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Conference Report: The Legacy of Armed Conflicts: Southern African and Comparative Perspectives

Giulia Piccolino

Abstract: This report deals with the international workshop “The Legacy of Armed Conflicts: Southern African and Comparative Perspectives,” held on 28–29 July 2016 at the University of Pretoria. The workshop facilitated discussions and exchanges between regional and comparative experts and focused on three themes: the relationship between peace processes and long-term peacebuilding, the role of former armed actors in post-conflict societies, and the persistence of violence after conflict. The importance of legitimacy for peacebuilding was often evoked as was the necessity to consider the continuity between armed conflict and other forms of violent and non-violent social action.

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Keywords: Southern Africa, peace terms, peacebuilding theory, peace and conflict research, area studies, comparative science

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This international workshop investigated key challenges of achieving stable peace, building accountable state institutions, and (re-)establishing trust in the aftermath of an armed conflict. It built on the GIGA's Peace and Security research programme and was part of the institute's South Africa research platform.¹

The workshop aimed to broaden research on peacebuilding – which to date has focused excessively on the role of international actors – and to advance the GIGA's comparative area studies agenda. South Africa was considered a particularly appropriate location for reflecting on the problem of the legacy of armed conflict. After bloody liberation struggles and civil wars, the Southern African region was heralded in the 1990s as a “success story” of peacebuilding, as studies on South Africa (Sisk 1994), Zimbabwe (Stedman 1991), Mozambique (Manning 2002), and Namibia (Crocker 1999) suggested. However, past wars continue to shape politics and societies in the region in many ways. More than 20 years after the resolution of these wars, politics in South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Angola, and Namibia is still dominated by the liberation movements that were the protagonists of past conflicts (Melber 2003; Southall 2013). Moreover, while Southern African societies are “peaceful” in the sense that armed conflict has ceased, they are still affected by various forms of state-sponsored and societal violence (Von Holdt 2013; Seedat et al. 2009; Jewkes and Abrahams 2002). The narrative of the “success story” is contradicted by the persistence of inequality in South Africa, by Zimbabwe's and Angola's slide into authoritarianism, and by the resumption of the armed conflict between the Mozambique Liberation Front (Frente de Libertação de Moçambique, FRELIMO) and the Mozambique National Resistance (Resistência Nacional Moçambicana, RENAMO), albeit at low levels of intensity.

1 The workshop was held on 28–29 July 2016 and was organised by Giulia Piccolino and by John Kotsopoulos from the Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation (GovInn) of the University of Pretoria. It took place at the Hatfield Campus of the University of Pretoria with administrative support from the junior researchers' team of GovInn. The workshop built on prior work by the Institutions for Sustainable Peace network and was facilitated by the GIGA's South Africa research platform. A full programme of the event including paper abstracts is accessible at: <www.giga-hamburg.de/en/event/the-legacy-of-armed-conflicts-southern-african-and-comparative-perspectives>.

The Debates

Timothy Sisk argued in a public opening lecture, “Armed Conflict into the 21st Century: Trends, Causes and Consequences,” that, overall, there has been a sharp reduction in armed conflict since 1992. Unfortunately, the downward trend has shown a modest reversal since 2007, which saw new conflict onsets exceed those that had terminated – partly as a consequence of the global jihadist insurgency. However, Sisk rejected pessimism, arguing that while there is a “conflict trap,” it is not absolute and most fragile African states are likely to escape it by 2030 (Cilliers and Sisk 2013). Sisk also stressed that governance is the pivotal, intervening variable, both for fostering peace and for creating an enabling environment for development in so-called “fragile states.” He insisted on the importance of fostering both vertical (between citizens and government) and horizontal (between citizens and communities) social cohesion.

