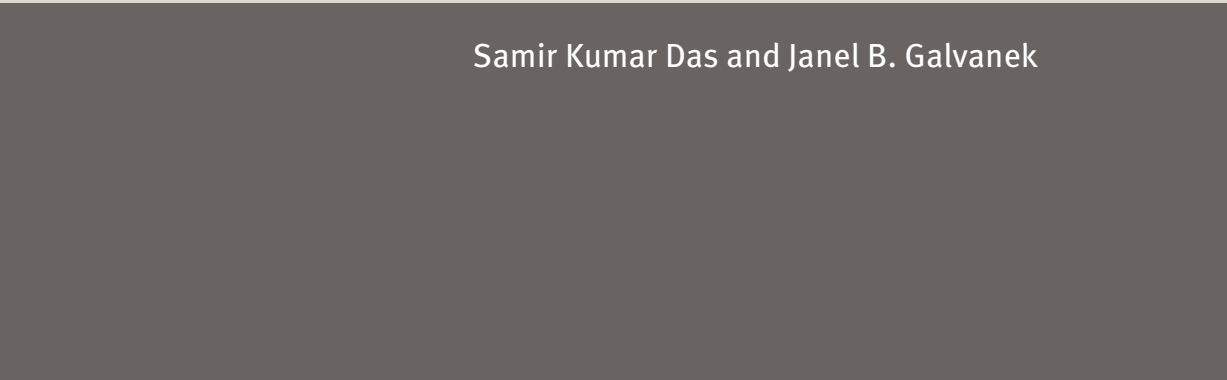


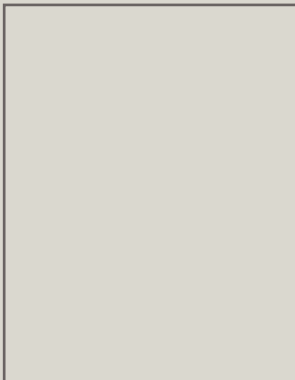


Learning from Governance Initiatives for Conflict Resolution

Local Agency, Inclusive Dialogue and Developmentality



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Introduction

An in-depth analysis of governance initiatives for conflict resolution has been one of the major foci of the project “Cultures of Governance and Conflict Resolution in Europe and India (CORE)”¹. Research carried out by project partners in the six case studies – Bihar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Georgia, Jammu and Kashmir, and Northeast India – has investigated initiatives that vary extensively in terms of goals, approaches and actors involved. Some initiatives have been implemented on an immense scale, such as the Panchayat Raj Institutions in India, yet others are much more modest in both size and objective, such as the dialogue initiatives of the Garo Baptist Church in Meghalaya. While some initiatives under examination can be labelled as top-down, such as the State Strategy for Occupied Territories in Georgia, many others are fine examples of locally-inspired movements, such as the Naga Mothers Association in Nagaland. Furthermore, while some initiatives have an explicit, direct goal of resolving conflict, such as the bi-communal movement in Cyprus, still others impact on conflict in a more indirect way, such as the microcredit schemes for women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. These examples demonstrate the extensive diversity inherent in the designation “governance initiative for conflict resolution”. It also illustrates how challenging it can be to determine the lessons that researchers, practitioners, and policy makers can best learn from the initiatives. Designating such lessons learned, however, and reflecting on these lessons is a crucial element of successful and effective peacebuilding processes. Only honest and open reflection can lead to the changes or adjustments that may be necessary.

With this in mind, we would like to draw some lessons learned from several of the governance initiatives for conflict resolution under examination in the CORE project. In the first section of the report, we will attempt to measure the impact of four specific initiatives on their respective conflicts and peacebuilding processes. We will, of course, be limited to the information provided from the field research, which means some questions of effectiveness may be left unanswered. Nonetheless, we hope that such a reflective analysis will be beneficial in the long run to policy makers and peace practitioners. More specifically, we will focus our efforts on two specific aspects that we have seen repeatedly in the initiatives within the case studies of the CORE project. Firstly, there is a general lack of consideration of local agency and its potential capacity in the design and implementation of initiatives. Secondly, the presence of trustful, dialogical relations among conflict stakeholders in conflict resolution processes is essential in order to increase the impact of governance initiatives. The second section of the report will have a closer look at the tendency of conflict resolution initiatives to be used by governance actors as a façade for pacification and the development of conflict areas. In other words, initiatives are carried out – often in the field of economic development – without any consideration of the fact that these measures alone will not lead to a sustainable peace. Explanatory references for this governance approach will be taken from the case studies in India and analysed individually.

1 Measuring Impact

Measuring the impact that various governance initiatives have on conflict resolution can be a challenging task. If such initiatives were specifically intended to help resolve the conflict, many designers and implementers of initiatives – whether governments, multinational organizations or NGOs – may assume that their efforts have contributed at least something to the goal of reducing violence. But is this always the case? Many governance initiatives for conflict resolution may have no distinguishable impact on

¹ See www.projectcore.eu for more information.

the conflict, may exacerbate the conflict, or may even create new conflicts. It is therefore imperative to investigate their effect. But peace and conflict are complex notions and as Church and Shouldice point out, the sheer number of variables that can affect peace within a society makes assessing the link between one intervention and peace in general a very difficult, if not questionable task.² Measuring the impact of one single initiative in a complex conflict environment is extremely tricky, particularly considering that peace practitioners often work with intangible concepts such as attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of security,³ which cannot be quantitatively measured. Therefore, it will not always be possible, or indeed necessary, to measure the effect of each initiative on conflict resolution processes.

Nevertheless, an honest examination combined with realistic reflection on the initiatives in question can be beneficial for all actors involved – from the designers of the initiatives, to those who carry them out, to those who ultimately benefit from them. Without this reflection, it is difficult to draw any lessons learned – lessons which are necessary in order to improve, redesign, or change future initiatives. Anderson and Olson set out four criteria when it comes to measuring the effectiveness of peace initiatives. The initiative should a) encourage the participants to develop their own initiatives for peace; b) contribute to the reform of institutions that address underlying grievances; c) enable people to resist violence; and d) increase the security of people.⁴ Although these criteria are certainly not exhaustive in terms of measuring impact or effectiveness, they have been found to apply across all contexts. Using these criteria, four specific governance initiatives for conflict resolution from four of the CORE project's case studies – Georgia, Cyprus, Kashmir and Northeast India – will be analysed for their overall impact on conflict resolution within their conflict context.

