiger, trying (unsuccessfully) to regulate the banks. Losing popularity and in most places elections too. Corruption scandals (including MPs) don’t help. Also failure to mobilise against populism and the Far Right.

**Leninists**
Much reduced everywhere, except arguably Latin America. Torn between unsuccessful attempts to win in electoral races and re-building their popular base through labour struggle. But their history and style of operation elicits suspicion among potential allies, and the historical model they represent is bankrupt.

**Far left**
See Leninism above. Some limited success eg Die Linke (Germany), NPA (France) but Trotskyists et al are often perceived as both marginal and manipulative of genuine people’s struggles. Sect-like behaviour doesn’t help.

**Greens**
What was once a welcome breath of fresh air in politics is now seen mostly as just another set of wheeler-dealing politicians vainly trying to control the great beast of globalisation. Compromised in the eyes of pacifists by willingness to endorse armed intervention, eg Kosovo. In most places marginal to the big political decisions.

**Anarchists/libertarian**
Central role in Indignés/Occupy. Local direct action struggles and protests of all types. Internet activism, hackers, wikileaks/Snowden etc. Strong link with environmental movements and actions eg anti-fracking, anti-airports, highways and dam-building, climate camps, anti-racist actions, solidarity with undocumented migrants… The challenge is making and sustaining links to the mainstream political system. Suffer from problems of transience, marginality and ineffectiveness eg Occupy. Like other political families, it relies on its avant-garde ideas permeating (or ‘pollinating’) society, helping to shift the discourse (eg ‘the 1% v the 99%’).

**World Social Forums**
Once seen as a dynamic new form of local and transnational organising, a horizontal civil society space, has given rise to great hopes and also great disappointment. Funding is running out and political energy too. Inspiring but unwieldy. Will there be another one?

**NGOs - associations**
A vast biodiversity of competing and cooperating organisations, often run and supported by ‘refugees’ disillusioned with the various political movements listed above. Some are clearly linked to parties, religious bodies, charismatic leaders, and many are funded by govs. Some specific successes (eg landmines…) but limited precisely by their specificity and narrow focus – unable to mount a full blown challenge to the dominant system.

**Question:** Where do conference participants place themselves in the above system, if at all? Do they have different political perceptions of the left-landscape? Where are the most positive elements and with whom do they ally themselves?

Choosing our roads, finding our actions
So how do we pull all these dimensions together? Many books have been written analysing these subjects in far greater detail than we have the scope to consider here. We offer the following observations:

We recognise that the WRI locates itself broadly in the anarco-pacifist-feminist corner of the political map; not that all in the wider circle would necessarily accept that label, but it comes closest to defining what the movement has stood for over close to 100 years.

We are not in a movement, nor at in time in history, in which setting up rigid doctrines and programmes for all to follow is acceptable; the essence of the libertarian approach is that each individual and constituent organisation / branch must find their own way to defining their analysis, priorities and methods of work. The key lies in effective networking and mutual support.

One of the main conclusions we can draw from the type of analysis sketched out above is that none of the responses to capitalist crisis listed has proved successful. Certainly not in overturning the established order and replacing it with a sustainable progressive alternative. A case can be made for certain regimes in Latin America (Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador…) and among the Arab Spring outcomes probably Tunisia can be regarded as some kind of success. But each of these examples could be questioned from several points of view; and each has grown from a particular political background which is not necessarily found elsewhere. Given the immensity of the task, and of the power of the vested interests ranged against us, it is no surprise that we find ourselves facing various types of heroic failure. But history has shown (Cuba?) that even heroic failures can lead to victories later on…It is also a question of how we choose to live. Radical non-violent politics implies an engagement far beyond that of casting a vote for a candidate or party that we think will help bring about change. It implies making choices about the whole range of everyday issues, from jobs and living arrangements to the way we use our resources and talents… ‘Better to die fighting for freedom then be a prisoner all the days of your life’ said Bob Marley.

**Question:** Is the idea of heroic failure unacceptably pessimistic? What is the life-philosophy behind our politics?

Finally…

What is important is that:

we increase our impact by improved forms of cooperation at all geographical levels;

we communicate our projects and share the lessons of what we undertake

we reach out as widely as we can to the societies in which we find ourselves

we prefigure in our lives and work the society we want to bring about

we inspire each other through creativity, courage, persistence and other positive qualities.

*Colin Archer*
The war business

War profiteering has a long and loathsome history. However, in the age of neo-liberalism - during which large-scale privatisation has been taking place - war profiteers have found new opportunities to rake in enormous profits. In particular, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the launching of wars of aggression by the US and its allies, both military and non-military corporations have enriched themselves to an extent never seen in history. For example, Halliburton made $39.5 billion as a result of no-bid contracts, gross overcharging and worker exploitation during the war against Iraq. There is a view that Dick Cheney, who had been Halliburton’s CEO until 2000 and was US vice president at the time of the invasion of Iraq, supported the war in order to rescue his struggling oil company.

War profiteers come in many guises such as arms dealers, commodity dealers, politicians, scientists in the service of the military, and civilian and military contractors. According to Stephen Lendman, “War profiteers are in a class by themselves. They thrive on war. They depend on it. Their businesses require conflicts and instability to prosper. The more ongoing, the greater the potential profits.” (“Making the world safe for war profiteers,” Global Research, December 16, 2013.)

The victims of war profiteers are not only the citizens of countries against whom war is waged, but also the taxpayers in the aggressor country. By playing on the security fears of citizens and by appealing to their sense of nationalism, war profiteers achieve their ambitions with relative ease. Recall Tony Blair’s claim that the Iraqi military was capable of launching chemical and biological weapons within 45 minutes of receiving an order.

How can we put an end to war profiteering? The obvious answer is to abolish war, but this is an unrealisable goal for now. Our challenge then, is to find creative ways to oppose war profiteers, and to expose their greed and corruption. Most importantly, it is necessary to relentlessly campaign for demilitarisation at home and abroad which would deprive war profiteers of their undeserved bounties.