The opening was followed by two parallel sessions, organised around three pivotal topics. The first session dealt with the relationship between peace processes and long-term peacebuilding. It analysed peace processes as windows of opportunities to negotiate the distribution of power and the shape of future institutions. The first panel of this thematic stream investigated three instruments that are often included in the “toolkit” of peacemakers: negotiation, peacekeeping, and security-sector reform. José Pascal da Rocha (Pedro Pires Institute), who is himself a practitioner of mediation, looked at peace negotiations from the perspective of mediators and argued that they must navigate among ambiguity and flexible arrangements. They need to be culturally competent, earn and maintain the respect of the warring parties, and be aware of the balance of power. Jana Krause (University of Amsterdam) discussed the under-representation of women in peace processes. She argued that networks of different female actors, such as female combatants and female politicians, can drive social change and contribute to the overall success of peace agreements and their sustainability. Malte Brosig and Norman Sempija (University of the Witwatersrand) looked at the impact of multidimensional peacekeeping beyond the mere absence of violence. Using the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance, they found that while peacekeeping has an impact on national security and political participation, its effects are minimal in other areas, such as human development and governance. Nadine Ansorg (GIGA and University of Kent) looked at the conditions for success of post-conflict security-sector reform (SSR). Through an analysis of 40 post-conflict countries, Ansorg argued that provisions related to local ownership and civilian oversight are inconsistently implemented. She then presented a theory of SSR

using the framework of credible commitment, arguing that local ownership might work in the long term as a consolidating mechanism for successful SSR, but might not be a viable option in the short term.

During the discussion, Toni Haastrup (University of Kent) highlighted the problem of the divide between practitioners and academics. The comparative research design of the papers and fact that three of them adopted a quantitative approach also raised the question of measurement, especially of dimensions of conflict such as gender that have been excluded from mainstream discourses until relatively recently.

The second panel featured a mix of case studies from two regions of Africa. One region (Southern Africa) is mainly at peace after decades of turmoil; the other (the region stretching from Sudan to Somalia) has been characterised by ongoing violence and fragile or non-existent state institutions.

Job Shipululo Amupanda (University of Namibia) looked at the secessionist revolt that took place in the Caprivi region of Namibia in 1999. No comprehensive peace process has taken place in the wake of the Caprivi conflict, and the region is still feeling its consequences. In the context of Zimbabwe, Siphamandla Zondi (University of South Africa) argued that the history of the country has been marked by centuries of violence and conflict. Efforts sponsored by the South African Development Community to reach a political agreement have failed to overcome the tradition of violence in Zimbabwean politics. Presenting a research project jointly conducted with Alex De Waal (Tufts University), Rachel Ibreck (London School of Economics) contrasted South Africa's experience with the ongoing peace process in South Sudan, where formal institutions are deficient and politics work as a militarised "political marketplace" (De Waal 2009). She placed hope for the development of public authority in grassroots institutions, such as customary courts, which enjoy strong local legitimacy. Debora Malito (University of Cape Town) looked at Somalia, which, she argued, remains a paradigmatic case of state disintegration, not in spite of, but partly because of, three decades of international militarised intervention. Malito argued that international intervention has promoted security and economic dependence, resulting in a "protégé's victory" that holds no contractual or coercive form of domestic legitimacy.

The second thematic stream examined the role of former armed actors in post-conflict societies. One panel dealt with armed groups that have taken control of the state and become peace-time rulers. It critically scrutinised the assumption that, under certain circumstances, insurgents might become successful state-builders and provide legitimate govern-

ance (Weinstein 2005; Toft 2010). A second panel focused on the micro- and meso-level rather than the national level, and dealt with former combatants who were not integrated into state institutions, including both former insurgents and members of pro-government militias.

Chris Saunders (University of Cape Town) looked at the post-liberation relationships between South Africa and Namibia. He argued that although the two conflicts have similarities, they were experienced differently by the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) and the African National Congress (ANC), because the first was a war of independence while the second was about dismantling apartheid. Jason Sumich (GIGA) focused on the emergence of a new middle class in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. Sumich argued that this phenomenon has not compromised the hegemony of FRELIMO, the liberation movement that is still in power: the middle class is not only economically linked to the party-state but also shares its conceptual and discursive universe. Giulia Piccolino (GIGA and Loughborough University) looked at the problem of establishing peace after a decisive military victory, with particular reference to the case of Côte d'Ivoire. She argued that victors have to maintain cohesion within the winning coalition, co-opt or repress residual resistance from the vanquished, and develop the capacity to rule a country. At the moment, the Alassane Ouattara administration seems to have met these challenges, but it faces future obstacles, particularly the incapacity to institutionalise political succession. Scott Straus (University of Wisconsin at Madison) stressed that there is still no theory accounting for variations in post-conflict outcomes. He argued that the crucial challenge for armed actors taking power after the conflict is to establish the "right to rule," but that they are caught in a dilemma: on the one hand, they should adopt inclusive policies to forge a new social contract; on the other, they are under pressure to reward their supporters. Philip Martin (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) looked at civil-military relations in insurgent-ruled states. Drawing on a comparison between Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire, he argued that the specific combination of capabilities that insurgent groups develop during armed conflict shapes civil-military relationships when these organisations obtain state power.