1.1 Consideration of Local Agency

Within the conflict resolution and peacebuilding field, it is often lamented that external actors involved in peace activities do not sufficiently take local agency into consideration. This lack of concern for needs, interests, ideas, and involvement of the local population has been demonstrated to be adverse to the overall success and impact of various projects and programs.⁵ Local individuals and communities are equipped with the knowledge of the context in which conflict resolution activities will be carried out, including an understanding of the history of the conflict, its root causes, the conflict stakeholders, and local attitudes and belief systems. Because a proper conflict analysis is a crucial first step in the planning of any peace initiative, acknowledging the role that local agency can play in this step is imperative. But this recognition of agency shouldn't stop once an initiative has been developed, but rather the "affected populations' perspectives and traditions [should be placed] at the centre of any peacebuilding efforts"⁶, from the planning to the evaluation stages. Without this effort, initiatives planned for peace may be well-intended, but may be irrelevant for the overall peacebuilding process and may actually lead to further or new conflict.

People living in the midst of conflict are not merely victims or passive onlookers of the violence surrounding them. Many individuals take active measures to resist violence and promote peace for themselves and their families. Even those individuals who may not actively work for peace may nevertheless make a conscious decision not to become involved in violence. This, too, must be recognized as a decision

² Church, Cheyanne and Julie Shouldice, *The Evaluation of Conflict Resolution Interventions: Framing the State of Play*. *INCORE International Conflict Research*, 2002, p.38.

³ Anderson, Mary B. "Experiences with Impact Assessment: Can we know what Good we do?" in Austin, Alex, Martina Fischer, and Norbert Ropers (eds.), *Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict: The Berghof Handbook*. Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2004, p. 202.

⁴ Anderson, Mary B. and Lara Olson, *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. The Collaborative for Development Action, Inc., 2003, p. 16-19.

⁵ See, for example, Anderson 2003; Richmond, Oliver P., "Critical Agency, resistance and a post-colonial civil society", *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 2011, pp. 419-440; and Schaefer, Christoph Daniel, "Local Practices and Normative Frameworks in Peacebuilding", *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 17, No. 4, 2010, pp. 499-514.

⁶ Schaefer, 2010, p. 504.

in favour of peace. Acknowledging the agency that each person inherently has – the capacity to shape the circumstances in which they live⁷ – means that such agency must also be recognized in developing initiatives for resolving the conflict. Yet it is important to recognize that there are inherent complications in sufficiently acknowledging local agency. Firstly, there is the perennial problem of deciding how to define the word ‘local’. Who can be designated as a local and who cannot? If local is designated as a certain community and region, who risks being excluded? Furthermore, there is no guarantee that the perspectives and traditions of local communities will correspond with the fundamental values intrinsic to peacebuilding initiatives, such as equality of rights.⁸ It is also essential to recognize that ‘local’ is not always homogeneous, particularly in a multi-ethnic society, which means that the needs and interests of locals may not always be the same. Even in homogeneously ethnic societies, differences in age, class and gender can produce divergent needs and interests in terms of the agenda for conflict resolution. Lastly, it is important to note that the field of peacebuilding commonly assumes that local agency (if sufficiently acknowledged) will be exercised positively, both in favour of the initiative in question as well as the conflict resolution process in general. This is certainly not always the case, as individuals and groups can use their agency to retain power at the expense of others.⁹ Moreover, critical agency exercised in opposition to peacebuilding initiatives can take many different forms, ranging from non-participation to open resistance,¹⁰ and can decelerate the process of building peace, if not lead to its ultimate failure.

In spite of these complications in defining and acknowledging local agency, taking local needs and interests into account is essential for the success of any initiative for peace. Therefore, it is remarkable the extent to which this oversight continues to happen, and is particularly striking with respect to those initiatives that are specifically intended as conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives. Many designers and implementers of said initiatives are external agencies or organisations with little connection with the local context. Even a national government may be considered an ‘outsider’ when it comes to implementing projects and programs in a conflict area. Such actors, while having good intentions, often overlook the essential role that local actors can and must play, thus disempowering them and risking the loss of the great potential for building peace that these local actors possess.¹¹ Instead of being treated as equal partners in a collaborative effort to resolve the conflict, they are relegated to the status of mere beneficiaries. This is also to some extent the case with several of the case study initiatives under examination within the CORE project.

1.1.1 Georgia and Abkhazia

One of the governance initiatives for conflict resolution under investigation that most strikingly disregards the agency of the community with which it is intended to cooperate is the so-called State Strategy on the Occupied Territories, designed by the former Government of Georgia.¹² The ‘occupied territories’ refer to Abkhazia and South Ossetia, breakaway regions of Georgia, which the government believes have been occupied by Russian troops since the brief war in August 2008 between Georgia and Russia. The strategy intends to follow a “policy of engagement” between Georgia and these territories, in order to build trust and confidence with the ultimate goal of resolving the conflict.¹³ Measures listed in the strategy to build this

⁷ Emirbayer, Mustafa and Ann Mische, “What is Agency?”, *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 103, No. 4, 1998, pp. 965.

⁸ Schaefer 2010, p. 504-505.

⁹ Galvanek, Janel B., *Translating Peacebuilding Rationalities into Practice: Local Agency and Everyday Resistance*, Berghof Foundation Operations, Berlin, 2013, p. 9. http://www.berghof-foundation.org/images/uploads/25062013/Galvanek_CORE.pdf

¹⁰ See, for example, Richmond 2011; Mac Ginty, Roger, “Between Resistance and Compliance: Non-participation and the Liberal Peace”, *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2012, pp. 167-187; and Richmond, Oliver P., “Resistance and the Post-Liberal Peace”, *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2010, pp. 665-692.

