



Translating Peacebuilding Rationalities into Practice

Local Agency and Everyday Resistance



Janel B. Galvanek





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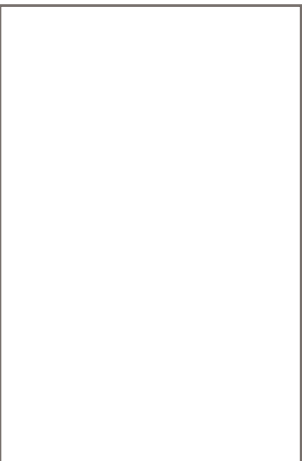


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This report was originally submitted to the European Commission in April 2013 within the framework of Theme B of Workpackage 4 of the CORE project entitled “The Translation of Peacebuilding Rationalities into Practice and its Effects”. This report contains the analysis of much of the research carried out during 2011-2012 in the case studies for the CORE project. The field research in each case was carried out by different partners in the CORE project. This means that the focus on governance initiatives for conflict resolution and the role of local agency and everyday resistance within these initiatives varies dramatically from case to case and is not uniform. This report and the chapters therein will reflect this lack of uniformity.



Peacebuilding Rationalities, Local Agency and Everyday Resistance

1 Introduction

In every governance initiative for conflict resolution and peacebuilding¹ there will be those individuals and groups who support and encourage the initiative and those who do not. The various reasons for lending support or denying it can be highly dependent on what role these people have played in the conflict, what they may gain or lose from the initiative, or simply their identity and the context in which they live. If these groups or individuals stand to gain something tangible from the initiative or the initiative has the potential to bring about a sustainable peace, which will create a safer environment for their families and communities, they will most likely support the initiative. If there is a chance, however, that they will lose something – power, financial stability or independence – or if they feel that the initiative will advantage their adversaries disproportionately, they may choose to oppose the initiative.

Often such opposition makes itself seen or heard violently, or at a political decision-making level. In these cases, the persons or groups responsible for the violence are referred to as ‘spoilers’ – those individuals (often, but not always, armed groups) who are assumed do not want peace, or at least do not want the peace that has been prescribed by the particular initiative. In other cases, the opposition may be powerful and vocal, but may nevertheless use strictly nonviolent means to make its concerns heard. Yet, there is also a much less

¹“Governance” is defined as an interactive process between different societal and political units, which possess agency or power of action, and which have a prominent role in the governing of society. These units include not only different governmental departments, but also individuals, families, associations, leaders and international bodies from the private and public sectors. “Governance for conflict resolution and peacebuilding” is thus the continual process by these units to govern aspects related to the management, resolution, and transformation of violent conflict. A “governance initiative” is defined as an activity, event, process, or mechanism which is designed and implemented by those units involved in governance. Governance initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding include, but are certainly not limited to, various projects and programmes, dialogue and mediation processes, workshops, trainings, and confidence and capacity-building measures. Any such activity, etc. can be viewed as such if it aids in the resolution of violent conflict and supports the aim of building a sustainable peace.

visible and less vocal opposition to peacebuilding initiatives, which may be much more common than either that of spoiler violence or organised mass protests. Being more subtle than vocal nonviolence and much less harmful and destructive than violent acts, this type of opposition often does not come to the attention of the planners and implementers of initiatives, who are very often external actors, rather than locals. Such opposition can nevertheless be sufficiently challenging for peacebuilding efforts – enough to hinder, impede or ultimately derail an initiative.

In some cases, local communities may only accept certain aspects of peacebuilding initiatives, while ignoring or disregarding other aspects. This is perhaps common practice in instances in which a peacebuilding initiative is designed according to the Western agenda of liberal peace, while being implemented on the ground in a setting with a tremendously different context and set of norms. In essence, local actors will apply features of the initiative that are appropriate for the setting, while discarding other aspects, if they have the power to do so. This adaptation or transformation of peacebuilding initiatives results in what Mac Ginty (2010, 397) refers to as a “hybridized peace, that is in constant flux, as different actors and processes cooperate and compete on different issue agendas”.²

Critical responses to governance initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding demonstrate the agency that local actors have in terms of initiatives that affect them. Local actors are not merely victims of the conflict or recipients of aid and peacebuilding support, but are rather quite capable of acting autonomously, within, of course, structured limits. This recognition of actors’ autonomy and agency is reflected in the effort external peacebuilders have made in the past years to be more inclusive and participatory in the design and implementation of governance initiatives for conflict resolution. Furthermore, the acknowledgement that local actors can promote alternative forms of conflict resolution via indigenous or traditional forums which have “cultural purchase in the host society” (ibid., 403) is a step forward in terms of recognising this local agency and viewing local actors as partners for peace rather than mere beneficiaries. Nevertheless, in practice, local agency is often disregarded or ignored, particularly when the responses to the initiative in question have a critical tone and may therefore not be appreciated by the external peacebuilders. The disregard for this agency on the part of the designers or implementers of initiatives is not only unethical, as it denies local communities a voice in activities that may directly affect them, but is also counter-productive for the initiative itself, as it may lead to more resistance and opposition. As a consequence, it may result in the failure of the peacebuilding initiative as well as continuing conflict.

One specific aim of this report is to identify where and how local agency in (post-)conflict societies is speaking for itself, to provide a forum in which it can do so more easily, and to present what is being said to a wider audience. It is crucial to note here that local agency is always speaking for itself, but it is not always being properly listened to, as many international and national actors involved in the peacebuilding process do not have the proper mechanisms to access and uncover these local dynamics.³ In order to be able to achieve these goals, however, we will need to investigate and better understand the concepts of local agency and “everyday resistance” to peacebuilding initiatives. Based on the fieldwork carried out by the CORE projects partners in Bihar/Jharkhand, Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter BiH), Cyprus, Georgia/Abkhazia, and Northeast India (Meghalaya), I will investigate the local agencies and how they emerge in these (post-) conflict settings.⁴ I will highlight in particular those agencies that are critical, and examine how they “accommodate, implement, deflect, modify, ignore, resist and hybridise” (CORE 2011, 18) the agenda for conflict resolution and peacebuilding that has been established within their context (including the specific initiatives).

In each individual chapter, I will look in detail at several peacebuilding rationalities (defined below) for each case – the list is certainly not exhaustive – and will then examine the selected governance initiatives

² For a detailed discussion on hybridised peace and hybridity, please refer to the related CORE report by Anna Bernhard, “The Dynamics of Relations between Different Actors when Building Sustainable Peace: The Role of Culture and Hybridity”.

³ I am grateful to Roger Mac Ginty for pointing this out.

⁴ Jammu and Kashmir will not be analysed in this report. See Anna Bernhard’s complementary CORE report for a detailed analysis of conflict governance in this region.

in each case. Then I will turn to the local agency exercised within the context of the initiatives, in an effort to better understand the accommodation of, modification of, or resistance to governance initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Here it is important to emphasise that not only is each conflict unique, having, for instance, its own individual peacebuilding rationalities, but the field research in each case was carried out by different partners in the CORE project. *This means that the focus on governance initiatives and the role of local agency within these initiatives varies dramatically from case to case and is not uniform.* Some partners have chosen, for instance, to look at broad, top-down initiatives executed by governments, while other partners have decided to focus on much smaller, grass-roots initiatives for their examination. This report and the chapters therein will reflect this lack of uniformity.

2 Peacebuilding Rationalities

Michel Foucault believed that the activity of government was a *type of art* “with its own distinctive and irreducible form of rationality....” (Gordon 1991, 14). In his investigations of these rationalities of government, he was interested not only in the activities of government, but more importantly in “the processes which [the government] directs” (Foucault 1991, 95). He understood governmental rationality as a “system of thinking about the nature of the practice of government (who can govern; what governing is; what or who is governed)....” (Gordon 1991, 3). Rationalities of government vary dramatically depending on the type of regime, its relation to its citizens (or subjects), and the historical era of the regime in question. Governmental rationalities in the time of Machiavelli, during which a governor remained external to those he governed, differ greatly from those of the modern era, in which the concern for the welfare of a population is of utmost importance for a ruler to be able to govern effectively (Foucault 1991, 89-90, 100).

Building upon this concept, the CORE project understands *political* rationalities as a kind of discourse that demarcates a “field of political intervention – the subjects, objects and practices to be governed – and lays out the appropriate means” for this to be accomplished (CORE 2011, 27). These rationalities are embedded and constructed within a social, economic and politico-societal environment, and shape the framework and boundaries within which governance can be carried out, showing us what is “reasonable, practicable and doable in relation to governance” (ibid., 27). Examples of such rationalities include the political rationality of liberalism, which “constitutes citizens as rational and autonomous agents capable of exercising their free will....” (Kalpagam 2001, 419). In contrast, one rationality of the colonial state in India was to create modern individuals through social reform, thereby governing subjects rather than citizens.⁵

Developing this idea further and applying it to the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding allows us to develop a *type* of political rationality, the “peacebuilding rationality”, which I define as a kind of discourse that delimits the field of intervention for building peace, lays out the appropriate methods and approaches to do so, and sets the boundaries within which governance initiatives for peacebuilding can be carried out.

One conspicuous example of a peacebuilding rationality (which will be discussed in detail later in this chapter) is that of the theory of liberal peace, which finds its roots in the Westphalian concept of the modern state and is based on democracy, the rule of law, liberalisation of the economy, the protection of human rights, and the concept of sovereignty. A further example of a peacebuilding rationality is the idea of development as conflict resolution, which is prevalent in the Indian conflict cases under examination. This rationality understands violent conflict as a direct consequence of poverty and underdevelopment and is based on the assumption that economic growth, education and better access to public services will automatically lead to a decrease in violence. In such cases, money is often simply ‘thrown at the problem’

⁵ Because the colonial governmentality in India was guided essentially by liberal principles, yet treated the governed not as liberal actors, but rather as subjects, the colonial state was inherently contradictory (see Kalpagam, 431).

without further thought about the target or design of the economic initiatives. This response to conflict is what DasGupta (2012, 19) refers to with regard to Jammu and Kashmir as an “economic package as panacea”, a strategy which she points out is ultimately questionable (at least in the case of Kashmir), as the money often does not reach those for whom it is intended, while it creates a society dependent on the government for its largesse, and does not translate into significant growth overall (ibid., 19-20). Although economic development can of course be an important element in a conflict resolution strategy, conflicts are rarely solved simply by an increase in economic attention alone.

While the rationalities set the framework for what is possible in relation to governance and the individual context, appropriate tools and methods (or ‘technologies’, with ‘initiatives’ being a type of technology) are needed by those who are governing, in order to be able to govern effectively. Chatterjee (2004, 34) explains how the use of governmental technologies in the modern nation state has led to the distinction between citizens (active participants in the sovereignty of the state) and populations (identifiable and classifiable groups). Technologies of power and surveillance, such as censuses and statistics, have been used to reach out to certain population groups as targets of the government’s economic and administrative policies. The idea and use of technologies, however, need not intimate the notion of ‘Big Brother’, but can also imply positive technologies of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, such as participatory, inclusive and reflective forms of collaboration and capacity-building. At the same time, technologies (and thus initiatives) which are intended (by one group or by external actors) to help govern, and consequently build peace, may unintentionally have the opposite effect, as we can see from the current tensions among the ethnic groups in BiH regarding the necessary constitutional reforms to implement the EU ‘Road map’ for accession. The CORE project defines political technologies simply as “the practices and devices through which political rationalities are operationalized” (CORE 2011, 28). Within this report, I will have a closer look at the technologies used in conflict settings in order to resolve conflict and build peace (specifically the various governance initiatives being carried out), and I will examine how everyday resistance and local agency (explained in more detail below) affect these technologies and initiatives and how the technologies in turn influence local agency.

Understanding the peacebuilding rationalities within individual conflict settings is essential for understanding the available options to build peace. A debate on *how* to best understand such rationalities may remain open, but it is clear that without this understanding and knowledge of the particular field of intervention and the boundaries of what is possible, it is unlikely that a governance initiative for conflict resolution will be effective. Indeed, it may actually lead to the escalation of the conflict.

3 Local Agency

The CORE project is based upon the assumption that local agency is crucial in bringing about sustainable peace. Within the conflict resolution and peacebuilding field, this assumption is underscored by yet another assumption: that if all beneficiaries are involved sufficiently in the process, they will (hopefully) exercise their agency positively, in favour of the conflict resolution initiative in question and in favour of the peacebuilding process in general. But regardless of what many states and NGOs involved in such processes would have us believe, this is not always the case. Reactions to peacebuilding initiatives by local communities can range from full, unhindered cooperation to targeting initiatives for sabotage, with an unlimited range of responses located in between. In fact, as Mac Ginty (2012, 168) points out, much of this reaction falls somewhere in between these two extremes, and is therefore often overlooked. He labels much of this in-between activity “non-participation”, which he defines as not participating in political and civic processes, yet falling short of being defined as a form of resistance (ibid., 172).

However, before discussing the role of local agency in peacebuilding, we must first examine the concept of agency in general and the significance of human agency in conflict and post-conflict settings. Bleiker

(2003, 25) defines human agency as “how people may or may not be able to influence their environment”. This rather simple definition could allow us to view agency concretely, without becoming entangled in a Foucaultian discussion of the discursive limitations on agency. However, the reality of agency is not as simple as Bleiker’s definition, as everyone inhabits multiple environments and one’s actions are not always consistent between these environments. In addition, the question of whether people are able to (successfully) exercise their agency – whether as individuals or collectively as a group or community – and shape their circumstances depends to a great extent on the context, the identity and culture of those involved, and the discourse(s) through which they view their world.

Furthermore, as Emirbayer and Mische (1998, 963) argue, agency must be analysed “within the flow of time”, and viewed more complexly as “a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past ..., but also oriented towards the future ... and toward the present....”. In other words, each action or “engagement” by actors in a specific moment incorporates elements of iteration (a reactivation of what has been done in the past), projectivity (that which is imagined for the future), and practical evaluation (problem-solving in the present, often changing, situation), something they refer to as the “chordal triad of agency” (*ibid.*, 963-4). When one views agency in this temporal manner, one can see that it is not only context, culture, identity or discourse that influence agency, but also the way individuals themselves relate to their past, present and future. Just as individuals can shift between different cultures and discourses, so can they shift between these different agentic orientations in order to adjust to the situational context in which they find themselves.

It is a depressing fact of global warfare that the majority of people in conflict settings are often unwillingly thrust into war and must attempt to ensure their and their families’ survival in the midst of fighting that they did not initiate, or indeed, even support. This does not mean, however, that they are powerless; indeed, it is sometimes the silent actions that are most significant. As Mary B. Anderson (1999, 24) so poignantly points out, “Even in virulent warfare, more people do not fight than do so. More individuals do not kill their neighbours than do so.” People are not simply passive onlookers, guided by the disciplinary force of established rules, but are rather “poets of their own acts” (de Certeau 1984, xviii). They have the ability and the capacity to significantly change the circumstances in which they live. This understanding of the freedom and choice of humans is particularly significant for an examination of local communities’, groups’, and individuals’ actions and agency in (post-) conflict settings.

Once the process of resolving the conflict and building peace has begun, however, local communities are often quite active, yet rarely receive any acknowledgement for their engagement. Very often in peace processes or conflict resolution initiatives, the third parties involved – whether they be nation states or international NGOs – appear as the ‘guardian angels’ of the warring communities, swooping down to save them from themselves and teach them how to build a peaceful, ‘civilised’ society. These third parties often do not take the necessary support from the local community into consideration. This is certainly not to belittle the important and often necessary task that third parties undertake in negotiating peace settlements or implementing peacebuilding projects; on the contrary, such initiatives are essential, particularly when the parties to a conflict and the communities which they represent do not have the capacity to resolve the conflict themselves and/or have asked external actors for assistance. Nevertheless, individual local agency is often overlooked and these individuals or groups are thus disempowered in governance initiatives for peacebuilding. This risks losing the great potential for building peace which lies within local actors and may contribute to factors that will keep the conflict unresolved.

The notion of local agency in peacebuilding processes has become a much discussed and much debated topic in the field. The “lack of opportunities for the local population to influence the direction of the international agenda” (Schaefer 2010, 503) has been persistently lamented and denounced. But how can a project be sufficiently participatory and locally owned, in order to ensure support from the individuals directly affected, without it leading to inefficiency and unruliness? Correspondingly, there has been a trend in recent years to look more closely at traditional approaches to conflict resolution particular to each (post-)conflict setting. Such traditional approaches are generally more process-oriented, considered more

legitimate by the communities on the ground, focus more on the psycho-social dimension of conflict and its transformation, and provide for more inclusion and participation than externally imposed approaches (Boege 2011, 445-449). Using such traditional approaches in their purest forms would theoretically enable the local actors to exercise their agency, use their voices, and become partners in the peacebuilding process, rather than remain simple beneficiaries. However, Boege points out that such traditional approaches are often taken by external actors and placed into the framework of Western concepts of conflict resolution and peacebuilding, “conquered’ and usurped in the process”, which thereby changes their inherent character (ibid., 434). In this case the original question remains as to how much capacity local agency truly has to act. Furthermore, the ‘local’ is certainly not always homogeneous. A multi-ethnic society may have different traditional approaches to solving conflict, which may not be accommodating and at times may even be contradictory. In this sense, choosing to use one approach may lead to the marginalisation of other groups, which risks escalating conflict. Particularly in divided societies, the interests of various groups must be addressed in a balanced and nonviolent way.

Be that as it may, the argument for using traditional approaches for conflict resolution is based on the assumption that such approaches are inherently better and will have a positive effect on the peacebuilding process. This, however, may not be true. Among other disadvantages, traditional approaches may directly contradict universal human rights standards and may not actually bring about an end to the violence (ibid., 450). Mac Ginty (2008, 149) warns correctly that traditional approaches should not always be equated with a “higher normative value”. Similarly, the argument that local agency is crucial in bringing about sustainable peace is based on the assumption that this agency will be exercised positively and in support of governance initiatives for peacebuilding. However, local agency may also be used by individuals or groups in order to retain and (mis)use their power, often at the expense of others. Furthermore, *critical* agency has the potential to decelerate the process of building peace, which can lead to hybridised forms of peace, or even to the failure of the process. Due to the hugely powerful and hegemonic presence of international peacebuilding actors and institutions, this critical, local agency in response to such initiatives (which will be discussed in this report) will rarely take a form which is openly manifested. It will instead be exercised on a more subdued and everyday level, taking the form of a subtle resistance. This resistance, which is easily overlooked, is the “essence of agency” (Richmond 2011, 424), what will be referred to as ‘everyday resistance’.

4 Everyday Forms of Resistance

The notion of the “everyday” has been the subject of various disciplines that range from anthropology to philosophy, and from art to feminist studies. The French Impressionists’ depiction of everyday life was considered in the nineteenth century highly provocative, as was Betty Friedan’s depiction of the “problem that has no name”, the everyday, unsatisfactory life of a housewife in the 1950s. Sigmund Freud put a name to that most common of experiences – the everyday slip of the tongue, while the philosopher Roland Barthes sang the praises of that ubiquitous and all-purposeful material, plastic.⁶ In spite of the great diversity of their subject matter, all of these artists, writers, and thinkers had at least one goal in common: to make the everyday significant.

According to Highmore (2002, 1), the concept of the everyday refers to “those practices and lives that have traditionally been left out of historical accounts.... It becomes shorthand for voices from ‘below’: women, children, migrants and so on.” Taking this concept of “voices from below” into the conflict resolution and peacebuilding field, these voices include not just those of women and migrants, but also the poor, the slum-dwellers, the refugees, those caught up in and suffering from conflict in general, the

⁶ For texts by Friedan, Freud and Barthes, see Highmore (2002).

oppressed and discriminated, and in its most general form, those that are referred to as the “locals”. It is on these levels of society and among these groups – the groups that have been historically overlooked or forgotten – that we can witness (often unconscious) resistance to their social, political or economic situations.

Due to the countless types of resistance carried out in countless different contexts, an individual’s understanding of what resistance is may vary dramatically from that of his neighbour. One may imagine organised protests and demonstrations against governmental policies or an authoritarian regime; or one may imagine less organised, virtual networks of resistance to more global issues, for instance, multinational corporations. One may associate resistance with armed guerrilla movements or, conversely, with the numerous and creative forms of nonviolent resistance.⁷ Resistance can be organised or spontaneous, individual or collective, violent or nonviolent. It will vary greatly depending on who the resister is, what they are resisting, and the methods of their resistance. Regardless of the form, however, resistance is always a reaction in some way to power. Vinthagen (2007, 7) defines resistance as an act carried out by someone in a subordinate position in response to power; an act that challenges power and contains at least the possibility that this power will be undermined by the act of resistance. Resistance can take either a defensive or reactive stance, for instance in order to protect existing values, or it may be more “strategic and *pro-active* ... aiming for structural and radical change” (Vinthagen and Lilja 2006, 4). An important aspect, and one that seems to be disputed among those writing and researching on the notion of resistance, is the question of intent within resistance. For Vinthagen, although intent would be “helpful” (in those cases in which it is evident), it is not a necessary criteria for an act to qualify as resistance (Vinthagen 2007, 7).

In his enlightening work “Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance”, James C. Scott (1985) gives us a meticulous account of how poor and dispossessed rural farmers in a region of Northwest Malaysia resist against their circumstances, in general, and the rich landowners, in particular. The rural poor in this particular context are resisting not only the fact of their poverty, for instance by stealing or siphoning off rice, but are also, more fundamentally, resisting the corrupt political system and its privileging of the landowning class; the inevitable march of modernity which has brought mechanised farming and therefore a steadily decreasing income for the unskilled; the elite and their callousness to the plight of the poor peasants; the changing societal norms, particularly in terms of charity, that have led to even greater poverty; and the injustice inherent in the labelling of the poor as lazy and undeserving. The methods that the poor employ in order to carry out this resistance are what Scott refers to as “the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth” (ibid., 29).

The fact that this type of resistance is carried out by generally powerless groups and individuals intrinsically limits the approaches and methods of resistance employed. With everyday resistance, there is no genuine hope of fundamentally changing the given circumstances; nor is there any expectation of a coordinated and popular resistance movement. Instead, this type of resistance is just what is implied – everyday acts, the “seemingly mundane practices by which people constantly shape and reshape their environment” (Bleiker 2003, 34). Acts of everyday resistance are often carried out individually and anonymously, subtly and covertly. Everyday resistance is the act of the North Korean peasant who chooses to divert less water for the irrigation of those fields whose crops he must render to the government. Such resistance rarely has any leader or structure, is often carried out informally and spontaneously, and is generally concerned with immediate gains (whether material or ideological). Everyday resistance is not an organised protest movement, but rather slander, gossip, character assassination, story-telling, comical imitation, backstage accusations, etc.⁸

Michel de Certeau (1984, xiii) further outlines the way that subjugated populations throughout history have not completely rejected the rules and laws imposed on them (a dangerous and possibly

⁷ See, for example, Dudouet (2011) or Vinthagen (2007).

⁸ For detailed examples of each, see Scott (1985), 14, 25, 187, 195.

lethal decision), but were rather able to transform and manipulate these rules in order to make them more relevant to their context, with an external appearance of assimilation. They were therefore able to escape the dominant system while remaining within it. This manipulation and/or transformation of the system or dominant social order by “users who are not its makers” (ibid., xiii) could plainly be interpreted as everyday resistance and is similar to what Scott refers to with regard to his own research as the “safe disguise of outward compliance” (Scott 1985, 283). De Certeau goes on to describe his distinction between a strategy (that which has its own spatial and institutional localisation) and that which does not have a ‘place’ of its own, but must therefore use the place that belongs to the ‘other’. This lack of place means that a tactic must therefore take advantage of ‘time’ – it must “constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into ‘opportunities’” (de Certeau 1984, xix). We can therefore deduce that tactical resistance must be carried out when and where the opportunity presents itself, which differs dramatically from strategic resistance, which can be coordinated, planned, and carried out at the intended localisation. Strategic resistance thus has an identifiable agent who exerts influence on an identifiable target, i.e. a citizen protesting against a government, while tactical resistance does not need a specified target – it is “not necessarily directed at the immediate source of appropriation” (Scott 1985, 35). With everyday resistance, “[p]ower is not met head on ... but instead is subtly circumvented and set off course” (Richmond 2011, 428).

Based on the above descriptions, it is not surprising that Scott finds fault with the definition of resistance as being only those acts that are organised and systematic, principled and with consequences – in essence, resistance which *challenges* power. On the contrary, his definition of resistance allows the inclusion of both individual and collective resistance, and focuses not on the intended consequences, but rather on intentions (Scott 1985, 290-292). This focus on intent is the probable predicament not only of Scott’s work, but also of other research carried out with the aim of analysing the resistance of subaltern groups to power. This intent is dreadfully difficult to prove, particularly as the acts of resistance may not be obvious to outsiders. As external actors, researchers can only hope to speculate on the intention behind acts of everyday resistance. Furthermore, the question of intent is often a matter of perspective. An external actor may understand an individual action as resistance, but for the person carrying out the activity, it may simply be a case of mere survival or ‘getting by’. This dilemma of whether intent is necessary for an action to qualify as resistance will be explored further within the case studies of the CORE project.

If there is evidence that the act of resistance was carried out with intent, however, the argument for classifying the act as resistance is correspondingly strengthened (ibid., 290). Moreover, demonstrating intent can assist in understanding *why* individuals resist in the first place. This more complete understanding would then hopefully lead to a better response – a response to the resistance itself as well as to the (socio-economic, political, cultural) factors that underlie the resistance. The importance of this understanding of resistance and response to it will become clearer in the next section.

5 An Example: The Liberal Peace and Resistance

In this report, the focus of the research and analysis will be on everyday engagement with and resistance to governance initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the chosen case studies. These initiatives vary greatly, as they have been designed and implemented within very different cultural and conflict contexts, with a background of very different peacebuilding rationalities and approaches to governance. Scott (1985) has provided us with an insightful study on everyday resistance within the context of class relations in an agricultural society in Malaysia, but the idea of investigating *everyday resistance*

to *peacebuilding initiatives* within (post-) conflict settings is quite new. However, preliminary work on the topic of everyday resistance to so-called “liberal peace” interventions has been carried out, although it does not have extensive field research findings to substantiate its claims. Nevertheless, this research merits a brief discussion here as it provides the necessary link to investigate everyday resistance in other settings. It also sets the parameters that will be used for the following analysis.

International peacebuilding and statebuilding interventions in post-conflict and fragile states during the last two decades have been increasingly based upon the concepts of democratisation, the rule of law, the liberalisation of the market, support for civil society and human rights protection. This is done in the hope that the promotion of such ideals will transform states into responsible nations, able to protect and provide for their citizens through sustainable development and good governance, while acting responsibly and cooperatively with other nations on the world stage. The proponents of this theory, dubbed “the liberal peace”, include states, various international organisations and international financial institutions. This theory has attracted a great deal of critique, most significantly because it acts as a “mechanism for the transmission of Western-specific ideas and practices”, as well as due to its promoters’ conviction of the practice’s superiority and subsequent dismissal of alternative forms of peace-making (Mac Ginty 2008, 144). Other critiques include the argument that international interventions based on the concepts of liberal peace are being carried out in countries that are simply not yet capable of accepting this responsibility for their citizens. In such states, there should first be a clear focus on establishing effective institutions before promoting democratic elections and a market economy, the early introduction of which could lead to possible turbulence. Paris (2004, 187-207) refers to this as “institutionalization before liberalization” – a process of delaying true liberalisation in order to ensure a smoother transition to peace and more stability in the long run. In this sense, therefore, it is not the basic understanding of liberal peace that is being critiqued, *per se*, but rather the suitability of its targets and the pace of its implementation.

David Chandler (2010, 22-42) points out a further critique that demonstrates how this entire approach to international intervention in post-conflict and fragile states is not particularly ‘liberal’, after all. In such countries, the traditionally liberal notions of national sovereignty, autonomy and democracy are considered too risky. Instead, international experts must first intervene to help establish the proper institutions and regulations to enable states to carry out effective administration, in accordance with ‘good governance’ practices. In essence, this means the reinterpretation of liberal, rights-based approaches (sovereignty, autonomy) as a threat to global stability (because states cannot yet be trusted with such characteristics), rather than that which safeguards it, as it was understood during the Cold War. In practice, this “institutionalist discourse of intervention and regulation is not one of liberal universalism and transformation but one of restricted possibilities, where democracy and development are hollowed out and, rather than embodying the possibilities of the autonomous human subject, become mechanisms of control and ordering” (*ibid.*, 40).

It is important here, however, to distinguish between these numerous and various critiques as being either critiques of the entire notion of liberal peace, or critiques of its implementation. Paris (2010, 356) points out that a misinterpretation of such critiques “may unnecessarily delegitimize the *idea* of liberal peacebuilding rather than focusing attention on the *mode* or *methods* of liberal peacebuilding”. As he demonstrates, many peacebuilding initiatives in countries recovering from violent conflict have helped make great strides towards sustainable peace and reconciliation. Nevertheless, no matter the perspective on the faults of liberal peace and/or its implementation, there is a consensus that liberal peace interventions are provoking legitimate resistance and opposition from those who are directly affected by their implementation in (post-) conflict countries. Often this resistance, as stated above, takes the form of violent actions carried out on the part of so-called ‘spoilers’. But other, less visible and more understated forms of resistance exist as well. This resistance generally stems from the critique of such interventions as being ideological, yet unethical, treating local actors as powerless and ignorant subjects, lacking any communication with these actors, and ignoring issues such as local culture and the everyday (Richmond 2009, 568). One example of how local actors can be treated as subjects rather than citizens is the absence of

efforts to ensure true political autonomy for voters under an international caretaker administration, such as in BiH. Although elections were held at regular intervals, decisions made by elected leaders could be overruled by the High Representative, who was considered to be ‘above politics’ and to whom the elected officials were ultimately accountable. In this sense, elections were not the expression of the political will of the people, but were rather seen as “educational exercises” in which the voters demonstrate to the international administrators their “political capacities as citizens” (Chandler 2006, 492).

Everyday resistance to liberal peace interventions and initiatives can, as Scott (1985) has shown in other contexts, take many different forms, some of which are not immediately recognisable as resistance, including non-cooperation, or cooperating with some aspects of an initiative, while subverting or ignoring others. The form that everyday resistance takes depends to a great extent on factors that vary considerably between (post-)conflict settings, such as how much power local actors actually have, the extent of the damage done by the conflict to national and local institutions, and the degree of dependency on the local actors for the implementation of (external) initiatives (Mac Ginty 2010, 402-403). Due to cultural differences, a lack of external understanding of the conflict setting and its people, and a blind faith on the part of external actors that they are doing what is best for the local people, such subtle resistance often goes unnoticed or overlooked. If such resistance does indeed draw the attention of international organisations or individuals, it is often explained, at best, as a general disinterest of the locals in the initiative, or, at worst, as their ungratefulness, both of which could fall into the external actors’ category of ‘unintended consequences’ of the initiative.

According to Richmond and Mac Ginty, such resistance and other outcomes (adaptation, transformation) of the interaction of external and local can lead to hybridity, or more exactly, the process of hybridisation, and ultimately, to a hybrid peace.⁹ For the purposes of this report, however, another possible outcome of this everyday resistance is much more relevant, namely, that the concept of the everyday “represents an alternative site of knowledge for peacebuilding” (Richmond 2009, 571). This could support the transformation of local actors and communities – previously seen simply as beneficiaries or recipients of such governance initiatives – from being mere subjects to being active citizens in the peacebuilding process. This alternative knowledge should not be disregarded, but rather used as a resource. This entails recognising resistance for what it is, understanding the reasons behind such resistance, developing creative ways of responding to this resistance and modifying the initiatives in order to incorporate this resistance. Of course, we shouldn’t over-romanticise such resistance as being a legitimate and unanimous response on the part of local communities to what may be perceived as interveners’ insensitive and ideologically-based, top-down approach. Indeed, such resistance can also have its darker sides, and can just as easily be an attempt by elites to retain their power and authority or to deny marginalised groups, in particular minorities or women, an opportunity for empowerment. Nevertheless, everyday resistance to the liberal peace, regardless of its ultimate aim, has the potential to greatly affect the peacebuilding process, and this alone deserves closer examination.