To a very large extent, wars can only be waged and sustained through public support. Warmongering politicians - in collaboration with the corporate media - manipulate public opinion to promote their ulterior agendas. Despite having been hoodwinked repeatedly through propaganda and appeals to patriotism, the military-industrial media complex continues to successfully fleece taxpayers and use the youth as cannon fodder. An important factor that enabled both the British and US empires to grow and survive for so long was the brainwashing of their citizens. Our task is to explore ways to encourage citizens to stand up against an uncritical acceptance of war rhetoric spouted by politicians and media, who are in reality the agents of war profiteers. In other words, the reach of War Resisters’ International needs to be extended globally, so that the organisation has a presence and influence well beyond its present spread.

On 15 February 2003 an estimated ten million protesters took to the streets in many countries to oppose the invasion of Iraq. Such mobilisation showed us that there was strong, global opposition against war, but the decision-makers/war profiteers were not dissuaded from their course of action. We need to consider what lessons have been learnt from our past experiences, and what can be done to be more effective in opposing those who profit from war.

Gurvart Govindjee and Seungho Park

The militarisation of youth and how to counter it

The images of war, armed conflict and organized violence worldwide can take different forms, but the one thing they almost always have in common are the young men and women filling the lines of military and paramilitary organizations. In both countries that still have conscription, and countries with professional militaries, governments, education systems, the militaries themselves and even privat companies and organizations, are all actively promote militaristic values, both to fill the ranks of armed forces, and to legitimize the use of organized violence socially.

Soldier teaching in a school in Israel. Credit: New Profile

In conscript societies, even though conscription is enforced by law, there are still great efforts to militarize youth. In Israel for example, much of the effort is concentrated in schools. Soldiers going in and out of classrooms explaining about units and positions, teachers being measured according to the enlistment rate of their students, principals promoting their schools by showing-off the high rate of combat soldiers or officers that graduated from the schools, and ministers of education that out-right declare that preparation for military service is one of the goals of the education system.

According to a survey done by WRI in 32 countries (both with conscript and professional militaries), in 18 of them there’s an official collaboration between the ministry of education and the military, and in the majority of countries with no mandatory service, the military does overt recruitment in schools. But militarization of youth doesn’t start and end within the walls of education systems.

While more and more countries in the world abolish conscription and move to a professional army there are plenty of other, more and less official ways to militarize youth without laws forcing
While most youth around the world have never heard a gun fired, and killed someone in a computer game? While most youth in the world might never have seen a military uniform, how many of us have ever seen camouflage cloths presented as just another form of fashion? How many of us played with toy guns? Militaries also find more and more ways to be appealing to youth not only through traditional violent-militaristic values. The promise of adventure, upholding values of democracy of even gender equality, and finally, the promise of personal gain, whether it be by subsidizing education or by promising a lasting career. In the survey done by WRI on the militarization of youth it was found that in 20 of the 32 countries surveyed, this idea that the military will lead to future employment or study opportunities is one of the strongest selling points used by all militaries, conscript and professional as one. Even when many of these promises are based on lies, this rhetoric targeting youth who still can't form strong opinions or explore different horizons, especially that underprivileged group of different societies, seems to work. Young men and women enlist on the pretence of these false promises and social values that push them to do so.

But militarization of youth is not reserved only to militaries. This is also true to countries in which strong para-military groups operate. As an example, while Kenya is considered a Non conscript country, militarization takes a totally different form where the common denominator is the false notion that the use of force is necessary for effective leadership and control. It has been noted before in many quotas that such a notion is in fact the premise of militarization. The existence of the same comes at the expense of rule of law mechanisms and democracy, as well as the realization of human rights. As witnessed in the Kenyan situation the architects of militarization are not always put in place by the state. In fact, there are instances where the state "is missing in action" and this opens space for militarization by groups, such as the militia groups in Kenyan informal settlements like Mungiki and the likes. Similar situations are witnessed Young people and members of the Mungiki, Nairobi d in many sectors that are considered disorganized and with gaps like the public transport, security and social service where these groups initially come in to feel the gaps but eventually turn into militias and dreaded terror groups that extort money from residents in the name of protection/security, garbage collection e.t.c. The challenge however, is the fact that militarization makes its mark not only on political and legal systems, but also on social behavior. Frequent threats and harassments are therefore symptomatic of the breakdown of social relationships as well as the institutions of rule of law and democracy. In these circumstances, the above mentioned threats are accompanied by extrajudicial killings, physical harassment of all types among other vices.

So what can we do about this?

Many anti-militarist activists around the world are finding different ways to counter the militarization of youth, and the more creative we are, the wider the affect we can have.

Working on school, municipal and regional levels to try to demand military-free education has been the main focus of some groups, others have been working on designing and changing computer games. Some activists focus on creating alternative spaces for youth to escape to and be able to criticize and challenge the direction their society is forcing them towards, and some focus on giving non-violent trainings to provide youth with an alternative way of reacting to everyday situations in which violence might otherwise be the default. Some groups focus on highlighting the use of militaristic symbols and soldiers in advertisement, and some in exposing the real conditions of soldiers as opposed to the one shown in military advertisements. An intentional day of action for military free education, that will be expanded into a week of action this year, has been an opportunity for many of these initiatives to come together.

In the Kenyan case, as an example of the above mentioned threats are accompanied by extrajudicial killings, physical harassment of all types among many others, most young people targeted for militarization are ones with minimal levels of education. Architects of militarization ride on their vulnerability due to lack of basic education and exposure to other ways and means of doing things to lure them into this system which eventually becomes the only thing they know and must remain as such lest they turn around or take off. In response, offering or ensuring accessibility to basic education is a method to counter militarization. Education and the exposure that comes with it introduces youths to alternative and better ways of living offering them a non-militarized path in life. Coaching, mentorship and accompaniment trough informal but tailor made dialogue processes can also play important roles in deconstructing the old notions of militarization. The Kenyan constitution 2010 opens space for citizens’ participation in governance and it is an alternative way of engaging young people in other means of building the nation.

Citizen participation forums for a while now have been an alternative way of making sure that young people are involved in local and national process that are aimed at bringing on board their contribution to development, peace and reconciliation and governance at it were, and therefore they slowly but steadily become part of crucial decision making processes. This come out as an alternative way of making sure young people are constructively engaged in nation building as opposed to being part of militarization activities.

By highlighting the affects militarization has on youth, on women, on the poor, the uneducated, on LGBTQ, and on other marginalized communities either targeted by the military for enlistment, or becoming targets for violence in their own society due to militaristic values, we can try to challenge all of these.

