Accord

INSIGHT 3

an international review of peace initiatives

CONCILIATION RESOURCES
working together for peace

Issue editors
Mark Salter and Zahbia Yousuf

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Transforming broken relationships
Making peace with the past

Accord
an international review of peace initiatives
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August 2016 // Editors
Mark Salter and Zahbia Yousuf

Accord Insight presents cutting-edge analysis and contemporary peacebuilding innovation by re-examining key challenges and practical lessons from Conciliation Resources' Accord publication series.

CONCILIATION RESOURCES
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Cover photo: A woman walks past a mural in Lendrick Street, a loyalist area in Belfast, Northern Ireland March 2016. *Re-imaging Communities* is a community cohesion strategy to replace paramilitary murals and sectional symbols with images of a shared history.
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Acronyms

General
IDP – Internally displaced person
ICRC – International Committee of the Red Cross
DwP – Dealing with the Past
TJ – Transitional Justice
TRC – Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Colombia
ELN – National Liberation Army
FARC-EP – Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army

Mindanao
ARMM – Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao
BBL – Bangsamoro Basic Law
BL-BAR – Basic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region
CAB – Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro
JUMPOC – Joint Ulama and Municipal Peace and Order Council
MILF – Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MNLF – Moro National Liberation Front
SAF – Special Action Force
TJRC – Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission
UCCP – United Church of th e Christ in the Philippines

Northern Ireland
DUP – Democratic Unionist Party
EU – European Union
IFI – International Fund for Ireland
IRA – Irish Republican Army
UVF – Ulster Volunteer Force

Foreword

Graeme Simpson is Director of Interpeace USA and Senior Adviser to the Director-General of Interpeace. Graeme founded the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR) in Johannesburg, South Africa and was Executive Director from 1995-2005. He has worked extensively on transitional justice issues in South Africa, including with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. From 2005, Graeme was Director of Country Programs at the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) and then Director of Thematic Programs. Graeme serves on the Editorial Board of the International Journal of Transitional Justice, and the International Advisory Board of the International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE) in Northern Ireland. He has worked with national and international civil society for over 25 years, advising government and non-governmental organisations in various countries.

Transforming horizontal and vertical relationships

Reconciliation is the process of building or rebuilding relationships damaged by violent conflict: horizontal relationships between people and groups in society; and vertical relationships between people and institutions, both within and outside the state. This understanding places reconciliation programmes and strategies at the heart of political processes and transitions in conflict-affected or fragile societies. Too often reconciliation is seen as supplementary or peripheral: an exotic distraction or utopian aspiration.

Such an approach also stresses the pragmatic value of reconciliation at the intersection of peacebuilding and statebuilding efforts, conceived not merely as technocratic exercises to build the capacity of 'strong' rather than 'fragile' states, but rather as essentially political endeavours to transform tainted relationships between state and society – or the cultivation of 'civic trust', as some have coined it. As noted by David Bloomfield (*see page 16*), this perspective salvages reconciliation from the realm of the 'fluffy' or 'soft' dimensions of peacebuilding, or as exclusively localised or intimate. On the contrary, reconciliation programming is pivotal to sustaining peace and preventing new or re-emerging violent conflict.

> **"Too often reconciliation is seen as supplementary or peripheral: an exotic distraction or utopian aspiration."**

Strategic implications for building peace

Understanding reconciliation as transforming both horizontal and vertical relationships has three main strategic implications for practitioners and policymakers. Firstly, it is resistant to crude, binary strategies of either 'bottom-up' or 'top-down': bottom-up, which ties reconciliation to local politics and geography, based on simplistic assumptions that rebuilding relationships must be driven from the local or community level, up to the national or global level; and top-down, which exclusively values elitist or state-centric processes. National or regional dynamics can all too easily undermine even the best-laid plans for local-level relationship building. And, equally, national peacebuilding or peacemaking can be unravelled by the ignition of local conflict.