6 Why Agency and Everyday Resistance?

Investigating local agency and everyday resistance to governance initiatives even further, specifically in the field of peacebuilding and conflict resolution, will open up a new forum to allow discussion of the role that such actors can and should play in such processes. This may prove to be a new and promising research

⁹ See Mac Ginty, 2010 and Richmond, 2010 and 2011, as well as Anna Bernhard’s complementary CORE report.

agenda, as everyday resistance within the peacebuilding setting has not yet been looked at in detail. The significance and importance of such research should be self-evident for those working in the conflict resolution field. Local agency and the support of local communities are considered crucial in bringing about sustainable peace; yet, initiatives strictly based on ‘liberal’ peacebuilding often disempower those same actors that they should ideally be encouraging. Methods and approaches to peacebuilding that are dictated externally often have little relevance for those individuals and communities whom they are supposed to benefit. Indeed, initiatives which bypass the “everyday and its agencies have little chance of being legitimate, sustainable and relevant for ordinary people” (CORE 2011, 23). If the intended beneficiaries of such initiatives feel that they are being treated as powerless subjects, they may choose to use their power – for they are far from powerless – in ways that demonstrate their discontent, which may lead to the ineffectiveness or even failure of the initiatives. A top-down, external imposition of initiatives may indeed push them into engaging in modes of agency that resist and oppose initiatives more openly.

Understanding how and why individuals use their agency and for what purpose, and understanding *why* they resist, requires first understanding – to the greatest extent possible – each conflict setting and background, the drivers of conflict, and the various socio-cultural and political rationalities of peacebuilding and conflict resolution. The theme of socio-cultural and political premises of peacebuilding governance has been a major focus of the CORE project, addressing in detail the various governmentalities at work within the framework of peacebuilding initiatives.¹⁰ Furthermore, it is imperative to examine the cultural and sociological framework within which such agency is expressed and such resistance is carried out. Actors’ cultures and identities play a decisive role in the mode of agency they express and the discourse which they use, which in turn influences to a great degree the relations amongst local and external actors, while shaping the type of hybrid peace that develops.¹¹ By taking these issues into consideration, we may hope to achieve the outcome of a more inclusive, legitimate peace process, which will therefore lead to a more sustainable and just peace.

As described in the introduction, the following chapters of this report will look at local agency and everyday resistance within five of the CORE project’s case studies. I define *everyday resistance to governance initiatives for conflict resolution* as any act not carried out overtly that (intentionally) limits the smooth implementation of a measure intended to mitigate conflict or build peace. The analysis will be based on field work carried out during 2011-2012 by our research partners and in most cases, will be the first official publication of the research findings. Each individual chapter will be dedicated to one (post-) conflict region. In each chapter, I will begin with a brief background of the conflict. I will then discuss the different perceptions of the conflict from the viewpoint of the main actors involved in the conflict. Understanding the (at times quite differing) perceptions of the root causes and current status of the conflict helps one better understand the reasoning behind the peacebuilding rationalities for each conflict. A short overview of the peacebuilding rationalities and governance initiatives being examined will then be given, followed by the reaction of the local actors to these initiatives, and in particular, the resistance to these initiatives. The discussion of resistance includes not only how local actors resist and why, but also the adaptation or transformation of the initiatives to make them more relevant to the local context. A final chapter of the report is dedicated to concluding remarks on governance initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding and resistance thereof within the individual conflict cases, and a short discussion on how governance is being conceptualised within the CORE project.

¹⁰ See Janel B. Galvanek, Hans J. Giessmann and Mir Mubashir (eds.), *Norms and Premises of Peace Governance: Socio-Cultural Commonalities and Differences in Europe and India*. Berghof Occasional Paper No. 32, 2012. Available at: <http://www.berghof-conflictresearch.org/documents/publications/boc32e.pdf>

¹¹ Anna Bernhard focuses on aspects of culture, identity and a hybrid peace in her complementary CORE report.

Georgia and Abkhazia

1 Background of the Conflict¹

When the Soviet Union disintegrated, many new nations were created in its wake. As these new or reconstituted nations emerged in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, this process of state formation encouraged other populations in those same regions to demand sovereignty and nationhood for themselves. Such demands for self-determination were not always accepted by the international community and most importantly not by the countries from which the new nations were to secede. Abkhazia is one of these cases. Under the socialist umbrella of the Soviet Union, Abkhazia was officially an autonomous republic of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. As the Georgian state began in the early 1990s to agitate for its independence from the Soviet Union, Abkhazia in turn began a similar process to secure its independence from Georgia.

Heightened political tensions and a contradictory understanding of self-determination and national sovereignty culminated in 1992 in the Abkhazian parliament's reinstatement of the draft Abkhazian constitution from 1925, which declared that Abkhazia was no longer part of Georgia. Interpreting this as a declaration of secession, Georgian troops advanced into Abkhazian territory. In the subsequent war which lasted until September 1993, approximately 250,000 ethnic Georgians were displaced – approximately 45%

¹ This report is partly based on the two field research reports by Nona Mikhelidze, research fellow at the Istituto Affari Internazionali in Rome, Italy. The reports are entitled “National and European cultures of governance in Georgia and Abkhaz conflict resolution” and “Summary of fieldwork (1st round) in Georgia/Abkhazia”. Field research was carried out in October 2011 and May 2012 by Nona Mikhelidze in Georgia and in October 2011 by Vanessa Boas in Abkhazia within the framework of the CORE project. Both reports have partly established the topics and analysis for this chapter. Based on the material included in the reports, this chapter analyses peacebuilding rationalities and governance initiatives for conflict resolution only from the Georgian side. Significantly for the findings in this chapter, it is important to note that the field research in Georgia and Abkhazia took place before the election of the new government of Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili in October 2012. Therefore, the description and analysis of both the peacebuilding rationalities and the governance initiatives were based upon the Georgian government of the still current president, Mikheil Saakashvili. It remains to be seen whether the approaches to conflict resolution will change under the new government.

of the pre-war Abkhazian population (Wolleh 2006, 17) – most of whom have subsequently been living as IDPs/refugees² in Georgia. Since the war, there has been sporadic violence in the Gal/i³ region of Abkhazia, but this has never led to the outbreak of more serious hostilities.

However, the brief interstate war between Russia and Georgia in August 2008 in the region of South Ossetia has complicated matters in Abkhazia further. One of the direct consequences of this war was the Russian recognition of South Ossetian and Abkhazian independence, which has changed both the status and the negotiating position of Abkhazia. This development, as well as the stationing of Russian troops in the territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, has changed the dynamics of the conflict significantly. The Georgian-Abkhazian conflict is nevertheless considered a ‘frozen’ conflict and is characterised by a marked lack of progress on any of the conflict related issues, such as the final political status of Abkhazia or a solution to the question of the return of IDPs/refugees.

2 Perceptions of the Conflict

The intractability of the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict can be understood in light of the “incompatibility between the ‘national projects’ of Georgian and Abkhaz elites, and of societies as a whole” (Gegeshidze 2011a, 5). While the Georgians view the conflict mainly from the standpoint of territorial integrity and the meddling of other countries (i.e. Russia) within their borders, the Abkhaz have a much more historical perspective of the conflict between the Georgians and Abkhaz, which only in 1992 culminated in significant violence.

For the Abkhaz, the conflict with the Georgians has long-term historical dimensions which include the forced displacement of the Abkhaz population in the second half of the 19th century as a result of Russian imperial policy and the subsequent resettlement of Georgian peasants on the uninhabited Abkhaz land. The short-lived period for nine months in 1921 during which Abkhazia enjoyed a status equal to Georgia as a Socialist Republic of the Soviet Union is cited as proof of the Abkhaz right to independent status. In the Abkhaz interpretation of the conflict, the agreement in December 1921 to become an autonomous republic *within* the republic of Georgia was “imposed by force” (Wolleh 2006, 11). Furthermore, the regime of Stalin (an ethnic Georgian) was particularly abusive and discriminatory towards the Abkhaz, banning the Abkhaz language and schools, resettling collective farmers from western Georgia onto Abkhaz land, and pursuing the “georgianization” of place names (Haindrava 2011b, 6-8).

Such discrimination and infringement of rights at the hands of both the Soviet leaders and the “Georgian party bosses” who were responsible for implementing such policies (ibid., 8), lies heavily on Abkhaz society and ensures that the conflict cannot be reduced merely to a dispute over territory. In fact, it is the Georgians themselves who are perceived by the Abkhaz as “the main threat to their ethnic and cultural identity” (Akaba 2011b, 8). Due partly to forced resettlement policies, the Georgian population in Abkhazia increased six-fold over the first six decades of the twentieth century and by 1960 had reduced the Abkhaz to an ethnic minority (ibid., 9). In light of this fact, it is imaginable why the Abkhaz in general have an “acute sense of their own cultural and demographic vulnerability” (Akaba 2011c, 14). Moreover, as the disintegration of the Soviet Union granted Georgians their own right to self-determination, the Abkhaz consider it an “outrageous injustice” that the Georgians would perceive the Abkhaz’ “natural drive for independence as something unlawful” (ibid., 15).

The Georgians, for their part, view the conflict in terms of sovereignty and perceive the secession of Abkhazia as a “major threat to Georgia statehood” (Wolleh 2006, 21). As mentioned above, for the greater part of the history of the Soviet Union, Abkhazia was officially an autonomous republic of the Georgian Soviet

² Georgians consider these displaced individuals ‘internally displaced persons’ (IDPs), while the Abkhaz refer to them as refugees.

³ For this report, both the Georgian and the Abkhaz spelling of place names will be used.

Socialist Republic and Georgians thus regard the region as an inherent part of the country. The ethnopolitical dimension of the conflict championed by the Abkhaz is either completely disregarded or given very little importance by the Georgian side. Instead, the view promoted by the Georgian state and within Georgian society is that the Abkhazian leadership “acts as an instrument of Russian policy” (ibid., 52).

Furthermore, one of the defining features of the conflict for the Georgians and that which stands out as “the main act of violence” (Wolleh 2006, 67) is the forced expulsion of ethnic Georgians from Abkhazia during the 1992-93 war. As a consequence of this displacement, the Abkhaz were viewed by Georgian society no longer just as “the victors of a secessionist war, but also [became] the perpetrators of ethnic cleansing against Georgians” (Popescu 2010, 6). Many of these IDPs/refugees have been living in temporary shelters in Georgia since that time, and many of those who chose to return voluntarily were subjected to violence and forced displacement yet again by Abkhaz militias in the violence in May 1998 (Hansen 1999, 60). Furthermore, Georgians believe that the Abkhazian government is reluctant to allow the return of Georgian IDPs/refugees, because they will then again outnumber the Abkhaz in the region (Nodia 1999, 22). These aspects, combined with the complete lack of progress made on solving this issue, have led to Georgian feelings of injustice. For many Abkhaz, however, the exodus of the Georgian population is viewed as a “just consequence of the national liberation struggle” (Akaba 2011b, 9). These two differing perspectives of the IDP/refugee issue are inherently contradictory, as the Georgians are seeking recognition of the illegality of the forced ‘expulsion’, while the Abkhaz view the war as a direct consequence of Georgian military aggression and therefore consider the ‘exodus’ as a natural repercussion of the war.

It is evident that the parties to the conflict have contradictory interpretations of past events which are “completely at odds with each other” (Akaba 2011a, 5). This is a result not only of the intense mistrust that exists between the two sides, but also of the narrow perspective each party has of the root causes of conflict. This was confirmed by the statement of a Georgian opposition politician in Tbilisi who stated in an interview that each side failed to appreciate and understand the perspectives of the other side (Mikhelidze 2012, 3). As Jonathan Cohen argues, the “Abkhaz fear of cultural extinction and Georgian concerns about political disintegration and Russian interference” have contributed to a wariness of leaders to reach compromise (Cohen 1999b, 12).

These contradictory interpretations of the past have in turn helped develop the quite contradictory interpretations of the present conflict. For the Abkhaz in general, the conflict has essentially been solved – Abkhazia is now a recognised country, and no longer just a secessionist regime (Popescu 2010, 13). Therefore, the interest and will to address the longstanding concerns of the conflict, such as IDP/refugee return and territorial status, is quite low among Abkhaz society, as these issues are not considered a priority (Akaba 2011c, 18; Khintba 2011b, 34). In the words of one civil society representative in Tbilisi, “Georgia does not exist anymore for Abkhazia; it is neither a threat, nor the source of development” (Mikhelidze 2011, 4). Since the 2008 war between Russia and Georgia, the strategic goals of the Georgian side have changed as well, with a focus on “the reversal of the military and political consequences of the war”, namely the Russian recognition of Abkhazia’s independence and the removal of Russian troops from Abkhazian soil (Gegeshidze 2011c, 34).

3 Peacebuilding Rationalities

As discussed in the first chapter of this report, I define a *peacebuilding rationality* as a kind of discourse that sets the boundaries within which governance initiatives for peacebuilding can be carried out. Such a rationality lays out the appropriate methods and approaches to be used. The designers and implementers of such initiatives – whether they be governmental actors, civil society members, or individuals, should ideally have an understanding of the context of the conflict and the field of intervention within which

actions are possible for resolving the conflict. The assumption here is that such a rationality is a logical evaluation of the conflict and its transformation possibilities.

However, because there are often quite different perspectives on the causes of the conflict (as seen in the last section), this logically leads to different views on how to best solve it. These different perspectives arise not only from different individual and collective experiences of war and conflict, but can also develop as a result of political pressure or due to nationalism or myths propagated by national elites. Therefore, actors who take on the responsibility for trying to resolve a conflict may believe that they are on the right path to building peace, when in reality there may be a large gap between what they want to achieve and the way they are attempting to achieve it. In this case, carrying out governance initiatives for conflict resolution within such a limited framework may not achieve the desired objective and could potentially lead to more conflict.

In the case of the conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia, I will examine more closely in this chapter three recognisable peacebuilding rationalities *of the Georgian government* and analyse them with regard to their potential for resolving the conflict with the Abkhazians. Based partly on the fieldwork carried out by Nona Mikhelidze at the Istituto Affari Internazionali and partly as a result of this author's analysis, these three peacebuilding rationalities were chosen as the three most relevant for the current state of conflict resolution between Georgia and Abkhazia.

3.1 Georgian Government Believes that the Main Conflict Parties are Georgia and Russia

The conflict between Georgia and Abkhazia has been through many different phases of violence and negotiations since the early 1990s. One of the major aspects that has remained consistent throughout is the Georgian government's almost complete disregard for Abkhazia as a party to the conflict. During the Moscow talks of 1992, the Abkhaz were initially not recognised as a negotiating party – an oversight that has been repeated throughout the years, for instance in the (unimplemented) Sochi agreement of 2003 between Georgia and Russia and even today in the framework of the Geneva discussions, in which Georgia refuses to recognise Abkhazia as an official negotiating party (Khintba 2011a, 20, 25, 28).

Since the August 2008 war with Russia in the region of South Ossetia, this understanding of the bilateral nature of the conflict has become much more pronounced, with the Georgian government attempting to portray Russia to the public as “the main enemy and the sole source of all [Georgia's] problems and misfortunes” (Gegeshidze 2011b, 25). The media in Georgia has promoted this view of the conflict even further, concentrating heavily on the Russian dimension (Tocci and Mikhelidze 2011, 154). Clearly, with the advancement of Russian troops into the territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and the recognition of these regions' independence by Russia, the dynamics of the conflict have changed dramatically. For Georgian society, the main issue is no longer that Moscow is intrinsically biased toward Sukhum/i, but rather that Russia is now occupying Georgian territory (Gegeshidze 2011b, 24).

Nevertheless, it would be mistaken to think that Georgia had a different understanding of the main parties to the conflict *before* the August 2008 war. As Archil Gegeshidze explains, the perception of the conflict as historically one between Russia and Georgia is based upon a myth that was popular even before the war that “Georgians and Abkhaz have always lived in peace and accord, and if it had not been for Russia pitching the two brotherly nations against each other to suit its own selfish interests, there would have been no wars between them” (ibid., 23). Such an understanding of the conflict, which over-emphasises the geopolitical factor with Russia, takes the Abkhaz perspective of the underlying causes of the conflict hardly into account. From an Abkhaz perspective, this absolute refusal of the Georgians to acknowledge the ethno-political dimension of the conflict creates further obstacles to its transformation (Khintba 2011b, 39). By focusing all of their attention on demonising Russia, the Georgian government does not sufficiently take into account other, more deep-rooted disputes, between the Georgian and Abkhazian

societies. In essence, focusing on Moscow “distracts attention from a serious discussion of the difficulties in overcoming the antagonistic relations” between the two communities (Coppieters 1999, 18).

This lack of acknowledgement of the Abkhaz grievances and interests paints the Abkhaz not as autonomous actors, but instead as “Russia’s puppets, devoid of any will of their own” (Akaba 2011a, 5) and the “obedient executor of Russia’s will” (Akaba 2011c, 12).⁴ Viewing the conflict in this light denies both the Abkhaz leadership and Abkhaz society as a whole any role or influence in aspects that affect them most directly – the continuation or resolution of the conflict with Georgia. This blatant denial of agency demonstrates quite clearly that the Georgians and Abkhazians not only have markedly different understandings of the main actors involved in the conflict, but also what the conflict is actually about. As Oliver Wolleh points out, “Georgians generally have only a limited awareness that the Abkhazians, as a nation, regard their struggle for independence as a serious matter” (Wolleh 2006, 74). The Abkhazians, in contrast, regard themselves as “independent actors [...] who possess an independent political vision” (ibid., 75) – notably independent of both Georgia *and* Russia.

On closer examination of this peacebuilding rationality, it becomes evident that the Georgian government is labouring under a misconception of how peace with Abkhazia can be sustainably built. Essentially, the Georgian government is painting the conflict in the way it so chooses, while simply disregarding the other significant party, namely, the Abkhaz people collectively. There is no recognition on the part of the Georgian government – and to a great extent also in Georgian society – that the Abkhaz people should have a say with regard to their future and the methods available for the transformation of the conflict. Decisions about the conflict resolution process are made in Georgia *for* the Abkhazians, *on behalf of* the Abkhazians and *with reference to* the Abkhazians, not – as it should ideally be in conflict resolution processes – *in consultation with* the Abkhazians. Such an approach is not only disrespectful of the Abkhaz people and their aspirations, but will ultimately backfire and therefore not lead to a just and sustainable peace. One conclusion that Nona Mikhelidze draws from her research in Georgia and one that this author fully supports is that the Georgian government should “completely redesign its governance approaches by choosing the right interlocutor – the de facto Abkhaz government and ordinary local people” (Mikhelidze 2012, 11).

3.2 Georgian Government Believes that the Conflict Must be Resolved in the Framework of Georgia’s Territorial Integrity

As explained above, the Georgians perceive the conflict as one which threatens their territorial sovereignty and integrity, while the Abkhazians view the conflict as a struggle for self-determination and the protection of their ethnic identity. The Georgian position on resolving the conflict – within the framework of national sovereignty and respect for Georgia’s international borders – has never been changed or even altered and indeed, because the opinion of the international community lies squarely on the Georgian side⁵, there seems to be little reason from the Georgian perspective to change this position. The Abkhazians, for their part, were initially willing to discuss possible solutions to the conflict in terms of the right to self-determination within a federal system. However, since the approval of the Constitution of Abkhazia in 1999 and the *Act of State Independence*, talk of such federal solutions are strictly off the table and the Abkhaz side has refused to discuss issues of political status (Khintba 2011a, 24). Significantly, this means that the framework within which all solutions from one side are envisioned is completely dismissed as a viable working framework by the other side.

⁴ There is no acknowledgement here by the Georgian government that Abkhazia’s reliance on Russia over the years has been a “direct consequence of the Georgian-instigated, Russian-imposed blockade”, which left the Abkhazians with the single option of Russia for travel and trade opportunities (Kvarchelia 1999, 30).

⁵ The EU, the USA and the OSCE all officially support the territorial integrity of the country of Georgia (Mikhelidze 2012, 4,7; Government of Georgia 2010, 3-4).

Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of the reunification of the country remains in Georgia a “subject of public consensus and serves as a motivational philosophy of the government” (Gegeshidze 2011c, 29). This strategy of re-establishing territorial integrity has been the objective of all Georgian governments since the collapse of the Soviet Union, specifically that of the Saakashvili regime, which came to power in the Rose Revolution of 2003 (Popescu 2010, 8). This seemingly insurmountable impasse is perhaps the most visible illustration of the incompatibility of the Georgian and Abkhaz national projects spoken of above, as these national projects developed by the communities include the “claims of an exclusive right to sovereignty over Abkhaz territory” (Coppieters 1999, 17). The two opposing sides to the conflict (if, indeed, one views Abkhazia rather than Russia as the main party to the conflict) seem to be confined within a vicious cycle of dead-end discussions about status, in which the sole road out of the conflict for one party is impassable for the other. The continuing stalemate concerning the status of Abkhazia and Georgia’s attempt to see the resolution only within this political framework is a “simplistic approach to a complex issue” and completely ignores the wider implications of the conflict, which include humanitarian, socio-economic and security concerns (Haindrava 2011a, 11).

Conflict resolution processes are about finding compromises that each side can realistically live with. The present situation concerning status negotiations between Georgia and Abkhazia is currently at a standstill, with neither party to the conflict willing to make any concessions. The Georgian government feels justified in its position due to the overwhelming international support for its territorial integrity. This support of the international community in itself could be critiqued as contributing to the problem, as it prevents the Georgian government from accepting compromise on this issue and adds to the asymmetry of the conflict. The Abkhaz, for their part, feel that since their country is now internationally recognised (albeit by only four countries), all talks of re-joining Georgia are simply unnecessary. It remains to be seen if and when one of the parties to the conflict will comprehend that such unbending standpoints can never lead to sustainable peace. When one party’s peacebuilding rationality is inherently incompatible with the other’s, it is never beneficial to continuously state the same position, over and over, with the hope that the other side will suddenly change their stance. Instead, creativity and determination to find a third way are called for. The only possible solution is for the parties to the conflict to “abandon unrealistic demands and expectations and adapt their policies accordingly” (Mikhelidze 2012, 11).

3.3 The Use of Force is Not an Option

One of the newer and certainly more positive peacebuilding rationalities that has developed on the Georgian side of the conflict divide in recent years is the understanding that using military force to ‘reclaim’ Abkhazia is no longer a viable option. In fact, in November 2010 during an address to the European Parliament, President Saakashvili stated that “we commit ourselves not to use force to restore control over our illegally divided country” (Civil Georgia 2010), thereby making a unilateral non-use of force declaration. However, Georgia still refuses to sign a non-use of force agreement with Abkhazia – a move encouraged by Russia – because the Georgian government considers Russia as the “real” party to the conflict (Khintba 2011b, 32-33). Nevertheless, as a direct consequence of the August 2008 war with Russia, the Georgian government, as well as Georgian society, has come to the realisation that violence and force is unequivocally *not* the answer to the ongoing dispute.

This more positive peacebuilding rationality was, however, not yet observable throughout the 1990s and even up to 2008. The war itself in 1992-93 is seen by some analysts as a result of clear aggression on the part of Georgia (Kvarchelia 1999, 28). Furthermore, there have been periodic escalations of violence since then, for instance the Galaev raid in the Kodori Gorge in 2001, which “would have been impossible without the help of the Georgian authorities” (Haindrava 2011a, 14). The introduction of Georgian armed forces into the Kodori Gorge in 2006 was yet another instance of the Georgians demonstrating their willingness to resort to military means and served as a “reminder to Abkhaz society that Tbilisi was ready to use force in

order to regain Abkhazia” (Khintba 2011a, 27). And although Abkhazia was spared any incidences of major violence during the war in August 2008 in South Ossetia, it was blatantly apparent that the Georgian use of force *was* on the table as an option for ending the secessionist conflict there.

Since the war in 2008, however, and the stationing of Russian troops on Abkhazian soil, the situation has changed. Even if this understanding of the importance of a peaceful solution to the conflict has been achieved not through a reflective learning process but rather through a more pragmatic decision based on *de facto* reality on the ground, the understanding has been reached nonetheless, which is a positive development. For the Abkhaz, this means that the threat of Georgian aggression is “largely diminished” (Akaba and Khintba 2011, 40). For the Georgians, this new peacebuilding rationality has meant that the government has been compelled to change its strategy ever so slightly in order to put more emphasis on options that aim to solve the conflict exclusively peacefully. This has been reflected most specifically in the “State Strategy on Occupied Territories”, which will be discussed and analysed in detail below. But even beyond governmental policy, it seems that there is more awareness of the dangers of using force, as force may hinder the resolution of the conflict, rather than advance it. For instance, surveys among the IDP community in Georgia, which is often portrayed as a particularly militant group when it comes to using force to ‘regain’ Abkhazia, have shown that 59% of those interviewed do not believe the conflict can be resolved by force (Conciliation Resources 2011, 4).

This third and much more promising peacebuilding rationality is one that needs to be supported and encouraged by the international community. Not only should the EU invite Russia to take steps toward signing a non-use of force agreement, as it has previously done (Mikhelidze 2012, 7) but it should also encourage Georgia to take the same step. Such a statement from the Georgian government – if truly genuine – could go a long way towards promoting reconciliation among the Abkhaz and Georgian communities. It could also make the IDP/refugee issue somewhat less poisonous, as the more radical elements among the displaced population would once and for all be forced to give up their expectation of Georgia retaking the region militarily and securing their return. This would perhaps allow the more moderate voices among this group – who are indeed in the majority – to be heard.

4 Governance Initiatives for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

As outlined above, the dynamics of the conflict have changed quite a bit as a result of the brief war between Georgia and Russia in August 2008. The Georgian government has significantly softened its position on using force and has begun to realize that other methods are necessary in order to achieve its goal of reintegrating Abkhazia. In this section, I take a closer look at four different governance initiatives for conflict resolution. The first two, the “State Strategy on Occupied Territories” and the Status Neutral Document, have been developed by the government of Georgia and characterize the new approach of the government to Abkhazia. The third initiative, the COBERM mechanism, is an initiative funded by international actors that brings people together from both sides of the conflict divide. Finally, “Engagement through Dialogue” is a programme funded by COBERM which connects young professionals from Georgia, Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

4.1 State Strategy on Occupied Territories

The “State Strategy on Occupied Territories: Engagement Through Cooperation” is a policy document of the Government of Georgia, which aims to promote interaction between the population of Georgia and its breakaway territories, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The strategy is based on the belief that “a policy of engagement that restores confidence and trust” between the regions can contribute significantly to the ultimate resolution of the conflicts (Government of Georgia 2010, 7). The Government of Georgia plans on implementing this strategy through policies and measures that focus, among other things, on economic and agricultural cooperation, educational opportunities, interpersonal interaction, and health care. Through the mechanism of the State Strategy, various projects have been funded, including proposals for joint business projects, special economic zones, and the drafting of necessary legal mechanisms to support business activities among the entities (Mikhelidze 2012, 5).

A brief glance at the projects which have been proposed and funded through the mechanism of the State Strategy shows various well-developed and beneficial projects for both societies across the conflict divide. On closer inspection, however, the State Strategy perpetuates the same discourse and rhetoric that one can find within the flawed peacebuilding rationalities of the government. Even on the very first page of the document, the reader is struck by the rather one-sided explanation of the goal of the policy document, which is “part of Georgia’s overarching determination to achieve the full de-occupation of Abkhazia [...] reverse the process of annexation [...] and reintegrate these territories and their population into Georgia’s constitutional ambit” (Government of Georgia 2010, 1). This sets the stage properly for the rest of the document, which lays the blame for the conflict squarely on Russia, outlines how Georgia’s legal position is supported by international law, and refers only to “political differences with *segments* of the population in Abkhazia” (ibid., 3-4, emphasis added).

Mikhelidze feels that the State Strategy reinforces Georgia’s “false belief that the conflict dynamic is determined only by Russia” and accuses the Georgian government of labouring under a “double fallacy”: not only does the State Strategy refer to Abkhazia as an “occupied” territory, but it also doesn’t recognise Abkhazia as being a party to the conflict (Mikhelidze 2012, 4). Such a blatant denial of Abkhaz agency within an official document that is intended to propose possible resolutions to the current conflict, has in fact the opposite effect, and ensures that the Abkhaz have no interest in supporting or cooperating with the strategy. Furthermore, the designation of Abkhazia as “occupied” is in stark contrast to that which the Abkhaz believe their land to be – an independent, internationally recognised country.

In light of these fallacies on the part of the Georgian government and what seems like little attempt to make the strategy attractive to the Abkhaz, it appears that the document was designed solely for international actors (ibid., 4). The use of words such as ‘reconciliation’ and ‘multi-ethnic society’ as well as a reference to European norms and the rejection of a military solution ensure that the document found acceptance and support among the international community. Nevertheless, for the reasons stated above, and because the document does not “envisage Abkhaz independence” (Mikhelidze 2011, 4), the document is unacceptable as a conflict resolution initiative to the Abkhaz leadership and to Abkhaz society in general.

4.2 Status Neutral Document

One of the specific initiatives implemented with the framework of the “State Strategy on Occupied Territories” intended to encourage reconciliation and to allow the Abkhaz to travel more freely within the region and abroad is the Status Neutral Document. This document is available to individuals from Abkhazia who do not have Georgian citizenship and allows them to travel internationally without the need for a Georgian passport. Holders of this document are also authorised to receive free healthcare services (within Georgia) as well as more access to educational opportunities in Georgia and Europe. The creation of this document has been welcomed by the USA and the EU, and as of May 2012 it had been accepted by

Japan, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Latvia and Lithuania (Mikhelidze 2012, 4).

Similar to the State Strategy, a superficial glance at this document shows some positive aspects. The initiative could be understood as an attempt by the Georgian government to decrease the isolation of Abkhaz society by allowing the Abkhaz to travel with ‘neutral documents’ without the need to accept a Georgian passport. This could be interpreted as a compromise on the part of the Georgian authorities. On closer scrutiny, however, the various problems with this document become clear. First of all, the initiative falls under the framework of the State Strategy itself, a Georgian policy document that is unacceptable to the people of Abkhazia. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, the document isn’t exactly neutral, because it contains a country code – GEO for Georgia. And as Irakli Khintba rightly points out, if an individual travelling abroad with this document were in need of consular services, he or she would be forced to visit the Georgian diplomatic mission in that country (Civil Georgia 2012).

Furthermore, President Saakashvili’s statement in June 2012 that the documents are an “important step forwards towards legitimizing our rights over occupied territories” (ibid.) does nothing to support the supposed neutrality of the documents and indeed has the opposite effect by implying that the users of the document will be helping Georgia to legitimise its claims over Abkhazia. Taking these issues into account, it is difficult to understand former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s statement that the status neutral document is a positive step towards reconciliation and a just resolution of the conflict. It is doubtful that a *Georgian* document issued to the Abkhaz by the *Georgian* authorities – the acceptance of which implicitly implies the subordination of Abkhazia to Georgia – could be in any way beneficial for the just resolution of the conflict. As a conflict resolution initiative, it is short-sighted and insulting to the Abkhaz. In order for conflict resolution initiatives to truly be successful, they should rather be well thought-out and developed, and above all, respectful of the opinions and aspirations of all conflict parties. Indeed, if one accepts the argument that the document is inherently flawed as a conflict resolution initiative, one could instead perceive a much more cynical tactic of the Georgian government – that of trying to counteract the issuing of Russian passports for the Abkhaz.