Sahar Vardi and Dola Nicholas Olouch

1 Mungiki is a Kikuyu (largest tribe in Kenya) word that means a united people or multitude or mass. It's a group that mostly consists of young people. Mungiki operates most extensively in Nairobi's informal settlement as essentially constituting a street gang or a criminal network that contributes to, and feeds off of, an environment plagued by a state of perpetual security crisis. It is said that it originally rejected westernization and everything that was believed to be theirs including Christianity and therefore wanted to practice the African culture.
Daily violence

Daily violence is a form of violence that is very difficult to endure and even harder to explain. With violent and violent actions become a part of the everyday life, when people are unable to live without fear of being threatened, beaten up, expelled from their homes or even killed, we can then diagnose daily violence.

Daily violence can be perpetuated either by the forces of the state - when the police or the military are the ones who apply the violence against their own citizens. We can also talk about the violence perpetrated by the para-military groups, on the “other side” of the law, but usually deeply connected with at least some structures of the state. Daily violence is also the one applied by the criminal groups that control vast territories in many countries, leading some of them to be called “failed states”. For many millions of women worldwide, it is violence on the streets or in their homes, at the hands of intimate partners or strangers. The other forms of daily violence mentioned are also deeply ‘gendered’, in that their impacts is imbalanced between women and men differently, including sexual violence against women by militaries, paramilitaries and guerrillas.

Its victims are usually the ones that are not in position to defend themselves, so here we are not talking about an armed conflict. This is not the case. This kind of violence is unidirectional towards the minority groups (ethnic, sexual, political...) or towards vulnerable groups such as migrants, people with low incomes, etc. Also, as its victims we need to include the activists: human rights activists, peace activists, ecologists, and all other who act or just try to raise awareness against the violence and its instigators, where we also need to include journalists. However, daily violence suffered by certain groups is well hidden, or is simply of no interest for the majority of the population. For example, the LGBTI community in many African countries is under a constant threat, and its members not only suffer everyday discrimination but are also murdered because of their sexual preferences, while the majority decides to turn their blind eye on it. Members of the indigenous communities in Latin America and elsewhere in the world also face very harsh and violent treatment by the authorities, while the majoritarian “mestizo” and “criollo” population pretends like it’s not aware of it.

In Central America, El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala, are some of the countries that have an enormous problem with gangs (Las Maras and others) who not only control the street business, but also take part of the earnings of all small businesses, even from those who make not more than 50 S/US a month. Those who refuse to pay them usually end up dead. People who press charges against them usually end up leaving their homes in fear of revenge, and many end up as refugees in Mexico and elsewhere. Those who are forced to flee also risk their lives during the entire trajectory that's usually northward as the migration routes are also controlled by the criminals. Mexico's borders, both the southern as well as the northern are among the world's most dangerous places. In Ciudad Juarez on the very border with the US, due to the huge amount of murdered and disappeared girls and woman, a new common crime called “femicide” had to be added to the criminal law.

In Mexico, the war between the state and the drug cartels causes more than 10,000 victims every year. More then 2 million people are considered to be internally displaced in Mexico due to the activities of the criminal groups. The crime has also infiltrated in the structures of the state, including the police, and the distrusts of the people led to creation of the “self-defence” forces, consisting of ordinary people who decided to arm themselves in order to obtain the protection that the state failed to provide them. Constant clashes between these groups and the criminals made violence an everyday experience in many (most?) parts of the country.

When the state decides to allow big corporations to excavate on large territories populated by the rural or indigenous communities which oppose these projects, we know we’re facing a situation that will cause a rise in daily and “failed states”. In other situations where states actually use the tactics of implementing, or allowing the increase of daily violence in certain areas in order to break popular resistance and pave the way for the corporations. Then, we have workers rights which are being violated in many places and in many ways, while the states use their forces on daily bases in order to maintain the unjust economic relations.

Unfortunately, our experience tell us that the daily violence usually enryst in the social tissue, and any attempt to remove it requires much more effort than it would have taken for its prevention. However there are examples of effective struggles against the daily violence and it’s our aim to make them known, learn from them, and see how can the experiences from one context be adapted and applied in another.

Igor Sekse

Military alliances and military intervention

Looking back over the history of Africa from the arrival of slave traders from the Western and Arab world, external armed powers continuously ran military expeditions all over the continent, in search of black people to export as slaves. These armed powers, mostly acting under the orders of royal houses and noble families from Western and Eastern empires, were militarily in competition in Africa and fighting each other for the “black gold”: black men, women and children. Most of these slave traders, their employers and sponsors from the royal societies in the USA respectively in Portugal, Spain, Sweden, France (Europe), Brazil or the Arab world enrich themselves, industrialise their countries and build their modern cities from this trade in barbarity. Some of the commanders who ran these murderous military expeditions to gain control over Africa in the nineteenth century are still being celebrated as heroes in their native countries today. One of this notorious figure or mass murder is for example Henry Morton Stanley, the beloved among the royalties of Europe and noble societies of the Americas.

In 1885, the former slave traders from the West and East committed to joined forces instead of fighting each others over Africa, and convened the “Berlin Congo-Conference” in Germany, in order to form military alliances along colonial lines after an arbitrarily partition of the black continent without consideration of existing traditional and socio-cultural societies or regions. The real retrogression of Africa began with the ratification of “the General Act of the Congo-Conference of Berlin”, on 26 February 1885, by representatives of the President of the USA, European and Ottoman empires. After banning the slave trade, these superpowers agreed to secure free access into lands and waters in Africa in order to get control over resources in this continent for “the development of the commerce and of civilizations in certain regions” of the black continent, and “to assure all the people the advantages of free navigation upon the two principal African rivers which empty into the Atlantic ocean.”, With the brutal partition of Africa they promised “to increase the moral and material wellbeing of the indigenous populations.” But, as their colonial militaries arrived in the continent, the apocolypse also began for the Africans. The so-called civilized from Europe and their allies exposed themselves as the most barbaric people, as enemies of humanity. To extend their system of war, they formed alliances with corrupt local traditional leaders and with small ethnic groups. They created segregated societies all over Africa, divided between “militarily allied local traditional leaders and their ethnic groups”.