'Middle out' approaches to building reconciliation are also important and may be effective: intermediaries that span different layers in society, such as civil society organisations capable of both 'listening down' and 'speaking up'; distinct social constituencies who cut across diverse levels, like women, youths or victims; or even the potential of social and state institutions as platforms for building reconciliation, which similarly straddle and operate across levels. Clearly top-down, bottom-up and middle-out approaches should not be viewed as mutually exclusive.

The rich and complex country case studies examined in this volume contribute creative insights, strategic options and conceptual challenges based on these different levels of engagement and the diverse tactical points of entry that they offer for transforming damaged relationships. Each respects the fundamental importance of context-specificity (and conflict-specificity), but also provocatively challenges us to think across contexts and different timeframes, about how we connect and reinforce diverse strategies and levels of engagement, and appreciate their potential cumulative effect.

Through this lens, there is great value in applying systems thinking to the field of reconciliation. This demands that practitioners move beyond the notion of working discretely or sequentially at different levels, or even multi-track engagement – important as this may be. Rather, it requires attention to the 'connective tissue' or 'social fabric' that connects and integrates these diverse engagements, and the spectrum of tactical points of entry within a wider understanding of reconciliation strategies as systemic and multi-faceted, as well as non-linear in both cause and effect.

Secondly, a systems-based approach to vertical and horizontal reconciliation challenges assumptions about a segmented temporal frame, which consigns reconciliation exclusively to phases of 'post-conflict social reconstruction', and which divorces reconciliation from other peacebuilding strategies.

Understanding the peace and conflict continuum as a system acknowledges cyclical patterns of conflict in which the boundaries of pre- and post-conflict phases are inevitably blurred. But it also offers a range of different and innovative points of engagement for building or supporting reconciliation efforts at different points in the conflict cycle.

Here too, the case studies discussed in this volume highlight and offer creative insights into the strategies for engaging in reconciliation programming in very different ways in a given context, depending on the point in the peace and conflict cycle, the particular nature of the political process or transition, and the 'politics of the possible' that this implies. A more systemic approach offers opportunities for innovation through a compendium of diverse initiatives and opportunities that can be applied in different societies at different times: for early intervention or pre-emption; for strategies for building reconciliation in the course of ongoing conflicts; for the range of mechanisms to address the legacies of violence; and for anticipating new or recurrent patterns of conflict.

> **"The assumption that reconciliation can be reduced to the 'right mixture' of the component approaches of a transitional justice template (or of a specific transitional justice mechanism, such as truth seeking) is problematic."**

Thirdly, policy and programming for reconciliation have been significantly impaired by increasingly normative associations with transitional justice and strategies for 'dealing with the past'. Transitional justice measures can make creative and highly important contributions to reconciliation. But the assumption that reconciliation can be reduced to the 'right mixture' of the component approaches of a transitional justice template (or of a specific transitional justice mechanism, such as truth seeking) is problematic. It implies a significant disservice to both the primary function of transitional justice mechanisms and – more importantly – to the diversity of approaches that might contribute to reconciliation in a particular society or community. It may well set transitional justice mechanisms up to fail if it is assumed that, in the right sequential combinations or proportions, they will automatically achieve reconciliation.

There are at least three risks of associating reconciliation too narrowly with these other approaches. First, transitional justice establishes a normative blueprint that is shaped more by the objectives of compliance and accountability (important though these are), than by the goals of transforming relationships damaged by conflict. A key dimension of reconciliation strategies as a peacebuilding endeavour must be how they reach beyond these normative obligations to the transformative objectives at their core. Second, dealing with the past frames a narrow objective and focus that is essentially retrospective, and that consequently undermines the critical preventive function of reconciliation strategies in making peace sustainable. This includes anticipating the changing and evolving (rather than static) character of conflict and violence, as well as patterns of marginalisation and exclusion in any society. Third, ready-made templates for 'best practice' for transitional justice may be less useful to the development of appropriate reconciliation strategies in any particular context than a compendium of practitioner innovation and experience.