Although the Abkhaz authorities have publically stated their opposition to these neutral documents, the Abkhaz society is resisting this initiative in their own way – by simply not using the document. To date, only 150 people have accepted this document – and these individuals did so in order to receive health care within Georgia.⁶ Such a personal decision is usually made based on urgent need for medical care, which in such cases proves to be more important than concerns of self-determination. Nevertheless, regardless of the individual justification, the decision to use these documents for health care is something no Abkhazian dares to talk about. In such a politicised climate, such use “can be interpreted as indirect recognition” of this Georgian scheme⁷, which is something that Abkhazians would like to avoid. Furthermore, the document does not yet function as a travel document considering that the European Union has yet to accept its use.⁸ This clearly limits the practicality of the document. But considering that the Abkhaz have made the decision to ignore this initiative out of principle, its acceptance in Europe may not make a dramatic difference in the number of Abkhaz using the document. In this case, the Abkhaz society has chosen to exercise their agency by resisting this document, not with protests or public statements, but simply by the everyday decision *not* to use them. It remains to be seen whether the Georgian government will recognise this resistance and either offer an alternative document to Abkhazians – one that does not implicitly recognise Georgia’s control over Abkhazia – or simply acknowledge that the initiative has failed.

⁶ Email interview with Nona Mikhelidze, Istituto Affari Internazionali, December 2012.

⁷ Interview with Oliver Wolleh, Berghof Foundation, December 2012.

⁸ Ibid.

4.3 Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM)

A further conflict resolution initiative under analysis in this chapter is the Confidence Building Early Response Mechanism (COBERM), which is funded by the European Union and carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Georgia. COBERM is a mechanism for peaceful conflict transformation that seeks to support “confidence building within and across conflict divided communities” (COBERM website). In particular, the initiative aims to enhance people-to-people contact, foster a culture of tolerance between and within communities, strengthen local peacebuilding initiatives, and increase capacities within communities to mediate differences peacefully (ibid.). As of September 2011, the COBERM mechanism had funded a total of 68 projects within diverse fields such as youth and education, agriculture and business development and human rights (COBERM 2010, 2011a, and 2011b; Mikhelidze 2012, 10).

According to the “Law on Occupied Territories” adopted by the Georgian parliament in October 2008, the government must agree to and approve all projects and programs not only carried out in Abkhazia, but also those projects regarding the region of Abkhazia. This essentially means that all international organisations that are interested in implementing projects that are in any way related to Abkhazia or have participants from the region, must notify the State Ministry for Reintegration about the activity (Mikhelidze 2012, 5). Here again we find a contradiction between the espoused goals of the COBERM projects (to build confidence and further conflict transformation) and the process of implementing these projects (forcing project implementers to receive approval from the Georgian government for the projects). We encounter as well yet another semantic *faux-pas* on the part of the Georgian government by the necessity of having such projects approved by the Ministry for “Reintegration”. That being said, according to an EU diplomat in Georgia, the coordinators of the COBERM mechanism at least understand that this notification to the state ministry about the planned projects “is just a formality” and the government has yet to object to any of the COBERM projects (Mikhelidze 2012, 5).

Mikhelidze (2012, 10 and 2011, 6) argues that the COBERM mechanism is playing a “valuable role” in the conflict resolution process. But she remains critical of the fact that very little information about these projects are made available to the Abkhaz and Georgian public. It is difficult to understand how these projects and programmes are supposed to have their desired effect to further the process of conflict transformation when ordinary people on both sides of the conflict divide are unaware of them. According to a UNDP representative in Tbilisi, one reason for this is the sensitivity of many of the projects. Therefore, the representatives responsible for the COBERM mechanism are hesitant to give out information freely (ibid., 10). Yet this “excessive emphasis on the sensitive nature of these projects sometimes hampers the implementation of certain projects” (ibid., 10). For instance, no funding is foreseen for projects that bring Abkhazians and Georgians together for meetings on Georgian soil (ibid., 11), regardless of whether the Abkhaz participants would agree to the meeting. According to a state official in Tbilisi:

“...the Ministry for Reintegration was planning to organize a summer camp of Georgian and Abkhaz children on the Black Sea coast (near Batumi) with COBERM funding. The initiative was initially rejected on the grounds that the Abkhaz would have never agreed to participate in a programme implemented on Georgian territory and therefore the summer camp had to be organized abroad. However, after pressures by the Georgian government, the initiative was realized within Georgia with partial COBERM funding.” (ibid., 10)

The need to keep a low-profile for such projects due to their ‘sensitivity’ needs to be balanced with allowing local actors and the public at large to find out information about these projects and have the opportunity to participate in them. Real conflict resolution cannot be achieved without allowing local people on both sides of the divide to become involved.

4.4 Engagement Through Dialogue

One last conflict resolution initiative that I will be analysing in this chapter is a programme entitled “Engagement through Dialogue”, which brings young professionals from Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Georgia together for dialogue workshops and trainings. One specific project within the programme is called “Young Facilitators of the Future”, which is funded by and carried out within the framework of COBERM. “Engagement through Dialogue” is a programme implemented by an alliance of organisations⁹ which believe it is “crucial to broaden the space for dialogue through ‘people-to-people’ contact” (Engagement through Dialogue website). They do so by building the capacities of “young leaders and engaged open-minded young professionals to think about complex solution models to the challenges their societies face” (ibid.). The project “Young Facilitators of the Future” consists of a series of training sessions which foresee an “on-going rotation of participants, which enlarges the net of involved people and thus enhances the effectiveness of the project” (Mikhelidze 2012, 9-10). The participants are young people actively involved in the political life in their respective regions, for instance, journalists and civil society activists. The idea behind such a project is to train these young people as facilitators so that they can manage dialogue meetings on their own across the conflict divide. The project implementers feel that a genuine dialogue among the participants is evident, as the basic ingredients for such a dialogue are present: “common values, common understanding on central issues, ... the willingness to listen to the other and the readiness to reflect about your own responsibilities” (Wolleh 2011, 13). To date, the “Engagement through Dialogue” programme has involved approximately 150 participants¹⁰, with 120 individuals remaining active and committed to the process (Wolleh 2011, 14).

The programme “Engagement through Dialogue” is an excellent example of an initiative that involves local people across the conflict divide to work together on common problems and towards common solutions. Obviously the young professionals who become involved in the programme are generally well educated and open to looking beyond the nationalistic views of their respective communities. In this sense, it could be said that they represent the ‘cream of the crop’ in terms of desired participants for such dialogue workshops. Nonetheless, these individuals are generally not members of the political elite, who are often the group responsible for perpetuating the nationalistic public discourse, which is very unhelpful for the conflict resolution process. The bottom-up nature of this initiative and the opportunity for such individuals to spread the message of cooperation and trust-building once they return to their regions and places of work, ensures that the initiative receives much support, particularly among Georgian society.¹¹

Nevertheless, the programme has encountered resistance from various actors. First, the Georgian government has not been in favour of the program, very simply because the programme demonstrates that there are “alternative ways of dealing with the conflict regions” than those promoted by the government.¹² Secondly, and more significantly, there has been everyday resistance from the Abkhazian side, as public opinion in general is not very positive about entering into dialogue with Georgians.¹³ A common perspective among the Abkhazians is that “engaging with Georgians means somehow being less patriotic” (Mikhelidze 2012, 10). Therefore, the Georgian participants at such meetings must communicate with the outside world very carefully and accurately. If their personal interpretations about meetings with Abkhazians are considered too optimistic, this often has a negative response in the wider Abkhaz public. For this reason, the programme implementers must select the participants from Georgia very carefully and they expect these participants to stick to the ground rules for such meetings and be well prepared.¹⁴

⁹ IKV Pax Christi and the Berghof Foundation, in partnership with the Agency for Economic, Social & Cultural Development, the International Center on Conflict & Negotiation, and World Without Violence.

¹⁰ Interview with Oliver Wolleh, Berghof Foundation, December 2012.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

5 Conclusion

The most striking aspect when examining the various governance initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding in this chapter is the obvious disregard for (local) agency. Specifically with regard to the “State Strategy on Occupied Territories” and the Status Neutral Document, it is remarkable how little consideration has been given to what the Abkhaz might think or feel about either of these initiatives. Not only was there no consultation whatsoever with the Abkhaz regarding both of the initiatives, but the objectives and even the choice of words used in each of the initiatives are highly offensive to the Abkhaz people as a whole. This shouldn’t be very surprising when one considers that the peacebuilding rationalities of the Georgian government – that which the government considers is truly necessary to build peace – are completely unacceptable to the Abkhaz. How can one expect a Georgian government initiative for peacebuilding to sufficiently take into account local Abkhaz agency when the Georgian government doesn’t even consider Abkhazia to be a party to the conflict?

In light of this blatant denial of agency, there is little left for the Abkhaz to do than simply ignore the initiatives, particularly the Status Neutral Document. This is the way in which they choose to resist. In this case, it is not the agency that is making its voice heard, but instead the silence which is exposing the local agency. It is just a matter of recognizing this silence for what it is – a rejection of the initiative and what it stands for. A mere 150 people accepting the document for reasons of pure pragmatism certainly does not constitute acceptance of the document by the Abkhaz. Although there has been no statement from the Georgian government on the matter, one can assume that this resistance to the document is certainly having an effect on the original expectations of the document as a ‘positive step towards reconciliation’. Such expectations were based on only one side of the conflict argument, which is not how effective peacebuilding initiatives should be developed.

In terms of the COBERM mechanism itself and the “Engagement through Dialogue” programme, there is here at least a clear attempt to reach out to people on both sides of the conflict divide. Unfortunately, there is a real concern about the number of people actually being reached. One criticism of the COBERM mechanism has been that ordinary people are not even aware of the various projects being implemented. This is a barrier that must be dismantled in order to truly take local agency into consideration. Ideally (even if not realistically in the current situation) such programmes should be developed together with Abkhaz partners, rather than just having international actors design programmes with Abkhaz and Georgian participants. This aspect is something that the “Engagement through Dialogue” programme has emphasized throughout its project – joint development and implementation together with Georgian and Abkhazian (and South Ossetian) partners, and the creation of a team of local facilitators for the continuation of such projects. The resistance from both ordinary people and the governments that such projects encounter along the way is frankly what one can expect with regard to the hardened positions on both sides of the conflict and the societal norms in Abkhazia against entering into dialogue with Georgians. The hope here is that such programmes will slowly but surely expand to involve ever more local people, who can continue to reach out to even more people in both Georgia and Abkhazia, and thus the resistance to such projects will in time gradually diminish.

Northeast India: Meghalaya

1 Background of Northeast India¹

The northeastern region of India is comprised of seven ethnically and linguistically diverse states with a unique and complex historical development within the Indian union. Geographically isolated from mainland India, and sandwiched between the countries of Myanmar, China, Bhutan and Bangladesh, the Northeast was historically – and continues to be today – a melting pot of tribes, religions and ethnicities. Peaceful co-existence among such an elaborate mixture of peoples would be challenging in the most prosperous of times, with no interference from outside powers or struggles for autonomous rights. But Northeast India has experienced the colonial domination of the British as well as the turbulent times of Indian independence, during which the various nationalities² of the Northeast began to express their own claims to self-determination. The region is furthermore burdened with the perennial problem of underdevelopment, the heavy-handed tactics of the Indian state in response to secessionist demands, and, perhaps most significantly, (illegal) migration from neighbouring states and countries on a massive scale, which has led to irreversible demographic changes and violent conflict among ethnic groups.

An explanation of the many and interlinking conflicts of the Northeast have often been placed within a framework of indigenous ethnic groups (and their armed factions, which have proliferated over the years

¹ Field research in Meghalaya was carried out in November 2011, February 2012, and December 2012 in the framework of the CORE project by Anjoo Sharan, Priyanka Upadhyaya, Ajay Rajtn and Oyindrila Chattopadhyay at the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research (MCPR) at Banaras Hindu University in Varanasi, India. The unpublished field work reports are entitled *Meghalaya Fieldwork Report (Feb 2012)* and *Exploring Sustainable Peace in Meghalaya* and have partly established the topics and analysis for this chapter. Furthermore, the research carried out by the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group in the framework of the CORE project for the published report by Samir Kumar Das entitled *Peace by Governance or Governing Peace? A Case Study of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)* has likewise supplied significant input for the analysis in this chapter.

² The ethnic groups of the Northeast India refer to themselves often as nations or nationalities rather than ethnicities within the nation of India. For instance, Charles Chasie states “the Naga people are unquestionably a nation” (Chasie 1999, 55).

on the pretence of protecting ethnic interests, and which the government often labels terrorist groups) struggling against the Indian nation state for more autonomy or independence. Such an oversimplification, however, not only limits the available options for conflict resolution within those conflicts that do, indeed, partially fit into this framework, but also ignores the other types of conflicts that occur in the region, namely, conflicts among the various tribal groups as well as conflicts between tribal groups and non-tribal groups³ (Sahni 2002, 46). Migration of mainly non-tribal groups to the region over the last century has led to increased demand for (and increasing conflict over) resources, especially land. This migration was partly encouraged by the colonial rulers in order to supply labour, for instance, for tea plantations in the Northeast, but has continued in modern times. The issue of (illegal) migration has yet to be appropriately and sufficiently tackled, not only because it is considered “toxic”, but particularly because politicians like to register the newcomers as voters (Economist 2012, 39) and there is therefore a lack of political will to solve the problem. Furthermore, the region is rich in extractive resources, which are being “utilized for the benefit of the rest of the country, while the states of the region have been largely excluded from these benefits” (CORE 2011, 35). Such (ethnic) conflict and the activities of the numerous insurgent groups active in the region, as well as, more recently, development projects and environmental degradation, have led to large-scale displacement of populations within the region (Bhaumik 2005, 144-172).

2 Peacebuilding Rationalities

Within this report, I will examine and analyze several governance initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding specifically in the northeastern state of Meghalaya. However, as all of the states of the Northeast are connected historically, economically, culturally, socially and with respect to the armed insurgencies and root causes of the violent ethnic conflicts taking place there, many of the states of the Northeast have the same or very similar peacebuilding rationalities. It is only within the boundaries and framework of such rationalities that initiatives for conflict resolution can be carried out and, indeed, understood. I will therefore analyze three of these peacebuilding rationalities in more detail.

2.1 State Formation and Granting of Autonomy

The specific history of the state of Meghalaya can only be understood within the context of the political and secessionist struggles in the entire Northeastern region. Since the time of Indian independence, the region has been continuously divided into smaller states due to demands for autonomy and self-determination, resulting in today’s seven individual states: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura.⁴ The establishment of the state of Nagaland in 1963, after almost two decades of demands for independence and the ensuing bloody insurgency, clearly influenced and encouraged other tribal populations of the Northeast to push for their own states (Inoue 2005, 26).

Over the last several decades, the central government has used the creation of new states in order to satisfy the demands for more autonomy and the protection of ethnic interests, as well as to pacify and manage the violent conflicts that have grown out of such demands. Furthermore, the numerous peace accords that have been negotiated between the state and the various armed groups of the region “have provided for the redistribution of authority by creating either territorial or nonterritorial means of representation and

³ Non-tribal groups include, for instance, Hindus and Muslims from mainland India or Bangladesh or from the plains areas of the Northeast.

⁴ The state of Sikkim, although somewhat separated geographically from the other seven, is often included in the states of the Northeast and is a member of the North Eastern Council.

self-governance – a time honoured conflict resolution measure” (Rajagopalan 2008, x). Through the use of such measures, not only have new states emerged, but numerous institutional mechanisms for granting autonomy to the indigenous communities have been established as well, for instance the Autonomous District Councils, which were intended to “usher in better Western education, citizen awareness, easier access to government services, taxation and technical knowledge” while “constraining the influence of the central government over the affairs” (MCPR 2012, 3-4) of the hill communities.

Samir Kumar Das, in his report on Assam (2012, 12), includes this strategy of “granting some degree of autonomy” – whether in the form of a state or an Autonomous District Council – as one of the ways that the government of India has responded to the secessionist demands of the insurgents in what he refers to as the “first phase of insurgency” in Northeast India. Also included in this first phase are various military and counterinsurgency operations, which were used to ‘pacify’ the insurgents and the population, and which led to grave human rights violations. By and large, this first phase of pacification has been successful, as violence throughout the northeast region has reached record lows (ibid., 1). As Das points out, however, peace achieved through such pacification is not the same thing as peace based on a “durable solution to conflicts”, which respects the principles of justice, rights and democracy (ibid., 2).

Using a redistribution of authority as a conflict management device has clear disadvantages, particularly when very few tribal and ethnic groups live in a concentrated area that can be geographically separated from other areas. Such granting of autonomy to one group could mean the disenfranchisement of another group (Rajagopalan 2008, 31-32). Therefore, such a mechanism should not be seen as the remedy for ethnic/political conflict in the Northeast. Indeed, it may even lead to more conflict, as the establishment of a state or other such political territory of representation “on the basis of ethnicity often means the fulfilment of one ethnic group’s aspiration [but] at the same time exclusion and oppression of other smaller ethnic groups in the vicinity” (Inoue 2005, 27). Moreover, it is a legitimate concern that using such a mechanism for conflict resolution leads to the escalation of even more similar demands, as a state cannot realistically grant greater autonomy to some sections of the population, while denying it to others (Rajagopalan 2008, 20).

The use of this state formation approach to resolving conflict in Northeast India is in essence the dominant peacebuilding rationality of the region. The discourse of granting more autonomy to (tribal) communities, yet stopping short of independence, clearly demarcates how far the Indian state is willing to go to solve these conflicts. Any method of building peace within these boundaries is permitted, and the approaches and methods that are considered appropriate and have been used in the past in other regions and communities of the Northeast will be recycled and used again, in spite of the evidence that such agreements may simply spawn new conflicts.⁵

Although the Northeast region of India has indeed seen more violent days in the past, this certainly does not imply that the conflicts have been (re)solved. On the contrary, tensions continue to exist in all states between the state and armed groups, between the indigenous tribal communities and the newer migrants, and even between different tribal groups (more on this below). Clearly, this continuous granting of autonomy in order to pacify the people and satisfy their demands has been only partially successful. The grievances and initial causes of the violence “have been pushed into the background without consequently resolving them” (Das 2012, 10). We therefore have a situation that could be described as *less violent and more peaceful*, but it would be quite an exaggeration to call it a sustainable peace. Nevertheless, this more peaceful situation has led the Indian government to move into the second phase, which Das (2012, 1) refers to as *developmentalism* - the attempt of the state to “govern” this fragile peace that has emerged in the region through development initiatives.

⁵ See Rajagopalan (2008) for more detailed information on the success of several peace accords in the Northeast.

2.2 Economic Development as Conflict Resolution

As with other regions in India that are experiencing violent conflict, specifically in the states where armed Naxalites groups⁶ are active, the Indian government does indeed recognise the fact that violence cannot be resolved solely by military means. The official approach is to use both a security-oriented approach while focusing attention on developmental issues.⁷ Too often, however, the government makes the assumption that if troubled regions are developed sufficiently, the problem of armed conflict will simply melt away. At times there is too much emphasis placed on development as a specific conflict resolution measure, rather than examining the root causes of the conflict.

Partly due to its geographical isolation and partly due to the menace of armed conflict over the last several decades, the Northeast region suffers from chronic underdevelopment. Attempts by the government to implement large-scale development projects, such as dams and mining, have often led to massive displacement, loss of homes and livelihoods, and have seemingly worsened the economic plight of some of the poor and powerless indigenous hill populations (where mining and dam projects are located), while benefiting the populations in the valley (Bhaumik 2005, 166-167; Dasgupta and Dey 2010, 37). In a region that already has numerous simmering ethnic conflicts, “even small levels of displacement can produce bitterness and conflict if one community benefits from the projects and the others suffer” (Bhaumik 2010, 167).

At the heart of the matter is often tension over land, its use, and its acquisition, a sensitive and complex topic which brings the tribal populations into conflict with the state and with other tribal populations and, most violently, with non-tribal populations. Northeast India is also incredibly rich in resources, which is often a recipe for disaster when a region is already suffering from violence.⁸ The lucrative extractive industry has been the target of extortion campaigns and has therefore been a major source of funding for the insurgents. In the state of Meghalaya, but also in other states of the Northeast, the dynamics of the insurgency are closely related to the mining industry (MCPR 2012, 9). While armed groups are ostensibly fighting for the rights of the indigenous tribal populations they claim to represent and therefore target the industry as symbols of the central government and unequal development, the insurgent groups are simultaneously funding their own cause(s) through this industry. This continuous struggle over resources “has pitted communities against the state, the army against the people, [and] one community against another” in the region (Samaddar 2012, 63).

The ‘Look East Policy’, an economic policy envisioned to connect India with the countries of Southeast Asia and encourage trade in the region, has arguably made things economically worse for the Northeast since it was initiated in 1991. The intention was to place the Northeast at the “center of a thriving and integrated economic space” (Haokip 2011, 1), yet the expansion in trade over the last decades has failed to achieve the intended impact on the economy of the Northeast. Moreover, the states of the region have had no active role to play in the development or implementation of the policy, which instead seems to be a “dictated policy” by the central government (Haokip 2011, 6).

Das (2012, 13) makes a very persuasive argument that this attempt on the part of the Indian government to bring economic development to the Northeast in order to resolve the conflict – *developmentalism* – is one of the most important ways that the government is “governing peace” in the region. Essentially, the Indian state is taking advantage of the (hopefully permanent) lull in violent activities to forge ahead with its development agenda. In his analysis of government policy, Das demonstrates that the government is under the impression that a) the insurgency itself has been responsible for holding back economic initiatives, and at the same time that b) the insurgencies will come to an end as soon as developmental progress begins (ibid.). The intention is to make up for lost time by initiating rapid economic development

⁶ See the chapter in this report on Bihar/Jharkhand for more information about the Naxalite armed conflict and the peacebuilding rationalities in the region.

⁷ See, for example, the Annual Report 2010-11 of the Ministry of Homeland Affairs, pg. 22.

⁸ See, for instance, Collier 2006, Humphreys 2003, and Ross 2004 for more information about the curse of resources in conflict and post-conflict countries.

with the understanding that “putting the region’s economy on the fast track” will bring about a “critical turnaround” in the region’s fortune (ibid., 14).

This approach of economic development as a conflict resolution measure is not unique to the Indian Northeast. We witness the same logic and rationalities for building peace in both Jammu and Kashmir (see DasGupta 2012) and in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand.⁹ There is, of course, no denying that the areas of India experiencing armed conflict are in desperate need of development measures, including better education, health care and provision of services. Nevertheless, the citizens living under the threat of armed violence are also in need of social and political justice – needs that cannot be met by economic measures. As Das (2012, 14) argues, these “newer technologies of governance in the second phase of peace [do] not address these larger questions of rights, justice and democracy”. There is a need for a much more holistic approach to the conflicts in the Northeast – an approach that takes into account the different and complex conflicts and, most importantly, the way in which they are all interlinked with each other. None of them can be resolved by economic development alone – no matter how rapidly it is implemented.

2.3 Intent to Solve Conflicts without External Help

A third, yet crucial, peacebuilding rationality that deserves mention here is the conspicuous lack of international involvement or intervention in the conflict(s) in Meghalaya or in the Northeast as a whole. Governmental policies of the Indian state “do not encourage international interventions – direct or indirect – in any conflict resolution process” in the Northeast (Sahni 2002, 40). This notable feature was confirmed as well by the research carried out in Meghalaya, in which involvement of external actors was found neither in the peacebuilding processes in the state, nor in any of the specific governance initiatives for conflict resolution under examination.¹⁰

This particular peacebuilding rationality is not unique to the Northeast and can be witnessed in other regions of India with armed conflict, such as in Jammu and Kashmir and Bihar/Jharkhand. Specifically in Kashmir, such an apathy for external involvement can be directly traced to the involvement of the United Nations Security Council in the early days of the Kashmir conflict, immediately after partition. Navnita Behera (2006, 34) argues that, at first, India, under the leadership of Nehru, was interested in having the UN become involved in the dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir, because the leaders were sure that India’s right to sovereignty would be upheld. However, after the Security Council backed Pakistan’s point of view, an approach that was considered by India to be “blatantly one-sided and partisan”, the United Nations was “for decades discredited [...] as an impartial institution in the eyes of India’s policymakers” (ibid., 35). As a consequence, the policymakers became wary of any third-party or external involvement in the conflict (ibid., 209). We can assume that such an experience has perhaps affected India’s openness to the assistance of external actors and has led to significant scepticism of third-party intervention.

This mind-set is apparent as well with regard to the various conflicts in the Northeast, in which outside intervention has played decidedly no role. There appears to be a determination on the part of India’s leaders and policymakers to want to solve conflicts on their own and within their own capacities, rather than accepting any outside assistance. We can observe the same attitude as well by regarding India’s disposition to humanitarian aid. After the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, for example, the country refused any international assistance to affected areas and chose instead to provide needed aid to the neighbouring countries affected by the tsunami, as if in an effort to emphasise its status as a donor, rather than a recipient (Binder et. al. 2010, 14). This also corresponds quite well with the image that India is trying to propagate for itself of a “modern dynamic state” which is capable of attracting foreign investors, rather than a

⁹ See the chapter in this report on Bihar/Jharkhand for a more in depth discussion of the role economic development measures in the Naxalite conflict.

¹⁰ Email interview with MCPR colleagues, August 2012.

“developing country plagued by poverty and illiteracy” (Wagner 2010, 335) and, of course, armed conflict.

History has yet to judge the wisdom of such decisions to shun outside intervention. The armed conflicts in Northeast India have, for the time being, been subdued – without external help – to the extent that one may tentatively speak of a fragile peace. Nevertheless, as has been discussed above, most of these conflicts are far from being definitively resolved, as the root causes and tensions lie simmering under the surface. It has been argued that the peacemaking actually undertaken in the Northeast “perpetually defers peace” rather than makes peace (Das 2012, 17). So the important question here must be – is this the best that can be done to build peace? If not, then other options need to be explored, one of which could be accepting the help of external actors. Third-party intervention need not always be ‘blatantly one-sided and partisan’, particularly when the third parties are neutral organisations which have no obvious stake in the conflict. Even so, it must be left up to the actors involved in the conflict to decide for themselves which third parties to involve and under which circumstances. And such a decision must be agreed upon by all conflict stakeholders, otherwise the intervention is doomed to failure from the very beginning. Whether external intervention in the conflicts in the Northeast (or anywhere in India) will become a reality remains to be seen and at this point in time, it does not look very promising. The only definite fact is that accepting outside help does not make up any part of the current rationality of building peace in the Northeast.

3 Conflict in Meghalaya

Historically, the indigenous populations of Meghalaya were protected under the so-called ‘Sixth Schedule’, a policy of the British colonial state created specifically for the tribal communities in Northeast India, which acknowledged that the people of the region were fundamentally different, and their culture and society should be preserved. Sahni (2002, 41-42) argues, however, that under the pretence of ‘protecting’ these communities, the tribal populations were actually excluded from the codes of civil administration – and thereby the processes of modernisation and development – because such processes were considered to be too advanced and thus unsuitable for the hill communities of the Northeast. A perhaps unintended side effect of these isolationist policies was therefore to amplify the schisms between hill and plains communities. On the other hand, these policies were successful in the sense that they allowed the communities to continue with their own way of life, which facilitated “the persistence of traditional political values and practices” (Baruah 2003, 7). This certainly does not imply that these tribal communities have been completely excluded from the processes of modernisation (which in the modern world would barely be feasible), yet the tribal communities were – for better or worse – afforded less opportunities for development than other communities.

The state of Meghalaya was officially created in 1972 within the framework of the North East Areas (Reorganisation) Act of 1971 and thereby ceased to be part of Assam state. Under the Indian constitution, the Sixth Schedule has remained in effect in the state, and functions through Autonomous District Councils, which are charged with protecting and empowering the ethnic, indigenous communities of the region. Meghalaya is home to three Autonomous District Councils - in the Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills, and Garo Hills, corresponding to the three main tribal communities in the state (Khasi, Jaintia, and Garo tribes). Although these three tribes have cooperated in the past, specifically in their successful efforts to gain statehood in a peaceful manner and, more ominously, in their fight against ‘outsiders’, i.e. non-tribal migrants, they underwent an official split in the early 1990s and have been engaged since then in periodic inter-tribal fighting (Sahni 2002, 101). This highlights the two dominant disputes in the state of Meghalaya – that between the tribal communities and the non-tribals, and that between the Garo and Khasi-Jaintia tribes.

At the heart of the dispute between the Khasi and the Garo tribes is the perceived political imbalance within the framework of the Reservation Policy of 1971. This policy reserves 40 percent of government

jobs and seats in educational institutions for members of the Garo tribe and 40 percent for members of the Khasi tribe, although the population of the Khasis is significantly higher in the state.¹¹ Historically, the Garos had less access to development in general and specifically to educational institutions, as most of the institutions are located in Shillong, in the East Khasi Hills. Therefore, the literacy and education rate is much lower among the Garos, which explains why the Garo communities were granted such a quota – as a ‘positive’ discrimination measure to encourage their development and further education. In practice, however, this quota has led to the problem of finding qualified Garos for certain posts, resulting in posts remaining vacant instead of being filled by a Khasi. For this reason, the Khasis are pushing for a more proportional distribution of the reservations, at a 60:30 ratio, or alternatively, a 90 percent ratio together, to be distributed based on merit alone (Sangma 2008, 212, 239). The Garos, for their part, feel that such a realignment of reservations would be unwarranted, as “they are far behind the other tribes” (ibid., 214) in terms of education and political power, and thus can benefit from the quotas.

The other predominant conflict in the state and that which can periodically turn violent is the conflict between tribal communities and the non-tribal populations, who are regarded as outsiders and are often the target of much ethnic violence in the state. In essence, the preservation of ethnicity, cultural and national identity, however that may be interpreted, is the guiding motivation behind much of the conflict between different communities. Large-scale migration by non-natives over the decades is seen by the natives as a threat to the “fragile ecological and demographic balance of the region, their language and culture, their land and livelihood resources” (Das 2012, 3). Periodic riots by members of the tribal communities and ethnic clashes targeting the ethnic Bengali and Bihari communities, among others, has led to large scale displacement of the non-tribal populations, who have been forced on occasion to flee the state. For those non-tribals who remain, they continue to live with a sense of insecurity and fear, and are denied many basic rights, such as buying land, doing business or practicing their religion (MCPR 2012, 11-12).

4 Perceptions of the Conflict

4.1 Northeast India

As mentioned above, it is a drastic oversimplification to understand the conflicts in the Northeast region as that between governmental agencies on the one hand and indigenous groups and the various armed factions on the other. Indeed, in the Northeast in general, as Sahni points out, underlying causes and motives of the various conflicts would be more “correctly interpreted in terms of conflicting tribal identities and histories of internecine warfare based entirely on tribal, sub-tribal, or tribal-outsider rivalries and corresponding competition over limited resources, especially land” (Sahni 2002, 46). Conflicts concerning land are particularly significant, as many of the indigenous communities in the Northeast own land collectively, while the non-indigenous populations are often “settled farmers, [who are] anxious to establish private-property rights as protection against dispossession” (The Economist 2012, 38). Therefore, disputes concerning land use and acquisition have been a source of major animosity and strife over the years as “local communities and the nation state are at loggerheads with each other in the ways they see land” (Dasgupta and Dey, 37).

The indigenous communities of the Northeast have continuously expressed their belief that they are “different from India – and from each other”, which has created ideal conditions not only for secessionist tendencies but also for sustained ethnic strife (Bhaumik 2005, 144). Many of the indigenous populations

¹¹ The Khasi quota includes the Jaintia tribe. Another 5 percent is reserved for other tribes, while 15 percent is reserved for non-tribals (Sangma 2008, 212).

of the region feel “swamped by members of other communities” (Singh 1987, 264) and feel that these ‘outsiders’ have “‘robbed’ them of their economic opportunities” (ibid., 279). Such perspectives can clearly have the potential to sustain a culture of division and confrontation and to hinder attempts at reconciliation and peaceful coexistence. Thus while the Indian state looks at the troubles in the Northeast as being mainly those of insufficient integration and development, the local communities see a much more nuanced continuum of grievances which range from threats to their multiple cultures and identities, inter-ethnic rivalries, and insufficient self-determination.