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populations, who were resistant to external powers, looters and murders. At the same time, the colonial powers built in the midst of African societies a kind of local "intellectual elite" in different cities, who could get some high school skills and they later qualified as "assimilated persons". While the rural populations were barred from schools and then dubbed "indigenous people" or "the brutes". This is the conflict line designed by the former slave traders and later colonial military powers, which is hurting the African continent since then until today.

In the middle of 1950s, Africa entered into a process of independence. In reaction to the permanent resistance by rural populations, during centuries and mostly without arms, "local intellectual elites" or the so-called "assimilated persons" took the lead of the liberation struggles in Africa. In the most cases, some "assimilated persons" turned into other military powers as China, Cuba and the former Eastern Soviet Union for alliances. It was now the beginning of the Cold War in Africa, with the Western colonial powers looking for to maintain the total control of natural resources of the black continent and the Soviets to extend its communist empire there. Both imperial powers were fighting for influence over Africa and its leadership; the dream of African independence did not become a reality and turned into a nightmare for the majority of its populations, with uncontested civil wars, more crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity, permanent starvation and extreme poverty.

After the failure of independence, and external powers acting to destabilize different African countries, most African leaders redesign their policies and formed new military alliances. Among their allies were former colonial powers, as well as new ones like China, Brazil, India, Japan, North Korea, South Korea, Israel, Pakistan, Iran, Emirates Arab United and Turkey. In this constellation, the corruption of the elite became a means of influencing local political leadership from outside in order to defend the interests of these external powers. Those leaders who tried to resist the established military power in Africa, were brutally assassinated. The case of Emery Patrice Lumumba [Congo independence leader and the first elected prime minister of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who was deposed after just 12 weeks and then killed by firing squads is still in our memory. Some of these external powers are very hostile to each others when competing for natural resources or other issues outside Africa, but share interests in a single country. There are many military alliances existing, from the past to today, and others are under way. Taking a look on existing military alliances throughout Africa, we find deals and cooperation aimed at gaining influence over the continent, which also enable the external powers to get free access in raw materials or Rare Earths at a low-cost. Through the militarisation of African countries, these external powers instigate violence and wage wars in order to maintain the status quo. It's a continuation of the spirit of the 1885 Berlin-sscopic Conference, putting the plundering in the centre of politics.

Among old military alliances existing in Africa, we should consider the US-Belgian coalition on DR Congo, which went back to the 1940s at the beginning of the Cold War II, as the Americans entered into partnership with the former colonial power to get free access to uranium for the production of the first atomic bomb, dropped later on May 1945 in both Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima to force the Japanese to surrender. U.S.A. have kept their eyes on the uranium site in the DRCongo, and from this US-Belgian military alliance resulted the strong arm of the CIA. The Belgians have been working closely with the CIA, the Belgian's secret service and Mobutu Sese Seko, who seized the power in 1961 after his contribution to the killing of Patrice Lumumba. Mobutu Sese Seko enter into the modern African history as a notorious and most repressive dictator, who stayed in power for 36 years forming also several strategic military alliances with Germany, Israel, China, the Apartheid regime of South Africa, France and UK among others. For many of these external powers, the dictator Mobutu was a kind of frontman in the destabilizing policy of the Central African Region and the guarantee for the free access to raw materials like cobalt, copper, diamonds, and gold. Countries like Germany, USA, Belgium, France and Israel supplied arms as well as military training to this dictator, which Mobutu used over the years to run war games against neighbour countries like Angola or supporting the former Hutu-regime in Rwanda. With the emergence of extremism in this Hutu-Regime, backed by some Western countries, the world witnessed another human tragedy, with the genocide of hundred thousands of Tutsi and moderate Hutu populations in 1994. The Hutu-regime was thrown out and the Tutsi-led armed forces seized power. Some years later, in 1997, the regime of the dictator Mobutu Sese Seko also collapsed after the march of a new military alliance between Tutsi-led power and Congolese exiled resistance, an alliance which opened the to chaos, which has affected the region of Central Africa since. From then, many different African countries formed military alliances in the struggle for the DRCongo, a country at a permanent risk of partition, with the president of Rwanda acting now as a frontman of the external powers from Western and Eastern countries.

Among all military alliances set up in the last two-three decades in Africa, AFRICOM (US Africa Command) is the largest one, and includes Special Operations, covert drone attacks and "Security Cooperation Programs", as well as close partnership with the majority of countries in the continent. Founded on 2007 by the US President George W. Bush, AFRICOM claims to play a geo-strategic role to promote security as well as to be in charge of 53 African countries, except Egypt, which has a special military partnership with the USA since more than three decades. With Headquarter located in Germany, city of Stuttgart-Moehringen, Africom set up different subordinate military commands operating from several countries, namely the "US Army Africaf" from Böblingen, Ramstein (both in Germany) and from Vicenza (Italy). It's very important to mention that Germany and Italy are playing a key role in many US special operations and covert wars in Africa. In 2011, from its subordinate Command in Vicenza (Italy), Africom took the lead of military actions by a coalition between France and UK against the dictator Muammar al-Kaddafhi in Libya, who later was brutally killed, with the USA and Germany's secret service supplying a support to its Western allies.

At the French military "Camp Lemonier" in Djibouti, East Africa, the US Command Africom set up its biggest military base in the black continent, from where the US Army Africa runs all special operations and supplies its forces on the war against terrorism over Somalia and Jemsen as well as the Indian Ocean. In addition, Africom maintains strong alliances with following countries with small military bases in Niamey (Niger) supporting French and German troops in Mali, in Ethiopia (Arba Minch) for Drones actions over Somalia, Seychelles (Victoria) for Drones war over East Africa, and in Uganda (Entebbe) for Drones and Special operations in South Sudan, Central Africa Republic (CAR) and Eastern Region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The US-Uganda military partnership enabled also the USA to set up its NSA-Centre, as well as a small unit of the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), operating from this African country through the continent. Beyond this, there are many other military alliances. But it makes sense to focus only on some of it. Most of these alliances base upon supplying arms or war equipments and manufacturing plants for the local production of small arms & ammunition, permanent military trainings and warfare know-how while some others of these external powers are boosting their economies through arms and drug trafficking in Africa.

Jan van Crieinge and Emanuel Matondo
Nonviolence trainings: A prospect for social change?