For these reasons, it is imperative that policy and practice discussions about reconciliation are emancipated from the constraints of a transitional justice paradigm, or from similar reconciliation toolboxes or blueprints. Many of the case studies in this volume acknowledge the value of particular transitional justice activities to reconciliation, but they do so without reducing them to articulations of a uniform reconciliation approach applied in each country.

Rather, the case studies offer an important contribution (or perhaps starting point) in building a portfolio of the diverse set of initiatives – locally, nationally or regionally. They powerfully illustrate that it is simply wrong to presume that reconciliation is one thing, or a neatly applicable universal set of interventions or processes. Reconciliation is highly context-specific, particular to moments in unique and dynamic peace and conflict cycles. Its commonality lies in the quest to redress the damage done to both vertical and horizontal relationships in any conflict-affected society.

Understanding change

Reconciliation is, therefore, very difficult to measure or assess by reference to typical results frameworks. This is especially true when the aspiration is not just redress, but prevention of violent conflict and the sustainability of positive peace in situations where both the nature of conflict and patterns of marginalisation and exclusion are themselves moving targets. On one hand this means that reconciliation practice is essentially about high strategy (rather than high principle) regarding how, where and when to intervene. But a focus on relationships also has vital relevance and implications for current policy debates and priorities: to the controversial discourse on preventing 'violent extremism'; to resilience for peace, or positive peace; to the shape, role and meaning of 'leadership' in fragile and conflict-affected societies; to circumnavigating the dysfunctional siloes associated with different agencies or segmented fields of peace practice; and how to implement Goal 16 of the Sustainable Development Goals.

This study does not claim to provide all the answers. But it begins the process of asking the right questions through the spectrum of case studies – capturing innovative experience and practice; helping to create an authentic voice; and opening the conversation about what reconciliation is for, rather than looking to have the last word.

Accord Insight

Making peace with the past: transforming broken relationships

Alexander Ramsbotham and Zahbia Yousuf

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This third Accord Insight reflects on practical approaches and challenges to addressing the legacies of violent conflict, including various activities intended to promote reconciliation, support justice and deal with the past. The case studies in the publication all stress the importance of 'transforming relationships' in peace processes: horizontally, between conflict parties and groups in society; and vertically, between citizens and state institutions. 'Transformation' focuses on dismantling conflict-generating relationships from the past, and instead creating new relationships for a peaceful and inclusive future. The emphasis on both horizontal and vertical relational transformation can help provide a much needed bridge between peacebuilding and statebuilding.

One of this Accord Insight's main questions has been whether different phases and circumstances of a peace process imply different types of reconciliation methods. Efforts to deal with the effects of violence often assume that violence has stopped, that a ceasefire is in place and an agreement signed, ushering in a new phase of post-conflict peacebuilding activity.

The case studies attest that transforming relationships is not simply a post-conflict endeavour but a continuous process that can start at an earlier stage, before a formal settlement. It requires different approaches, attention and application according to the particular contextual and chronological circumstances of the conflict and peace process – in the absence of a political settlement in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, during a negotiation process in Colombia, in the immediate post-agreement phase in Mindanao, and to consolidate peace in Northern Ireland.

The four case studies illustrate the complexities in overcoming the deep political and social divisions created by violence. They look beyond particular frameworks for reconciliation, transitional justice or dealing with the past that have shaped contemporary discussions, to encompass the diversity of practical experiences used to tackle the legacies of conflict.

"Transforming relationships is not simply a post-conflict endeavour but a continuous process that can start at an earlier stage, before a formal settlement."