4.2 Meghalaya

According to the studies carried out by Bang and Sangma¹², the tension between the Khasi and Garo tribal communities is mainly political, rather than social (Bang 2008, 270), and revolves around the sense of political injustice that both communities feel. The Khasi community resents the reservation policy because of the perceived inequality of the quotas, while the Garo community resents the Khasi demand for the policy to be revised. Specifically, the Garos feel that they are not represented equally in the government and are dominated politically by the Khasis (Sangma 2008, 224); if the reservation policy is redrafted, the Khasis will make “inroads into their entitlement” (Bang 2008, 251). This perception of political inequality encourages support among the Garo community for the establishment of Greater Garo Land (GGL), which would comprise not only the Garo Hills of Meghalaya, but would also include Garo-inhabited areas of the Khasi Hills as well as parts of the state of Assam. This, in turn, exacerbates the conflict, because the Khasis feel threatened by the demand that parts of the Khasi Hills inhabited by Garos should be included in GGL (ibid., 271). The tension between the two communities usually remains dormant, but it does have the potential to escalate into something more violent, when given the proper trigger, such as demands or protests by one of the politically-active student unions (MCPR 2012, 11-12).

As the research carried out in Meghalaya within the framework of the CORE project has shown, the general perception of the conflict is somewhat vague, as the state has been grappling with various conflict for decades (MCPR 2013, 1). Therefore, the conflict between the Khasi and the Garo communities is certainly not the only factor at work within the conflict dynamics. In fact, in interviews with individuals in the state, the “gradual dilapidation of the natural resources” and the “privatization of community land” were listed as major concerns. Both of these problems are perceived to have led to economic disparity in the state and are held just as responsible for the economic woes as the armed conflicts (ibid.). Furthermore, there is a perception that although the conflicts are essentially economic in nature, they are misrepresented as ethnic conflicts by the politicians, particularly at election time (ibid.). This manipulation of the conflict in order to gain popularity based on ethnic lines can also be seen with groups such as the Khasi Students’ Union, which promotes the “ethnic conflict theory [in order] to gain popularity” (ibid.). Migration is clearly a major issue in Meghalaya, as elsewhere in the Northeast, but the field research has shown that the situation is much more complex than simply assuming that migrants come illegally from Bangladesh. The inside picture shows that it is actually the affluent landowners who bring the migrant labourers into Meghalaya, most specifically to work in the coal mines of the state (ibid.). But once they are here, the landowners do not offer them any protection from the anti-migrant pressure groups (ibid.).

¹² The studies were carried out with 76 individuals, 41 Garo and 36 Khasi, both students and working people, with an equal mix of men and women. The study included questions on the source of tension between the ethnic groups, perceptions and stereotypes of the ethnic groups towards each other, the role of youth and women, and possible scenarios for the future (see Sangma 2008 and Bang 2008).

5 Governance Initiatives for Conflict Resolution

There is no shortage of armed insurgent groups active in Meghalaya. Because the state shares a 443-kilometer-long border with Bangladesh, not only is the state profoundly affected by the consequences of illegal migration, but it also serves as a “crucial transit route” for larger and more dominant armed groups active in other parts of the Northeast (Dash 2006). Thus many of the armed groups active in carrying out insurgent activities in the state may not actually have any real grievances related to the state.¹³ Each ethnic community generally has its own insurgent group, which ostensibly acts to protect the interests of the group. Furthermore, once an insurgent group becomes inactive, due to, for instance, a ceasefire, a peace agreement, or the fracturing of the group, new armed groups are often created to fill the vacuum. For example, once the government signed a cease-fire agreement with the Achik National Volunteer Council (ANVC) in July 2004, no less than six armed groups sprung up in its place (Dash 2006).

In this section, I will look at governance initiatives to resolve the conflict with the armed group ANVC, which was founded in 1995 from the disaffected cadres of one of the previous Garo armed groups, the Achik Liberation Matgrik Army (ALMA). The ANVC demands the establishment of Greater Garo Land, which would include Garo-inhabited areas of the Khasi Hills. For understandable reasons, this demand has “aroused the sentiments of the Khasis” (Sangma 2008, 214) and has been met with general disapproval from the Khasi community. Yet despite its political demands, the activities of the ANVC were generally economic and criminal in nature, and it wasn’t until four years after the group’s formation that they released their political manifesto. Promptly after the release of this manifesto, the Union government banned the ANVC. An official cease-fire between the ANVC and the government has held since 2004 and was extended indefinitely in September 2010.

5.1 Facilitation Initiatives of the Garo Baptist Church

The population of Meghalaya is predominantly Christian, and the church plays a significant role in public life in the state. It exerts its influence mainly through the educational and spiritual sectors, and has generally limited its involvement in politics and the resolution of inter-ethnic conflict (Bang 2008, 253). However, in the studies carried out by Bang and Sangma in 2008, there was a general consensus among those interviewed that the church leaders have made previous attempts to improve the relationship between the two main ethnic groups in the state and that they are in a unique position to act as bridge builders between the two communities (Sangma 2008, 227, 247; Bang 2008, 268-269).

Perhaps due to the recognition of the central government that the church plays an important role in tribal society and is greatly respected by the population, the Garo Baptist Church (GBCH) has been asked on several occasions to become involved in the facilitation of peace processes with armed groups in Meghalaya. For instance, four members of the GBCH were part of the Peace Committee formed to help bring ALMA to the negotiating table with the Union and State governments in 1994 (MCPR 2012, 14). One of the strategies used by the GBCH prior to these tripartite negotiations was to organise so-called ‘Peace Rallies’ throughout the Garo Hills in order to mobilise public opinion against the insurgency and its violent consequences (*ibid.*). A second strategy was to have direct contact with the leadership of ALMA – whether by written correspondence or personal meetings. The Union government was well aware of this contact with the insurgents and approved of the church’s approach (*ibid.*).

¹³ See Pradhan (2011) for statistics on deaths and arrests of militants in Meghalaya.

Years later in 2003 the GBCH was once again involved in promoting a negotiated ceasefire between the government and an armed group, this time the ANVC. The church took up the task of being the key interlocutor with the ANVC, although the strategy that was carried out within the framework of these negotiations was slightly different; namely, church members chose to address the foot soldiers of the ANVC rather than the elite, who were opposed to the talks (ibid., 16). The church was also able to take advantage of their influence and prestige among the Garo community across the border in Bangladesh in order to further their negotiations with the ANVC. Many of the insurgents were more willing to talk in the peaceful environment (safely out of the Indian army's reach) that existed on the other side of the border. This proved to be advantageous in facilitating contact between the two parties (ibid., 16-17). Once the GBCH brought the two warring parties to the table, the members of the church felt that the work they had been asked to do was finished.¹⁴ It still remains to be seen whether the negotiations between the ANVC and the government will ultimately lead to a peace agreement, but it was nevertheless a significant accomplishment of the GBCH to convince the ANVC to negotiate a ceasefire, as the cadres were originally quite reluctant to participate.

In deciding to ask the GBCH to become involved in facilitating negotiations with both ALMA and the ANVC, the Indian state clearly took into consideration the local context and the fact that the church in Meghalaya is regarded with great respect, even among the insurgents. The church enjoys much prestige in the state, yet at the same time is considered neutral. In this sense, it is perhaps an advantage that the church in Meghalaya becomes involved in politics and conflict resolution so seldom, and then only on the request of the government. This clearly helps maintain their appearance of neutrality, in contrast to the student organisations in the state, most of which are clearly political and ethnically biased.

Furthermore, the Indian state approached the GBCH to become involved, yet allowed the church to work according to their own approaches and methods, some of which the government certainly could not employ themselves. This opened sufficient space for the agency of local actors, namely church members as well as the Garo community members in both Meghalaya (in the framework of the Peace Rallies) and in Bangladesh (in the framework of negotiating the ANVC talks) to express their opinions about the conflict and their support for its resolution. Such initiatives – although prompted and encouraged by the government – were entirely organised and implemented by local actors, not external forces. It was certainly only this fact – that the interlocutor was locally active and locally respected – that encouraged the ANVC to take part in the negotiations.

Church groups and forums are one of the main platforms for civil society in Meghalaya. The church has “extensive networks and communication channels across several layers of governance” (MCPR 2012, 7), which it can clearly use to its advantage and for the benefit of society at large. In the specific case of Meghalaya, the church represents a mixture of what Das (2007, 45-47) refers to as “bridge builders” and “peace groups”. Peace groups (often referred to officially as Peace Committees) are generally established for the specific purpose of bringing the conflict parties to the table – they facilitate the negotiations and often the terms of a ceasefire, which should ideally lead to a peace agreement. Bridge builders, on the other hand, are organisations that play a more active and crucial role of building peace on a *local* level – they are often responsible for preventing conflicts from becoming full-blown wars. More often than not, the peace groups have a very limited role to play beyond facilitating the negotiations, which is to a certain extent the case with the GBCH – once the talks began, the GBCH felt that its task was completed. However, unlike a lot of the peace groups which simply cease to exist after they have finished their task, the GBCH is quite clearly a local actor, with the ability (and willingness) to become involved in the resolution of (local) conflicts. This is apparently a function that much of the local population would encourage it to undertake more often.

¹⁴ Email interview with MCPR colleagues, August 2012.

5.2 Rehabilitation Scheme for ANVC Cadres

One mechanism for building peace often implemented in conflicts around the world is a type of disarmament, demobilisation, and reintegration (DDR) program, which is intended to encourage combatants to give up their arms, with the promise of vocational or education training and supportive reintegration back into civilian life. The rehabilitation schemes that have been carried out in the Northeast region for various armed groups clearly have some commonalities to the typical DDR programs implemented globally by the UN. The combatants (in India, *surrendered cadres*, or SCs) are placed in camps, given pocket money and vocational training, while individuals with the most advanced military training are often incorporated into the armed forces. However, the so-called ‘evaluation stage’ of the rehabilitation scheme differs quite dramatically from international DDR programs.

In the case of the ANVC cadres, once a combatant has surrendered, a committee made up of members of the Indian intelligence and security branches reviews the candidates for rehabilitation on a case-by-case basis (MCPR 2012, 18). This committee conducts research on the candidate, including information about his home and family, and based on this information, the scope of the rehabilitation support is then decided (*ibid.*). Any information about SCs who were denied rehabilitation support by this committee was unfortunately not available to the researchers, but it can be assumed that such cadres would return to the forests and continue with their insurgent activities. Those ANVC cadres who were granted rehabilitation were then placed in one of two designated camps, together with their arms, and their movements were highly restricted and monitored by security forces. The SCs were given a monthly allowance of Rs. 2,000 as well as daily food rations (*ibid.*). As most of the cadres who came to the camps were from poorer communities, it is understandable why such support was initially so attractive. In the long-term, the intention of such programs is to monitor the progress of SCs for a period of up to 10 years and once officially ‘rehabilitated’, their citizenship rights would be restored (*ibid.*, 19). As is common in other DDR programs carried out globally, the leaders of insurgent movements do not go through the same process as lower-level combatants, but rather are allowed to enter public life or start businesses with the funds allocated for their specific rehabilitation (*ibid.*, 18-19).

The real effectiveness of such schemes is highly debatable. Currently, the camps for the ANVC cadres are no longer functioning, as all the SCs have chosen to leave. It is important to note here that the previously surrendered ALMA insurgents were kept not in secluded camps under police supervision, but rather under the surveillance of their families in their own villages. This was a major difference between the ALMA and the ANVC rehabilitation schemes and perhaps for this reason, very few ALMA surrendered cadres got involved in insurgent activities again.¹⁵ Sadly, this was not the case with ANVC cadres. Another major problem with the ANVC rehabilitation scheme is that the promises of vocational training and jobs were simply not fulfilled.¹⁶ If no financial reassurances are available for the SCs, and they have no legitimate options for reintegrating into civilian society, it becomes very difficult to compete with the insurgent lifestyle, which can provide much higher monetary incentives. There are rumours circulating among local people that previously surrendered cadres have returned to illegal extortion activities (*ibid.*, 19).

A further concern is that the entire ANVC rehabilitation scheme was implemented within a profoundly top-down framework. Officially, the program was carried out by the central government (Ministry of Home Affairs) in coordination with the State government and the Army. All aspects of the process – from the evaluation stage to the monitoring of the camps – were executed by the government itself, with no neutral third-party having any role to play. The government decided if and what type of rehabilitation would be offered, and played the role of the judge in deciding whether a SC was sufficiently ‘rehabilitated’. Understandably, this approach led to much insecurity among the SCs, which led to them maintaining

¹⁵ Email interview with MCPR colleagues, February 2013.

¹⁶ Email interview with MCPR colleagues, August 2012.

ties with other armed groups during their stay in the camps.¹⁷ In such a top-down process, there is no acknowledgement of the local agency that each and every cadre has within such a process. There seems to have been no involvement of the cadres in decisions concerning vocational training, for instance, nor are counselling or religious activities a part of the official rehabilitation strategy. Essentially, the SCs are expected to stay in the camps, collect their monthly allowance, and avoid making trouble. This is hardly the approach the UN takes to DDR, a complex process which should ideally include “political, military, security, humanitarian and socio-economic dimensions” (UN 2006, 1.10, 2).

Moreover, because the process was highly confidential and the government is unwilling to share information about the process or its outcomes¹⁸, it is difficult to investigate the process in any detail. This limits the lessons we can learn from such a rehabilitation scheme as a peacebuilding measure. Nevertheless, one point we can take away is that the process of sustained peace and successful rehabilitation of combatants is a two-way street. The rehabilitation scheme for the ANVC proved to be unsuccessful in terms of helping to achieve a sustained peace, and some of the surrendered cadres may have decided to return to their insurgent activities. Because the rehabilitation program was so poor at achieving the desired outcomes or fulfilling its promises, the poorly-planned program could be one of the reasons for this failure.

6 Conclusion

In the case of Meghalaya in Northeast India and the governance initiatives for conflict resolution under examination, we are confronted with the situation of one initiative being carried out with relatively much consideration given to local agency, while the other initiative can be characterised as having a complete disregard for local agency. Considering that the same actor – the central Indian government – was responsible for initiating both initiatives, this could be regarded as somewhat peculiar.

The significant difference between these two initiatives, and that which may have played a large role in the success or failure of the initiatives, was the degree of ownership involved in the initiatives. With regards to the Garo Baptist Church, the central government requested their assistance in bringing the ANVC combatants to the negotiating table, but beyond making the request, the government didn't get involved with the details on how to approach the combatants or what to say to them, etc. The members of the church were allowed to use their own contacts and influence to achieve their goals without much interference from the government. In the end, this strategy, which took into consideration the status and respect that the church has in Meghalaya, proved advantageous and the ANVC eventually accepted the invitation to negotiate.

On the other hand, the rehabilitation scheme for the surrendered ANVC cadres turned out to be completely ineffective. The main reason for this, as mentioned, is the lack of vocational opportunities which may have led to the cadres returning to their insurgent activities. But the fact that the entire process was carried out in a blatantly top-down manner certainly also led to its failure. A proper demobilisation and reintegration process must take the individual and collective needs of the combatants into consideration, ideally with both vocational and psychosocial counselling as well as vocational training. The communities into which the combatants will be reintegrated should also ideally be consulted about and involved in the entire process. None of this, however, was done in the case of the ANVC cadres. In the case of reintegration, the potential (positive) agency that can be exercised by both the communities and the combatants – in support of the rehabilitation scheme and the peace process of which it is a feature – is extremely important in order to ensure the success of the programs. It was this potential agency that was completely disregarded in this case.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Bosnia and Herzegovina

1 Background of the Conflict¹

The reasons for the dissolution of Yugoslavia at the beginning of the 1990s are complex and various. The decade prior proved to be considerably destabilising for the country, with the death of Tito and a looming economic crisis, which led to “social disintegration, intense political fighting, [and] ethno-nationalist movements” (Povrzanivić Frykman 2008, 164). In 1991, brief wars broke out in Slovenia and Croatia, after these former Yugoslav republics declared their secession. Their subsequent independence and recognition by the international community led to agitation within Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter BiH) for independence from Yugoslavia as well. Significantly, however, there was no consensus among the three biggest ethnic groups of BiH – the Croats, Bosniacs² and Serbs – on the future of the country. The Bosniacs and the Croats (at that time 44 percent and 17 percent of the population, respectively) strongly favoured independence for BiH, while the Serbs (31 percent) were strongly opposed. The Serbs preferred instead to remain part of greater Yugoslavia, in which Serbs were the majority, rather than become a minority within a newly independent country (Paris 2004, 97-98).

Under conditions of economic and political tension, the nationalistic politicians and army leaders of the country’s ethnic groups were successfully able to manipulate and take advantage of the sense of distrust and fear of other ethnic groups, with tragic consequences (Povrzanivić Frykman 2008, 171; Isakovic 2000,83). In an environment of increasing ethnic polarisation, a referendum on independence held in

¹ This report is partly based on the field research carried out by Elena Stavrevska at the Central European University in Budapest, Hungary in the framework of the CORE project. Research was carried out on various occasions in 2011 and 2012. Two unpublished fieldwork reports have been drafted based on the research: *Report on preliminary fieldwork in Bosnia-Herzegovina* and *Bosnia and Herzegovina – Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. Both reports have partly established the topics and analysis for this chapter.

² “Bosniacs” is the designation given to the Muslim population of Bosnia and is often used interchangeably with “Muslims”. The designation “Bosniac” is not to be confused with “Bosnian”, which refers to all citizens of the country of BiH, regardless of ethnic affiliation.

February-March 1992 was boycotted by the Serb population, which led to independence being endorsed by a large margin. As the results of the referendum became clear and a declaration of Bosnian independence seemed imminent, Serb nationalist leaders declared independence for a Serb Republic of BiH, and Serbian and Croatian paramilitary forces began to annex portions of Bosnian territory (Friedman 2004, 43).

The war in BiH lasted from 1992-95 and was marked by devastating violence among the three ethnic groups and ‘ethnic cleansing’ on a massive scale. The violence was also characterised by different and changing constellations of alliances and hostilities between the ethnicities in different regions of BiH, and the direct involvement of the governments of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia³ and Croatia. An estimated 104,732 people were killed throughout the war, while the fate of another 10,000 still remains unknown.⁴ The war also led to a massive displacement of population, estimated at 2.2 million people (Kleck 2007, 107), including those who became refugees and those who were (and partially remain) internally displaced. The increased involvement of NATO and massive air strikes on Serbian positions in BiH preceded a ceasefire and shortly thereafter the warring parties⁵ agreed to negotiation (Friedman 2004, 57-58). The General Framework for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereafter Dayton Agreement) was signed in December 1995 and officially ended hostilities, authorised international peacekeeping forces, and created two entities within the country – the majority Serb Republika Srpska (RS) and the majority Bosniac-Croat Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH) – as well as the internationally governed Brčko District. Of course, the Dayton Agreement was just an official framework for bringing the war to an end and did not lead to sustained peace and reconciliation, which we will see in the following sections of this chapter.

2 Perceptions of the Conflict

The different perceptions of the conflict among the citizens of BiH lie at the very heart of the problem and pose significant challenges for peacebuilding. There is a very real and potent sense of “victimisation” among all of the parties to the conflict, meaning that each group identifies itself as the sole or main victim (Fischer 2009, 67). This perspective inhibits an understanding and acceptance of the fact that all sides have been guilty of violence and have committed atrocities. This, in turn, prevents reconciliation between the parties and obstructs the process of building a just and sustainable peace.

These different perceptions of the conflict find their root in the “selective view” (Povrzanić Frykman 2008, 164) and “greatly differing interpretations” of the past (Fischer 2009, 63), which members of each ethnic group retain. These different pasts relate to the era of WWII as well as to the socialist period (Povrzanić Frykman 2008, 164-5) and have directly influenced modern politics and modern ethnic tensions. The specific politics of remembrance in BiH is highly controversial, as war criminals are celebrated in certain places as heroes, and a selective commemoration of war victims continues to take place (Fischer 2009, 63). As Natascha Zupan argues, “mutually exclusive truths and notions of victimhood and heroism are still shaping the various group identities, thus reinforcing the existing social fragmentation” (2007, 337).

These notions of victimhood and heroism are perhaps demonstrated most visibly by the perceptions of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) among the ethnic groups of the country. While the ICTY remains the only “cross-border mechanism for fact-finding and prosecution of war

³ At the time, the countries of Serbia and Montenegro remained in a federation called the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Only in 2003 was the name changed to the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro.

⁴ The figures for war deaths were taken from the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia website, while the figure for missing persons comes from the International Commission on Missing Persons website.

⁵ The signers of the Dayton Agreement were Alija Izetbegović, the president of the Republic of BiH, representing the Bosniac population; Slobodan Milošević, the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia), representing the Bosnian Serbs (because the Bosnian Serb leaders had been indicted for war crimes and could not travel freely); and Franjo Tuđman, the president of Croatia, representing the Bosnian Croats.

crimes” (Fischer 2009, 60), it is still regarded by many citizens of BiH as a “mechanism to prosecute war criminals of the other side” (Zupan 2007, 338, emphasis added). Specifically for many Serbs, the ICTY has always been regarded as “an anti-Serb kangaroo court” (The Economist 2012, 31).⁶ Although the tribunal has helped to uncover facts about atrocities during the war and has contributed significantly to public discussions, its judgments have nonetheless also fuelled nationalist discourses about the war (Fischer 2009, 70). The controversial legitimacy of the court thus remains a challenge for the goal of sustainable reconciliation and peacebuilding in BiH and the wider region.

The ability of Bosnian citizens of all ethnic groups to look beyond the narrow definitions of victim and perpetrator is clearly lacking, which leads to frozen perspectives on the roles that ethnic groups played during the war. Nedžad Horozovic from the Centre for Nonviolent Action in Sarajevo argues in his interview with Martina Fischer (2007a, 422) that although people are still searching for clear documentation on who the victims and perpetrators are, this does not lead to a “constructive peace process and will not mean progress for constructing a future society in Bosnia”. Instead, as his colleague argues, we should regard people in BiH not as victims, but rather as survivors, and encourage them to “look at their responsibility for the past, present and future” (Tamara Smidling quoted in Fischer 2007a, 421).

3 Peacebuilding Rationalities

In a discussion of the most significant peacebuilding rationalities in BiH that influence and inform the conflict resolution and peacebuilding process, one must first clarify what kind of peace is envisioned and by whom. This is significant in any discussion of the conflict in BiH, as there are very different perspectives not only on what type of peace can realistically be achieved, but also on what type of peace is actually sought by the various actors involved in the peacebuilding process. If we understand peace as a *negative peace* – the “absence of violence of all kinds” (Galtung 1996, 31) – then one can realistically claim to have achieved peace (an absence of war) in BiH. The three constituent peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina co-exist with each other – at least for the time being – without resorting to violence in order to solve their differences. But this current co-existence is little more than silenced weapons and remains far from the notion of *positive peace*, which includes an “increase in social justice and the creation of a culture of peace among people within and across societies” (Berghof 2012, 59). This peace – a peace which includes addressing grievances and reaching reconciliation – should be the ultimate goal of a peacebuilding process.

In the following section, three peacebuilding rationalities in BiH will be examined and analysed in terms of their potential for building a positive peace. As discussed in the first chapter, a peacebuilding rationality is defined as a framework for and an understanding about how peace can best be built and achieved within a specific conflict setting. Such a rationality is the outcome of the (historical) consequences of war, the perspectives of the various parties to the conflict and the external actors involved, and a (common) understanding of what is socially, economically, and politically acceptable and feasible. The following three peacebuilding rationalities have been chosen based upon the information available in the CORE field research reports on BiH.

⁶ This perception among Serbs has been heightened since the acquittal in November 2012 of Croatian generals Ante Gotovina and Mladen Markač for the killing of ethnic Serbs in an offensive to retake Croatia’s Krajina region in 1995. With this acquittal, to date no Croatians have been convicted of crimes against Serbs, and the verdicts “have left Serbs with little faith in the tribunal’s ability to find justice for their suffering in the conflicts” (De Launey 2012).

3.1 The “Spatialisation” of Ethnicities Will Inherently Lead to Peace

The Dayton Agreement that was signed in December 1995 officially put an end to warfare in BiH. But the Agreement was much more than just a peace accord which ended armed conflict. It was a comprehensive document that contained both military and civilian elements and imposed a new constitution on the country, based on the liberal values of democracy, rule of law, and respect for human rights and minorities. The Dayton Agreement was “designed to create a new country” (Lyon 2007, 50) and “explicitly sought to transform Bosnia into a liberal democracy on the assumption that doing so would reduce the likelihood of renewed fighting” (Paris 2004, 99). In the narrow sense of physical security and stabilisation, the Dayton Agreement has been successful, as international peacekeeping forces have managed to keep the truce and there have been no further armed hostilities (Lyon 2007, 51). However, the compromise that was embodied in the Dayton Agreement was dissatisfactory for all conflict parties and was “sufficiently ambiguous for all sides to believe it could be used for their respective purposes” after the agreement had been signed (Aggestam and Björkdahl 2011, 9).

The Dayton Agreement – particularly the constitution – has been criticised extensively for various reasons, many of which are beyond the scope of this chapter.⁷ One of the most severe criticisms of the agreement is that the institutions that were created through the Dayton Agreement have implicitly reinforced the ethnic divides in BiH (Fischer 2007b, 9). This means that – regardless of the provisions in the agreement which provided for the return of refugees – the creation of Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina essentially endorsed the reality of the ethnic cleansing that had occurred during the war. Furthermore, the political structure that was established for the two entities, as well as for the central government, was comprised of ethnic quotas and voting rules explicitly based upon the three ethnic categorisations (see Friedman 2004, 60-64). As a rule, “*all* state-level posts are expected to follow demographic quotas” (ICG 2012, 11).

Essentially, if you are a Serb, it is assumed by the constitution and within the framework of the political system that you will vote for those political parties which claim to promote Serb interests. The same premise applies to Croats and Bosniacs. Furthermore, because the RS votes for the Serb member of the presidency and the Federation votes for the Muslim and Croat members of the presidency, this leaves no space for representation of the minority populations within the two entities (Stavrevska 2012b, 5). Indeed, James Lyon argues that the “entire constitution enshrines ethnic discrimination as a principle of law” (Lyon 2007, 52). Moreover, this strict categorisation of people and their supposed interests has led, for instance, to people of mixed ethnicity or from a minority group (e.g. Jewish, Roma) being unable to run for the higher political offices in the country. This assumption that “if a candidate declares him/herself of a certain ethnicity, which is mandatory, [he/she] will be elected by and thus represent the interests of that same ethnicity” is what Stavrevska calls one of the more “intriguing” aspects of the BiH constitutional setup (Stavrevska 2012b, 4-5).

On the one hand, we could understand the Dayton Agreement not as a roadmap for building sustainable peace in the country but merely as an agreement to end armed hostilities. On the other hand, as mentioned above, the creators of the document had much more in mind than simply ending war. The document contains eleven annexes, gives extensive access to the international community for the country’s reconstruction and governance, and is binding in international law (Friedman 2004, 60). Therefore, it is clearly much more than a ceasefire agreement. However, if the goal of the document was to achieve peace by setting up extensive liberal structures in order to do so, it is curious that the agreement established a government structure so explicitly along fixed, ethnic lines. As Fischer (2010, 5) argues, this structure has proven to be “unsuitable for the purpose of consolidating peace”. One possible interpretation is that

⁷ Criticisms include, for example, that the agreement denies Bosnian citizens and political representatives any autonomy or accountability; that it created immensely complicated governmental structures; that the power-sharing principles undermine the state’s authority and efficiency; and that it politically rewarded the very people who had carried out the war. See Aggestam and Björkdahl 2011, Chandler 1999, Chandler 2005, International Crisis Group 2012, Sebastian 2009, and Woodward 2009.

this was perceived as the only way to end the violence. After all, the Dayton Agreement “stopped the war and the killing, which no doubt was an important achievement” (Aggestam and Björkdahl 2011, 10). The assumption of the agreement’s drafters may have been that if the Bosnian people were separated along fixed, ethnic lines and given what they wanted (territory and autonomy), peace would follow.

In her field research report, Stavrevska argues that this understanding of ethnic groups as homogeneous and fixed categories is not only one of the basic premises of the BiH constitution, but is also one of the main governance assumptions (Stavrevska 2012b, 5). Based upon this statement, I would suggest further that this assumption forms one of the major peacebuilding rationalities in BiH and greatly informs and influences other, smaller peacebuilding rationalities. The general acceptance of ethnic categories as the most significant and meaningful identity marker for Bosnian citizens has led not only to various quota systems and electoral rules based upon ethnicity, but has also led to initiatives for development, conflict resolution, and reconciliation to use these fixed categories as a premise for various projects. However, is ethnicity truly the most significant identity marker for citizens of BiH?

Through her research on ethnic minorities in BiH, Paula M. Pickering (2007, 64-84) shows that many Bosnians express frustration with the ethnic classifications, regarding them as inadequate, and reject the idea that “one ethnic category could describe their self-conception” (ibid., 67). Many individuals have multiple identities due to their family histories, while others reject the very principle of the division into constituent peoples and prefer to see themselves as citizens of BiH, without an ethnic label (ICG 2012, 7). For many minorities living in cities, the urban-rural division, the disparate wartime experiences, or the question of whether one stayed in the respective city during the war often create larger divides than any ethnic division (Pickering, 77). Essentially, many Bosnians (and not just those from mixed families) take offense to the assumption that a person’s ethnicity determines his/her interests and resent being forced to use the official labels. Such a system of classification imposes “a severely simplified frame on a complex reality” (ibid., 66).

In spite of the oversimplification of ethnicities in BiH as fixed and static categories, such categorisation has led to what Stavrevska refers to as the “spatialisation of ethnicity”, or the existence of ethnically conceived spaces (2012b, 6). Essentially, this refers to the understanding that each ethnicity has its own *space* in which it has legitimacy and authority. These spaces are not just geographical, such as Serb or Croat dominated municipalities, but also conceptual, linguistic and representative of the everyday. Stavrevska argues that these ethnically conceived spaces are manifested, for instance, in various practices such as the official insistence on three separate languages, in spite of the fact that all three languages are mutually intelligible and considered by many to be dialects of the same language (ibid., 6). Another example is the use of the Cyrillic and Latin alphabets – both of which are official alphabets of BiH and required learning for students. However, Cyrillic is seen as intimately linked to the Serbian people, which leads to the alphabets being manipulated for nationalistic purposes, such as teachers refusing to teach both alphabets, professors refusing to grade papers written in the other alphabet, or sign posts in certain places being written exclusively in one or the other alphabet (ibid., 7).

A further and very explicit example of the spatialisation of ethnicity is the phenomenon common in Central Bosnia and the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton of two schools under one roof. In such schools, children of different ethnicities study completely separately, either in different classrooms or in different shifts, and often have different entrances (ibid., 8). The location of certain flags is another manifestation of the spatialisation of ethnicity. For instance, it is not uncommon to see the Serbian flag in the Republika Srpska, while the state flag of BiH is a rare sight. Similarly, the Croatian flag can be seen in towns and cities in BiH with a large Croatian population. In Bosniac dominated spaces, it is not uncommon to see various Islamic flags alongside the state flag (ibid., 9). The spatialisation of ethnicity is even manifested in everyday things such as mobile phone operators and newspapers. There is an unspoken understanding about which mobile operator caters to which ethnicity and which newspapers belong to whom (ibid., 9).