¹¹ Galvanek, 2013, p. 10.

¹² Field research was carried out in 2011-2012 in Georgia and Abkhazia by colleagues at the Istituto Affari Internazionali in Rome, Italy within the framework of the CORE project.

¹³ Government of Georgia, *State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Cooperation*, 2010, p. 7. <http://www.civil.ge/files/files/SMR-Strategy-en.pdf>

confidence include economic and health care initiatives, inter-community projects, and the development of infrastructure. However, the mere name of the document shows that there was no consultation with the Abkhaz during the drafting of the strategy, as the Abkhaz do not feel that they are ‘occupied’, but rather consider themselves citizens of an independent country. Additionally, the strategy blames the conflict squarely on Russia and states that its ultimate goal is to reintegrate the breakaway regions back into Georgia, both points with which the Abkhaz would decidedly disagree. As Mikhelidze rightly points out, the State Strategy reinforces Georgia’s belief that the conflict is only determined by Russia, and doesn’t even recognize Abkhazia as a party to the conflict, a recognition to which the Abkhazians attach great importance.¹⁴ The lack of consultation with the Abkhaz community – those with whom the Georgian government is supposed to engage – as well as the complete disregard for their existence as conflict stakeholders is a flagrant denial of Abkhaz agency. Rather than building trust, the strategy has been met in Abkhazia with disinterest and disdain and has to date achieved none of its stated goals.

1.1.2 Cyprus

As stated above, critical agency can take on many different forms. Specifically when this agency takes the form of active resistance to a peacebuilding initiative, it is often overlooked or dismissed as ‘spoiler’ activity and is not acknowledged as a legitimate statement in response to the initiative in question. A case in point is the open resistance to the Green Line Regulation in Cyprus¹⁵, an EU-sponsored mechanism implemented in 2004 through which goods can be officially traded between northern and southern Cyprus over the ‘Green Line’, which separates the Greek Cypriot controlled Republic of Cyprus from the Turkish Cypriot controlled Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Although the objective of the Green Line Regulation is to foster economic cooperation and integration between the two sides, ostensibly in order to promote peace¹⁶, the trade between the two sides remains too small to be significant and the overall trade volume is actually declining, rather than increasing.¹⁷ This state of affairs is generally attributed to the implicit societal understanding among Greek Cypriots that products from the northern part of Cyprus should be subject to a boycott.¹⁸ This resistance to buying Turkish Cypriot goods is reflected in supermarkets refusing to stock products from the north as well as the refusal of Greek Cypriot newspapers to advertise for Turkish Cypriot products.¹⁹ Moreover, Greek Cypriot farmers openly protest against the regulation, citing unfair competition from the north. For their part, Turkish Cypriot farmers feel that it is not safe enough to export their goods to the Republic of Cyprus due to sabotage or mistreatment of their cargo.²⁰ This resistance to bi-communal trade is an example of local agency expressing itself in response to what many Greek Cypriots feel is an unsatisfactory initiative, as such trade is understood to implicitly recognise the government in the north. Because such resistance renders ineffective much of the Green Line Regulation, this is an instructive case in the perils of ignoring local agency. The effort and funds invested in this initiative may have been better spent if the societal restrictions in the south concerning the recognition of the north had been better acknowledged and understood.

¹⁴ Mikhelidze, Nona, *National and European cultures of governance in Georgia and Abkhaz conflict resolution*, unpublished field research report, 2012, p. 4.

¹⁵ Field research in Cyprus was carried out in 2010-2011 by colleagues at the University of Manchester within the framework of the CORE project.

¹⁶ See European Commission, Council Regulation (EC) No. 389/2006, 2006, p. 2. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:065:0005:0008:EN:PDF>

¹⁷ European Commission, Seventh Report on the implementation of Council Regulation (EC) 866/2004 of 29 April 2004 and the situation resulting from its application covering the period 1 May until December 2010, 2011, p. 4. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2011:0284:FIN:EN:PDF>

¹⁸ Vogel, Birte, *Report on Fieldwork in Cyprus: International, European and local approaches to Conflict Resolution*, unpublished fieldwork report, 2012, p. 4.

¹⁹ Moestue, Herman Prein, “Wrong side of the (trade) barriers”, *European Voice*, 5 September 2008. <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/imported/wrong-side-of-the-trade-barriers/62192.aspx>

²⁰ Vogel 2012, pp. 7-8.

1.1.3 Impact Analysis

It has already been made apparent through the field research and analysis thereof that both initiatives described above – the State Strategy for the Occupied Territories and the Green Line Regulation – have not achieved their stated goals. Nevertheless, if we apply Anderson’s and Olsen’s criteria to assess the effectiveness of peace initiatives, this can be helpful in understanding more clearly *why* they had little impact. The first criterion – that the initiative should encourage the participants to develop their own initiatives for peace – is difficult, yet not impossible, to apply to the cases in Georgia and Cyprus. More research is needed, for instance, in Cyprus in order to determine whether those farmers and business people participating in the Green Line Regulation have been encouraged through the initiative to work for peace. But in the case of Georgia, the result is clearer. As the Abkhaz were not consulted in the drafting of the Strategy, the only participant involved in this top-down initiative was the Georgian government, and even if the government were encouraged to work for peace further through this initiative, the version of peace presented in the Strategy cannot be accepted by the Abkhaz. With regard to the second criterion – that the initiative should contribute to the reform of institutions that address underlying grievances – we can clearly assess this negatively for both cases. Although the research concerning this was certainly not exhaustive, the State Strategy rather entrenched the one-sided rhetoric of the Georgian government instead of addressing any underlying grievances of the conflict. The Green Line Regulation, for its part, may have actually made the implicit societal understanding of a boycott against Turkish Cypriot goods more visible and self-evident and therefore stronger.