This publication has drawn on participatory activities as part of a broader project, such as a Joint Analysis Workshop (*see* Conciliation Resources (2016), 'Workshop Report: Peacebuilding and Reconciliation') and other forms of consultation. These have contributed a variety of experiences and perspectives, which have highlighted the challenges of developing a common language and understanding. Terms such as 'reconciliation' and 'co-existence' hold particular and different meanings in each context. Sometimes terminology can contribute to splits among groups within the same society. The case studies have therefore explored the contextual relevance of various practices. As Graeme Simpson stresses in the foreword, it is the common ambition to redress the damage done to both vertical and horizontal relationships in conflict-affected societies that connects the various approaches documented here.

The development of the case studies has also stimulated in-country efforts to understand what it means to transform relations. In Colombia, at a key moment in the peace process, authors Rosa Emilia Salamanca González and Ricardo Mendoza convened a series of conversations among civil society, academics and analysts to look at existing reconciliation initiatives, the experience, opportunities and challenges emerging from these, and key priorities during and after the Havana talks. In the Georgian-Abkhaz context, the case study has been an opportunity for authors from both sides of the conflict divide to explore together the difficulties

Priorities for transforming relationships in peace processes

Transforming relationships from the middle out

- Identify links that connect across constituencies, levels and distinct social platforms, in particular intermediaries who can 'listen down and speak up'.
- Are there efforts to support the resilience of diverse reconciliation efforts? In particular, is there awareness of political schisms that may be reinforced by power-sharing arrangements and that risk reversing community initiatives?

Upstream reconciliation

- Are efforts helping to break down polarised narratives of the conflict?
- Do they support conditions for negotiations to encompass diverse perspectives – for example to accommodate the interests of victims of violence, direct and indirect?

Building new relationships

- Do practices prioritise building new relationships rather than restoring old ones? Do they recognise different types of harm and are they adaptive to evolving needs and priorities across society?
- Are discrete spaces available where different institutional interests or personal experiences can be brought together to build trust and transform 'victims and perpetrators' into 'citizens with equal rights'?

Relational statebuilding

- Are institutional reform processes engaging society to create greater confidence in the state?
- Are reconciliation initiatives addressing structural violence?

of undertaking initiatives when there are different contextual understandings of dealing with the past.

Transforming relationships from the middle out

Both horizontal and vertical reconciliation efforts are essential to build trust in the state and within society. Too often peace processes prioritise one approach over the other, or fail to connect different efforts to transform relationships at different levels. Previous Accord articles summarised in this publication, which draw on experiences from a number of contexts, illustrate that practical templates to deal with the legacies of past violence are often planned or financed from above or externally while being implemented at community levels. This has at times imposed inappropriate approaches and led to tensions with existing local practices or structures for reconciliation. A continued emphasis on 'bottom up' and 'top down' can also reinforce the gap between the two – even in the context of efforts to link them. This risk particularly arises as reconciliation efforts are often compromised by wider political dynamics.

Rufa Cagoco-Guiam describes in the Mindanao case study (*see page 35*) how the listening project as part of the Truth and Justice Reconciliation Commission in Mindanao in the Philippines has innovatively brought diverse perspectives into a national framework for dealing with the past. Local researchers visited numerous communities across the region to collect testimony and understand local priorities. This data has been used to inform the commission's recommendations to the government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) 'peace panels'. Yet, the success of such innovations also relies on progress in the formal peace process, which has been severely disrupted by obstructions to the passing of the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL) through the national Philippines Congress in Manila.

As Graeme Simpson suggests (*see page 5*), rather than thinking in terms of bifurcated levels of 'top' and 'bottom', it is important to pay attention to the 'connective tissue' or 'social fabric' that integrates diverse engagements across multiple levels within a wider understanding of reconciliation strategies as both multi-faceted and non-linear. This approach requires the development of platforms and constituency groups that can push from the 'middle out'. This emphasises the role of intermediaries who can 'listen down and speak up', including individuals, social structures and institutions (such as religious leaders in Mindanao), as well as distinct social constituencies (such as women in Colombia). As González and Mendoza reflect (*see page 27*), after decades of hostility, insecurity and suspicion in Colombia, there is a need to re-orientate the mindsets and energies of conflict parties and broader society towards reconciliation, and to build their capacity to do this.