3.1.1 Everyday Resistance to the Spatialisation of Ethnicity

This spatialisation of ethnicity is mainly pursued and enforced by the governmental structures and legal framework of the country, but it is also implicitly supported and reinforced by Bosnian citizens and society through their everyday actions⁸ – actions most likely carried out unconsciously or at least without any reflection. However, such clear-cut rules for ethnic spatialisation, whether official, such as territorial divisions, or unspoken, such as the unofficial agreement on mobile phone operators, completely disregard individual and community agency. Members of the different ethnic groups in BiH are expected – whether by the state, the entity, their communities or by general social norms – to toe the line. They are expected to live in certain areas, to be labelled in a certain way, to go to certain schools, and to conform to a certain culture and ethnicity. There is an implicit understanding that this ethnic spatialisation is the reality of the current BiH, and any attempts to fight upstream are regarded as futile. As Stavrevska points out, there are countless examples of compliance with this spatialisation of ethnicity, such as parents sending their children to school far away from where they live so that the children can attend school in ‘their own’ language (Stavrevska 2012b, 18).

Nevertheless, there are various methods that the citizens of BiH use in order to resist this assumption of ethnicities as fixed categories. If this assumption is understood as a peacebuilding rationality as well – the assumption that grouping people together based on ethnicity will satisfy their ethnic needs and that separating ethnic groups from each other will keep the peace – we could understand resistance to this rationality as people’s way of saying that this is not the type of peace that should be sought. Although not stated explicitly by the common citizen in BiH, this is perhaps an unconscious recognition of the fact that strict ethnic categorisation and the mere co-existence of the different ethnicities is not the way to build a just peace. At the very least, it is everyday resistance to the “straightjacket of ethnicity that they have been placed in”.⁹ The important question here is whether or not the authorities are taking heed. For instance, one of the many ways to resist this strict ethnic categorisation is to refuse to declare ethnicity on forms, such as for university registration. Many children of interethnic marriages loathe having to make such a choice, as choosing only one ethnicity would in essence “neglect part of their identity” (ibid., 18-19). They therefore often write in bogus identities, such as Martian or Jedi, or simply write Bosnian-Herzegovinian, which remarkably falls under the category of ‘others’ (ibid., 19). This also applies to other Bosnian citizens who are not from interethnic marriages, but who oppose the ethnic categorisation on principle. Further examples include those citizens who choose to sign their names in both alphabets to oppose the strict association of Cyrillic with the Serbian population or the woman from Sarajevo who states that she often simply visits RS, because, if she didn’t, “it would mean that they have won and that the division has succeeded” (ibid., 19).

These are all examples of Bosnian citizens intentionally – however inconsequentially – resisting the spatialisation of ethnicity. These individuals are not out in the streets or in front of parliament protesting against this situation, trying to change it on a national or political level. Instead, they are exercising their agency in whatever form they can out of principle, even though they know that their actions will not lead to any change, except perhaps in terms of their personal satisfaction in resisting the system. This is everyday resistance at its finest. It is a personal way of saying that although these actions cannot change the system, they can at least voice dissatisfaction with the system itself.

Another type of resistance visible on an everyday basis in BiH is that which Stavrevska refers to as “coping” (ibid., 20). Examples of such coping measures include the actions of many citizens who live along the Inter-Entity Boundary Line. Often citizens register on one side of the line in order to receive their pensions or better medical services, although their real residence is on the opposite side. Flexible registration, in which individuals only have to provide an address, rather than proof of residence,

⁸ Email interview with Elena B. Stavrevska, January 2013.

⁹ Ibid.

makes it possible to circumvent the system (ibid., 21). Such methods are ways in which citizens resist the spatialisation of ethnicity, such as Bosniac mothers-to-be registering in Serb-dominated East Sarajevo in order to get better maternity benefits. Such resistance is not really carried out intentionally as a matter of principle, but rather simply “to make life more bearable” (ibid.). In this sense, we can understand such actions as a type of resistance deemed necessary by the personal circumstances in which individuals find themselves, not resistance in which a concept or rationality is being challenged, *per se*.

The spatialisation of ethnicity as a fundamental peacebuilding rationality in BiH is an imperfect solution to an admittedly complex problem, and it directly challenges the notions of inter-communal reconciliation and peace that many local and international peacebuilders in BiH are working so hard to achieve. On the one hand, such a spatialisation is for the most part working, as it satisfies the nationalists in each ethnic group and nationalists tend to talk louder than others. Stavrevska also argues that it has done its part in reducing inter-ethnic violence.¹⁰ On the other hand, such geographical and conceptual distances between the ethnic groups provide little opportunity for interaction and cannot realistically lead to reconciliation. Moreover, it greatly restricts individuals with regard to not only their actions, but also in the way they understand their identities. This greatly limits their ability to use their agency in what could potentially be creative and innovative ways related to how they conceive themselves as Bosnian citizens and how they conceptualise peace.

3.2 Bosnian Society Must be Built from Scratch

Stavrevska believes that one of the assumptions about governance that local and international decision-makers in BiH have is that the “war wiped everything clean” (Stavrevska 2012b, 10). This means that any sort of understanding or mentality concerning governance and politics that was prevalent before the war has been proven unworkable and faulty and must therefore be disregarded in the post-conflict setting. This relates directly to Gilbert’s argument (2006, 14, 16) that the socialist experience in Bosnia – whether for good or for bad – does not form “part of a broader discourse shaping social-transformation in post-war Bosnia” and that the “lived experience and values of socialism” were, in fact, “ill-suited” for responding to or shaping these transformations. Stavrevska (2012b, 10) substantiates this idea by showing how certain socialist values, specifically regarding economic practices and the functioning of public institutions, have been ignored in the public sphere in post-war BiH, while continuing to play a role in people’s mentalities, which leads to them “coexisting awkwardly” with newer, more liberal practices. One of the examples she gives is the voluntary fixing of prices among taxi drivers or the silent agreements on which taxi driver covers which area of town. While some of this cooperation is arranged by the municipalities, much of it is unprescribed by the authorities and entered into voluntarily by the taxi drivers themselves (ibid., 11). The drivers seem to have little interest in earning a few more marks if it means going against the socialist values that they are comfortable with. As one taxi driver poignantly expresses, “we have to cooperate so that there is something for all of us” (ibid.). A further example given is the closure of the National Museum in Sarajevo. Because the director of the museum refused to seek external funds for the museum, believing – according to socialist values – in the centrality of the state and that the state was responsible for financing the museum, the museum was forced to shut its doors (ibid., 11-12).

In terms of the peacebuilding process in BiH, this assumption that the “war wiped everything clean” has led to the peacebuilding rationality that the Bosnian political, governance, and also to a certain degree societal, structures were destroyed to such an extent in the war that they must therefore be built completely anew, practically from scratch. In the eyes of many international statebuilders – as well as their local and national supporters – who perceive the past as only negative and associated with war and economic incompetence, this past is something to be buried. And just as a phoenix rises from the ashes of

¹⁰ Email interview with Elena B. Stavrevska, January 2013.

its predecessor, a newer, better, *more liberal* BiH was to be built upon the ruins of war.

Such an approach is not uncommon in post-conflict states worldwide in which international actors have taken over part or most of the political, economic and judicial mechanisms. The effort to rebuild BiH was “one of the international community’s first multifaceted efforts at postconflict statebuilding after the end of the Cold War” (Pickering 2007, 5). Indeed, Susan L. Woodward argues that the entire “international consensus that civil wars are a threat to global security and that both international peace and local development depend on complex state-building interventions to build effective and legitimate states” found its beginnings in BiH (2009, 48). She further argues that in the case of BiH, many international actors involved in post-war reconstruction did not just ignore the pre-war institutions, structures and customs (as is the case in many countries), but rather they completely disregarded them because they saw them as obstacles to their ultimate objectives in post-war BiH. In particular, they felt that the local populations were “burdened by the legacy of communist politics” and therefore needed to be “forced to become democrats and [to] create market economies” (ibid., 52). A similar opinion was expressed in an interview with an EU Police Mission official when he stated that the mission in BiH was not to provide the Bosnians with tools for better policing, but rather to “change their mentality, their Balkan mentality” (Stavrevska 2012b, 14-15).

In BiH, the ignorance of the situation on the ground as well as the open disdain for the previous system has at times been detrimental to sustainable peacebuilding. One example is the complete disregard for neighbourhood associations (*mjesne zajednice*) that were so prevalent before the war. These associations were deeply rooted in Bosnian society and were widely acknowledged as mechanisms for community participation, acting as contact points between the government and the citizens (Fischer 2010, 13). These associations were nevertheless disregarded by the Dayton Agreement, although they were, as Woodward (2009, 52) argues, “the most effective and legitimate means of reconciliation” in contrast with “the artificial and ethicising policies of donors who funded ‘multiethnic’ projects”. Simply disregarding certain institutions because they seem at first not to fit in with the new model of a country is certainly not the best way to take local agency into account. Because these associations were good examples of individuals being active in their communities and exercising their agency on a very local and everyday level, it is a shame that they were forcibly abandoned in the years after the war. Clearly, the policy of international intervention “was not based on an appropriate assessment of the former Yugoslavia system and society, which differed significantly from other (centralist) socialist systems, as it used to provide some space for self-management” (Fischer 2010, 13). In recent years, however, there has been some acknowledgment on the part of the international community that these associations can be beneficial, and several international donors (notably the OSCE) have assisted in their partial reestablishment.¹¹

Just as there is a necessity to understand the root causes and history of a conflict in order to understand the conflict itself, it is also imperative to understand the history of a country in order to understand the peacebuilding process. This history in BiH encompasses both the war *and* the socialist past prior to the war. Thus it is necessary in this particular case to look more closely at which institutions have legitimacy and acceptance within the society, rather than simply discarding old ones and creating new ones. Citizens of BiH cannot be expected to complete a crash course in the principles of liberal peace and to start a life anew with different perspectives and ideals. They are instead individuals that have survived a brutal war and are greatly influenced by both the conflict and the pre-war society of Yugoslavia. Therefore, legitimate, trusted institutions may have a much better chance of helping build sustainable peace than institutions that the local people are unfamiliar with. The challenge of taking this local context and agency into account in the peacebuilding and conflict resolution process is one that peacebuilders are confronted with continuously, as often the tools they are using to build peace are generally based on the cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all mould. This is a lesson that peacebuilders are still in the painful process of learning.

¹¹ Email interview with Elena B. Stavrevska, January 2013. See, for instance, the “Local First Initiative” of the OSCE: <http://www.oscebih.org/Default.aspx?id=21&lang=EN>.

3.3 Joining the EU is Incentive (Enough) to Build Peace

A third major peacebuilding rationality that much of the international community – in particular the European Union – has been labouring under in BiH is the assumption that the carrot of eventual EU membership is enough incentive to allow Bosnian politicians of all ethnic groups to bury the hatchet, so to say, and work together for the common good of all. Stavrevska refers to this as the assumption that no matter their differences, politicians will come together to achieve the “EU dream” (2012b, 15). For anyone well-versed in the ethnic politics of BiH, however, such a rationality seems dangerously naïve. This assumption has been proven wrong on various occasions, not the least of which have been the attempted police reform in 2006 in order to secure a Stabilisation and Association Agreement with the EU (see Lyon 2007 and Fagan 2010) and the ever-postponed constitutional reform needed specifically in order to implement the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights on the Sejdić-Finci case.¹² Both of these cases have shown beyond a reasonable doubt that “there are limits to what EU leverage can [...] achieve” (Fagan 2010, 91).

On the one hand, one could acknowledge the fact that the incentive of EU membership has given Bosnian politicians a basic rationale for reform, which was outlined specifically through the opinion of the Venice Commission in 2005 on the constitutional situation in BiH (Sebastian 2009, 342).¹³ After all, membership in the EU is one of the only points on which agreement among Bosnian constituencies can be found and “no Balkan politician can safely disavow” the dream of joining the EU (ICG 2012, 15). In this sense, one could argue that “despite the slow pace and various hiccups along the way, EU conditionality is driving domestic reform” (Fagan 2010, 90). On the other hand, the EU has been forced to soften its stance and back down when it has become apparent that attempts at reform (in this case police and constitutional) have not had the intended outcome (ICG 2012, 8; Fagan 2010, 90). In this regard it becomes clear that there are not only serious limitations of the EU’s soft power, but also of the prized carrot of EU membership.

Although all Bosnian leaders openly support the objective of EU membership, Bosnian officials have complained about the lack of tangible, shorter-term incentives on the longer path to EU membership. This could affect the willingness of officials to comply with the EU criteria and reform requirements, specifically with regard to the EU ‘Road Map’ (Stavrevska 2012b, 15). Perhaps if both politicians and citizens of BiH were able to see the progress of complying with EU requirements through more concrete measures, such as, for instance, visa liberalisation, it would be easier to ‘sell’ the more complex and longer-term reforms for EU accession. Nevertheless, Stavrevska argues that a more plausible factor may be simply that such reforms, especially the constitutional reforms, would require a redistribution of power at the state level, and none of the constituent peoples is currently prepared to accept such a redistribution at the cost of their ‘national interests’ – regardless of the incentive of EU membership (ibid., 15). This zero-sum game in which reforms required to join the EU explicitly entail (in the eyes of Bosnian politicians) giving up or compromising ethnic interests, means that the politicians may be publically paying heed to the goal of EU membership, while having no true intention of carrying out any reforms. So while it is accepted by almost all actors involved in BiH that Bosnians unquestionably desire EU membership, it has become clear that membership cannot come at any cost.

Another factor possibly influencing this peacebuilding rationality is the implicit understanding within EU circles that the EU knows what is best for BiH and that the reforms which will help BiH down the path of EU membership are the best medicine for what is ailing the country. Considering that the High Representative in BiH, who has extensive powers over legislation and policy, was for many years simultaneously the EU Special

¹² The European Court of Human Rights ruled in 2009 that the Bosnian constitution violates the European Convention on Human Rights, because it requires that posts in both the three-member presidency and the parliamentary House of Peoples be equally divided among Bosniacs, Croats and Serbs. Such a requirement therefore restricts access to minority citizens who are not associated with one of these three groups (see ICG 2012).

¹³ “The Venice Commission’s rationale for constitutional reform included the following factors: (1) to provide the state with the institutional capacity to fulfil EU accession requirements; (2) to make the complex decision-making process in BiH speedier... (3) to make the state more efficient from an economic perspective ... and (4) to redress some specific violations of the European Convention on Human Rights contained in the BiH’s constitution” (Sebastian 2009, 342).

Representative, this led to a somewhat unusual situation in which the reforms needed for EU membership, if not agreed upon by democratically elected politicians in the country, could be forced through by edict. Therefore, the powers of the High Representative could be used both “under the aegis of upholding the Dayton peace agreement and of facilitating the reforms necessary for EU membership” (Chandler 2007, 2). Fortunately, there has been a decoupling of these two positions since September 2011 and the practice of reforms being forced through by edict has been largely avoided in the last several years. Nevertheless, this governance setup, and the fact that the HR can still use his powers of edict if he so chooses, has led to the rather hypocritical situation in which democracy is valued as an essential element of the governments of EU member states, yet the High Representative may impose legislation undemocratically. Chandler (2005, 343) argues critically that the EU’s disregard for this lack of democracy in BiH is strangely “not necessarily seen as problematic for BiH’s closer integration into the EU”.

This general attitude of the international community – and specifically the EU – of knowing what reforms are best for the future of BiH should, however, be seen in the light of ethnic politicians who have refused to compromise their interests and work together in order to achieve sustainable and fair reform. In the case of police reform, Lyon (2007, 63) talks of the “fundamental failure of the RS [...] to understand the switch from peace-implementation led reform to the language and dynamics of EU integration”. Such criticism could apply to both entities and almost all parties, depending on the particular situation. Therefore, under such circumstances, the EU is faced with the losing battle of advocating for the reforms. In the last several years, the EU has used more soft power methods, for example public pressure and mediation, rather than trying to strong-arm reforms through undemocratically. It seems that the EU has realised that pushing reform in order to pave the way for EU membership would only lead to cosmetic changes for the sake of membership, not to fundamental and genuine changes in the governmental and constitutional structures of the country, ideally designed and implemented by Bosnian politicians for the sake of effectiveness and progress, let alone in the spirit of ethnic cooperation. Nevertheless, the incentive of EU membership is still expected to cure the ethnic failings of the Bosnian political system, regardless of how unrealistic this may seem.

4 Governance Initiatives for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

Among all of the case studies under consideration for the CORE project, the post-war country of Bosnia and Herzegovina leads the list in the sheer number of external actors involved in the statebuilding process, as well as the number of initiatives carried out over the years in the hopes of building a more sustainable peace. Since the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995 – and particularly in the years immediately after the conclusion of the war – a plethora of international organisations and institutions, both state and non-state, have descended upon BiH to carry out peacebuilding activities in order to rebuild and reconstruct the country and its society. In fact, Husanović (2000, 126) argues that BiH is an international “testfield for all that is named (and heavily funded) under the fancy hats of various ‘democratizations’, ‘reconstructions’, ‘reconstitutions’, ‘empowerments’, and so forth”. The promise of such large and sustained international presence – both civilian and military – was one of the incentives for the warring parties to cease hostilities, and the provided assistance is “considered in per capita terms to be the highest ever in the history of international aid” (Bojicic-Dzelilovic 2006, 206).

Considering the great amount of activities in BiH related to developmental work, security reform, the statebuilding process, the promotion of democracy and good governance, refugee return, and

transitional justice mechanisms, it is extremely difficult to separate and define which activities qualify as conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives, and which lay outside of this realm. Clearly there is a lot of overlap. According to Ramsbotham et.al., *conflict resolution* implies that the “deep-rooted sources of conflict are addressed and transformed”, so that behaviour is no longer violent and attitudes are no longer hostile (2005, 29), while Roland Paris defines *peacebuilding* as actions “undertaken at the end of a civil conflict to consolidate peace and prevent a recurrence of fighting” (Paris 2004, 38).

The presumption that socio-economic development (together with democratisation) provides “a necessary structural basis for resolving deep-rooted conflicts” has been embraced by the international community, specifically by the World Bank and the European Union, as well as other organisations (Kotzé 2005, 63). It is believed that by increasing people’s economic prospects and opportunities for a better future, the chances of a recurrence of conflict are significantly reduced. Therefore, many activities and initiatives carried out in BiH, which at first sight would correlate more closely with economic development initiatives, fall under the designation of conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Francine Friedman argues that “economic investment in Bosnia may be the only way to reintegrate that country, as Bosnia’s stability may ultimately rest on its economic health” (2004, 95), while Fischer (2010, 19) contends that economic consolidation is an “important prerequisite for reconciliation and a stable peace”. This corresponds with findings that show that economic prospects not only affect Bosnian’s choice to return to their original homes, but work places also offer the best opportunities for interethnic mixing and reconciliation (Pickering 2007, 95, 126-131). With this in mind, various types of governance initiatives in the realm of economic activity have thus collectively a significant role to play in the peacebuilding process in BiH.

4.1 Micro-Credit Loans for Women

One of the many economic initiatives that have been implemented in post-war BiH is the granting of micro-credit loans to women. Such an enterprise has essentially two main functions and objectives: to further the economic development of the country (for instance, by offering start-up capital for small businesses) but also to empower women. As Stavrevska (2012a, 6) argues in her preliminary research findings, international peacebuilding initiatives in BiH in the field of gender have clearly been informed by the liberal, mainstream approach. Indeed, in BiH, which has been heavily dependent on international funds for the last 15 years, “activism related to gender issues is almost 100 per cent reliant on foreign donors” (Husanović 2000, 130).

There have been various micro-credit initiatives of this kind, which reach out to women in particular. One which is perceived as having been notably successful is the micro-credit foundation called MI-BOSPO. This foundation provides agricultural, business and housing loans for “economic active women entrepreneurs with low income” (MI-BOSPO website). The initiative is supported by USAID, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the European Fund for SE Europe, among other partners. The foundation believes that with the money women can earn from putting these loans to good use, they can better provide for their families, which means school for children and better accommodation. This “improved financial status” and the participation of women “in earning for the family” creates better harmony over all within the family (ibid.). Significantly, MI-BOSPO feels that such a micro-credit initiative meets the needs of women *better* than humanitarian aid (ibid.).

Upon closer analysis of such micro-credit initiatives, there have been cases of recipients using the loans in ways that were not necessarily foreseen by the designers of the micro-credit programs. For example, until recently there was no coordinating body for the dispersal of loans in BiH, which enabled many people to take out more than one loan from different loaning agencies. This unfortunately led to many people becoming over-indebted (Stavrevska 2011a, 6). As a further consequence, it has been shown that the financial difficulties directly related to such debt have led to a number of divorces (ibid.). Obviously, it may not be possible to contribute the breakdown of marriages solely to the practice of women taking out more than one micro-credit loan. Nevertheless, it is worth asking the question of whether these micro-loan

initiatives – specifically with regard to the fact that there was originally no body to coordinate the loans – were designed and coordinated properly in order to truly empower women. There may certainly be cases of women who are better off being divorced, but if they are (financially) worse off after the divorce than before, such loans have clearly not achieved their objectives for these women.

Another example and one of the most common examples uncovered during field research is that many women take out such loans under their own names, but it is actually the male in the family who is running the business and managing the money. This situation generally flies in the face of the liberal understanding of the empowerment of women, which should aim to decrease the dependence of women on the men in their family and enable them to provide for themselves and for their children. As Stavrevska (2012b, 12) points out, however, such Western discourse on women empowerment “focuses on the individual as the basic unit of society”, while in contrast many women in BiH “see the family as the basic societal cell and understand their empowerment in that sense”. The centrality of family life in BiH has grown even more important since the war, as many families were separated for years or have suffered tragedy. In this sense, many women take advantage of the opportunity to take out a micro-credit loan specifically so that they can invest in a family business or do some other activity that is beneficial for the entire family (ibid.). Although this might mean that the male in the family then manages the business or money, many women do not find this problematic. For these women, they do not feel that they are being instrumentalised or dominated by their husbands. On the contrary, they gain empowerment “precisely through the ability to provide for their families and to contribute to the family wellbeing” (ibid.). In this sense, the micro-credit loans have been remarkably successful, as they have both improved the economic well-being of the women and have empowered them as well, even if this empowerment is understood differently than the Western understanding prevalent in such programs.

In terms of local agency and everyday resistance, such a method of using the opportunities given to these women through micro-credit loans cannot be labelled as everyday resistance to the initiative itself. After all, these women are putting these loans to good use for their families and economic well-being and are therefore meeting the stated goals of the programs. Nevertheless, they are adapting the programs in such a way to make them more relevant and suitable to their particular context. So they are resisting the *intended* use of the loans – as perceived by the Western, liberal designers of such loan programs – and making their own, individual use of them. This is an excellent example of the agency of these local women to decide for themselves (and for their families) how to best use the opportunities – in this case financial – that have been offered to them. One should therefore not look at such adaptation of micro-credit loans as a misuse of the funds, or as a contradiction to its intended application, but rather as the personal and legitimate choice of the women to use the money in the best way they see fit.

4.2 Regulation of the Arizona Market

The Arizona Market, located in the Brčko District at the intersection of Croatia, Serbia and BiH, began as a roadblock set up by the NATO Stabilisation Force (SFOR) in the years after the war. As it was a place where people of all ethnicities came to do business and trade both legal and illegal goods, it was encouraged by SFOR as an informal free-trade zone. The market was both “unregulated and protected” and became a “showcase [for] how [a] market economy can contribute to the establishment of peace” (Stavrevska 2012a, 8). Over time the market came into disrepute, however, as it became known that human trafficking and prostitution were among the illegal activities taking place there. Therefore, the authorities chose to regulate and rebuild the market, and High Representative Paddy Ashdown inaugurated the market in 2004. Today, there are two separate sections of the market – one which resembles an unofficial flea market and a second, more regulated section which was sold to a private Italian investor in 2004 and is arranged in neatly lined stores (Stavrevska 2012b, 17).

Many of the traders at the Arizona market today have no choice but to comply with the new rules and regulations, which include taxes and fees for cleaning, water and security (Stavrevska 2012b, 17). Although the traders openly complain about the initiative to formally regulate the market and bemoan the high taxes, they nevertheless intentionally comply with them (*ibid.*). However, the traders do find creative ways to elude state control, for instance by finding more sophisticated methods of importing goods or employing unregistered workers (Stavrevska 2012a, 8). For instance, many traders in the flea market section have joined forces and have only registered one booth (representing one company), while in actuality they have and run two separate booths, or separate businesses. According to the authorities, however, these two businesses should be registered as two different companies. Furthermore, at least one employee must be registered for each company, which means two employees must be registered for two booths if they are separate companies. This would mean much higher taxes and, in one case exemplified during the field research, one woman would lose the family pension she inherited from her husband after his death if she were to register as an employee. Therefore, most traders team up and continue to register only one joint company and one employee, even if they have more (Stavrevska 2012b, 22-23).

The traders at the Arizona market understand that the authorities have a job to do and they do not resent the governmental regulation of the market. In the words of one trader, “what has to be done, has to be done. They do their job, we do ours” (*ibid.*, 23). Nonetheless, they do resist the regulation in any way they can, mainly as a pragmatic measure in order to pay less tax than is officially required. But beyond this, there is also a much more subtle form of resistance taking place at the Arizona market – a resistance to a “certain blueprint of [a] market economy that aims to move BiH away from its socialist past” (Stavrevska 2011a, 8). Essentially, the early encouragement of the market by SFOR as well as its official regulation can be partly seen as support by the authorities for the market as a capitalist venture (and not just support for inter-ethnic trading). The assumption here relates directly to the idea of a free market economy as an essential element of liberal peace – an element that must be in place in order for the peacebuilding process to be ultimately successful. But the attitude of the traders themselves – influenced as they are by their socialist past – do not comply with this mentality. Indeed, those traders who are interested in making money and are more profit-driven are looked down upon and criticised by the other traders. They make a definitive distinction between those traders who want “summer houses and jeeps” and those who are content with earning enough to “cover the costs” (Stavrevska 2012b, 11). One sees here that the “mentality of a subsistence economy, invoking the notion of a ‘normal life’ and of having ‘enough’ is still widely present in [BiH] society” (*ibid.*, 10) even if the authorities who have regulated the market have much more neo-liberal and capitalist ambitions.

The resistance that the traders carry out with regard to the regulations of the market can be best understood as a ‘coping’ mechanism described above (see Stavrevska 2012b). The traders do not resist because they disagree in principle with the regulations; in fact, they understand that such rules are necessary and do not resent the government for them. Nevertheless, they find some of the rules impractical and choose to pragmatically resist them. Significantly, this resistance is carried out to help them make ends meet financially. On the other hand, the traders’ resistance to the monetary ideals of the market economy and to their colleagues who are perceived as being only interested in money is a type of resistance that is much more intentional and based on the principles of what people feel is proper and right. As such, it is interesting in the respect that it is through previously accepted social norms that the resistance to this economic initiative is making itself known. This resistance will most probably remain at a very local level, only to be discussed among the traders themselves, as it is highly unlikely that the country of BiH will be heading back to a socialist economy any time soon.

5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have given an in-depth overview of how local agencies in BiH are expressing themselves with regard to specific (economic) governance initiatives for peacebuilding as well as in response to the spatialisation of ethnicity that is so prevalent in the country. It becomes obvious in the description and analysis of these local agencies that such agency in general is rather difficult to see – particularly for external actors – unless one is specifically looking. The university student who writes “Jedi” under ethnicity on an official form is most probably considered a jokester by the university administration, not as someone who is making a serious political statement. The trader at the Arizona market who registers only one booth instead of two in order to pay less taxes is most likely considered a rule breaker by the authorities, not as someone who is voicing an opinion about the neo-liberal aspects of the new, regulated market. One can thus see that such agency will remain hidden for those who are not searching for it, or indeed for those who choose not to see it.

But this is the true essence of everyday resistance – actions that are not overt or conspicuous, but rather those actions that could easily be disregarded, misunderstood or simply overlooked. These small actions of resistance – for instance, the writing of a name in *both* alphabets – are a response to power (as all resistance is), but are without any great expectation that the situation will change as a result of this resistance. And regardless of these small expectations, many of these acts are nevertheless carried out tactically and with intent – to *not* be forced to choose one ethnicity, to ‘not let the nationalists win’, or even just for personal satisfaction. Even the individual cases of resistance that can be labelled as ‘coping’, as Stavrevska has described it, are carried out with intent – intent to make one’s personal circumstances more tolerable. Clearly the line separating principled resistance (to make a statement, regardless of how minor) and coping mechanisms is a very fine one, yet, depending on the perspective, all of these acts could be seen as resistance – just different types and degrees of resistance.

The local agency that is being exercised in BiH is also quite interesting with regard to the temporal aspects of agency mentioned in the first chapter of this report and how groups and individuals relate to their past, present and future. The traders at the Arizona market are clearly influenced by their socialist past when they voice criticism of the traders whom they feel are only concerned with money. Although surrounded by the neo-liberal economic experiment of the market, they clearly find more comfort in the values of the previous social system, even if it is not exemplified as such by the traders themselves. The woman who chooses to give her micro-credit loan to her husband to support the family business is exercising her agency to the best of her ability in the present – to help support her family – rather than contemplating how this loan should empower her individually, outside the family context. Furthermore, those individuals who choose to resist the ethnic spatialisation out of principle are exercising their agency with an eye on the future Bosnia and Herzegovina and their place within it. A country in which ethnicities continue to be separated and in which this separation becomes permanently established does not conform to the BiH they would like to envision. In this case, these everyday acts of resistance offer a much better alternative site of knowledge for sustainable peacebuilding. It remains to be seen how and to what extent these forms of local agency and everyday resistance can affect the governance initiatives (or the peacebuilding rationalities) under examination in this chapter, but before their effect can be discerned, it is important that the agency be heard.

Bihar/Jharkhand

1 Background of the Conflict¹

The Indian states of Bihar and Jharkhand are located in the eastern part of the country, at the northern tip of what is referred to as the ‘red corridor’, a region stretching from the border with Nepal to the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, which has been for the last few decades affected by the left-wing Naxal movement. The movement gets its name from a localised revolt against an oppressive landlord in the remote village of Naxalbari in the state of West Bengal that took place in 1967 (Verma 2011, 4). Since that time, the movement has greatly expanded and grown and now affects many populated states which are “predominantly agricultural and chronically impoverished” (Morrison 2012, 57). The term ‘Naxal’ is an umbrella term which comprises a large number of groups with different interests and ideologies, various methods of achieving their goals, and greatly differing levels of activity and/or violence. Regardless of differences, however, the basic premise of the movement over the last 40 years has been to fight against the exploitation and oppression of the rural poor, while engaging in the struggle for social and economic justice. Specifically, this has meant addressing concerns such as “land redistribution, access to public commons, wage increase and anger against sexual oppression of Dalit women by dominant castes” (Jha and Pushpendra 2012, 12). Specifically in the state of Bihar, the origins of Naxalism can be traced to a ruthless landlord from the village of Manatu and the deplorable conditions of a lower caste community, the

¹ This chapter is partly based on the field research carried out by Amit Prakash, Imran Amin and Rukmani Joshi at Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India in the framework of the CORE project. Research was carried out in Bihar and Jharkhand on various occasions in 2011 and 2012. Two unpublished fieldwork reports have been drafted based on the research: *Thematically Arranged Fieldwork Report Bihar Jharkhand* and *Report on Preliminary Field Study of Bihar and Jharkhand*. Both reports have partly established the topics and analysis for this chapter. Furthermore, the research carried out by the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group in the framework of the CORE project for the published report *Governing Caste and Managing Conflicts Bihar, 1990-2011* by Manish K. Jha and Pushpendra has likewise informed parts of this chapter.