Ever asked yourself the question: what does it take to have successful nonviolence training? Nonviolence - people power for social change - takes many forms. Likewise, nonviolence training may take different approaches to provide individuals and groups tools to challenge social injustice. Techniques used by nonviolence trainers may include a variety of exercises: brainstorming, working in small groups, role plays, presentations, discussions, audiovisuals - the list is endless. As trainers conduct nonviolence workshops, the main goal is to develop a better understanding of all aspects of nonviolence through questioning patterns of violence, i.e. hierarchy. The trainings may provide grounds for needs assessments at many levels, to create awareness on vast number of subjects such as gender/queer, to analyze situations/relations/dynamics, to build up strategies, to organize campaigns, to provide persons to prepare her/himself for direct actions. Nonviolence trainings may create energy, reinforce group dynamics, provide concrete action plans that pushes them to take action against injustices.

Nonviolence trainings provide tools to strengthen groups, develop community spirit, where people learn to work better together to build strong movements.

The choice of exercises for any specific workshop may depend on the type of group asks for a training. It therefore calls for skills in group diagnosis. One needs to consider age, gender, language, education levels, and economic status, amongst other things. The theme and the length of the training may depend on the need of the group, the available resources, how urgent the issue is, the nature of the training – is it a basic training or an advanced level of training, a strategy planning training or a campaigning training? While questioning the power relations in the societies, the trainers at the same time need to consider power relations, especially emerge from gender, within the training group. It is clear that nonviolence training is no easy job. Developing a team of experienced and knowledgeable trainers/facilitators would create an atmosphere for empathy, good basis for discussion and thus fruitful outcomes.

For example in Kenya, it took concerted efforts of trainers from UK and local peace actors- to introduce the Turning the Tide programme, a fast-growing programme on nonviolence. It all started with a needs assessment after the 2007/8 post-election violence. Peace-implementing organizations had done much work to calm the situation, but there was a dire need to address the underlying issues that caused the repeated election violence. After the needs assessment, a concept paper was developed and the program designed. In 2010 the program was introduced to a team of identified resource people in western Kenya with great results. After an intensive two weeks training, participants were able to start thinking differently and slowly started to develop a keen interest in nonviolence campaigns. What followed was amazing. The trained resource people easily mobilized their communities and challenged some of the existing social injustices. Starting small, and pushing on until something happened, the informed and charged resource people were able to challenge bad leadership and, little by little, transformed communities to hold leaders accountable.

In one notable campaign, students in one of the public university wanted to demand for fair allocation of education bursary. A two-hour nonviolence training conducted by trained resource people made a big difference. The students were simply introduced to the nonviolence concept and taken through some of the nonviolence training exercises – such as nonviolence spectrum line, “an action is nonviolent if…” , the pillars of power, social speedometer among others. At night the students prepared to ensure that all adhered to nonviolence principles. The following day they marched to the local constituency office with a memorandum listing their demands. They sung religious songs to encourage themselves, carried posters explaining their issue and had documents to prove their case. Along the way they were joined by community members who were attracted by the way they conducted themselves and who were in support of the issue. At the end of the day they were given audience by local leaders who immediately responded to their grievances.

Agona Benard and Hülya Özpinar
Dealing with the past to promote peacebuilding

At the heart of the peacebuilding project is the identification of more effective ways of stabilizing and improving the livelihood and well-being of war-affected citizens. In 1992, the Agenda for Peace, published by the then United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, defined peacebuilding as the medium to long-term process of rebuilding war-affected communities. It defined peacebuilding as ‘action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse to conflict.’ Over time the definition of peacebuilding has progressively expanded to refer to integrated approaches to address violent conflict at different phases of the conflict cycle. At a fundamental level peacebuilding involves addressing the root causes of the conflict and enabling warring parties to continue to find solutions through negotiation and when necessary through mediation. These activities are ultimately striving to bring about the healing of a war-affected community through effectively dealing with the past and promoting reconciliation. Reconciliation, however, is not sustainable without socio-economic reconstruction and development. All of which cannot be done without the mobilization of resources. Peacebuilding is effectively a political activity but one that seeks to unify the judicial, social and economic spheres.

Peacebuilding in Context

At the heart of the peacebuilding project is the identification of more effective ways of stabilizing and improving the livelihood and well-being of war-affected citizens. In 1992, the Agenda for Peace, published by the then United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, defined peacebuilding as the medium to long-term process of rebuilding war-affected communities. It defined peacebuilding as ‘action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse to conflict.’ Over time the definition of peacebuilding has progressively expanded to refer to integrated approaches to address violent conflict at different phases of the conflict cycle. At a fundamental level peacebuilding involves addressing the root causes of the conflict and enabling warring parties to continue to find solutions through negotiation and when necessary through mediation. These activities are ultimately striving to bring about the healing of a war-affected community through effectively dealing with the past and promoting reconciliation. Reconciliation, however, is not sustainable without socio-economic reconstruction and development. All of which cannot be done without the mobilization of resources. Peacebuilding is effectively a political activity but one that seeks to unify the judicial, social and economic spheres.

Understanding dealing with the Past

Dealing with the past includes establishing processes of justice and redress as a means to promoting peacebuilding and reconciliation. In 1997, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (predecessor to the UN Human Rights Council) approved the Joint Principles on Combating Impunity which established the rights of victims and the obligations of states. The Joint Principles identify four key parallel processes that are necessary to mitigate against impunity, namely:

- the right to know;
- the right to justice;
- the right to reparations; and
- the guarantee of non-recurrence.

The processes are premised on confronting the atrocities of the past and undertaking certain judicial and quasi-judicial measures to safeguard against the potential recurrence of similar abuses in the future.

Some of the processes for dealing with the past fall under the rubric of the still contested concept of ‘transitional justice’. In particular, transitional justice seeks to advance processes and establish mechanisms of redress to confront the past and to address the key issues that have sustained political repression or fuelled conflict. Transitional justice seeks to address challenges that confront societies as they move from an authoritarian state to a form of democracy. More often than not such societies are emerging from a past of brutality, exploitation and victimisation. In this context, transitional justice does not seek to replace criminal justice, rather it strives to promote ‘a deeper, richer and broader vision of justice which seeks to confront perpetrators, address the needs of victims, and start a process of reconciliation and transformation towards a more just and humane society’.