Unfortunately, it is practically impossible to assess the impact of the third criterion – to enable people to resist violence – as any data in this regard is unavailable and neither of the initiatives has as its specific goal the reduction of violence, *per se*. On the last criterion – whether the initiative has increased the security of people – the assessment is rather negative. Although the State Strategy clearly states that Georgia seeks to achieve its goals through peaceful means and rejects any military solution²¹ – a statement which most certainly was welcomed by the Abkhaz – its overall effect on the security of the Abkhaz was most likely negligible. In the case of the Green Line Regulation, because it has led to some tension around the topic of trade between the north and south and has seen active protests (i.e. from farmers), it has most likely led to less security. This assessment of the above governance initiatives for conflict resolution clearly demonstrates that both had a negligible impact on the peacebuilding process in Georgia and Cyprus, respectively, and may have even created more tension.

1.2 Dialogical Relations

Just as there are various stakeholders involved in any conflict, there are also numerous actors involved in any initiative for conflict resolution – often with different interests, needs and objectives. These can include, but certainly are not limited to, local, national, and international organisations, government representatives, and the local beneficiaries of the projects or programmes. Bringing such various actors together and establishing the different roles that each actor will play and for what purpose necessitates much communication and interaction. Such communication is often carried out in an environment of asymmetry in which the more powerful actors – for instance, international actors or governments – tend to push their agenda on those, often more local actors, who are weaker, both organizationally and financially. In such conditions of asymmetrical relations, it can be difficult to contribute to the resolution, or even transformation, of violent conflict, as such asymmetry within initiatives can be a reflection of the discrimination that may have partly led to the conflict in the first place.

²¹ Government of Georgia 2010, p. 1.

Ideally, the communication and interaction that are necessary in the design and implementation of governance initiatives for conflict resolution should take place in an environment of equity and mutual respect, and should be sufficiently dialogical in the sense that all sides are able to speak openly and honestly. Furthermore, all parties involved should feel that their needs and concerns are being listened to. In such an environment, dialogue can be a “tool for change that allows individuals and groups to move to a deeper level of behavior where intent, will, and commitment are strong”.²² As we have seen from the last section, it is detrimental to any initiative for conflict resolution to disregard local agency and the positive role it can play. Dialogical interaction with local actors is the essential first step in acknowledging this role.

Bernhard defines dialogical relations in a peacebuilding setting as a mode in which all “involved actors truly collaborate and actively contribute and help to shape the agendas of projects and strategies in a participatory manner”, allowing space for exchange, mutual empathy and understanding.²³ The existence of trustful, dialogical relations among all stakeholders in conflict resolution activities and peacebuilding processes is essential in order to increase the impact and effectiveness of governance initiatives. Nevertheless, in many instances this is not the approach that is taken by those stakeholders in the more powerful position. One example of this is the implementation in parts of Jammu & Kashmir of the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs), a mechanism for increasing local self-governance, specifically with regard to economic development and social justice.²⁴

1.2.1 Jammu and Kashmir

The underlying logic of the PRIs as a conflict resolution mechanism is the connection between the lack of development and the precedence of violent conflict, an assumption of the Indian government that is analysed in more detail below. If citizens became active in armed conflict due to the lack of development opportunities, the government should then provide more development to reduce conflict. If citizens are then given more control over the planning and implementation of development initiatives, conflict could be resolved even more quickly, with the PRIs having made a significant contribution to conflict resolution. This logic, of course, disregards other potential root causes of any conflict, including discrimination, lack of political rights and ethnic tensions, and simplifies conflicts into the dichotomy of development vs. lack of development. It also presupposes that citizens will be willing to participate in local self-governance mechanisms, which is far from certain. Nevertheless, the PRIs do have significant potential as a peacebuilding measure, if the majority of citizens choose to participate and if the PRIs are established and executed in an environment conducive to sustainable peace, for instance, in a setting of respect and mutual cooperation. This could reduce feelings of marginalization and give people a sense of ownership over developmental policy. In particular, the implementation of the PRIs in areas of armed conflict within India should be careful not to reinforce the present asymmetries or add to the underlying grievances of the conflict, nor should they antagonize any of the conflict parties.

²² Pruitt, Bettye H. and Katrin Käufer, *Dialogue as a Tool for Peaceful Conflict Transformation*. United Nations Development Programme, 2004, p. 14.

²³ Bernhard, Anna, *Dynamics of Relations between different Actors when Building Peace: The Role of Hybridity and Culture*. Berghof Foundation Operations, Berlin, 2013. Available at: http://www.berghof-foundation.org/images/uploads/27062013ABernhard_CORE.pdf

²⁴ The Panchayati Raj Institutions were established in 1993 by the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Indian Constitution, which created a 3-tier system of councils for local governance. The amendments provided the legal groundwork for direct democracy at the local level, and formalized the traditional council of elders (*Panchayat*) that was previously prevalent in rural India. The new, official structures introduced democratic elections every five years and provided affirmative action measures for women and historically underprivileged minorities. For more information about the Panchayati Raj Institutions, please see: Narayana, D., “Local Governance without Capacity Building: Ten Years of Panchayati Raj”, *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 40, No. 26, 2005, pp. 2822-2832; and Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) – India, *Strengthening Local Governance: some experiences from India*, Local Governance Initiative South Asia (LoGI), 2009.

Unfortunately, this is partially what the implementation of the PRIs in Jammu and Kashmir²⁵ has led to, considering that many of the stated benefits of the local PRI elections have yet to materialize. For instance, the promises of increased funding and responsibilities for the newly elected representatives have in many cases not been kept by the district and state officials. The concept of locally-elected leaders taking on new responsibilities was supposed to ensure that local communities would have more of a say in meeting their own unique development needs. However, many of these local leaders have been left many months after the elections without any work, as their powers and responsibilities must first be devolved from higher (unelected) officials, who seem to be reluctant to give up any of their power and influence. This has led to a situation of frustration and anger in many districts of Jammu and Kashmir and a growing discontent with the state government. With the notable exception of certain districts in the Ladakh region of Kashmir in which people in some villages feel that the PRI elections have brought a certain level of transparency, many of the elected local representatives in other parts of Kashmir feel that the PRI elections were a mere formality, as nothing has really changed. At the time of the field research, little funds had been distributed and people were feeling cheated. In some cases, the lack of devolution has led to conflicts between the newly elected representatives on one hand and the people on the other, as the representatives have been accused of receiving money from the government and not distributing it. Furthermore, there is a lack of clarity on the ground in terms of who is responsible for which operational task, as the “new roles and functions of the [Block Development Officer], the village level worker and the sarpanches and panches and their inter relationships were shrouded in confusion”.²⁶ The outcome of these lamentable circumstances is a significant trust deficit between the government and the citizens. This is a precarious development in a region which has seen violent conflict over the years – a conflict which has its origins in the complex dynamics of political representation among the region’s diverse communities and their aspirations for self-determination.