In addition, initiatives to deal with past violence often evolve through processes of learning in response to particular contextual conditions. In Northern Ireland, longstanding sectarian conflict has prompted both community-level initiatives and institutional reforms (such as in education and housing) to promote inter-community relations. In Colombia, high levels of extreme violence and a corresponding culture of human rights activism have resulted in an emphasis on victims. They have featured prominently in the Havana negotiations, accompanied by initiatives across the country to document and uncover what happened during the conflict.

Supporting the resilience of reconciliation efforts, especially community-based ones, is therefore important to enable their cumulative impact. Civil society work in Northern Ireland has been integral to developing policy frameworks for a 'shared future'. These have been maintained through international recognition and funding, particularly from the European Union (EU), but have struggled to transform the national political environment. Northern Irish politics remain split along persistent sectarian divides, and leaders continue to appeal to identity-based constituencies for support. The outcome of the United Kingdom referendum on EU membership in June 2016 has placed a major question mark over the sustainability of funding for reconciliation in Northern Ireland.

In Mindanao, the discrete work done by community and regional leaders to date has helped to promote social cohesion locally, but has lacked a coherent and strategic

framework to elevate it to the national consciousness. The January 2015 Mamasapano incident, which linked the killing of security forces personnel with the MILF, reignited narratives demonising the Moro people; many suspect this led to Congress's rejection of the BBL. Professor Cagoco-Guiam (*see page 35*) suggests that a broader communications and education plan is necessary to help wider Filipino society understand the rationale for entering into the peace process with those they have long viewed as 'terrorists'.

> **"The tendency to promote such initiatives only after a ceasefire is called or once conflict parties have reached an agreement misses a vital opportunity to capitalise on their transformative potential."**

Upstream reconciliation

All of the case studies in this publication show that efforts to address the legacies of violence can start in the absence of a political agreement, or when one seems unlikely or even impossible. Such initiatives can in fact have a positive, practical influence on peace processes and support trust building. By providing space for alternative perspectives of the conflict to emerge, they can help to break down polarised narratives that act as barriers to meaningful dialogue between conflict parties. They can also help develop and sustain the trajectory of a peace process to be more transformative, helping to create conditions for negotiations to encompass diverse perspectives and to focus on changing relations – for example, the inclusion of victims' perspectives in the Havana talks as part of the Colombia peace process.

The case studies describe a range of initiatives that began when a political solution to conflict appeared remote. These efforts challenged entrenched conflict narratives that reinforced the necessity of violence by highlighting its impact from a range of perspectives and questioning the demonisation of the 'other'. They also tried to shift discussion towards the possibility of constructive relations, for example by encouraging peaceful dialogue between people across divisions, such as through practical projects directed at community development, or providing valuable space to share perspectives of the conflict. Examples include: inter-faith dialogues between Christian and Muslim communities in Mindanao; work on dealing with the past in the Georgian-Abkhaz context; and the work of the National Centre for Historical Memory in Colombia to document the testimonies of victims and serious human rights violations.

The depth and type of early activity depends on both context and circumstance. Early efforts can be risky, particularly when the level of violence is high or conflict parties feel threatened and fall back on nationalist agendas. Human rights activists in Colombia suffered threats to their families as well as direct physical violence for speaking out against armed actors. In the early 2000s the government of Álvaro Uribe had an explicit policy of 'democratic security' whereby any criticism of the state was viewed as complicity with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP). Even so, civil society sustained attention on violations by appealing to the international community and highlighting international human rights obligations and norms.

An endemic lack of trust may limit the scope and possibilities to engage the 'other' directly and to build space for inclusive conversations about security and politics. Without the common political or legal framework for such conversations that a formal peace deal might provide, it may be difficult to touch on root causes or deeper structural conflict dynamics in order to stimulate broader transformative action.