Bhuinyan. Members of this caste and other lower castes began targeting the rich landlords and demanding better rights for labourers (Prakash et.al. 2012, 1).

The traditional exploitation of the landless labourers and tribal (indigenous) communities in the rural areas of India combined with corruption on the part of the government or – in certain areas – the complete lack of governmental presence has led to the oppressed populations becoming “natural constituents” of the Naxalites (CHD 2011, 9). Particularly among lower caste communities, issues such as unequal distribution of land and the abject failure of governmental development policy to translate into real change have led to legitimate grievances in rural areas (Morrison 2012, 59). Specifically in Bihar, the members of the movement are overwhelmingly “landless, small peasants with marginal landholdings” (Bhatia 2005, 1537) and as Bela Bhatia (*ibid.*, 1540) argues, many people join the Naxalite movement not on account of its formal ideology, but simply because they “feel that the Naxalites share their sense of injustice”. Particularly in areas in which there is little access to governmental services and significant poverty, the likelihood is greater that communities will support the Naxal movement (Hoelscher et. al., 2012, 15).

The Naxal movement, both in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand as well as in other states, is comprised of dozens of different factions. Over the years, these factions have merged and split with remarkable frequency, often due to disputes between castes (see, for example, Prakash et.al. 2012, 18-19). The most important merger took place in 2004 and resulted in the Communist Party of India (Maoist) – CPI (Maoist), which is active on the national level (CHD 2011, 17). According to the research carried out in 2012, it seems that there are four major Naxal parties currently active in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand, namely CPI (Maoist), the Tiritiya Prastuti Committee (TPC), the Jharkhand Prastuti Committee (JPC) and the Jharkhand Liberation Tigers (JLT). Two further parties are present in the region as well – Shastra Pratirodh Manch (SPM) and the Revolutionary Core Committee (RCC) – but according to the Naxal activist interviewed, these are both minor parties (Prakash et. al. 2012, 5).²

The various methods used by the Naxalites to promote their cause depend to a large degree on the particular group, its ideology, and what the specific objectives of the activity are. Some groups are proscribed and operate strictly underground, while other groups remain tolerated by the state and are more active politically. Still others use a combination of underground armed struggle with overground mass movement (see Jha and Pushpendra 2012, 12). While Naxalites in general are known for violent extrajudicial justice (as portrayed in the media and by the state), Naxalites also employ various examples of nonviolent activities, such as marches, boycotts, lockdowns and strikes, which suggests that the struggle is at its core socio-economic (Morrison 2012, 62).

If one evaluates the Naxal movement strictly from the perspective of fighting injustice for the poor and oppressed, then the movement can claim some considerable success. Wages for landless labourers have increased and have become more just (Sahay 2008, 6), physical and sexual abuse has decreased (Mohanty 2006, 18), and the landlords’ monopoly on land has been challenged (Bhatia 2005, 1543). Moreover, the movement has empowered the previously oppressed classes, has awakened a political consciousness among the labourers (Bhatia 2005, 1542) and, perhaps most importantly, has restored the human dignity of the lower castes (Kumar 2010, 80). As Gaurang R. Sahay (2008, 8) points out:

The Naxalite Movement in Central Bihar has been fairly successful in restoring dignity and honour to the poor and marginalized by fighting against exploitative social relations. Even though the poor continue to face many deprivations, they are now more autonomous and assertive and claim equal social space and rights in the villages.... All this has happened because the landlords are no longer in a position to exercise their traditional power.

On the other hand, however, “protracted violence has also left a long trail of blood and tears” (Bhatia 2005, 1542). With the successes of the Naxalite movement have also come negative factors, which have adversely

² According to Gaurung R. Sahay, there were 17 different Naxalite groups active in Bihar alone in 2008.

affected the lives of civilians. The Naxalites have been accused of violating various principles of human rights including forcibly displacing people, recruiting children, targeting schools and public facilities, making civilians the objects of armed conflict, and practicing vigilante justice (Sahay 2008, 9). In the past, the Naxalites were known to practice a type of “people’s court” (*jan adalat*), in which violent punishment – such as the amputation of body parts – was meted out to rich members of society who are deemed by the Naxalites as being exploitative against other, poorer members of society (Prakash et. al. 2012, 3). Today, the motive behind such courts has switched from seeking justice to using it more as a violent instrument of coercion.³

Furthermore, not only have the state security forces responded with violence to the activities of the Naxalites, but various private (higher) caste armies have been formed to fight the Naxalite groups and to counteract the mobilisation of poor peasants in general. Such caste armies have been responsible over the years for a “reign of terror” against the Naxalites and their supporters and have often acted in connivance with the state (Jha and Pushendra 2012, 12). Such violence on all sides has had serious consequences for the daily lives of civilians, who are often caught in the middle of the violence between the state police forces, the Naxalites and the caste armies. As Shrey Verna (2011, 2) argues, the poor population finds themselves “sandwiched between these conflicting interests, with no one upholding their cause with genuine determination”. Furthermore, the violence has created a climate of fear in many regions in which the Naxal movement is active (CHD 2011, 12) “where people live in constant terror and suspicion, and are exposed to the worst forms of violence on a daily basis” (Bhatia 2005, 1547).

2 Perceptions of the Conflict

Depending on the interests, ideology and identity of the actors involved, there are clearly very different perceptions of the Naxalite conflict. In April 2010, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated that left-wing extremism was the gravest internal security threat that India faces (CHD 2011, 18). On the other hand, for many rural and exploited peasants, the Naxalite movement has been life-altering. As Burt Suykens (2010, 54) points out, the debate on the issue in India has become highly polarised, with the Naxalites either being dismissed as terrorists, or celebrated as the “vanguard of social activism”. But in many of their actions, the Naxalites conform to neither of these popular images.

For their supporters and for the Naxalites themselves, the armed struggle is a classic case of poor against rich or the oppressed castes against the traditional elites. For the Indian state, however, it is considered a law and order problem. Problems of this nature are considered the responsibility of the individual state, meaning that the police forces of each state are given the task of maintaining internal security and combating the armed Naxalite cadres, who are assumed to be challenging the legitimate order.⁴ The situation is further compounded by the lack of a comprehensive national strategy to deal with the Naxalite movement. In fact, Verma (2011, 33) argues that the “security response of the Government of India to the Maoist problem has been devoid of any strategy and political will”. Furthermore, the Indian government contradicts itself by partly conceding to the legitimacy of some Naxal demands (for instance, concerning the extent of government mismanagement and corruption), yet simultaneously labelling them as terrorists (Morrison 2012, 64).

Partly due to the government’s perception of the conflict as a law and order issue, and partly due to its acknowledgement of some Naxal grievances, it is addressing the conflict on two fronts: “Tight policing of

³ Email interview with Amit Prakash, February 2013.

⁴ While policing and retaining public order are state subjects, the central government supplements state efforts, for instance, by providing the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) with its special unit Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA), which has been deployed to areas with Naxal disturbances (see Prakash et.al. 2012, 2, and Government of India 2011, 25).

Naxalite violence [together with] benign welfare measures for the poverty-stricken masses” (K. Balagopal, as quoted in CHD 2011, 8). Although both types of measures have had their successes and failures, they fail to tackle the problem comprehensively, particularly because each state goes about combatting the Naxalites in different ways and with different methods. As Hoelscher et. al. (2012, 6) point out, efforts on the part of the state governments “have ranged from ceasefires and conciliatory gestures to all-out military campaigns”. This simply enables the Naxalites to move from state to state whenever deemed necessary. Significantly, security offensives to tackle the Naxalites often prove to be counterproductive, particularly when such offensives lead to atrocities against civilians, which often simply lead to new recruits for the Naxalites. Winning the battle against the security forces is often less important than the real objective of “extracting the maximum out of the discontent that is manufactured as a result of such security offensives” (Verma 2011, 37).

There is one last, extremely important, aspect to consider when contemplating the different perceptions that exist of the Naxalite conflict. The movement claims (with varying levels of legitimacy) to defend the poor, tribal and landless, yet has become in the last decade or so clearly based on a levy economy and has lost much of its original ideology. The conflict has therefore been transformed from being a struggle against the underdevelopment and oppression of the lower castes and tribes to being a movement that actually denies access to development for those it claims to be fighting for. As pointed out by various researchers working on the topic (see Hoelscher et. al. 2012; Suykens 2010; Verma 2011), a major extortion business on various products is in place throughout much of the ‘red corridor’, and mining activities form one of the main sources of Naxalite finances. Mining is particularly attractive for the Naxalites, as mining districts generally have terrain that is difficult to access, a high degree of corruption, and communities that feel aggrieved (Hoelscher et. al. 2012, 8). Hoelscher et.al. argue against any grievance demands of the Naxalites, arguing that such demands – often based on ideals of justice – may drive recruitment into the movement, but are not driving the “locational aspects” of the conflict (ibid., 24). In essence, the Naxalites are active in mining regions not necessarily because the poor communities there are the most exploited and deserve the most justice, but rather because the regions are the most lucrative for their activities.

The activity of imposing high levies and taxes on contractors has led to the perverse situation that due to security concerns, development activities often cannot be carried out in areas in which the Naxalites are active, denying the communities any positive benefits from the proposed activities (see more on this below). Moreover, this lure of easy money, combined with diminishing ideology, has led to a “growing criminalization of the cadre base”, a negative trend that is “most visible in Bihar” (Kumar 2010, 83). It is therefore apparent that what used to be a simple case of rich versus poor, and landowners versus landless communities, has become something much larger and much more complex. In the next section I will have a closer look at the peacebuilding rationalities that the Indian government (both state and national) works under in order to address the issues of the conflict in an attempt to find a lasting solution and to start building peace.

3 Peacebuilding Rationalities

As discussed previously in this report, each actor in the multi-layered and complex system of governance in conflict settings has a type of framework within which he or she places the possibilities and limitations for resolving the conflict and building peace. This framework colours the discourses and frames the arguments which all actors use within the context. It is essentially a system of what is possible and what is not possible in light of the circumstances and dynamics of the conflict. This is what I refer to as a peacebuilding rationality. In every conflict, the actors in the system of governance work under various, overlapping, and at times even contradictory, peacebuilding rationalities. It is beyond the scope of this report to address all

the peacebuilding rationalities of the actors in Bihar and Jharkhand, but I will examine two peacebuilding rationalities of the Indian government in detail – economic development and local governance – both as conflict resolution mechanisms.

3.1 Economic Development as Conflict Resolution⁵

As stated in the previous section, the government has been addressing the conflict with the Naxalites on two fronts. On the one hand, security forces have been employed to strike against the armed groups; while on the other hand, development initiatives are being carried out to address the legitimate grievances of the impoverished communities. Such an approach is therefore based upon the (government's) assumption that individuals join and support the Naxalites because they are poor and underdeveloped. Following this argument to its logical conclusion means that once people reap the benefits of modern development, the Naxalite conflict should diminish automatically.

Such a simplistic equation of 'if underdevelopment equals war, then development equals peace' overlooks many other factors which have led to the Naxalite conflict, including caste inequality, traditional land ownership structures, a lack of social justice, and government incompetence and corruption. Viewing the conflict only through the development lens negates the importance of these factors for the dignity of individuals and oversimplifies a complex situation. Such oversimplification also disregards the role that modern elements (such as mining and extortion activities) have played in the continuation of the conflict, thereby altering the very character of the conflict itself. Most importantly in this respect, viewing development as a panacea to armed conflict discounts the role that development activities themselves have played in the perpetuation of the conflict.

Much of the mining activity taking place within the 'red corridor' has not brought the expected economic development and higher standards of living that are suggested will come with such activity. Instead, mining has partly worsened the situation by leading to environmental degradation, which in turn has become a significant driver of conflict (Falkenhagen 2011). Instead of improving the lives of local villagers by supplying jobs and needed services, the industrialization "has exacerbated their problems by polluting land and making fresh water for local villages unusable" (ibid.). Thus we have a situation in which the environmental damage done by mining and the dissatisfaction with developmental policy both enrich the breeding ground for the Naxalites, while the same Naxalites finance themselves from these industrial activities, rendering them even more ineffective for sustainable development.

In addition, the fact that Naxalites have demanded levies and taxes from contractors and other actors involved in development activities has led to development activities being cancelled, being carried out much more slowly than originally planned, or being implemented with poor quality. For instance, as Morrison demonstrates, some Naxal groups are opposed to infrastructure development in general because such projects lead to the rural populations being more satisfied with the government. This is perceived, in turn, to be a challenge to Naxal ideology and control, and they therefore disrupt or sabotage state-led development initiatives (Morrison 2012, 61). In this sense, the Naxalites' claims to support oppressed and underdeveloped communities seem hollow.

In the Hazaribagh district of Jharkhand, the field research has demonstrated that because the Naxals demand levies from the contractors, this leads to the contractors paying lower wages to the workers and using poorer quality material for the projects. In many of the cases, the projects remain unfinished, which further deteriorates the conditions that the projects were meant to improve (Prakash et. al. 2012, 12). Interestingly, many individuals interviewed in the region have reported that levies are only demanded from larger projects in which the government has a share. This means that many smaller projects, such

⁵ See the chapter in this report on Northeast India for information about a similar approach in the region as well as the same peacebuilding rationality of economic development as a conflict resolution measure.

as schools and health centres, are left alone simply by default, as the financial reward wouldn't be high enough to merit demanding the levy (*ibid.*, 13).

But just because projects such as education and health facilities are not subject to the imposition of Naxal levies does not mean that the Naxal presence in an area cannot have a negative influence on these projects. Specifically if different Naxal factions are trying to prove their dominance over a certain area, this infighting leads to many projects being left unfinished. The area between Sherghati and Banke Bazaar in the Gaya district of Bihar is a case in point, in which the road is in deplorable condition due to the lack of dominance of one Naxal group (*ibid.*, 15). Another case is a health centre in the Semariya Block of Chatra District in Jharkhand, which has not yet been built because the JPC and TPC are currently fighting over the area (*ibid.*). Clearly, such antagonistic Naxal dynamics among factions can be highly detrimental to development activities.

In other communities and states, development seems to be a response in itself to left-wing extremism, in the sense that once the Naxalite movement has taken hold in certain communities, it is only then that the government directs its attention to the underdevelopment of the region. For example, one rural beneficiary of the governmental development scheme Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)⁶ states that his village in particular had been waiting in vain for development for decades and only since the Naxalites became active in the region, did the government make its presence known (BBC 2010). Such an approach can therefore be interpreted as a "reactive policy whose primary goal is to contain" left-wing violence, rather than a genuine attempt to develop rural areas (Morrison 2012, 66). Such a half-hearted, disingenuous effort to offer citizens better lives is not only insufficient, but can also backfire as it gives communities more incentive to support the Naxal movement.

None of this is meant to negate the role that economic development can play in the betterment of living conditions, health care and education for a population. Nor should the link between better development and diminishing conflict be disregarded. The Naxal movement is indeed much weaker where economic conditions are stronger (Morrison 2012, 58) and underdevelopment is one of the legitimate grievances which lead to support for Naxal activities. Nevertheless, the central government in Delhi does not have a consistent response to the Naxalite crisis, and "confusion reigns among policymakers and local implementation actors as to the scope, mandate, and direction of development" (Hoelscher et. al. 2012, 4). Although everyone seems to agree that development is needed in general, the devil is in the details. If development initiatives are carried out under conditions in which corruption is rampant, for instance, or without proper foresight, there is a significant chance that they could lead to worsened conditions for the communities as well as further protraction of the conflict with the Naxalites. Particularly when this development comes in the form of industrial (mining) expansion, the risks of such an outcome are high, because "a ramping up of industrial development without individual or monetary safeguards to prevent against corruption or other abuses" simply leads to greater support for Naxal ideology (*ibid.*, 4).

Using various activities and initiatives for economic development is one of the main approaches of the Indian government in dealing with its internal armed conflicts, whether they be in central India, Northeast India or Jammu and Kashmir. There is a tendency among the Indian political elite to equate economic development with conflict resolution, and use the same methods for economic development in the different regions, regardless of the uniqueness of the individual conflicts. This approach of economic development as a fool-proof remedy for armed conflict has been criticised extensively (see, for instance, DasGupta 2012, 19-21). In the specific context of Bihar and Jharkhand, this peacebuilding rationality is problematic for three major reasons. Firstly, by perceiving a lack of development as the main reason for conflict, this understanding overlooks any deep-rooted social and/or political grievances that people may have. Even if development initiatives are successful at raising the standard of living and improving general

⁶ The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act is a government-sponsored social welfare scheme which guarantees 100 days of work a year for every rural home. Work provided is mainly manual labor, such as building or reconstructing local infrastructure or ponds.

economic conditions, if political and social grievances, such as land rights and control over resources, are not addressed within more holistic development measures, the conflict will remain unresolved. Secondly, this approach to building peace completely disregards the role that development measures in and of themselves can play in the perpetuation of the conflict. This has become painfully apparent during the last decade or so of the Naxalite conflict in the Bihar/Jharkhand region in which the levies imposed by the Naxalites (specifically on development projects) have rapidly increased, while there seems to be a simultaneous decline in the Naxalites' ideological inclinations (Prakash et. al. 2012, 4). Lastly, such a peacebuilding rationality tends to lump everyone together in a group of people for whom economic development is the most important factor. This is far from the truth and denies communities and individuals their agency. For some lower caste and tribal citizens of the states of Bihar and Jharkhand, social and political equality, social justice, and the respect for the dignity of all individuals may be more important than economic development. In addition, sustainable development for many communities encompasses a healthy environment as well as jobs and increasing income levels.

3.2 Local Governance as a Conflict Resolution Mechanism

In the Annual Report from 2010-2011 by the Ministry of Home Affairs, the specific strategy for economic development and the various initiatives thereof for the regions affected by so-called left-wing extremism is described in relative detail over four full pages (Government of India 2011, 28-31). In comparison, information about local government in regions affected by left-wing extremism is limited to the following sentence: "The Left Wing Extremist affected States have been asked to implement PESA on priority, which categorically assigns rights over minor forest produce to Gram Sabhas" (ibid, 26).⁷ Clearly, using the mechanism of local self-governance as a type of conflict resolution measure does not have as high a priority with the Indian government as economic development issues do.

Nevertheless, this statement is an explicit acknowledgement that strengthening the local governmental structures (PESA) in areas with left-wing violence is perceived as urgent ("on priority") so that rights to the land and forest produce rest with the local people (in the form of the *Gram Sabha*).⁸ In essence, this is the logic that underlies the specific governance initiative for peacebuilding that will be examined in detail below, the *Panchayati Raj* Institutions, and its link to the peacebuilding rationality above. If the government's assumption is that that citizens have joined the armed Naxal movement partly because they are dissatisfied with the development policy of the central government due to its limited effects, then it follows that the government should provide more development benefits. Simultaneously, the argument goes, if the government then gives the people their own rights in terms of planning and implementation of development initiatives via local governance, this will resolve armed conflict even more quickly.

Although this argument might appear sound on the surface, there is an implicit underlying assumption here that citizens will be interested and willing to become involved in local self-governance. However, as Mac Ginty (2012, 173-175) has shown, many individuals and communities voluntarily choose not to become involved in political activity, whether out of principle, for tactical reasons, or merely out of disinterest. This is certainly the case with regard to some of the Naxalite factions. Some of the groups, for instance the Tritiya Prastuti Committee and the Jharkhand Prastuti Committee, are interested in utilising official government mechanisms in order to achieve their goals (Prakash et. al. 2012, 12). Other groups, however, are strictly opposed to any sort of cooperation with the government. The Communist Party of India (Maoist) is firmly opposed to taking part in any level of the democratic system as the party feels that "all the institutions like parliament, legislative assemblies, executive councils, (including the so-called panchayati raj) are

⁷ The Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA) was passed in 1996 and recognised the rights of the tribal communities to self-government. The Act legitimised the systems and traditions of the tribal communities and gave them rights over issues such as mining leases, land acquisition, money lending and minor forest produce (Verma 2011, 15-16).

⁸ See the next section of this chapter for a detailed discussion of the Panchayati Raj Institutions and local governance mechanisms.

a thin cover for the autocratic rule representing the dictatorship of comprador bureaucratic bourgeoisie and feudal classes subservient to imperialism” (SATP, point 27). Therefore, the CPI (Maoist) in particular feels that participating in elections is incompatible with its overall left-wing struggle. This is what Jha and Pushpendra (2012, 13) refer to as the “great debate of the mid-1980s within the Naxalite movement”, which revolved around the question of whether the movement should get involved in politics. On the one hand, it was argued that the democratic system could be used strategically in order to reach the objective of building a mass movement. On the other hand, many promoted a boycott of the political institutions as they were simply an “instrument of domination” by the ruling elite (ibid., 13).

Today, this fundamental dilemma among the various Naxal groups has yet to be definitively resolved and each group has developed more or less its own approach. Furthermore, as we will see in the last section of this chapter, simply because the Naxalites choose to become involved in the political system doesn't mean that they do so in democratic or transparent ways. They have been able to adapt the *Panchayati Raj* system to their own contexts, often by creating a type of parallel government system to correspond to the official system. This means that the Naxalites are effectively the government (the ‘red government’) in various places, and carry out tasks such as arbitration of property and other disputes (Bhatia 2005, 1540).

The overall concept of local self-governance in order to meet the needs of the local population and increase transparency in government is certainly not misplaced. The concept takes the role of local agency into account and can play an important role in building peace in conflict societies. However, in order for local governance to be effective, there must be an interest and willingness on the part of the local communities to become involved. Moreover, if the will and interest are there, but people are prevented from being involved – due to security reasons or social norms, for instance – local governance will be similarly ineffective. A further point is to establish that all individuals have the right to participate equally in the process, without certain groups feeling intimidated or excluded from the process. All of these conditions are crucial in order to have an effective, functioning system of local governance and one that can indeed contribute to a sustainable peace. Thus in order for this peacebuilding rationality to have its intended positive effect, it is imperative that these conditions be met.

4 Governance Initiative for Conflict Resolution – The Panchayati Raj Institutions

In light of the abovementioned arguments for the utilisation of local governance mechanisms in order to resolve conflict and build peace, the governance initiative that was under investigation in detail during the field research in Bihar and Jharkhand was the relatively recent implementation of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, a mechanism for local self-governance. The 73rd and 74th amendment of the Indian constitution were historic in the sense that they provided the official, legal groundwork for direct democracy at the local level, effectively empowering local actors in grassroots governance. The 73rd amendment specifically established a 3-tier-system of councils for rural areas, at the district, block and village level. Local governance institutions have traditionally played an important role in India, with typically a council of elders (*panchayat*) having both executive and judicial powers and the authority to make decisions that concern the village or community. These *panchayats* were usually composed of unelected, powerful men – typically due to their caste or landownership (SDC 2009a, 6; SDC 2009b, 8). The 1993 amendments to

the constitution brought an official structure of transparency and democracy to these *panchayats* by introducing democratic elections every five years and providing significant affirmative action measures for women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.⁹ It has also led, however, to a type of parallel system in which the unelected panchayats carry on with their traditional work, while the newer, elected panchayats are the official representatives on paper. There is clearly much overlap between these two systems.¹⁰

The rationale behind the establishment of the 3-tier system of local government was to enable local communities to play a larger role in their own governance, specifically with regard to economic development measures and social justice. There was a growing recognition among the political class that development measures were extremely difficult to plan and administer from afar. This recognition, combined with the acknowledgment of the massive extent of rural poverty in India, led to the realisation that a restructuring of government was necessary, specifically with adjustments on the local level to take local needs into account (CENCORED 2006, 15; SDC 2009a, 7).

At the village level, the new governmental structure provided for a *Gram Panchayat*, an elected village council headed by an elected chairperson (*Mukhiya*). Furthermore, a village assembly (*Gram Sabha*), comprising all adult members of the village, is meant to serve as “an effective tool for participation of the people in the democratic process” (SDC 2009a, 11). The *Gram Sabha* acts as a ratifying body and communally discusses and decides on development plans and recommendations of the *Gram Panchayat*. For instance, in the regions under investigation for the CORE project, one of the main tasks of the *Mukhiya* is consulting the *Gram Sabha* in order to verify the eligibility of the candidates on the “Below Poverty Line” waiting list for the government scheme “Indira Awaas Yojana”¹¹ (Prakash and Amin 2012, 2).

The new Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) are significant because citizens are now able to directly elect their local representatives. Furthermore, through participatory planning, the elected leaders together with the community (through the *Gram Sabha*) have been given the responsibility and power to formulate their own plans for economic development. Moreover, by providing for reserved seats in the elected councils for both women and marginalised groups¹², the PRIs have significantly increased the political representation of these groups and brought them into the political process. However, due to hierarchical and patriarchal social norms prevalent today in India, many of these elected individuals have a difficult time performing their jobs. Many of the newly elected representatives from scheduled castes and many of the elected women have little education and little experience in politics or governmental planning. This had led to, for example, many instances of women being elected to *Gram Panchayats*, while the role is performed instead by a male member of the family (see Narayana 2005; SDC 2009a, 14-15; and below).

The biggest challenge to the PRI system, however, is the on-going lack of devolution of powers to the lower tiers of governance. In order to make the local governance system truly functional, powers and responsibilities at the higher levels need to be turned over to the lower levels, and the state agencies have not always shown themselves willing to give up power. This aversion to devolution is partly due to the fact that an “all-pervasive mind-set of India’s federal two-level system is still widespread amongst the ruling elites” (SDC 2009a, 7). It may also be due to the legitimate concern that rural, illiterate and inexperienced *panchayat* leaders do not have the capacity to carry out the required work. Nevertheless, without this proper devolution of powers, the *panchayats* are extremely limited in what development measures they can realistically plan and implement for their communities and can therefore not function as the institutions of self-governance envisioned in the constitutional amendments. Furthermore, one way to deal with the inexperience of the elected *panchayat* members is to provide sufficient capacity-building for the newly elected leaders. This, however, has not been done adequately everywhere (see SDC 2009a and Narayana 2005).

⁹ Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) make up 16 and 8 per cent of the population, respectively (SDC 2009b, 9). The Scheduled Castes are those lower castes which have traditionally been marginalised in Indian society, also known as Dalits.

¹⁰ For more information on traditional, unelected panchayats and their interaction with the official PRIs, see Ananth Pur 2007.

¹¹ Indira Awaas Yojana is a government-sponsored social welfare programme that provides housing for the rural poor. It provides subsidies and cash assistance to people who then construct the houses themselves.

¹² One-third of seats on the elected councils are typically reserved for women and SC/ST on a rotating basis. In a few states, including Bihar, 50% of the seats are reserved for women.

Although the constitutional amendments for the PRI institutions came into operation in 1993, elections for the *panchayats* were only organised in Bihar in 2001, as the government would not allow the elections to take place, ostensibly due to reasons of security. Only when the Patna High Court intervened judicially and ordered the elections to take place were they conducted (Jha and Pushpendra 2012, 24; Mohanty 2006, 21). The first *panchayat* elections did not take place in the state of Jharkhand until 2011.

The *Gram Panchayats* in Bihar and Jharkhand are involved with various developmental activities such as prioritising the projects available under the MNREGA scheme, choosing sites for development activities and ensuring the proper functioning of child care centres, schools and health centres. They also organise the meeting of the *Gram Sabha*, which is intended to inform the citizens about the developmental state policies and allow the people to register their grievances (Prakash and Amin 2012, 3). In the areas under investigation, “people reportedly participate without fear” in the *panchayat* institutions, which is a very positive feature of the system in the region, as it ensures that the *Mukhiya* distributes the funds transparently and properly (*ibid.*). The *panchayats* have also become the site of dispute settlement, in which the *Gram Panchayat* mediates a negotiated solution between the parties involved. The objective with such an informal mechanism to resolve disagreements is to avoid having to involve the police in disputes that can potentially be solved locally. This course of action is also supported by the police themselves (*ibid.*). In some areas, the task of dispute settlement seems to eclipse even that of economic development, which is officially the primary task of the *panchayats*. One member of the Piri *Panchayat* in Chatra District even went so far as to say that while the development work for the *panchayat* representatives is “seasonal”, dispute settlement is “the more perennial job” (Prakash et. al. 2012, 3).

Specifically in Bihar thanks to the *panchayat* elections, there have been significant changes in the structure of power at the grassroots level, which is a positive development. At the same time, however, the upper castes and the traditional, rural elites still have substantial power in local governance (Jha and Pushpendra 2012, 24). Furthermore, the same concerns about the lack of devolution that have been expressed in states all over India have been observed in Bihar and Jharkhand as well. For instance, the heads of many of the *Panchayat Samiti* (block-level *panchayats*) reported during the interviews that although they should have received thirty per cent of project funds, no money has so far been transferred. They all spoke of having no real power to carry out their jobs (Prakash and Amin 2012, 2). Contrary to the intentions of the 73rd amendment, the (unelected) state officials still remain the most powerful actors in local governance and are the “final deciding authority for proposals of projects and beneficiaries” and there is no other authority that can effectively counteract their power (*ibid.*). Moreover, they have taken on a sort of threatening “gatekeeping role”, which means they insist on the locally elected representatives using exact procedures and following exact guidelines for the utilisation of funds, and in the case of any financial irregularities they have threatened prosecution (*ibid.*).

Considering how inexperienced and sometimes illiterate these local representatives are, they should ideally be offered capacity-building opportunities to learn how to properly exercise their functions as representatives. At the very least, they should be offered encouragement from the very government who has implemented these constitutional amendments and structures of self-determination. Instead, they are offered little in terms of trainings or workshops, are not devolved the powers to carry out their jobs properly, and are often faced with the threat of prosecution in case of improper procedure. In this sense, it is obvious that the *panchayat* system is not yet functioning as it was intended to, even though it has indisputably led to the (at least partial) political empowerment of women and marginalised groups. In light of this interpretation, it may be interesting to now examine just how individuals and groups, specifically the Naxalites, have responded to the PRIs and how they have been able to exercise their agency (positively and negatively) in order to adapt the *panchayats* to their specific contexts.

5 Local Agency and Everyday Resistance

Because the Panchayati Raj institutions make up such a colossal system of local rural governance that extends to all corners of the country and involves millions of locally-elected representatives, there are countless examples of how the system in various regions is either working or not working. It is very difficult to generalise the functioning of the system, as the outcome depends to a large degree on individual state employees (and whether they initiate devolution), the dynamics of the individual communities, and the socio-economic context of the state. While some states, for instance the southern state of Kerala, are considered prime examples of how local governance should ideally work, other states, such as Jammu and Kashmir, are just beginning to explore the path of self-governance.¹³ Therefore, it is always possible to find examples of the successes and failures of the system, as well as aspects that are positive and those which could be improved.

Looking at the field research carried out in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand, however, one aspect becomes apparent, which could certainly be claimed for other states as well (see Narayana 2005; SDC 2009b; and Ananth Pur 2007). This is the ability of individuals and communities to adapt these structures to their particular contexts or to adapt their actions to the PRI structures. Such adaptations are not always positive. Indeed, such instances often involve patriarchal or unequal social norms being applied to the *panchayat* system, thereby perverting the democratic structures that the PRIs are meant to be.

Many of the cases of adaptation involve women who have been elected *Mukhiyas* of their *Gram Panchayats*, and who are unfortunately “eclipsed by their husbands in their public life” (Prakash and Amin 2012, 3). This is a clear example of advocates of the patriarchal traditions using and adhering to the modern system of local governance on the surface, by letting women campaign for office and be elected according to the quotas, but in actuality the women elected (and the positions they hold) are being controlled and manipulated by men. In some cases, this happens due to the dominance of certain families in the *panchayat* system, what D. Narayana refers to as “elite capture” (see Narayana 2005, 2828 and Prakash et. al. 2012, 16). For instance, sometimes a seat that has been previously filled by a man is reserved for a woman in the next election. In this case, often the wife or daughter of the man will campaign for the seat and once the woman has been elected, the man who previously held the position will carry on with his job as if nothing had changed (Prakash et. al. 2012, 17). This practice of men doing the job of the elected women is so common that these men have a title, *Mukhiya-Pati*, which denotes the husband of the *Mukhiya*, particularly if he is known to take over the official duties of his wife. In many cases it seems as if the women are simply elected in name only, and their husbands, fathers or even father-in-laws “take care of the functioning of the *panchayat* at all levels except the meetings where the presence of the lady is required” (ibid., 19).