Essentially, the complications resulting from the unimplemented aspects of the Panchayat Raj Institutions in Jammu and Kashmir is compounded by a severe lack of communication and dialogue among the actors involved. Information about devolution and funding has not been forthcoming from the district and state officials, and the newly elected representatives are therefore left without powers and tasks. There seem to be no proper channels of communication between the government and the elected representatives in terms of how devolution should be carried out, and many officials are feeling threatened by the possible empowerment of the local representatives. As stated above, the communication necessary for the successful implementation of governance initiatives for conflict resolution should take place in an environment of mutual respect, in which all sides feel that their needs and concerns are being listened to. This is certainly not the case with the PRIs in Jammu and Kashmir. Not only is the state turning a deaf ear to the legitimate complaints of the local representatives, but the lack of dialogue also risks adding to the underlying political grievances of the conflict. In a region in which many districts already feel neglected by the state and in which many representatives risked their lives to run for office, offering citizens more democracy and control over their development needs and then not following through on the promises seems callous. Citizens in the region expressed hope that these elections could bring about significant changes in their lives, and are now disheartened by the lack of progress. There is therefore a clear need for better communication mechanisms in order to truly be able to realize the potential of local self-government with the framework of the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

²⁵ Field research was carried out in 2011-2012 in Jammu and Kashmir by colleagues at the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) in New Delhi within the framework of the CORE project.

²⁶ DasGupta, Sumona and Priyanka Singh, *Preliminary observations on local self-governance in Kashmir*, unpublished field research report, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi, 2011.

1.2.2 Nagaland

A much more positive example for dialogical relations in governance initiatives for conflict resolution is that of the women's movements in Nagaland²⁷, particularly that of the Naga Mothers Association (NMA), that have been active for peace in the region. In Northeast India, women dominate the peace movement and make strategic use of their traditional roles as mothers and protectors in the societal context, which has allowed them to negotiate with both the government as well as with various armed groups for the cause of peace. Women's testimonies in Nagaland highlight how their engagement for peace has provided the scope for bringing in *their* perspective in managing conflict situations and carries the possibility of transgressing stereotypes which often centre on the control over their sexuality. Banerjee and Dey argue that the success, specifically of the NMA, is due to the organisations' broader definition of peace – rather than just peace as the end of armed conflict – and their belief that peace must be achieved through dialogue and negotiation.²⁸ Unfortunately, due to the patriarchal context of Nagaland, much of what the women promote has been blocked by the traditional norms of Naga society and even openly by the traditional authorities. This has made it imperative for the women to enter into a strategic, albeit unlikely, alliance with the state, for instance in terms of combatting domestic violence and ensuring the political representation of women. The more that their own traditions have failed them and the avenues of redress are closed, the more they are willing to ally with the state.²⁹ The state, for its part, recognized a partner in the women's organisations, as they shared the same goal of a reduction in violence. It therefore took up many of the women's concerns. Bernhard argues that the women's organisations have been so successful at negotiating peace because they are willing to work together with the government, as well as with other ethnic groups, and they manage to build trust and confidence among all conflict stakeholders.³⁰ The women's organisations are thus a good example of the communication and interaction that are necessary to allow all parties to communicate their needs and to allow all actors to actively contribute to the shaping of projects and strategies for peacebuilding.

1.2.3 Impact Analysis

The Panchayati Raj Institutions in Jammu and Kashmir and the women's organisations for peace in Nagaland are undoubtedly very different initiatives with different approaches. Nonetheless, one of the objectives of both of the initiatives – directly or indirectly – is conflict resolution. Therefore, it is vital to evaluate both the implementation of the PRIs and the women's organisations in terms of their impact on peace in Kashmir and Nagaland, respectively. It is already evident from the descriptions above that the PRIs have not been very successful, while the women's organisations have been much more so. But a closer look at the suggested criteria for effective peace initiatives will help tell us why this is so.

The first criterion for effectiveness according to Anderson and Olsen is that the initiative should encourage the participants to develop their own initiatives for peace. As we have seen above with the cases of Georgia and Cyprus, this criterion is rather difficult, yet not impossible, to apply. The field research carried out within the framework of the CORE project did not investigate the 'spin off' effect of the governance initiatives under examination. Nevertheless, it is evident that the Nagaland women's organisations have been enormously effective in terms of empowering women to work for peace and justice. What began as a

²⁷ Field research was carried out in 2011 in Nagaland by colleagues at the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group in Kolkata within the framework of the CORE project.

²⁸ Banerjee, Paula and Ishita Dey, *Women, Conflict, and Governance in Nagaland*, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, July 2012, p. 17.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁰ Bernhard, Anna, *Dynamics of Relations between different Actors when Building Peace: The Role of Hybridity and Culture*. Berghof Foundation Operations, Berlin, 2013, pp. 37-38.

movement to demand the repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)³¹ and encourage dialogue and negotiation between the conflict actors has developed into a broader movement that works towards peace and justice within the community. Furthermore, this development was entirely home-grown, with little assistance from external actors. It is therefore a fine example of participants being encouraged to develop – or in this case to continue and broaden – their efforts for peace. The PRIs in Jammu and Kashmir are much more difficult to analyse in this respect, as the actual implementation of the local governance in the region has in many cases yet to begin. It is therefore probably safe to say that the participants – in this case, the elected representatives – will not be encouraged to develop their own initiatives for peace until their own initiative has been fully and satisfactorily implemented.