The ultimate purpose of a process of transitional justice is to establish a quasi-judicial framework to undo the continuing effects of the past. South Africa remains an important model in this regard. At the heart of the South African transition was the need to deal with a past through procedures that were acknowledged and accepted by all. Interlocutors who were affected by the deep divisions of the past. It is also necessary not to lose sight of the fact that transitional justice is just that, a ‘transitional process’ and it should not be viewed as a permanent solution to addressing the atrocities of the past. It is rather a transient process that will have to give way to the rule of law and the restoration of a constitutional order that will manage and resolve the social, political and economic tensions within society. Bodies such as truth and reconciliation commissions and special courts are temporary and time-bound institutions and should not be considered as a permanent solution.

There are at least five components of dealing with the past through transitional justice proposed in a publication entitled Pieces of the Puzzle: Keywords on Reconciliation and Transitional Justice compiled by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, based in Cape Town, South Africa. These include:

- ensuring accountability in the fair administration of justice and restoring the rule of law;
- the use of non-judicial mechanisms to recover the truth, such as truth and reconciliation commissions;
- reconciliation in which a commonly agreed memory of past atrocities is acknowledged by those who created and implemented the unjust system as a prerequisite to promoting forgiveness and healing;
- the reform of institutions including the executive, judiciary and legislative branches of government as well as the security sector to ensure that a degree of trust is restored and bridges between members of society can be re-built;
- the issuing of reparations to victims who had suffered human rights violations including gender-based violence, as a way to remedy the harm suffered in the past.

Cultural Approaches to Dealing with the Past

Different cultures have developed their own models for promoting peace and reconciliation, as well as pursuing punitive justice. What is evident is that justice and reconciliation models that have been developed in one culture cannot be transplanted into another society. This suggests that each society has to determine which cultural approach to reconciliation is most likely to sustain peace and advance the cause of justice and redress for past violations. It is necessary for each culture to excavate the lessons that it can learn from its peacebuilding and reconciliation processes so that this knowledge can be shared with the global community.

The Rwandan context

Rwanda had hit the bottom rock, twenty years ago. We lost over a million people, a thousand people were dying every day at the hands of Rwandans. The genocide is an example of the worst human beings can do. Reconciliation is showing us the best human beings can be as we work to leave this tragic past behind us.

The Genocide destroyed Rwanda’s social fabric which had been deliberately damaged over decades. Our work as a new nation in the last twenty years has been about restoring social cohesion and the dignity of Rwandans.

For us, what came out of that tragedy is energy and renewal. We have gained power to work in coherence. If you don’t learn from the tragedy you went through, it is another way to invite another tragedy.

Some of home grown initiatives that inspired by the Rwandan culture are: 
Towards a culturally sensitive peacebuilding approach in Africa

Africa is perceived differently by many people from all around the world. Some see Africa as a continent of hope where people are hospitable, flexible and simple with plenty of natural resources - most of it unexplored. Then there are those who see Africa as a continent of senseless conflicts, violence, poverty, ignorance and the like. The truth is there are opportunities and challenges in Africa. One way to invest in Africa is to embark on peacebuilding to transform conflicts and negative relations to the potential for peace and prosperity.

The term peacebuilding was popularized after 1992, when Boutros Boutros Ghali, then United Nations Secretary General, presented the report: An agenda for peace. In his report Boutros defined peacebuilding as a range of activities meant to identify and support structures which will strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict, distinguishing it from peacemaking and peacekeeping.

However, it was not Boutros-Ghali who invented these terms, but the peace researcher Johan Galtung 20 years earlier who called them “approaches to peace”. Together, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding formulate a general theory of achieving or maintaining peace. As Miall et al (1999) wrote:

“With reference to the conflict triangle, it can be suggested that peace-making aims to change the attitudes of the main protagonists, peace-keeping lowers the level of destructive behaviour, and peace-building tries to overcome the contradictions which lie at the root of the conflict.”

There are many approaches and techniques to peacebuilding such as through arts and music, dialogue and reconciliation, sports and nonviolence education. Each approach has its uniqueness, significance and challenges. In “Strategic Peacebuilding” Lisa
continued from page 12...

Schirch says:

"Peacebuilding seeks to prevent, reduce, transform, and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not yet led to massive civil unrest. Strategic peacebuilding recognizes the complexity of the tasks required to build peace. Peacebuilding is strategic when resources, actors, and approaches are coordinated to accomplish multiple goals and address multiple issues for the long term. Therefore, Peacebuilding requires multiple and well coordinated approaches to transform violence and conflict into more sustainable, peaceful relationships and structures."

**Why culture is important in peacebuilding?**

In our experience, peacebuilding projects are more effective when designed and adapted to the socio-cultural, economic and political context and needs of the local people. There is no "one-size-fits-all" solution to African problems. This is because every context in Africa is unique and finding "African solutions to African problems" requires analysis and understanding of indigenous complex African culture, values, norms, and traditions. Even within a given African country there are diverse cultural differences: what works in community "A" may not work in community "B". For example, in some communities in South Sudan beating a wife may be considered an expression of love while in another community, it's violence. That's why there is a need to carry out regular research and conduct experience sharing and trainings in order to widen our understanding of local culture for building a culturally sensitive and coherent peacebuilding approach

Peacebuilding is not new in Africa. History tells us that Africa is the cradle of humanity, an assertion that suggests the existence of rich and diverse indigenous resources and institutions of conflict resolution and peacebuilding dating back centuries. What is new is the exportation and imposition of peacebuilding and development interventions based on the liberal peace project. Peacebuilding has nowadays entered into the agenda of international agencies, and in the form of "post-war peacebuilding", based on the concept of "liberal peace" made a standard concept of international wars and military interventions.

The idea of liberal peace, according to Mark Duffield (2008), combines and conflates liberal (as in contemporary economic and political tenets) with "peace" (the present policy prediction towards conflict resolution and societal reconstruction). This view reflects the notion that war-torn societies can and should be rebuilt through the utilization of a number of interrelated strategies for transformation. The emphasis is on conflict prevention, resolution and institution-building including so-called democratic elections, and strengthening civil society organizations. A review of existing literature (Ali and Mathews 2004; Reynier 2001, Rupesingshe 1998) on the subject of peacebuilding in Africa, however, reveals a limited analysis restricted to the post conflict phase of armed conflict, which has very limited short term prescriptions for a return to order and stability in a country that has experienced violent armed conflict (David, 1998).