Summing up the findings of the presenters, Justin Pearce (University of Cambridge) pointed to the centrality of the problem of legitimacy in all cases presented. He wondered whether postcolonial liberation might still constitute an effective source of legitimacy in Southern Africa. He also noted that although cohesive and effective military organisations might be good at certain aspects of post-conflict governance, they tend to establish

very authoritarian governance. He added that the challenge may be finding the right balance between too much and too little compromise.

The second panel opened with two case studies from Mozambique. Corinna Jentzsch (Leiden University) looked at a pro-governmental peasant militia, the Naparama, which emerged in the final years of the Mozambican civil war. The request for recognition of their wartime efforts has recently led Naparama members to re-mobilise and protest. However, their mobilisation has remained peaceful and they have reaffirmed their loyalty to FRELIMO. In contrast, Justin Pearce dealt with the low-intensity guerrilla war that has been waged by aging RENAMO fighters since 2013. Pearce argued that RENAMO has enjoyed acceptance and even support among the population of central Mozambique, as it has been able to tap into long-held feelings of alienation stemming from FRELIMO's perceived "southern" governance. With the presentation by Nigel Mxolisi Landa (Great Zimbabwe University), the focus shifted to Zimbabwe, where war veterans have been prominent social and political actors since the end of the liberation war. Landa observed that veterans are increasingly factionalised and some of veteran leaders have recently challenged Robert Mugabe, accusing him of authoritarianism and an inability to solve the problems of the country. In contrast with Landa's presentation, Lennart Bollinger (University of Oxford) looked at black Southern Africans who fought on the side of the apartheid government, as members of the police counterinsurgency unit Koevoet and the South African Defence Force's (SADF) 32 Battalion. Despite the shared post-war experience of marginalisation and stigmatisation, Bollinger argued that the wartime memory of these combatants varied: while former 32 Battalion members gave an overwhelmingly negative account of their experience, former Koevoet members continued to employ the ideological discourse of the time – the narrative of a fight for democracy and against communism. The presentation by Gngadjomon Koné shifted the focus from Southern Africa to Côte d'Ivoire. He argued that the context of civil war encouraged the formation of youth militias in rural areas, and he looked at how this development has reshaped the customary land-regulation system, subverting existing social hierarchies.

Discussing the papers, Annette Seegers (University of Cape Town) pointed out the methodological challenges involved in studying a "post-conflict" environment, where the legacy of the past conflict interacts with post-war developments. Seegers also noted that war not only militarises society, but also gives power to young people, creating networks that persist after war. She argued, however, that in Namibia and Zim-

babwe, the state also uses veterans to strengthen its legitimacy, by keeping the myth of the liberation struggle alive.

The third thematic stream focused on the persistence of violence after the conflict and the problem of rebuilding societal trust. This theme has particular relevance in countries such as South Africa, where violence has continued in peace time, taking apparently non-political forms, such as crime, gender-based violence, and violent protests; it also invites comparisons with other regions, particularly Latin America.