Research on the role of women in the PRI institutions in Bihar and Jharkhand nevertheless supports the assumption that women are becoming more empowered both in their communities and within the PRI system itself. This may be happening more slowly than anticipated or hoped for, but women are becoming more visible in public life (ibid., 19; Prakash and Amin 2012, 3). One of the more observable changes is that women are becoming more organised into self-help groups (*mahila samiti*¹⁴) (Prakash and Amin 2012, 5). Furthermore, it seems that in tribal areas of the states, patriarchal norms have much less influence on the PRI institutions and the women representatives therefore play a more autonomous and important role in their *panchayats* (ibid., 4).

¹³ For detailed information about the PRI elections in Jammu and Kashmir, please see Anna Bernhard’s related CORE report.

¹⁴ Self-help groups are groups of generally women who are involved in economic development activities, including savings groups and micro-credit groups. Such groups are encouraged and sometimes partly supported by NGOs and *Gram Panchayats*.

The Naxals in the region have also proven to be adept at adapting the *panchayat* system to their needs and interests. In certain areas, they have been able to either contest the elections for the *panchayats* themselves or have their family members or supporters campaign for the positions. For instance, the *Mukhiya-Pati* in both the Birhu *Panchayat* and the Shila *Panchayat* in Chatra District are local Naxal leaders (Prakash and Amin 2012, 4; Prakash et. al. 2012, 11). Many of the individuals interviewed, including the Deputy Commander of the Central Reserve Police Force, felt that the Naxalites contesting the PRI elections was a positive development. The District Supply Officer in Chatra was of the opinion that more effort was needed to encourage the Naxals to join the PRI system, as it was a good way “to vent their fears and anger and to contribute in the process of making better societies” (Prakash et. al. 2012, 11-12). However, the caveat on these positive developments is that most of the Naxals who have contested elections are from either the TPC or the JPC, who have always been willing to join mainstream politics (ibid., 13). As discussed above, this is unfortunately not the case with all Naxal groups.

In many areas in the region, the *panchayat* elections have been very peaceful, simply because the Naxal leaders are contesting the elections themselves, which often means that no one dares to contest the seats against them. The result has been elections with little violence and the *panchayat* positions being filled by Naxalites (Prakash et. al. 2012, 11). This has both positive and negative aspects. Clearly a peaceful election is in everyone’s interest, but this outcome is at the cost of true democracy, if citizens fear contesting elections against Naxalite candidates. This is certainly not what was intended when the PRI system was developed as a mechanism of self-determination.

These various adaptations of the PRI system demonstrate that many of the local actors have embraced the concept of local governance, but nevertheless have chosen to transform the system in order to make it work for them. We see, for example, men misusing the quotas for women in order to have a female relative elected, while the men carry out the women’s duties. In this sense, I could argue that these men are (implicitly) resisting the concept of the empowerment of women that the *panchayati raj* is expected to contribute to. They are not resisting the system in its entirety, but have instead intentionally chosen to fashion the system to appropriately fit their (patriarchal) context. That being said, it could also be argued that the men simply assume women are not capable of performing the job, and many women easily concede to this because it is what they are accustomed to.¹⁵ In this sense, the resistance to the intended empowerment of women through the quotas is perhaps quite unintentional.

We see the same phenomenon with those Naxal groups who have chosen to contest PRI elections. They are working within the *panchayati raj* institutions – so not resisting them as a whole – but are instead adapting them in an (undemocratic) way that was not intended by their design. And lastly, of course, there are those Naxal groups who choose to openly resist the PRIs. This clearly remains the biggest challenge to the entire *panchayati* system as it means that a very large group of people (both the Naxalites who refuse to take part as well as those who due to security reasons cannot take part) are excluded from the system of local governance and the benefits that it could potentially bring.

6 Conclusion

It is extraordinarily difficult to draw any sort of general conclusions about the Naxalites, their ideologies, and their activities, simply because the designation ‘Naxal’ has different and changing meanings, both geographically and temporally. The Naxal groups vary dramatically not only from state to state, but also at times from district to district. Moreover, the Naxalite movement of today, based extensively on criminal extortion campaigns, differs significantly from the movement in prior decades, which strove for social and

¹⁵ I am grateful to Mubashir Mir for pointing this out to me.

political justice as a priority. And just as it is difficult to draw conclusions about the Naxalites themselves, it is also difficult to make conclusions about how the local agency being exercising in the Bihar/Jharkhand region, a region highly affected by the Naxal insurgency, is affecting the governance initiative for conflict resolution under investigation here, the *panchayati raj* institutions. The method in which this agency is exercised, and significantly, how this agency is perceived, can vary from village to village.

In the case of the PRIs in these two states, we have seen a whole range of resistance – from welcoming the PRI as a positive measure to completely rejecting it – as well as many forms of adaptation and accommodation in between. These are all excellent examples of local agency making itself heard. This agency is being taken into consideration at least to a certain extent, as the type of adaptation of the *panchayati* institutions demonstrated here is not unknown to other researchers (see, for instance, Narayana 2005). The crucial point here is to determine how this local agency can be used as an alternative site of knowledge – not only for making the PRIs more effective and in line with their intended goal of meeting the needs of the local communities, but also for furthering the aim of sustainable peacebuilding in the context of the Naxalite insurgency. In addition, what is interesting in the case of the Naxal conflict is the local agency that remains hidden, muffled, or suppressed due to issues of security and fear. For local agency to be heard and seen sufficiently, it must be free to express itself, which means the violent conflict must be resolved justly and sustainably.

Cyprus

1 Background of the Conflict¹

In the years leading up to Cyprus' independence in 1960 from its colonial ruler, Great Britain, the struggle against colonial domination and for self-determination was often voiced by the Greek Cypriot community in terms of *enosis*, or unification with Greece. This goal of unification was not shared, however, by the approximately twenty percent of the Cyprus population who belonged to the Turkish Cypriot community. They preferred *taksim* instead, which foresaw the partition of the island between Greece and Turkey. The creation of an independent Cyprus, with the signing of the Zürich-London Agreements (drafted and signed by Britain, Greece and Turkey as well as by the Turkish and Greek Cypriot community leaders), was meant to be a compromise solution, and created an independent, bi-communal republic. This solution was far from perfect, however, as neither side was particularly pleased. Furthermore, as Richmond (1998, 75) points out, the Cypriot constitution did not resolve the historical roots of unrest and “contained very little in the way of machinery for the mediation and resolution of internal disputes”.

In 1963 the Greek Cypriot political leadership unilaterally amended the constitutional provisions for representation of the communities, which they believed overrepresented the Turkish Cypriot community in light of the actual population ratio. This prompted the Turkish representatives to leave the government, which then led to a constitutional crisis. The next decade witnessed significant intercommunal violence and internal displacement, which contributed to the decision to send the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) to the island already in 1964.

¹This report is partly based on the field research carried out by Birte Vogel at the University of Manchester in the framework of the CORE project. Research was carried out on various occasions in 2011 and 2012. Two unpublished fieldwork reports have been drafted based on the research: *Summary of preliminary fieldwork* and *Report on Fieldwork in Cyprus: International, European and local approaches to Conflict Resolution*. Both reports have partly established the topics and analysis for this chapter.

Following the Greek-led military coup in July 1974 which disposed the Greek Cypriot leader, forcing him to flee the country, the Turkish army arrived in the northern part of the island, ostensibly to protect the Turkish Cypriots from Greek Cypriot violence and to prevent the island from being taken over by Greece. The ensuing Turkish military action resulted in the *de facto* division of the island into a Turkish-Cypriot controlled north (occupied by Turkish troops) and a Greek-Cypriot controlled south. The division led to the displacement of nearly one-third of the Greek Cypriot community and one-half of the Turkish Cypriot community (Gürel 2012, 9). Over the years, and with the help of numerous UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions², the Greek-Cypriot controlled south has become internationally accepted as the Republic of Cyprus (RoC), while the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which was declared in 1983, has only been recognised by Turkey.

Over the decades since the constitutional crisis, there have been numerous UN-brokered attempts to resolve the ‘Cyprus problem’ which have consisted of high-level meetings between representatives of the two communities, as well as various plans and proposals proffered by the different UN Secretaries General. None of these attempts have been successful at bridging the differences between the two sides and reaching a comprehensive solution. In fact, it has been argued that both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders have not been truly interested in making the necessary concessions for a comprehensive solution, choosing instead to continue with the more preferable status quo (Richmond 1998, 242; Tocci 2006, 265). This way, both sides have been able to reap the benefits of being involved in the UN-led mediation process, yet the “primary objective” of the talks has been the “avoidance of blame for the failure of each round of talks” (Richmond 1998, 231).

As the Cyprus accession to the European Union drew closer at the beginning of the new millennium, the international community embarked on what Anastasiou (2007, 191) refers to as the “greatest ever, concerted international political and diplomatic effort to resolve the Cyprus problem”. The European Union made no secret of its strong preference for a united Cyprus joining the Union and indeed hoped that the accession process would act as a catalyst for a solution (Tocci 2007, 30). A comprehensive solution to the problem, however, was *not* a pre-condition for accession (ibid., 45). The results of the referendum on the Annan Plan³ in April 2004 were striking: 67% of the Turkish Cypriots voted in favour of the Plan, while 76% of the Greek Cypriots voted against it. As a consequence, the Greek-Cypriot controlled Republic of Cyprus became the first EU member country that was ethnically divided, that was partially occupied by the military forces of another state, and that had a ceasefire line manned by UN peacekeepers (Anastasiou 2009, 131).

2 Perceptions of the Conflict

The manner in which a conflict is perceived by those actors who are involved in it has enormous influence on what the actors regard as the possible solutions to the conflict. If there is little agreement on the underlying causes of the conflict, there will correspondingly be little agreement on ways to solve it. On the island of Cyprus, the Greek Cypriot community and the Turkish Cypriot community have completely opposite viewpoints on many of the main issues regarding the conflict, such as the concepts of sovereignty and security. Some of the fundamental features of a future settlement for the Greek Cypriots are completely out of the question for the Turkish Cypriots, and vice versa. This is, of course, not particularly rare in the

² The first UNSC resolution on the topic was Resolution 186 from 1964, which established the UNFICYP and recognised the Greek-Cypriot controlled Republic of Cyprus as the sole legitimate government on the island.

³ The Annan Plan is named after the UN Secretary General who was mediating in the Cyprus conflict at the time of EU accession, Kofi Annan. The plan envisioned a sharing of sovereignty between the communities, both on the federal level and between the two constituent states, and would have allowed a majority of Greek Cypriot refugees to return to their property in the north (Tocci 2007, 36).

various armed conflicts in the world, but as there is no real case of a “mutually hurting stalemate” (Zartman 2008, 232) in Cyprus, but rather a relatively painless, albeit frustrating, *status quo*, there is nothing that is pushing either side to make painful concessions for a compromise solution. The Turkish Cypriot community is less isolated than in the past, while both sides feel relatively secure – the Greek Cypriots through the mechanisms of the EU, and the Turkish Cypriots with the military and financial backing of Turkey (Vogel 2011, 3). Perhaps more significant than their opposing viewpoints, though, is the fact that the lens through which they view the conflict is not the same. For the Greek Cypriots, the conflict is primarily a legal and international dilemma, while for the Turkish Cypriots, it is an internal, political one.

The official Greek Cypriot position is one which views the current dilemma as having its starting point in 1974, with the Turkish ‘invasion’ and partial ‘occupation’ of Cyprus, which was a violation of the territorial integrity of Cyprus and of international law (Anastasiou 2009, 131). The Turkish military action led to the forced displacement of a large section of the Greek Cypriot population, of which the majority have yet to recover their property or receive compensation. At the same time, however, the Greek Cypriots tend to overlook “any injustice, indignities and deprivations” that the Turkish Cypriots may have suffered in the years before 1974 (Stavrinides 1999, 16) and to suppress the fact that “the tragedy they experienced as a result of the Turkish invasion of 1974 was also the culminating point of a decade and a half of inter-ethnic bloodshed” (Anastasiou 2009, 132).

Arguing from a strictly legalistic standpoint of military occupation, and referencing the positions of international law on human rights’ violations and the right of refugee return, the Greek Cypriot side has been successful at internationalising the Cyprus issue (see Richmond 1998). As the Greek-Cypriot controlled Republic of Cyprus has international legitimacy as a member of both the UN and the EU, they have been in a legally superior position over the years to do just this. This international recognition is an exceedingly valuable possession and something which the Greek Cypriots are determined to retain their monopoly of on the island. From the Greek-Cypriot perspective, granting the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus any sort of recognition would mean an acceptance of the *status quo* division of the island and acquiescence to violations of international law. Indeed, the “recognition or the possibility of recognition of the other side’s regime as [a] sovereign state or legitimate government” is one of the defining features of the entire Cyprus conflict (Constantinou and Papadakis 2001, 128). Furthermore, because the Greek Cypriots view Turkey as a military occupier, the country is considered a threat to Greek Cypriot security.

For the Turkish Cypriots, the conflict has much more to do with the problem of ethnic persecution and “asymmetrical inter-ethnic power relations” (Anastasiou 2009, 132) that placed the Turkish Cypriot community on the disadvantaged side. When viewed through the lens of oppression and inter-ethnic violence, the ‘invasion’ of the Turkish army in 1974 is seen by the community more as a peace intervention to protect civilians, rather than an aggressive military operation. Moreover, from this perspective, the continued presence of Turkish troops on Cyprus soil is necessary in order to continue to protect the Turkish Cypriots. In this sense, the Turkish army is safeguarding security, not – as in the view of the Greek Cypriots – threatening it. Of course, in this reading of history, the Turkish side tends to ignore the fact that both the military operation and the system of security that has been set up for the TRNC has led to massive and perpetual human rights’ violations of the Greek Cypriots (ibid.). In terms of recognition, the general perception of the Turkish Cypriots is that the Greek Cypriot leaders “highjacked the power of the state against the provisions of the 1960 constitution, shut the Turkish Cypriots out of the machinery of the state, and got themselves accepted by the international community as the government of the Republic of Cyprus” (Stavrinides 1999, 32). This is seen as a colossal injustice that has never been addressed. Even today, the Turkish Cypriots must tolerate the perception of both the Greek Cypriots and most of the world that Cyprus is a Greek island (Broome 2004, 201).

The arguments of both communities can be viewed as legitimate, depending on which lens one looks through. As Anastasiou (2009, 133) correctly points out, the Turkish Cypriot community’s political arguments are stronger than their legal ones, while the Greek Cypriot community’s legal arguments are stronger than their political ones. Seen from a cynical point of view, the only opinion the two sides share is

that “both sides see themselves as victims of aggression, and neither side trusts the other” (Broome 2004, 192). Fortunately, there are also positive similarities between the two sides concerning the perceptions of the conflict. For instance, it has been shown that a very high percentage of both communities feel that the nationalism of both communities “was very, or somewhat, responsible for the creation and perpetuation of the conflict” (Hadjipavlou 2007, 355). Significantly, this shows that both communities hold themselves and the nationalistic rhetoric prevalent on both sides of the conflict divide responsible for the conflict and do not solely blame the other side. Nevertheless, these very different perceptions of the inherent character of the conflict have led to drastically different peacebuilding rationalities, which will be examined more closely below.

3 Peacebuilding Rationalities

In the chapter of this report on the conflict in Georgia/Abkhazia, one of the most striking features of the peacebuilding rationalities of the Georgian government was their incompatibility with the peacebuilding rationalities of the Abkhazians. While the Georgian government believes, for instance, that the conflict must be resolved within the framework of Georgia’s territorial integrity, the Abkhazians demand for the most part full succession. Such incompatibility makes it horribly difficult to even sit around the same negotiating table, let alone find a suitable compromise to end the conflict.

One can observe a very similar dilemma in Cyprus. The peacebuilding rationalities of the Greek Cypriots are almost diametrically opposed to the peacebuilding rationalities of the Turkish Cypriots. Besides the ultimate goal of creating a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, there is precious little that the two sides can actually agree on. The peacebuilding rationalities of each community are based to an enormous extent on how they perceive the conflict – what the conflict is actually all about – which, as we have seen from the previous section, varies dramatically. In the next sections, I will sketch these opposing frameworks for solving the conflict in more detail.

3.1 Peacebuilding Rationalities of the Greek Cypriots

The peacebuilding rationalities of the Greek Cypriot community are based to a significant extent on the concept of a unitary state and the ‘three freedoms’ of movement, settlement and property. The notion of a unitary state rests on the reunification of the island and refers to the original form of the Republic of Cyprus before the *de facto* division of the island. The community ideally “aims to restore to the greatest possible extent the *status quo ante*”, the situation that existed prior to 1974 (Tocci 2006, 265), which includes the complete withdrawal of all Turkish troops from the island. This inherently means that the current division and bizonality of the island “must be resisted and reversed as much as possible” (Gürel 2012, 11). In order to achieve this, the Greek Cypriots emphasise the need to apply the freedom of movement, settlement and property rights to the whole of the island, demands which have become a crucial element of Greek Cypriot arguments for a settlement. The application of these freedoms would mean that “*all displaced persons, from both communities, [would] be granted the right to return home*” (Williams and Gürel 2011, 21). If we use as an example the final Annan Plan from 2004 with its proposals for territorial adjustments, and if all displaced individuals and their descendants do indeed choose to return (which seems unlikely), this would mean that the Greek Cypriots would again be a majority in the northern part of the island (Stavrínides 1999, 41-42).

Another crucial peacebuilding rationality of the Greek Cypriots and a method they have employed over the years to force a solution is the internationalisation of the conflict (see Richmond 1998). They

have done this by continually addressing the topic in UN forums and seeking Security Council resolutions on the matter. As a logical continuation of this strategy, EU membership was seen not only as “a way of bolstering the RoC’s status as the only legitimate government” on the island but it would also “provide the RoC with an additional forum in which to present its case” (Tocci 2007, 43). Although this strategy of internationalisation has been successful at keeping the Cyprus problem on the agenda of successive UN Secretaries General, it has ultimately failed in its objective of leading to a solution. Indeed, Cyprus has been referred to as the “graveyard of diplomats” (Vogel and Richmond 2013, no page number). Furthermore, it has had the (intended or unintended?) effect of irritating the Turkish Cypriot community, the very people whom the Greek Cypriots should be trying to convince to join a unitary government with them. Moreover, the outcome of this internationalisation has not always been to the Greek Cypriots’ liking. For instance, Turkey has never been mentioned specifically in the various UN resolutions that have addressed the topic of occupation; instead the resolutions call upon “all States to respect the sovereignty, independence, [and] territorial integrity” of the Republic of Cyprus.⁴ In retrospect, the Greek Cypriots surely had higher hopes for this particular peacebuilding rationality than is reflected in its successes.

3.2 Peacebuilding Rationalities of the Turkish Cypriots

For the Turkish Cypriot community, the only possibility of reaching a comprehensive solution would be to allow the island to remain – to the greatest extent possible – a bi-zonal and bi-communal state. Even if Turkish Cypriots are well aware that the formalisation of the status quo is “outrageous” for the Greek Cypriots (Stavrinos 1999, 4) and therefore barely feasible, they nevertheless insist upon a federation in which each community will be able to manage its own affairs with absolute equality (ibid., 3). Viewing the conflict from the perspective of prior political oppression, the Turkish Cypriots have little interest in re-joining a government that discriminated against them in the past and in giving up their security guarantees from Turkey. They feel that “due to their smaller size, their political quality warrants the highest degree of self-rule and physical separation from the Greek Cypriots” (Tocci 2006, 268). Therefore, the best way to achieve this is by maintaining “two independent ethnic zones” (Broome 2004, 200). This would mean, however, a strict rejection of the Greek Cypriot demands for the three freedoms. Instead of granting all displaced the right of return, the Turkish Cypriots have in the past proposed a “global exchange and compensation” solution, which is a “kind of ‘lump-sum’ agreement” that would entail the exchange of all originally Turkish-Cypriot owned properties in the south with Greek-Cypriot owned properties in the north (Williams and Gürel 2012, 21). Since the landmark cases of the European Court of Human Rights and the establishment of the Immovable Property Commission⁵, however, this proposal of a global exchange has been significantly weakened and is viewed as not achievable. Nevertheless, the ultimate ethnic division of the island and federation governance structures based upon this division are a crucial element of the rationalities of the Turkish Cypriot community to achieve a comprehensive final solution to the problem.

3.3 Implications for Peacebuilding

These different peacebuilding rationalities of the Turkish Cypriot and Greek Cypriot communities – although they seem contradictory and perhaps antagonistic to the external viewer – are truly what the Greek and

⁴ See UN General Assembly Resolution 3212 (1974), and Security Council Resolutions 367 (1975) and 541 (1983).

⁵ The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has ruled that as the TRNC is not a state under international law, displaced Greek Cypriots remain the legal owners of their property in the north. However, the Immovable Properties Commission (IPC) that was established in 2005 in the TRNC was accepted by the ECtHR as an effective domestic remedy for the violation of dispossessed owners’ rights to their property. The IPC examines and identifies claims and can decide on three forms of redress: restitution, exchange of properties, or payment of compensation (Gürel 2012, 28, 33-34).

Turkish Cypriots feel is necessary (for their community) in order to find a comprehensive solution to the conflict and to build a sustainable peace. Even though they don't take the other viewpoint sufficiently into account, it is important to remember that there are limitations to what each respective community can allow. If the compromises envisioned in an ultimate peace agreement do not find support within each of the communities, it would be impossible to implement the peace agreement. In other words, there is only so far that each community can go to have empathy for and give concessions to the other side. The dilemma here is that there is currently – and has been for decades – no meaningful overlap between the peacebuilding rationalities of each side.

The essential conflict revolves around the fact that both communities have “very different views of what constitutes a just solution and what count as adequate security arrangements” (Stavrinides 1999, 2). In this case it is not only the different interests of the communities that contradict each other, but also the needs of each community. The stationing of Turkish troops on the island is an excellent example for this. In order for Greek Cypriots to ultimately feel secure, it is necessary for the Turkish army to leave in its entirety. But for the Turkish Cypriot community to feel secure, the army must remain. Moreover, as Tocci (2006, 270-71) rightly points out:

Greek Cypriot calls for a tightly integrated federal state with single and undivided sovereignty contradict Turkish Cypriot needs for political equality given the relative size and strength of the two communities. Turkish Cypriot calls for divided sovereignty and quasi-statehood negate Greek Cypriot needs to reunify the island and prevent secession.

This is a difficult situation in which in order to fulfil the needs of one community, it is necessary to neglect the needs of the other. Added to this complexity is also the “mono-ethnic concept of statehood” (Anastasiou 2009, 136) that characterises the official positions of both Cypriot administrations and communities. It is this inherent ethnocentric nationalism which makes the prospects – and necessary concessions – for a multi-ethnic democracy so difficult for both sides to accept. In light of this challenging situation, it is perhaps no wonder that the UN negotiations over the years to comprehensively resolve the conflict have never been successful. As stated above, both communities continue the game of negotiations, mainly in order not to be blamed for their failure. But it is relatively clear that both the Turkish Cypriots and the Greek Cypriots are passionate neither about the negotiations themselves, nor about the outcome that such negotiations could realistically bring about.

4 Governance Initiatives for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding/Resistance to Initiatives

External actors have always played a rather large role in the Cyprus problem, either as a part of the original conflict and/or within the framework for its potential solution. The countries of Greece, Turkey and Great Britain were very much involved in the historical roots of the conflict, and over the years – partly due to the strategy of internationalisation by the Greek Cypriots – the UN has become an (almost reluctant) actor in the mediation of the conflict. Since the 1990s, as the Republic of Cyprus began its EU accession process, and specifically after a divided Cyprus joined the European Union in 2004, the EU has also become involved

in attempts to reconcile the two Cypriot communities. Various initiatives have been implemented over the decades to do just this, ranging from high-level meetings between the leaders of the Turkish and Greek Cypriots, to more bottom-up, bi-communal events attended by activists from both sides, to the more recent technical initiatives sponsored by the EU, or even the Immovable Property Commission designed and implemented by the TRNC. The field research carried out in Cyprus in the framework of the CORE project looked at several of these initiatives, which will be examined more closely here, as well as the various resistance that each of these initiatives encounters. The first is the Green Line Regulation, a governance initiative promoted by the EU in order to further economic cooperation – and thus interdependence – between the two communities. The second is the movement of bi-communal organisations, which are supported and funded by international actors and which try to bridge the differences between the conflict divide on a more communal level. The third initiative is the bottom-up, home-grown initiative ‘Occupy Buffer Zone’.

4.1 Green Line Regulation

One of the principles of the European Union and one of the perceived benefits of being a member of the Union is the single market, which is based on the idea of goods, money and people being able to move freely among the member states and the implicit stability and peaceful relations that this should bring about (EU 2001, 7; EU 2012, 15-16). One common method of achieving economic interdependence is by implementing mechanisms of free trade between member states and with third countries. In the case of Cyprus, however, the situation is a bit trickier than in other member states due to the *de facto* division of the island. The lack of communication between and mutual recognition of the two governments on the island means that legal trade between the two parts of the island was negligible before 2004. The Turkish Cypriot-controlled northern part of the island is officially part of the EU, yet because the Republic of Cyprus does not exercise control over this part of the island, EU legislation there is officially suspended. But since the Green Line⁶ still does not “constitute an external border of the EU, special rules concerning the crossing of goods, services and persons” across this line needed to be established (European Commission 2005).

The Green Line Regulation came into effect in 2004 and has been the mechanism through which Turkish Cypriot goods can be formally ‘exported’ to southern Cyprus, and Greek Cypriot goods to the north. The explicit objective of the Green Line Regulation is to foster economic cooperation and integration between the two sides, and, according to a source at the European Commission in Nicosia, to “help the Turkish Cypriots overcome their economic isolation” (Vogel 2012, 6). The regulation has not had its intended effect, however. Among the most serious impediments to its success is the fact that the trade between the two sides remains too small to be significant. Furthermore, the overall trade volume is actually declining, rather than increasing (European Commission 2011). This is in spite of the fact that more products are added to the Green Line regulation product list every year (Vogel 2012, 7).

EU Commission representatives in Nicosia assume that this state of affairs is mainly due to the social norms in the Republic of Cyprus, which encourage the rejection of products from the ‘other side’ (ibid.). Essentially, there is an implicit societal understanding that products from the north should be subject to a boycott. This everyday resistance against supporting the businesses of Turkish Cypriots is reflected, for instance, in supermarkets refusing to put Turkish Cypriot products on their shelves out of fear of protests by their customers (Moestue 2008). Greek Cypriot newspapers, for their part, are unwilling to advertise for Turkish Cypriot products (ibid.). This, of course, clearly limits the demands for such products to a significant extent and severely restricts the impact that a mechanism such as the Green Line Regulation can realistically make.

⁶ The Green Line is the official separation line between the RoC in the south and the TRNC in the north and runs the length of the island from east to west, cutting directly through Nicosia.

A somewhat more sinister resistance to the bi-communal trade exists as well, specifically in terms of the reactions to and opinions of farmers to the trade regulation. Greek Cypriot farmers are passionately opposed to the Green Line Regulation, as the agricultural sector in the Republic of Cyprus “fears unfair competition from farmers in the North and frequently complains about lower production standards in the North” (Vogel 2012, 7). Vogel argues, however, that this may simply be a rhetorical argument and the real reason is an attempt to eliminate business competition from the north.⁷ There are often rumours spread about illegal pesticides (ibid.) on goods from the north – an act that cannot be attributed to the farmers with any proof, but contributes nonetheless to the slander of Turkish Cypriot goods.⁸ In one recent case confided by a source at the EU Coordination Centre in Nicosia, farmers blocked the highway with their tractors to prohibit the crossing of goods across the Green Line and used the protest as an opportunity to voice their concerns over unfair competition. In this situation, the EU was forced to intervene and put pressure on the Greek Cypriot authorities to bring an end to the protest and allow the crossing. On that very evening, a storage facility for potatoes in the south was burned down. While the Greek Cypriots authorities claim that this was mere coincidence, Turkish Cypriots perceive it as a malicious act of Greek Cypriot farmers (ibid.).

There also happens to be a certain level of resistance, albeit much less, to the regulation on the other side of the conflict divide as well. Farmers in the TRNC feel that it is not safe enough to export their goods to the Republic of Cyprus due to, for instance, sabotage or mistreatment of their cargo (Vogel 2012, 8). This demonstrates the general lack of trust between the two communities and shows that more confidence-building measures in terms of trade and farming are needed to make the Green Line Regulation truly profitable for Turkish Cypriots and to increase its potential for interethnic cooperation.⁹ The country of Turkey complicates matters even further by specifically stipulating that farmers who trade their goods over the Green Line will *not* be subsidised (Vogel 2012, 8). As Vogel points out, this can be seen as either a type of resistance to EU trade policies, or it could be understood simply as a way to keep the TRNC dependent on Turkey (ibid.).

There has also been the much more open and obstinate resistance of the Greek Cypriot government to trade in general with northern Cyprus. Ideally, the EU would have liked to have implemented an agreement to open direct preferential trade with northern Cyprus, but as such an agreement needs the approval of all EU member states, the Greek Cypriots have blocked the agreement in the EU’s Council of Ministers. They argue that such an agreement would implicitly give the TRNC recognition (Tocci 2007, 42). They argue further that such a third country trade agreement can only be enforced between the EU and an outside country, and because the TRNC is not officially a state, it is not suitable for such an agreement (Vogel 2012, 7). Therefore, according to the EC officials in Nicosia, the members of the Commission are calling the document ‘dead’, assuming that there is no chance of it being implemented (ibid.).

In her field research report, Vogel (2012, 6) critically points out that the European Union is following a policy in Cyprus “based on the idea that economic interdependence and thus trade [can] bring the two sides together”, in other words that “economic integration leads to conflict resolution”. Indeed, the Commission is very open about its ultimate aims for economic integration, for instance, in its Council Regulation (EC) No 389/2006 which states that “[t]he Community shall provide assistance to facilitate the reunification of Cyprus by encouraging the economic development of the Turkish Cypriot community with particular emphasis on the economic integration of the island, on improving contacts between the two communities and with the EU, and on preparation for the *acquis communautaire*” (European Commission

⁷ Email interview with Birte Vogel, February 2013.

⁸ In the 2011 report of the European Commission on the implementation of the Green Line Regulation, it is reported that in two cases, “considerable quantities of pesticides were detected in vegetables” from the north that were to be sold in the south (European Commission 2011, 5). This shows, therefore, that the rumours are not completely unfounded, but this seems to be a rare occurrence of which the Turkish Cypriot Chamber of Commerce was informed.

⁹ There are also reports of Turkish Cypriot police harassing Turkish Cypriots at checkpoints as they return from shopping excursions in the Republic of Cyprus (Anastasiou 2009, 140). In this case, societal norms and presumptions about a boycott have led to the abusive treatment of one’s own compatriots who do not follow these presumptions. In other words, people are being punished for not resisting the bi-communal trade.

2006, 2). Clearly, the EU feels that economic integration has a large role to play in the ultimate settlement of the Cyprus problem. But if the two sides have little interest in trading with one another and being economically interdependent, a well-developed initiative may have (as we have seen) very little effect. Furthermore, if the communities actively and openly resist such initiatives, as the farmers have done, this could lead to such resistance and methods of boycotting becoming even more popular and self-evident. It seems, therefore, that the assumption on the part of the EU that direct trade over the Green Line will ultimately help the reunification of Cyprus naïvely optimistic. This viewpoint does not take into account the various societal restrictions in the south concerning the recognition of the north, the extreme level of mistrust on both sides, and the actions of the governments (Republic of Cyprus and Turkey) who actively oppose direct trade.