**Why peacebuilding matters**

Since the end of the cold war, Africa has suffered its share of violent wars and armed violent conflicts. In Africa, there are many ongoing inter-ethnic and political armed conflicts aimed at achieving political and economic power. Countries emerging from long civil wars often experience challenges in managing former combatants, militia groups and armed civilians. Hence, violent conflicts have become major obstacles to peace and development, particularly in fragile and post-conflict countries. Maintaining the rule of law, good governance and delivery of equitable basic social services is equally challenging. The results are continued wide-spread physical, psychological, cultural and structural violence.

Violence is not restricted to one country, continent, one region or religion. It is universally used to achieve objectives; sometimes through sheer naked aggression, or at other time subtly, covered in the grab of legislation and legitimacy as a tool to maintain law and order (2011). For women, this takes many forms including: rape, forced domestic labour, men beatings their wives, detention and denial of widows to inheritance and discrimination from economic benefits. Expropriation of girls ("hijacking girls for marriage") is perceived as a legitimate cultural practice in many Africa countries. Peacebuilding interventions are needed to build safe and secured environment where people can pursue happiness without fear.

So our thesis is: Peacebuilding is needed. But not in the form of importing abstract recipes coming with the liberal peace paradigm. As Africa faces challenges of importation and imposition of peacebuilding and development interventions, this weakness can be addressed by encouraging and building local capacities to conduct baseline assessments, research and studies and making relevant recommendations to the both local and international peace actors as well as policy makers for improved engagement.

Peacebuilding involves building democratic structures through participation of citizens and other stakeholders in democratization processes without which peace will be meaningless. It also means equitable sharing of resources. There are significant challenges in many African countries when it comes to alignment and fair distribution of resources to expenditure priorities. Economic growth and revenues generated from oil and other natural resources are not being channeled to address poverty.

This creates a situation where peace dividends are hardly enjoyed by impatient and impoverished civilians, forcing them to question the meaning of peace. In our experience, many people think peace means the absence of violence and the maintenance of law and order. However it is not only guns that kill. Lack of access to basic means of life, dignity and enjoyment of rights can be as destructive as weapons. Meaningful peacebuilding is not an end in itself - rather a means to a safe and prosperous state, where every person enjoys basic rights and life in dignity.

Therefore, addressing structural violence aimed at creating fundamental state reform, in which equitable social services are provided without discrimination, is critical if we are to build Africa safe for all.

**The role of peace stakeholders**

There are many actors working on peacebuilding in Africa. In the heart of these organizations are social and peace movements affiliated to WRI, IFOR, COPA (Coalition for Peace in Africa) and other regional movements. The African Centre for Constructive Resolution of Dispute "ACCORD" is based in Durban with offices in other countries, and there are women-focused groups including Women Action

continued on page 14...
Small Actions, Big Movements: The Continuum of Nonviolence

continued from page 13...

Network for Peace (WANEPI) and Women Peacemakers Program (WPP).

At the same time, newer research into peacebuilding strategies and effects teaches us that while civil society has an important role to play in peacebuilding, state actors (with their much greater to resources) cannot be neglected, and peacebuilding works best when the various actors manage to cooperate. Hence, the role of regional and sub-bodies, such as the African Union (AU), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Economic Community Of West African States (ECOWAS) and Southern African Development Community (SADC), is important. Although sub-regional bodies were originally established to promote socioeconomic welfare of the region, they ended up playing greater roles in peacebuilding as an entry point to economic development.

There is also, especially from the side of international donors and agencies, an over-emphasis on certain activities and neglect of others that may have much wider impact. For example, to look at another region, in the Balkans after the wars of the 1990s, everyone talked about and paid for “reconciliation” while lack of adequate education and professional perspectives caused a whole generation of youth to remain without any meaningful perspective to do with their lives.

Conclusion

The theme group will begin with an interactive session on: What do we mean by peacebuilding? An introduction to the meaning of peacebuilding in general and on the African continent in particular.

On day 2, we will look at South Sudan as an example, and discuss various approaches, looking at a wide range of actors: civil society groups working to change peoples’ attitudes, the role (or non-role) of civil society in peace negotiations, discussing approaches preferred by the international community like security-sector restructuring and micro-building and the problem of security for civilians including the role of UNMISS and unarmed civilian peacekeeping provided by the INGO Nonviolent Peaceforce, along with questions of economics, gender, etc.

Day 3 with the help of resource persons from other countries we will look at challenges and issues of peacebuilding in other countries in Africa and beyond.

On the concluding day, 4, we will seek to draw lessons from the case studies, and discuss the issue of peacebuilding, nonviolence and the contributions of international solidarity and support. The key question will be how can we better work together?

Moses Monday

Education and nonviolence

We want to see a really nonviolent society, but we can’t see it yet. Thinking about getting the whole society from here to there we have to start with education too, because education – both formal and non-formal, is one way of socializing, one way society constitutes itself. Thinking about nonviolence and education means that we have to define both of them as well as their relation. Nonviolence (principled or pragmatic) means minimizing violence (physical, mental, structural, cultural), it entails being coherent or developing respectful relations between individuals in the society.

Education means constraining knowledge, habits and skills as well as developing personality or respectful relations amongst individuals in the society. Hence, nonviolence already implies education and vice versa – education already implies nonviolence.

But this is an idea, it’s not yet reality. In fact, we see a really violent society and a violent education still. How do we get from violent to nonviolent education? There are different answers to this question as there are different aspects to education. In modern society there are different educational institutions. There is formal education (intentional and certified, e.g. schools) and non-formal education (less structured than formal, more structured than informal, e.g. WRI Conference, Theme Group, Workshop). As our violent social systems too often are replicated in our school systems, we have to challenge how we learn in a formal way, as well as value how we learn in a non-formal way.

There are different levels and different subjects in education. But nonviolence relates to all levels from primary education through secondary education to tertiary education. And it does matter for many subjects like Art through Citizenship, Geography, and History to Languages.

Some schools are public while others are private. On the one hand, public schools are free and often run by militarist governments; on the other hand, private schools charge fees, and may be run by pacifist providers.

There are compulsory and voluntary schools. On the one hand compulsory schools force one into their system, on the other hand they guarantee education for all.