For a peace initiative to be ultimately effective, it should also contribute to the reform of institutions that address the underlying grievances of a conflict. Here we can see the positive contribution of the women's organisations in Nagaland. Although the organisations ultimately failed in their efforts to have the AFSPA repealed, they can look to a number of successes in terms of creating an environment more conducive for social peace and the rights of women, including support for the formation of the Department of Women's Development³² and the implementation of its various schemes, and the introduction of 33 per cent quotas for women in local bodies. The organisations have also played their role in increasing the accountability of the government in terms of being a provider of justice and good governance, which should better ensure the maintenance of peace.³³ In the case of Kashmir, we unfortunately see that the lacking devolution of powers and distribution of funds to the local representatives has the potential to inflame the underlying grievances in the region. Considering that the conflict in Kashmir revolves substantially around the issue of self-determination, promising citizens more decision-making power and not keeping that promise can be detrimental to the process of building peace. In this sense, the lack of proper implementation of the PRIs has had a negative impact on the ground for peace in parts of Jammu and Kashmir.

As stated above, the third criterion – enabling people to resist violence – is almost impossible to assess, due to a lack of data, but it is certainly not implausible to think that in the context of women's involvement for peace in Nagaland, many women involved in the organisations have been empowered to work for peace and resist violence within their own communities. Finally, the last criterion of whether the initiative has increased the security of people can be assessed – with the data available – positively in the case of Nagaland and negatively in the case of Kashmir. The Naga Mothers Association were directly involved in the peace negotiations that led to a ceasefire between the Indian government and one of the armed factions in Nagaland, and this is only one example of an initiative in which they were involved. Women's organisations in Nagaland are working not only toward peace between the state and the armed groups, but also more broadly for social justice and women's rights, and can list many achievements in this respect. Therefore, the women's movement has played a significant role in increasing the security of citizens in Nagaland. In Jammu and Kashmir, considering that many of the elected representatives have been threatened and several have actually lost their lives due to their political activism, it is very difficult to claim that the PRIs have led to more security for citizens. Nevertheless, if the devolution of powers is carried out sufficiently and according to the wishes of the elected representatives and the voters, the PRIs do have the potential to empower people and give them a sense of ownership over their development needs. This could, in turn, lead to more satisfaction with the government in general and, in time, less violence. However, until the devolution happens on a large scale, such potential for the PRIs remains only speculation.

³¹ The Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) was passed in 1958 and gives special powers to the security forces, regardless of rank, to detain a person or to resort to violence up to the point of causing death against someone who the security forces feel is acting suspiciously and against law and order. Through this law, the security forces enjoy full impunity.

³² For more information on this, see Banerjee and Dey, *Women, Conflict, and Governance in Nagaland*, p. 13.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 21-22.

2 Peacebuilding as a Façade for Pacification and Development

The agendum of liberal peace has a tendency of understanding conflicts by rolling them into one mega-conflict and leaving the others unresolved – if not completely unaddressed. For instance, during the research carried out within the framework of the CORE project, one common complaint that various cross-sections of the people of Ladakh³⁴ (a region in the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir) made is that their demands get overwhelmed and bypassed by the crisis in Kashmir, which attracts wider international attention and media coverage, and the government does not seem to pay heed to their demands – unlike those of the people living in the Kashmir valley. Ladakhis – both Muslims and Buddhists – have not been a part of the “movement” in the valley. On the contrary there have been strong demands that Ladakh be integrated more closely into the Indian union by being given Union Territory status and separating it from the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

2.1 Transition to the New Technology of Governance

Over the last two decades, a change has taken place in the technology of governing conflicts in India. In the first phase of insurgency, state measures deployed particularly in the Northeast consisted predominantly of counter-insurgency campaigns ranging from full-scale military operations and village grouping (shifting of the villagers to areas where they can be isolated from the insurgents and made subject to intense surveillance) to driving a wedge between different sections of insurgents and ethnic militias by way of playing one off against the other and keeping the economy of the conflict areas on doles and assistance, etc.³⁵

By the beginning of the 1990s the Indian State seemed to have realized that the counterinsurgency operations *alone* would not suffice. Military campaigns both in the Northeast and in Kashmir are accused of having routinely violated human rights and have often sparked off intense public criticism and protest.³⁶ This realization seems to have led to a shift in the technology of governance. The developmentalism of the 1990s came with the promise of making a critical turnaround by putting the economy of the Northeast on a fast track. The idea is to tap and market the resources of these regions by way of improving connectivity and initiating institutional reforms with the twin objective of opening the region to the ‘powerhouse’ economies of Southeast Asia (commonly known as India’s “Look East” policy) and securing the rule of private property by coming down strongly on the extraction of ‘taxes’ by the insurgents and ethnic militias.

Development may not be meeting people’s expectations, but it has already created a new desire for development – *developmentality* as we may call it. More and more people are seen to be sharing the desire and want to become its stakeholders. Samaddar, for instance, argues that ‘social governance’ aims at “making the society the stakeholder of the ways of governance, therefore its policies are aimed at identifying and involving the stakeholders (beneficiary groups, groups locked in conflict, etc.)”.³⁷ In Nagaland in Northeast India for instance, side by side with governance through extraordinary laws (for

³⁴ Field research was carried out in April 2012 in the Ladakh region of Kashmir by colleagues at the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) in New Delhi within the framework of the CORE project.

³⁵ Field research was carried out in 2011-2012 in Assam by colleagues at Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group (MCRG) in Kolkata within the framework of the CORE project. See Das, Samir Kumar, *Peace by Governance of Governing Peace? A Case Study of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)*, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata, 2012.

³⁶ See, for instance, Samir Kumar Das, “Truth and Rights: A Study of the Violation of Rights on the Margins of India”, in *Man and Society – A Journal of North East Studies*, Volume VII, Summer 2010, pp. 40-60.