One panel focused on rebuilding trust and social cohesion among citizens and communities after conflict. Sabine Kurtenbach (GIGA) presented the results of a comparative research project on youth in post-conflict society. She pointed out that although youth are seen as potential “troublemakers,” only a minority of young people turns to violence, even in high-risk contexts. Blocked in their transition to adulthood, youth often opt for non-political forms of participation and self-expression, such as sports clubs, religious organisations, and cultural activities. The presentation by Ruth Murambadoro (University of Pretoria), co-authored with Chenai Matshaka (University of Pretoria), focused on transitional justice in Zimbabwe. She argued that local communities in Zimbabwe view dealing with past injustices as key to building trust and working towards national cohesion. However, the government has frustrated them, maintaining an attitude of “letting bygones be bygones.” Fletcher Cox (William Jewell College) looked at how local communities have prevented local conflicts – or failed to do so – in Kenya’s peripheral northern regions. Cox pointed to successful peacebuilding efforts but argued that they could still be undermined: inappropriate state actions and, paradoxically, the sudden availability of more resources for peacebuilding activities, which have caused rent-seeking and opportunistic behaviour, might lead to the collapse of effective organisations. Rachel Hatcher (University of the Free State) offered a critique of “reconciliation.” She argued that reconciliation misleadingly suggests the existence of a mythical past of social harmony. In addition, ambiguity remains about who is supposed to be reconciled: reconciliation has often targeted enemy combatants and the political elite, excluding ordinary citizens.

Several points were raised during the discussion. Adam Harris (University of Gothenburg) invited Kurtenbach to link the central theme of her paper – youth transition into adulthood – more directly to the data presented. Looking at the Kenyan cases, some participants felt that questions remain about why some communities are able to innovate in peacebuilding and others not. Some also questioned the normative assumption that tran-

sitional justice will contribute to statebuilding and peacebuilding, and argued that institutionalising conflicts might be more important.

The last panel focused on post-conflict violence. Looking at the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, Sebastian van Baalen (University of Uppsala) presented a paper co-authored with Kristine Höglund (University of Uppsala), proposing a theory about why post-conflict violence does not affect all communities equally. He argued that communities in which wartime mobilisation at the local level was based on the formation of alliances between armed groups and local elites are more likely to experience post-war violence. Using historical legal records, Samuel Fury Childs Daly (Rutgers University) analysed the emergence of armed robbery in the aftermath of the Nigerian Civil War. He argued that the civil war not only caused the influx of large numbers of firearms into Southeastern Nigeria, but also blurred the line between legitimate state violence and criminal violence. Adam Harris presented the initial results of a statistical analysis looking at the relationship between violence during the conflict and post-war societal trust in post-apartheid South Africa. He found support for the counter-intuitive hypothesis that communities who live in areas that have a history of more deadly political violence have higher levels of trust today.

Nadine Ansorg pointed out some theoretical and methodological limitations of the papers. In particular, she invited Van Baalen and Daly to consider alternative explanations to their own causal accounts. She also felt that Harris's paper needed a clearer definition of "trust" and must account more explicitly for the potential effects of post-conflict trust-building measures.

Gilbert Khadiagala (University of the Witwatersrand) delivered a keynote speech entitled "The Rise and Fall of Peacebuilding in Africa" that was widely attended by the general public. He started with the bold statement that peacebuilding is not only in crisis, but that the whole notion should be rethought or maybe even abandoned. According to Khadiagala, sub-Saharan countries need to first establish the building blocks of a functioning state. He argued that the most positive results in rebuilding states after conflicts were achieved by countries such as Uganda and Ethiopia, where there was a strong element of national ownership. These countries have "run away" from the label of post-conflict countries, while international peacebuilding has reinforced the stigma of war and conflict, presenting Africa as being locked into a "conflict trap." Khadiagala's arguments spurred a great deal of debate, with some members of the audience contesting his focus on state building

and arguing that without a political compromise being built first, state building risks degenerating into authoritarian politics.