4.2 Bi-Communal Civil Society Organisations

Much has been written about the various bi-communal activities that have brought Turkish and Greek Cypriots together over the years (see, for instance, Broome 2004, Constantinou and Papadakis 2001, Loizos 2006, Vogel and Richmond 2013). Peter Loizos (2006, 180) defines the bi-communal movement as the ideas and mind-set of “activists who have tried to help the resolution of the Cyprus conflict by creating contexts in which Turkish and Greek Cypriots can communicate more freely with each other”. These grassroots actors form what Vogel (2012, 10) refers to as “the second pillar in the international strategy” for conflict resolution in Cyprus. As such, they are encouraged and financially supported by the international actors active in Cyprus.

Vogel argues that regardless of their support, many international actors, such as the European Commission and the UN, feel that civil society organisations in both communities are generally weak, and are not very good at advocating for their rights or participating in the conflict resolution process (Vogel 2012, 10). These international actors mainly blame the two governments on the island and their nationalistic discourses for disempowering civil society, and assume that civil society can only develop significantly after a comprehensive solution is agreed (ibid.). Moreover, the international actors feel that the ‘Cyprus problem’ overshadows all other issues on the island and “creates an environment in which any other topic is subordinated” (ibid.). The civil society actors themselves acknowledge this “missing culture of activism” on the island but attribute it more to the fact that traditionally, families have tended to be integrated into party structures and often followed the respective party opinions (ibid.). Furthermore, the political parties have a rather negative perception of civil society organisations and tend to regard them more as a threat to their power, rather than a “source of information or a way to learn about local demands and needs” (ibid., 10-11). This clearly limits the positive influence and effect that civil society can have on the citizens of Cyprus and the conflict in general.

The fairly negative view that international actors have of civil society organisations is under the circumstances somewhat unjust, as “[i]nternationals in Cyprus have little understanding of the structural, social, political, professional, and cultural constraints and sanctions NGOs and peace activists are subject to” (Vogel and Richmond, 2013). The task of interethnic peacebuilding in an environment of nationalistic discourses has never been easy. In fact, over the years, those involved in these bi-communal activities have been subject to much resistance from the administrations on both parts of the divided island as well as from the societies in general, which has led to much abuse and harassment. For instance, due to the sensitive recognition issues that characterise the Cyprus conflict, people choosing to meet in bi-communal settings have often been “charged with offering legitimisation to the legal and political claims of the other side” (Constantinou 2001, 126) and treated as “saboteurs of national solidarity” (Loizos 2006, 183). They have been ridiculed for being involved in “meaningless” activities and accused of being pawns of the international community (Broome 2004, 194). Geographically as well, these bi-communal activities were subject to severe restrictions before the opening of the Green Line in 2003, as crossing to the other side, or

even meeting within the Buffer Zone¹⁰, required difficult to obtain permission (Vogel 2012, 14).

Today, such activities have no such geographical restrictions and officially, both administrations are in favour of bi-communal activities. Nevertheless, people involved in the movement continue to face significant resistance to their activities from both the governments and society, which not only has the potential to affect the individuals personally, but also affects to a great extent the outreach of their activities. For instance, organisations involved in such activities often have difficulties in gaining permits to advertise their activities in public places (Vogel 2012, 14). There is also the problem of Greek Cypriots refusing to cross the Green Line, as they feel that showing their passports at the line would be recognising the TRNC, thereby granting it legitimacy (Vogel 2011, 2). This refusal, and of course the disinterest in bi-communal activities that such a refusal reflects, clearly limits the ability to bring the two sides together. Another type of more subtle – and perhaps even unintended – resistance to bi-communal activities is, for instance, the events organised by the NGO Peace Players International. This organisation organises sport classes in children’s hometowns as well as bi-communal events that are intended to bring young Turkish and Greek Cypriots together. According to an activist from Peace Players, the bi-communal events are always less well attended than the other, mono-communal events held in children’s villages (Vogel 2011, 3). This is perhaps just a reflection of the fact that practices in children’s hometowns are much more convenient to attend. But it may also be a subtle resistance to the principles of such events – interethnic contact – or, perhaps more likely, an expression of the simple disinterest in such activities. On a personal level, individuals active in bi-communal organisations continue to face “stereotyping and negative labelling for being part of an integrative movement, especially from the neo-fascist and nationalist right”, which civil society actors assert is on the rise in Cyprus (ibid., 14). Another possible consequence is being denied professional promotion in the public sector (ibid.).

This resistance – both open and subtle – to the activities and events of the bi-communal organisations has, of course, a negative effect on the different organisations’ outreach. The organisations are closely linked with each other, but they do not connect to large parts of the population on either side of the Green Line (Vogel 2012, 12). Ideally, the activists involved in these activities would like to have many more people involved and interested in their work (ibid., 14). Unfortunately, however, they “fail to bridge the gap that exists between citizens” (ibid., 12) and it is questionable what real positive influence they are having on the persistent conflict except for reaching out to the ‘usual suspects’ time and again. Vogel therefore refers to these organisations operating in a “third space”, “an internationally protected and financed space” which is “unable to connect to other parts of society” because their actions “do not connect to the everyday life of people” (Vogel 2011, 5). These bi-communal organisations have essentially created this space for themselves in which they operate – a space that is severely limited in its outreach due to the disinterest of the communities and the resistance of the societies and governments on the island. They are further limited in their outreach because of the requirements for being involved in such organisations – the common location in the Buffer Zone and the need to speak English for many activities clearly restricts the number of Cypriots who can realistically take part in such activities.

Nevertheless, Vogel and Richmond (2013, no page number) make a sound argument for the idea that these intercommunal organisations are the best hope for a future peace agreement and that they can offer important insight on how to best resolve the conflict. First of all, they have over the years kept the channels of communication open between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, often under very difficult and even menacing conditions. And although their outreach beyond the Buffer Zone is admittedly limited, the activists are most knowledgeable about when and how to challenge the nationalist views of their compatriots (ibid.). Essentially, as Cypriot citizens and individuals intimately involved with the conflict and its potential resolution, they embody the positive local agency that is so needed for the peacebuilding process. Furthermore, they are widely networked throughout the island and have contacts with what

¹⁰ The Buffer Zone is the demilitarised zone that runs on both sides of the Green Line separating the RoC and the TRNC and is patrolled by UN peacekeeping forces.

Vogel and Richmond refer to as “hidden agency”, which includes many figures of influence as well as ordinary citizens (ibid.). If a peace agreement is to be reached in Cyprus, it would be beneficial for the politicians and elites to learn from the bi-communal activists, who have “developed a range of internal operating procedures that facilitate debate, cooperation, and reconciliation, despite identity differences or competing claims of a various nature” (ibid.).

4.3 Occupy Buffer Zone Movement

One highly interesting initiative for conflict resolution that now, after its conclusion, seems like a tiny blip on the timeline of Cyprus conflict resolution initiatives is the Occupy Buffer Zone movement. This movement may at first glance seem too trivial or ineffective to be worth mentioning in the same paper as other, much more formal and longer-term initiatives. Yet it deserves mention firstly because of the truly inter-communal constellation of its activists; secondly, because of its unique position on the Cyprus conflict which runs counter to the positions of the elite and NGOs alike; and thirdly, because it is an excellent example of the exercising of local agency in an authentically bottom-up form.

The Occupy Buffer Zone (OBZ) was founded in October 2011 and its activists occupied a house on Ledra Street in Nicosia between two pedestrian checkpoints between the north and south of the island (Vogel 2012, 15). The movement argued *against* the bi-communal and bi-federal solution to the conflict, as such a solution would deny Cyprus’ “pluralistic face” and might institutionalise ethnic division, as it has done to a significant extent in Bosnia-Herzegovina (ibid., 15-16). This same concern has apparently been voiced as well by more mainstream civil society actors in the peacebuilding field, but has not been emphasised or pushed for, as these organisations are concerned that they could possibly lose their funding if they oppose the (internationally favoured) solution too openly (ibid., 15). In line with many of the global *Occupy* movements in 2011, the OBZ movement was in principle an anti-capitalist movement, and it argued that in an “unhealthy global system, there cannot be a healthy solution to Cyprus” (ibid., 16). The movement was consequently opposed to the integration via trade approach that the EU is promoting in Cyprus and demanded complete demilitarisation.

The OBZ movement met with remarkably little official resistance during its time and was even complimented by other activists as an “amazing movement” (ibid.). A source at the European Commission stated that although there was little agreement with the movement concerning its ultimate goals, the movement was a positive development for Cypriots because the solution for a comprehensive settlement for the conflict must come from within, rather than being imposed by external actors (ibid.). Therefore, the fact that the OBZ movement developed in an authentic, grass-roots way, with only inspiration from outside – the other Occupy movements worldwide – gave it a level of legitimacy with the citizens of Cyprus that other initiatives cannot realistically have. Indeed, according to Mihalis Elefteriou, the movement’s founder, the OBZ movement felt itself to be “organically grown” and was proud of not being funded by international donors (ibid.). In the view of the OBZ, the organisations active in the Buffer Zone are corrupted by the international money they receive and simply carry out their agenda according to the donors’ wishes (ibid.). The UN, and specifically the UN peacekeepers, tolerated the OBZ within the Buffer Zone for a significant time period, although they officially rejected the movement and its cause.¹¹ In spite of this official tolerance, the UN did use other, more unofficial, methods to attempt to remove the protestors, such as sending a UN general to speak with the leader of the movement (Elefteriou 2012). The movement’s leaders, however, remained resolute in the face of this intimidation.

Ultimately, the movement proved fatal to itself. It was founded on the principles of inclusiveness, which meant that the movement was open for everyone, from both sides of the conflict divide. This meant, however, that the space became a sort of refuge for homeless people and teenagers, and began developing

¹¹ Email interview with Birte Vogel, February 2013.

problems with excessive alcohol consumption and internal violence. The original political mission of the movement thus unfortunately got lost (ibid., 16-17). The UN began to argue officially that the encampment was a danger to public health and to the activists themselves, with a build-up of garbage and open fires (Cyprus Mail 2012). This reasoning allowed the UN peacekeepers to move in and dismantle the site in the spring of 2012. In retrospect, the founder of the OBZ movement feels that it would have been better to have created a core leadership team and have opened the movement only to those individuals who would honour the movement's principles and political aims (Vogel 2012, 17). It is perhaps ironic that a grassroots movement was not resisted and destroyed by those organisations, elites or governments that felt threatened by it, but was rather destroyed by an equally bottom-up dynamic.

5 Conclusion

The Cyprus conflict is characterised by seemingly strong feelings on both sides of the Green Line concerning working with, and thereby possibly recognising, the other side. Such attitudes, as we have seen, are influenced by the high level of mistrust on both sides and the differing perspectives on the root causes of the conflict. These attitudes also lead therefore to significant levels of resistance to many initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding, including those which have been examined in this chapter in more detail.

It is somewhat disconcerting to observe that much of the resistance to specific initiatives – such as the farmers resistance to the Green Line Regulation and the general societal resistance to bi-communal activities – is carried out with the intention of opposing the idea of economically interdependent and reconciled Cypriot communities. In other words, local agencies are emerging to oppose the overall peacebuilding agenda of interethnic cooperation. In essence, this is practically the opposite of the resistance that we see in Bosnia-Herzegovina, through which citizens showed their dissatisfaction with the forced ethnic categorisations and thus with the ethnically-divided peace that is so prominent in BiH. In Cyprus, on the other hand, this resistance is being carried out *in favour* of ethnic separation. In this sense, such resistance does not necessarily represent an alternative site of knowledge for peacebuilding, as a divided Cyprus based on ethnicity is not the ideal peace that should be strived for in Cyprus.¹²

Nevertheless, such resistance should be taken into consideration seriously, particularly with regard to its implications for the initiatives. For instance, the trade between the north and the south will never reach its potential levels if continually subjected to the prevalent social norms in the south of refusing to cooperate – economically or otherwise – with the TRNC. The EU and particularly those responsible for the Green Line Regulation may have to rethink their strategy and come up with creative ways of fighting this social resistance, such as creating more space and offering more support for local trade initiatives. The various bi-communal organisations have been dealing with this exact dilemma for decades and still have yet to be able to sufficiently combat the disinterest in and resistance to their activities on the part of both Cypriot communities. It is exceptional that they even continue with their activities in light of such resistance. One of the major influences that this negative local agency has on the bi-communal activities is to make them less effective, which leads to them having much less of an impact on the societies and the conflict resolution process as a whole. As a logical reaction to this resistance and disinterest, the organisations continue with their activities, in the belief that bi-communal activities will lessen the ethno-nationalist attitudes of the Cypriot communities. But they never reach their ideal objective, because this very resistance stands in the way. So it is thus a vicious cycle that perpetuates itself.

This situation is in desperate need of a new and original way of breaking through this endless cycle.

¹² Of course, this does not imply that resistance to ethnic separation does not exist in Cyprus. It certainly may, but is unfortunately not within the scope of this analysis.

The Occupy Buffer Zone movement did, indeed, have the potential to play this unique role, as an inter-communal, bottom-up movement of Cypriots, with different perspectives on the conflict and potential ways to resolve it. This is a much better example of the potential knowledge that exists at the local level for sustainable peacebuilding. Unfortunately, however, and somewhat contradictorily, the movement was opposed by the UN, the main international organisation charged with mediating a bi-communal solution to the conflict. It remains to be seen if any of the principles or ideas of the OBZ will find their way into more mainstream movements in Cyprus, but if so, this would certainly be positive for peacebuilding, as it is clear that Cyprus is in desperate need of more citizens who feel that they belong to a multi-ethnic community.

Conclusion

1 Introductory Remarks

The objective of this report has been to examine in detail how the various peacebuilding rationalities in each conflict setting are translated into practice on the ground and how, in turn, governance initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding are received and perceived by local agencies. As mentioned in the introductory chapter of this report, the various governance initiatives that were chosen for investigation within the CORE project and those initiatives that were thus examined in detail in this report were incredibly diverse. Some were prime examples of bottom-up movements, such as the Occupy Buffer Zone movement in Cyprus, while others were strictly top-down, designed and implemented by the respective government, such as the rehabilitation scheme for ex-combatants in Meghalaya. Because the sheer number and diversity of existing governance initiatives in each conflict setting is tremendous, it is unavoidable that the sample initiatives chosen for examination in each case are so diverse. Therefore, it is practically impossible to draw any conclusions about the nature of governance initiatives for conflict resolution in each conflict, or as a whole in India or Europe, simply because the initiatives under investigation are not – and could not be – representative of all governance initiatives in these conflict settings. The single initiatives chosen are simply too specialised. No discernible (and thus comparable) ‘pattern’ of initiatives – between European initiatives and Indian initiatives, for instance, or even among the European and Indian cases – could be found. In other words, there were neither striking similarities, nor striking differences between the cases.

It would be impractical to conclude that, for instance, governance initiatives in Europe are more inclusive and take local agency more into account than the initiatives in India, or vice versa. From the data analysed for this report, such a conclusion would be a drastic overgeneralisation and would exclude information from all other initiatives – potentially hundreds – for conflict resolution and peacebuilding that exist in each conflict setting. A compelling argument for not making such generalisations can be

made, for example, by looking at the cases of Meghalaya and Georgia/Abkhazia. In both of these cases, several initiatives examined were very much designed and implemented by the government and did not take local agency into account whatsoever. The “State Strategy on the Occupied Territories” was created by the Georgian government without any consultation with or even consideration of the interests or concerns of the Abkhaz people. The rehabilitation scheme for the ANVC cadres in Meghalaya, carried out by the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, gave little thought to the communities affected or even the needs of the ex-combatants. Yet at the same time, the research in both of these cases has uncovered much more inclusive initiatives for conflict resolution, namely the facilitation initiatives of the Garo Baptist Church and the “Engagement through Dialogue” programme. Both of these initiatives – while not completely bottom-up – have given sufficient space to the interests and concerns of local people in Meghalaya and Georgia/Abkhazia, respectively. If we take these examples as representative of many conflict settings in the world (and again, this in and of itself would be an overgeneralisation) we see that there is potential space for all types and forms of approaches to conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the same conflict setting.

2 The Conceptualisation of ‘Governance’ for Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding

That being said, within our admittedly limited sample of governance initiatives in this report, a few overall conclusions can be drawn. The first conclusion is about the comprehensive conceptualisation of the notion of governance within the CORE project. About half of the governance initiatives being investigated in the field research (and therefore in this report) are *governmental* initiatives, which, of course, may have to do with the fact that governmental initiatives are often more visible and more accessible to researchers. From the Status Neutral Document in Georgia to the *Panchayati Raj* Institutions in India to the rehabilitation schemes in Meghalaya to the regulation of the Arizona market in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) – these are all peacebuilding initiatives planned, developed, and implemented by the respective governments. The implication here is that the notion of *governance* is at least partially being conceptualised as *government*, which is perhaps not a very surprising finding. If we understand governance as an interactive process between different societal and political units which possess agency or power of action and which have a prominent role in the governing of society, it is a foregone conclusion that the government itself will be included as one of these political units which has a prominent role in governing society.

In the cases in which non-state initiatives were investigated, many of these are internationally initiated and funded, such as the Green Line Regulation in Cyprus, the COBERM mechanism in Georgia, or the micro-credit foundation MI-BOSPO in BiH. This shows that international organisations – including developmental organisations such as UNDP and USAID, as well as political bodies such as the EU – can also be considered a source for initiatives in the realm of governance. An interesting observation here is that none of the internationally designed and funded initiatives under consideration in this report were carried out in India. This does not mean in any way that such initiatives do not exist, yet such an observation does correspond well with the proposed peacebuilding rationality of the Indian government of the intention to resolve conflicts without external help.¹

¹ See the chapter in this report on Northeast India/Meghalaya for more information on this peacebuilding rationality.

Lastly, two of the initiatives under examination are very much local and ‘home-grown’, namely, the Occupy Buffer Zone movement in Cyprus and the facilitation initiatives of the Garo Baptist Church (GBCH) in Meghalaya. But even with this last example, there is a slight caveat, as the request for the GBCH to become involved originated with the Indian government. So while the GBCH carried out its facilitation with little involvement from the government, the impetus for the initiative was from the state. Nevertheless, these examples show that governance can come from the lower levels of society itself – as an interactive process between different societal units which have agency and power of action. The Garo Baptist Church, an important actor in the realm of civil society in Meghalaya, exercised its acknowledged agency and power to act by bringing the ANVC to the negotiating table.

Again here, it would be rash to make any generalised statements about how governance initiatives in conflict settings are a heterogeneous mixture of state and non-state, local and external enterprises. This may not always be the case and cannot be concluded from the information here. Indeed it may be the case in some conflicts that remarkably little is offered by the government in the way of conflict resolution, while in other conflict settings the initiatives come solely from the government. I would wager to say, however, that the initiatives in most cases are likely a mixture of somewhere in between these two extremes. Furthermore, a lot of these initiatives defy a simple categorisation into state or non-state, external or local. Many of the bi-communal organisations active in the Buffer Zone in Cyprus are indeed developed and run by Cypriots, even if a large part of their funding comes from international actors.

3 Translation of Peacebuilding Rationalities into Practice

As stated, it is immensely difficult to draw conclusions about governance in the various conflict settings with the limited number of governance initiatives for conflict resolution that have been examined within this report. Furthermore, it is also not always possible to establish a direct link from the peacebuilding rationalities illustrated for each conflict case to the singular governance initiatives that were examined. In certain cases, the initiatives chosen correspond well with the peacebuilding rationalities; in others, they seem to contradict each other. In further instances, because the initiatives are at times so specific and the peacebuilding rationalities described here are only a sample for each case, they seem to be even irrelevant for each other.

One link between the two is exemplified by the facilitation initiative of the Garo Baptist Church in Meghalaya, which corresponds well with one of the peacebuilding rationalities for the Indian government in Northeast India, namely, the intent to solve conflicts without any external (international) help. In this facilitation, it was clear that the citizens of Meghalaya owned and guided the process, which may be one of the reasons for its success. In light of the peacebuilding framework within which the Indian government operates, it would be highly unusual for external actors to be asked to facilitate negotiations with an armed group. Instead, asking local actors to become involved conforms nicely with the particular boundaries that have been set for building peace in Meghalaya.

Another example of this accord between governance initiative and peacebuilding rationality is that of the *Panchayati Raj* Institutions (PRI) in India. As seen in the chapter on Bihar/Jharkhand, it seems almost as if the PRIs are the outcome of the combination of two prevalent and significant peacebuilding rationalities in India, namely economic development as conflict resolution and local governance as conflict resolution. Granting local actors self-governance and allowing them a say in matters of social justice and development is assumed to counteract any grievances that may exist in relation to the central

government, for instance high levels of corruption or the lack of governmental presence. Simultaneously, if the benefits of development are made more readily available and the communities are able to have control and influence over how best to realise these benefits for the good of the community, this will also mitigate armed conflict. In this sense, the general concept behind the PRIs corresponds well with the peacebuilding rationalities prevalent in Bihar/Jharkhand. This does not imply, however, that the PRIs have been successful in achieving the twin goals of economic development and local self-determination for all rural citizens of India. As we have seen, there are clear difficulties and limitations with the system, and its implementation has not always been carried out properly. Nevertheless, from the narrow perspective of alignment with the peacebuilding rationalities in the setting of Naxal violence, the methods and approaches laid out with these rationalities are adapted quite well into the initiative of the *Panchayati Raj*.

In the setting of the Georgian/Abkhazian conflict, there is also a clear case of alignment between the peacebuilding rationalities and two of the governance initiatives for conflict resolution under consideration. This case, however, has much more negative implications for peacebuilding than the examples above. Because the Georgian government believes that the main parties to the conflict are Georgia and Russia (and *not* Abkhazia) and because it further believes that the conflict must be resolved within the framework of Georgia's territorial integrity, the initiatives that the Georgian government has put forth for conflict resolution reflect these ideas. These assumptions about the conflict parties and the need for territorial integrity shape and delimit both the "State Strategy on Occupied Territories" and the Status Neutral Document. By disregarding the Abkhaz people as a party to the conflict, thereby denying them any agency in the resolution of the conflict, the Georgian government is labouring under a misconception of how peace with Abkhazia can sustainably be built. In this sense, these initiatives are functioning under this same misconception and cannot realistically achieve much in the realm of peace.

In each conflict setting, the peacebuilding rationalities of the actors involved in the peacebuilding process are critical to the success of the process, as they are the fundament for the governance that is exercised. They establish the logic behind all actions that are taken in the peacebuilding process. They set the boundaries of what is possible and what is not possible in terms of any initiatives or activities that are carried out. We have seen throughout this report that many of these peacebuilding rationalities can be misguided or even contradictory to the rationalities of the other parties to the conflict. In this sense, it is therefore not surprising that many initiatives for conflict resolution – and not just those under investigation here – don't live up to their expectations. Fortunately, peacebuilding rationalities need not be static. In fact, they can prove to be rather malleable in light of the continually changing dynamics of conflict. For example, the peacebuilding rationality of the Georgian government that force is not an option with regard to Abkhazia is a rather new rationality that was a direct consequence of the war with Russia in 2008. With this in mind, it may be a promising, yet challenging, endeavour for actors involved in peacebuilding processes to focus more on the peacebuilding rationalities in each conflict setting, in order to begin to bridge the gap that exists between the rationalities of different conflict parties. After all, governance initiatives for conflict resolution and peacebuilding may prove to have little effect if the peacebuilding rationalities are incompatible.

4 Resistance and Local Agency

Another conclusion that can be drawn from the limited number of governance initiatives under investigation in this report and one that is crucial for the future of peacebuilding is that local agencies – in many different forms – will continue to modify, adapt, and resist the agenda that has been set for them, whether this agenda has been designed by their own government or by external actors. However, there are many crucial questions that must be posed concerning this resistance, for instance: What is the nature of the resistance?

What is the object of the resistance? What is the purpose or intent of this resistance, if any? Is the intent to halt the governance initiative in question? Or just to transform, delay, or adapt it? The answers to these questions and others will (hopefully) help us to better understand this resistance, the reasoning behind it, and the best way to address this resistance and take it into consideration for further peacebuilding processes. In every conflict setting and as a response to every governance initiative, there will be an immense spectrum of resistance for different reasons; therefore, each individual case must be examined separately. This is the intriguing, yet complex, aspect about everyday resistance as such – it can take so many intricate and subtle forms depending on the source, the context, and the intention – and, due to these factors, communities and individuals can respond entirely differently to the same governance initiative. Therefore, a closer examination in each individual case is crucial in order to be able to understand the reasons for the resistance and thus to respond to it adequately, preferably using reflective and dialogical practices with those agencies which are resisting. This is admittedly not a simple task and may unfortunately not be one that many governments, international peacebuilding organisations, and other designers of initiatives are ready to take on. While such actors are being increasingly asked by researchers and practitioners in the peacebuilding field to take local communities (and their agency) more into consideration in the design and implementation of initiatives, the research within the CORE project is prompting the same actors to go one step forward and look more closely at the everyday resistance that the initiatives encounter.

The way that states, international organisations, or other actors responsible for peacebuilding activities choose to acknowledge local agency and everyday resistance and how they choose to behave in response to it *should* highly depend on the type of resistance being encountered. As in peacebuilding processes themselves, there is no one-size-fit-all method of dealing with resistance. As we have seen above, the resistance is much too varied to merit such a uniform response. For example, it would be illogical to treat the resistance in southern Cyprus to trade with the north in the same way that one would treat the resistance of the traders to the regulations of the Arizona market in BiH. In the first case, the resistance is borne of the predominant social norms and ethnocentricity in the Republic of Cyprus. In this context, it is acceptable for – indeed, even expected of – Greek Cypriots to resist economic interdependence with the Turkish Cypriots. Many forms of cooperation with the north, economic and otherwise, are frowned upon by both the authorities and the society. In the latter case, the resistance of the traders to the rules of the new, regulated market can be seen as tactical resistance, or smart pragmatism, or – as Stavrevska (2012b) labels it, “coping” – rather than a principled resistance to the principles of neo-liberalism. This resistance is carried out with the intent of making life more bearable for the individuals involved, not because of some inherent disagreement with the principle of the market itself. At first glance, the effect of both forms of resistance may be similar in that the initiatives are not as effective or successful as had been hoped. But upon looking more closely, it becomes quite clear that what is labelled resistance has immensely different intentions and objectives. By treating these forms of resistance as similar simply because they fall under the category of ‘resistance to governance initiatives for peacebuilding’ is not only discounting the agency of the individuals and communities who are carrying out this resistance, but also does a disservice to the concept of peacebuilding as a whole.

A further complication with regard to the notion of (everyday) resistance is the fact that much of what may be labelled as resistance may not be considered as such when the governance initiative – that which the resistance is reacting to – is taken out of the equation. In essence, all resistance is a response to power, whether or not the agencies carrying out this resistance have any hope of changing or altering this power. The power that has been examined in this report is the authority, and at times hegemony, of governance initiatives for peacebuilding. But if these initiatives suddenly disappeared, much of the resistance would remain in a perhaps slightly altered form, but would not carry the label of resistance. The social norms in the Republic of Cyprus against cooperating with the north would still be present if the Green Line Regulation ceased to exist. But since the initiative does exist, these social norms against cooperation can be clearly labelled, in this specific case, as resistance to the Green Line Regulation. The methods in which the Naxals are able to adapt the institutions of local governance to increase their power and influence

would most likely remain the same or very similar with or without the *Panchayati Raj*. One can label the Naxal adaptation of the PRIs as a type of resistance to the principles of democracy, transparency and self-determination that the PRIs should embody, but if the PRIs were not to exist, the Naxals would still be able to wield their power over other forms of local governance, but this would no longer be labelled resistance. In this sense, the initiative meets a social construct which is already present, and elevates this social construct to the level of resistance. Thus the everyday resistance that we have ‘uncovered’ through the CORE project is only made visible *as such* through its juxtaposition with the initiatives.

Because resistance in its various forms seems to be so commonplace, it is not in any way remarkable that it happens. It is instead remarkable that such resistance is so (openly) disregarded. And just as the resistance to governance initiatives takes many different forms, so does the disregard for this resistance. It may be intentionally disregarded out of principle or, perhaps more likely, simply overlooked or not considered resistance as such. For instance, the Abkhazians are resisting the Status Neutral Document initiated by the Georgian government, mainly by simply ignoring the initiative and thereby refusing to engage in this level of discourse with the Georgian government. So far only 150 individuals have accepted this document, and this seems to be more for medical reasons than anything else. But the Georgian government is forging ahead with the initiative and continues to argue officially that it is a positive step towards reconciliation, which means that the government is blatantly ignoring this collective Abkhazian act of resistance. In this case, the clear disinterest of the Abkhazians in the document is rather difficult to overlook, which lends weight to the argument that the Georgian government is not pursuing this course because it feels the document can truly lead to reconciliation, but rather in order to please the US and the EU and to demonstrate that it is making an effort (however misguided) to promote peace.

In terms of the agenda that has been set for the citizens of BiH with regard to the ‘spatialisation of ethnicity’, the many different forms of resistance are probably just overlooked by the authorities, or considered unimportant. This may have much to do with the simple number of individuals involved in such resistance. If the vast majority are following the ‘rules’ of ethnic spatialisation – by checking the proper ethnic box on a form or writing in the ‘proper’ alphabet – then the small minority of individuals who are making a political statement by choosing not to follow the rules may be disregarded as irrelevant. But it is this case more than all others that shows the relevance of such resistance for building sustainable peace. Even the small, individual, everyday acts that may seem trivial to the authorities or to external actors are in a way creating their own (still imaginary) version of what a truly multi-ethnic BiH would look like – a society that has reconciled with its past and can regard all citizens as Bosnians, rather than as members of a particular ethnic group. In this imaginary BiH, mothers-to-be wouldn’t have to ‘cross the ethnic divide’ in order to receive better health care and children of inter-ethnic parents wouldn’t be forced to choose one ethnicity on a form. Thus it is to this resistance – and the more hopeful vision of the future that it imagines – that peacebuilders should be looking.

5 Concluding Remarks

As with any research endeavour, this report has opened up many new and promising avenues of research that lie outside the scope of this project. The most striking of these is the need to investigate further the reaction of governance initiatives to (everyday) resistance. It should be examined whether there is a willingness on the part of the designers of the initiatives to acknowledge this resistance and to adapt to local circumstances, or if they choose instead to ‘defend’ their initiatives and refuse to adapt. Such defence of initiatives may even be a type of resistance on the part of the designers towards alternative (local, traditional, inclusive, etc.) understandings of governance for conflict resolution. If the peacebuilding process is partly viewed as a continual ‘back and forth’ between local agencies and more external actors,

then much time and energy has been spent examining the first phase of this back and forth, namely, the external actors reaching out to the local. But correspondingly little time has been spent examining the response of the local agencies to the external actors, a growing research field that this project can contribute to. But significantly, much less time has been spent investigating the external reaction to the local reaction, which would be the next logical step within this research agenda. Although related issues of the interaction between the 'top' and the 'bottom', between local and external, and the inadequate link between the two is discussed in detail in Anna Bernhard's complementary CORE report, this is a research agenda that merits much more exploration in order to truly benefit the field of peacebuilding.

In conclusion, it is necessary to look more deeply into the realm of local agency and everyday resistance and its various causes and intentions, as this would assist the evolution of the peacebuilding rationalities of all conflict actors into more inclusive and empathetic forms. In turn, these more inclusive peacebuilding rationalities could then be translated into practice in the form of more inclusive initiatives, which could provide more impetus and support for sustainable peacebuilding processes.

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