³⁷ Samaddar, Ranabir, *Government of Peace*, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata, October 2012, p. 4.

example, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act of 1958) there was also a more civil form of governance with the growing realization that violence alone cannot solve a political problem. As the field research report on Nagaland emphasizes: “In the days of Look East it was becoming much more essential to address issues of sovereignty by means other than violence.”³⁸ The internal pacification of the Northeast is now nearly complete and the state has established its hegemony over the body politic – partly due to the decrease in violence all over the Northeast. The agenda of rights in the region seems also to have shifted from citizenship defined in contradistinction with outsiders or foreigners, to a rather new citizenship defined as people’s right to equality, equal opportunities, and rights over natural resources. “The new citizen is constituted as the new agent of peace in the Northeast.”³⁹

In Bihar⁴⁰, caste alliances had previously been managed in a rather nuanced manner in order to suit the interest of ruling elite, which came from a numerically weak upper-caste background. These same caste alliances, however, have been “turned upside down by a more incisive and shrewd caste management by backward-caste political leaders”⁴¹ such as, for instance, Lalu Prasad and Nitish Kumar during the last 22 years of their rule. The field research in Bihar also reveals “the emancipatory potential of the hitherto backward sections of society”⁴² and how they are making their claims for better representation in government and administration through more reservations in government jobs, more seats in parliamentary and legislative elections, etc. In Jharkhand⁴³ – unlike in Bihar and particularly in the Maoism-affected areas – we come to know of a wide variety of informal arrangements through which Maoists are reported to have come to an understanding with the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and other state institutions without in any way changing the existing caste and gender equations.

2.2 Development and its Discontents

While development is understood by the Indian government as the means for trumping conflicts and violence, the new technology of governance has already started showing signs of unease and discord. First of all, in Ladakh, the research shows that newly initiated development processes can create new wedges between ethnic communities and even within homes. The conflict between the Buddhists and the Muslims, though now latent, often affects decision making and governance in the region. In Jammu some respondents have pointed out that these local elections had broken homes, in which different members within the family contested elections with different party tickets, and after the completion of the elections the families were left feuding. Field research carried out in Meghalaya⁴⁴ in Northeast India shows how “the local rationale of bringing all into ethnic zero-sum games” contributes to what it describes as the “electoralization”⁴⁵ of the peace process and the developmental activities.

Secondly, the field research indicates that development *per se* has proven unable to address the pre-existing alienation within society. While in Jammu people hardly identify themselves as beneficiaries of the fruits of development, in Ladakh they seem to have developed a sense of ownership. The respondents

³⁸ Banerjee, Paula and Ishita Dey, *Women, Conflict, and Governance in Nagaland*, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata, July 2012, p. 12.

³⁹ Das, Samir Kumar: *Peace by Governance of Governing Peace? A Case Study of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)*, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata, 2012, p. 18

⁴⁰ Field research was carried out in Bihar by colleagues at the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group in Kolkata within the framework of the CORE project.

⁴¹ Jha, Manish K. and Pushpendra, *Governing Caste and Managing Conflicts Bihar, 1990-2011*, Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, Kolkata, March 2012, p. 25.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Field research was carried out in 2011-2012 in Jharkhand and Bihar by colleagues at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi within the framework of the CORE project.

⁴⁴ Field research was carried out in 2012-2013 in Meghalaya by colleagues at the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi within the framework of the CORE project.

⁴⁵ Malaviya Centre for Peace Research (MCPR), *Meghalaya Fieldwork Report (Feb 2012)*, Unpublished fieldwork report, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 2012, p. 10 & 24.

in Ladakh seem to be happy with the fact that the elected representatives have put an end to the contractor system (depending on the contractors rather than on local initiatives) and that the development work has been given to the community.

Thirdly, a directly inverse correlation is found between alienation and the presence of civic-associational activities. Field research carried out in the villages of the Jammu subdivision – villages that are generally neglected by the Indian government according to the perceptions of the villagers living in them – points out that there appears to be a much greater impulse to form associations and confederations of elected representatives at the local level and proceed in terms of collective action. By contrast, in the Kashmir valley – an area that receives much attention – there is not much evidence that elected representatives were getting together, forming informal pressure groups and taking the initiative for joint collective action to press the government to implement the letter and spirit of devolution.⁴⁶

Fourthly, how development is institutionally delivered, rather than development *per se*, is found to be important in the governance of conflicts. Inter-institutional rivalries have a varying impact on society. In Ladakh, there were some signs of possible conflict between the Hill Council and the *Panchayat* as the Councillors were feeling threatened by their diminishing role and power. Ethnic perceptions about how the institutions function also differ significantly across regions. In a few instances respondents in Jammu shared that while the state police harassed them, the Indian armed forces were more cooperative in times of crisis. This perception is clearly different from the voices in the Kashmir valley indicating that the Indian army is perceived very differently in different parts of the state.

2.3 Peace by Pacification

The study on insurgency in Assam⁴⁷ argues that there are different kinds of peace. Peace achieved through pacification ‘mainly by force’ and peace based on some durable solution to conflicts, respecting the triadic principles of rights, justice and democracy, are certainly not the same – although there is no denying that one may be the precursor to the other. Conventional Indian peace literature does not seem to discriminate between different kinds of peace.⁴⁸ For instance, peace based on consensus by way of involving various sectors of society is found to be more durable than peace without it. In Meghalaya, for instance, although the conflict was resolved through the mediation of religious leaders – both tribal and non-tribal⁴⁹ – non-tribals continue to harbour a sense of insecurity and fear. As the study on Meghalaya points out: “The non tribals of the Garo Hills, likewise in the Khasi Hills, are similarly deprived of basic rights (of buying land, doing business, protesting, etc.) and facilities.... The non-tribals lack adequate access to basic rights in the Khasi hills, be it education, jobs or engagement in local political processes.”⁵⁰ As a result, minority groups in the state of Meghalaya continue to nurture security anxieties in their own hometowns amidst sporadic episodes of insurgency. The research team observed a strong local need to move away from short term pacification efforts, achieved through monetary compensations, in favour of “a comprehensive approach towards rehabilitation schemes and the implementation of development schemes applied as part of the peacebuilding strategy”.⁵¹

⁴⁶ DasGupta, Sumona and Priyanka Singh, unpublished field research report from Jammu, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi, 2012.