Before the workshop closed, a roundtable discussion on the challenges of peacebuilding in Southern Africa was held under the moderation of Maxi Schoeman (University of Pretoria), with Brian Raftopoulos (University of the Western Cape), Annette Seegers (University of Cape Town), and Hugo van der Merwe (Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa) participating. Sabelo J. Ndlovu Gatsheni (University of South Africa) sent in a written contribution. The participants agreed that while there are differences among the countries of Southern Africa, there are also commonalities, particularly in regard to the shared heritage of settler colonialism and of liberation struggles. The legacy of the liberation struggle was described as an ambiguous one. Raftopoulos argued that the transformation of liberation movements into party-states helped some countries reach stability during political transitions, but that in Zimbabwe it has had a negative long-term effect, because those who take issue with the official “story of the nation” are marginalised. Seegers added that the particular nature of liberation insurgency helped to build states where the military is subordinated to civilian control. However, a sense of frustration over “failed liberation” emerged later, especially in countries that have experienced a negotiated settlement. Van der Merwe added that liberation has provided a vision that has fostered national unity in Southern African countries. However, after 20 years there is a sense in South Africa that the ANC has exhausted its role and has become a clientelistic machine. Participants noted that Southern Africa is entering a new phase, with new forms of social protest rocking the boat. Despite this, they argued that different forms of protests should not be lumped together. In Zimbabwe, protests have remained overwhelmingly non-violent, in contrast to South Africa, which has experienced more violent forms of social mobilisation. Very different social actors have animated these protests. For instance, there has been little connection between protests over the delivery of local public services and students’ mobilisation against rising university fees.

Conclusion

Several important issues for the study of post-conflict peace emerged from the workshop. The field of peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction remains under-theorised from the point of view of explanatory theory. Moreover, much peacebuilding literature focuses on international actors, leaving domestic actors in the background, despite the call to pay attention to “local ownership.” Many of the workshop presentations

aimed to overcome these limitations, putting the agency of local actors (political elites, former combatants, communities) centre stage and proposing theories to explain variations in post-conflict outcomes.

A central theme discussed at the workshop was the problem of the bond between citizens and state institutions – variously described as legitimacy, vertical trust, social cohesion, or the social contract. Participants agreed that although legitimacy is crucial for post-conflict peace, it remains an elusive concept. Case studies showed that legitimacy is not simply the product of effective service delivery by the state, nor can it be equated with the establishment of an electoral democracy. The analysis of Southern African cases has driven the discussion towards a specific source of legitimacy – the legacy of national liberation. However, participants noticed that claims to legitimacy based on the legacy of liberation are currently being contested. A promising path to follow would be to reconnect the study of peacebuilding with the literature on political legitimacy in various geographical regions and in different types of political regimes (Alagappa 1995; Barker 2001; Von Soest and Grauvogel 2015).

The workshop also highlighted that conflicts are not only destructive but also creative processes, during which institutions are created or reconfigured, new ideologies gain acceptance, and new social actors that claim recognition emerge. The literature on post-conflict peace could benefit by interacting more closely with the literature on the social processes of war (Arjona 2014; Wood 2008; Mampilly 2011) and on insurgent organisations (Weinstein 2007; Staniland 2014).

A third related theme has been the relationship between armed conflict and other forms of violent and non-violent social action, including crime and social protests. The persistence of violence in contexts where the conflict has been purportedly resolved leads to the question of the blurred distinction between war and peace and the search for a “quality peace” (Keen 2000; Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs 2010; Mac Ginty 2006; Wallensteen 2015). However, the existence of peaceful protests in post-conflict countries also shows that it is possible to institutionalise conflicts to preclude them from taking a destructive turn.

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Konferenzbericht: Das Erbe bewaffneter Konflikte: im Südlichen Afrika und im Vergleich

Zusammenfassung: Die Autorin berichtet vom internationalen Workshop „The Legacy of Armed Conflicts: Southern African and Comparative Perspectives“, der am 28./29. Juli 2016 an der Universität Pretoria stattfand. Der Workshop ermöglichte den Austausch und die gemeinsame Debatte von Experten für Regionalforschung und für komparative Studien. Im Zentrum standen drei Themen: der Zusammenhang zwischen Friedensprozessen und langfristiger Friedenssicherung, die Rolle ehemaliger bewaffneter Akteure in Nachkriegsgesellschaften und die Fortdauer von Gewalt nach der Beendigung von Konflikten. In der Diskussion wurde insbesondere die Bedeutung von Legitimität beim Aufbau friedlicher Strukturen hervorgehoben sowie die Notwendigkeit, die Kontinuität zwischen bewaffneten Konflikten und späteren Formen gewaltsamer und gewaltloser sozialer Handlungen zu berücksichtigen.

Schlagwörter: Südliches Afrika, Friedensbedingungen, Theorie der Friedenssicherung, Friedens- und Konfliktforschung, Länder- und Regionalforschung, Vergleichende Wissenschaft