So, we have to discuss and perhaps argue about these aspects of educational institutions. Do we want to abolish compulsory education? Or are we able to offer opportunities and environments to learn nonviolence within public education? What can administrators, parents, students, or teachers do to transform formal education? What rights and duties do they have? This leads us to the aspects of educational curricula, which are as many as for schools. If we see the relation between nonviolence and education institutions as “nonviolent education”, we see the relation between nonviolence and education curricula as “nonviolence education”. Nonviolence is not only a form of learning, but it also refers to the content of learning.

What do we need to learn, if we want to learn to create a truly nonviolent society? Like a society itself, a nonviolent society has at least two, if not three levels. On the micro-level we have to learn personal nonviolence. This includes specific attitudes, perceptions, communication styles, and behaviors. A good example for micro-level nonviolence education is peer mediation among youth in school. On the meso-level we have to learn social nonviolence. This deals with discrimination and promotes respect between local groups, be it ethnic, linguistic, or religious groups. For example local or regional reconciliation in post conflict situations can be seen as meso-level nonviolence education. Finally, on the macro-level we have to learn political nonviolence. This means we have to analyze intra- and international conflicts including civil wars and to develop their civilian nonviolent resolution like in civic education in schools. Although these ideas seem to be global or universal, there will be regional or local differences of nonviolence education because there are differences of situations between countries like, say, Burundi and Germany.

We propose to focus the theme group “nonviolence and education” on formal (primary and secondary) education curricula because we imagine that the theme group “counter-militarization of youth” will deal with formal education institutions, while the theme group “nonviolence training” will deal with nonformal education curricula, and the theme group “peace building” will deal with nonformal education institutions.

We propose on day (1) to get to know each other, our interests, our expectations, and the issues of education and nonviolence. Perhaps we can do that talking to a teacher and two students. On day (2) we want to look at formal education and micro-level nonviolence and its problems including structural violence of education institutions themselves. On day (3) we would like to talk about formal education and macro-level(non)violence and its problems including political influence and principles of political education (like controversy and no indoctrination) in public schools. And on day (4) we will discuss options of transnational cooperation for nonviolence education and prepare the report for the market.

The aims and principles of both education institutions and curricular education are to advance liberty and equality or simply democracy as much as possible. “As much as possible” implies that there will be some problems or conflicts because most students are still developing, not yet fully developed personalities like most parents and teachers. There never will be an ideal state of nonviolent education, but like nonviolence itself nonviolent education will be a process.

Elavie Ndura and Kai-Uwe Dosch
Nonviolent community struggles

The vast majority of people today are reduced to being small cogs in a mega machine, where the established system wants consumers but not free citizens. Consequently common citizens, whether they live in authoritarian States or democracies, are subject to injustice and violence especially where there is a push for ‘modern development’.

Various Communities, and the forms of violence they face
Communities subject to state violence, organised violence, vigilante violence, usually without “due process of law”, Communities subject to ‘development violence’ after “due process” of law; e.g., State-corporate nexus trying to appropriate natural, national, mineral resources
Violence in the name of religion, ethnicity, beliefs, ideology
Communities subject to subtle violence – the oppressed often being so conditioned as to be unaware that they are victims of violence.

Clearly, most people are peace loving and would like to avoid struggle and would resort to resistance only when left with no option. It must also be appreciated that communities, before they face some form of violence and fall into the definition of “affected communities” are usually engaged in a daily struggle for mere survival are not trained in the philosophy, science or art of nonviolence live peacefully until some form of State or corporate aggression hits them out of the blue their response is reflexive rather than
strategically planned they are up against the resources and might of the State-corporate nexus

Communities across the world are currently engaged in struggles for the right to life, livelihood, justice and peace. More often than not they are up against very powerful forces such State military or paramilitary forces, corporations, organised militant groups, existing law, established media, technocrats, vested interests, a vocal group that benefits from the status quo etc. It is therefore a very unequal battle. Those fighting with their backs to the wall, because they challenge the status quo, their every thought and action is subject to the most intense scrutiny and are likely to be labelled ‘anti-development’, ‘anti-national’, ‘retrogressive’, etc.

These communities, for an effective and durable struggle, must use nonviolent resistance to fight violence and oppression.

Nonviolence
The expression ‘nonviolence’ would seem to imply just ‘absence of violence’. Both theoreticians and practitioners of nonviolence would vouch that it is actually a proactive, positive, forward-looking, potentially uplifting process for participants. It can be an evolutionary journey if pursued as a means to an end without compromising on values.

There is often a tendency among those fighting injustice to attempt militant (often violent) quick-fix solutions to State violence against unarmed people, or violence resulting from the State-corporate nexus against traditional communities or even deep-rooted systemic problems. The means resorted to in such struggles may not be paid much attention to as it is often a life and death struggle for the affected people. It would be easy for puritans and theoreticians to find fault with such struggles. They often do not have a conception of the gravity of the life and death struggle some threatened communities are engaged in, hence they enjoy the luxury of sitting in judgement over a struggle as being ‘not up to the mark’ in terms purity of nonviolence. At the other extreme activists who ‘represent’ the oppressed often do not themselves engage in actual violent action but do encourage or incite the oppressed ‘others’ to offer violent resistance. They too enjoy the luxury of holding radical positions without having to put themselves on the line. There is an obvious fundamental problem with both positions.

It would be a travesty of sit in judgement over the reflex actions of such affected communities. The starting point for them would most likely be a mere ‘absence of violence’. As they start coming to grips with the problem they are up against, as they get conceptual, technical, training and material support from conscientious non-affected sympathisers their struggle may evolve to a well strategic programme of nonviolent resistance. That process can assume the form of an evolutionary journey. That journey could further take the affected communities from dealing with their immediate, local problem to becoming aware, concerned and proactive on macro, long term issues.

Whatever the outcome of a struggle, it is absolutely important that nonviolent struggles are waged because they do not only contribute to a more just order, they deepen democracy and sow the seed for a continuing revolution.

Swati Desai

South Gujarat, India. From a week-long march to oppose the interlinking of rivers in South Gujarat, India. If this project is implemented then 75 villages will be affected, some of them will be totally submerged. Credit: Swati Desai.
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If you would like extra copies, please contact the WRI office, or download it from our website. War Resisters’ International, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX, Britain tel +44-20-7278 4040 fax +44-20-7278 0444 info@wri-irg.org http://wri-irg.org/publications/brokenrifle/issue-99

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