⁴⁷ Das, 2012.

⁴⁸ For an understanding and critique of what is referred to here as “conventional Indian peace literature” see, for example, Samaddar, Ranabir (ed.), *Peace Studies: An Introduction to the Concept, Scope, and Themes, South Asian Peace Studies I*, New Delhi: Sage, 2004; Das, Samir Kumar (ed.), *Peace Processes and Peace Accords, South Asian Peace Studies II*, New Delhi: Sage, 2005; Banerjee, Paula (ed.), *Women in Peace Politics, South Asian Peace Studies III*, New Delhi: Sage, 2008; Singh, Ujjwal Kumar (ed.), *Human Rights and Peace: Ideas, Laws, Institutions and Movements, South Asian Peace Studies IV*, New Delhi: Sage, 2009.

⁴⁹ Tribal groups refer to the indigenous peoples of Northeast India, while non-tribal groups include Hindus and Muslims from mainland India or Bangladesh or from the plains areas of the Northeast.

⁵⁰ Malaviya Centre for Peace Research (MCPR), *Meghalaya Fieldwork Report (Feb 2012)*, Unpublished fieldwork report, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi, 2012, p. 11.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p.2.

2.4 New Technologies of Governance and Traditional Forms of Peacemaking

The relation of the traditional forms of peacemaking to the new peace initiatives in the Northeast or for that matter to other parts of India has been problematic. For one thing, our experience makes it clear that there is hardly any scope for celebrating the traditional forms. While they cannot be mechanically restored under the present circumstances, one of the findings of the LSE's Crisis States Project⁵² has been that many of these forms have been both undemocratic and patriarchal. Another finding is that the newer forms of peacebuilding – encouraged and sponsored by regional and multilateral agencies – have the effect of imposing a version of peace on an environment that is alien to these forms, creating thereby serious social discontinuities between the traditional forms and newer initiatives. In Meghalaya the initial findings indicate that while the local political culture offers a range of norms for dialogue and negotiation towards building peace in the region, their success in procuring a workable and positive peace has been rather inadequate. While violence and conflict threaten to erode the very foundations of civil society – considered the key instrument of peacebuilding – in Meghalaya the clan-based nature of the community hampers individual Khasis from helping non-tribals even if they would like to.

In Leh - the headquarters of Ladakh - the traditional system is termed the “Goba” system (an assembly of five to seven elders) which traditionally looked into dispute resolution, as it is preferred that disputes are settled within the village itself rather than taking them to the courts. In close knit communities the preference is to settle the matter at home and on the community level as the formal judicial process can take 3-4 years for the matter to be decided upon. The traditional Goba system of Ladakh has mostly died out, but the new system based on the Panchayat structure has yet to be institutionalized.⁵³ Furthermore, the newly introduced democratically elected Panchayats are not conceived as dispute-settlement mechanisms and in the absence of any such institution people are either forced to live with conflicts, which take a toll on their everyday life, or to take them to the courts, which is both expensive and time-consuming.

3 Comparative Lessons Learned

In this report, we have examined various elements of governance initiatives for conflict resolution in settings of both post-conflict and ongoing conflict in India and Europe. As we have seen, many elements of such initiatives are less than ideal and do not lead to the ultimate objective of helping to resolve the conflict. In some cases, they may actually have created more tension than had existed before. It has become apparent throughout the CORE project that similar mistakes are made in conflict resolution strategies and measures, regardless of whether the conflict is taking place in India or Europe. Moreover, it seems that these mistakes are made by all designers and implementers of initiatives, whether it be the European Union, national governments, or external non-state actors. Firstly, there is little acknowledgment of the role that local agency can play in conflict resolution – this is certainly not confined to the two examples given above. Similarly, the absence of empathetic and respectful dialogue amongst conflict stakeholders is a problem that exists in all cases. And lastly, the use of the peacebuilding discourse as a façade for pacification in conflict areas is certainly not limited to India, but is used extensively by peacebuilding actors within the

⁵² Baruah, Apurba K., *Tribal Traditions and Crises of Governance in North East India, with Special Reference to Meghalaya*. Crisis States Research Centre working papers series 1, Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, 2003, p. 22.

⁵³ DasGupta, Sumona and Priyanka Singh, unpublished field research report from Leh, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), New Delhi, 2012.

European cases of the CORE project. This demonstrates that although there may to a certain extent be a distinct Indian and European approach to conflict resolution in general,⁵⁴ there is nevertheless much scope for both approaches to encounter similar dilemmas and have similar successes.

For researchers, practitioners and policymakers who are involved in governance initiatives for conflict resolution, it is imperative to have a more holistic view of conflicts and their root causes, rather than defining each conflict narrowly. For instance, there are quite often more conflict stakeholders than acknowledged, and the conflict dynamics are much more complex than the traditional understanding of two factions opposed to each other. In addition, it is essential to recognize that even those who are not involved in the violence, for instance local actors, have potentially a crucial role to play in the conflict and its resolution. Recognizing these broader conflict dynamics can assist in improving those missing elements of conflict resolution discussed above, namely local agency and inclusive dialogue. Similarly, it is essential to acknowledge that a conflict can rarely be attributed to one cause; most conflicts have various and interlinked causes. Treating one cause without addressing the others is not only futile, but can also potentially lead to the prolongation of the conflict. Reducing a conflict to, for instance, a simple lack of development, without acknowledging that other, more complex factors are fueling the conflict will not often lead to a sustained peace. Accepting that each violent conflict is unique in terms of actors, causes and dynamics, and recognizing that its resolution will be a long-term process can greatly assist in developing a holistic perspective on conflict. It is only with such a perspective that policymakers can truly learn the lessons from individual conflict resolution initiatives.

⁵⁴ See Tocci, Nathalie and Priyanka Upadhyaya, *Peacebuilding in Europe and India: Theory and Practice*, The Role of Governance in the Resolution of Socioeconomic and Political Conflict in India and Europe, 2013.