In the Georgian-Abkhaz context, semantic and practical problems overlap as different understandings of reconciliation have increased mistrust. The Abkhaz associate reconciliation negatively with Abkhazia's reintegration into Georgia, fuelled by Georgians' own conflation of the two. On the Georgian side, some view efforts to change current approaches to the conflict and engage directly with the Abkhaz as promoting Russian interests in the region. Those who are involved in such work therefore raise suspicion within their own community as well as among the other side. Approaches that use the language of dealing with the past, and focus on acknowledging different experiences of the war and breaking down stereotypes of the 'other', have been more appropriate to this context.

It can be difficult to assess the impact of discrete efforts to address the past in such challenging circumstances. Yet the tendency to promote such initiatives only after a ceasefire is called or once conflict parties have reached an agreement misses a vital opportunity to capitalise on their transformative potential.

Building new relationships, not restoring old ones

An important part of addressing past violence acknowledges harm done and grievances on all sides, and looks to establish accountability for violations of human rights. Yet an exclusively binary focus on victims and perpetrators can negatively affect the ability to change the nature of hostile relations. First, it can overlook the multiple beneficiaries and bystanders in violence and conflict. Second, it can reinforce antagonistic relationships from the conflict era or before, which are often based on contested ethno-nationalism and historical grievance.

This can lead to contestation over which victims deserve greater attention, such as the 'hierarchy of victims' that some point to in Northern Ireland: women and children killed by paramilitary organisations are placed above all others, with members of paramilitary organisations and their families killed by the state at the bottom. This has polarised attempts to pursue national-level transitional justice initiatives. It also negates the varied type of victim that the *Gender Principles for Dealing with the Legacy of the Past* (*see page 42*) address. Inclusive reconciliation practices therefore look beyond

the victim/perpetrator dichotomy to prioritise building new relationships rather than restoring old ones.

Relationships are also dynamic: different types of violence, suffering and victimhood continually emerge as conflicts and peace processes progress and mutate over time. In Colombia, women are drawing attention to the increased incidence of domestic violence in post-conflict contexts, highlighting 'continuities of violence' that are often ignored. Distinctions between physical, political, criminal and structural violence can be blurred as well. The authors of the Gender Principles argue that deaths from conflict in Northern Ireland led to multiple related harms from state and non-state actors. These range from impoverishment, neglect, harassment and vulnerability to other abuses that affect the whole family, for which the woman may now be the sole caregiver. For peace to be sustainable and inclusive, reconciliation needs to adapt to evolving needs and priorities across society.

Authors of the Colombian case study reflect on the need to move beyond victims and perpetrators, towards notions of shared responsibility. Similarly, in Northern Ireland 'a shared future' for both state actors and society was a core vision for civil society. This echoes the approach to dealing with the past by swisspeace, a practice-research institute, which points to transforming victims and perpetrators "into citizens with equal rights who can play a meaningful role in the establishment of a peaceful and democratic society".

Two examples from the case studies, the Women, Peace and Security Collective in Colombia, and the Memory Project in the Georgian-Abkhaz context, highlight the benefit of opportunities to break down institutional and personal conflict-based views. They look to create space to build new relationships among representatives of communities and institutions that are violently at odds with or isolated from each other, but who understand the need to find ways to communicate and cooperate in order to build a peaceful future. The examples suggest that spaces work well when they are discrete and invite in motivated participants with sufficient experience to raise sensitive issues that might be problematic in a more public discussion.

The Women, Peace and Security Collective involves 'difficult conversations' between women from sectors traditionally opposed to each other, such as the military and human rights groups. These try to shift the security paradigm from one based on traditional hard security operations and military capacity to one with human security at its centre. The practical exercise of collating and systematising oral histories and archival material in the Memory Project sheds light on the range of perspectives and experiences of the conflict, and supports people-to-people contact in a closed political space. At its core, the work is about creating a foundation for building different and new relationships, rather than restoring previous ones.

Relational statebuilding

Institutional reforms are integral to peacebuilding but are seldom associated with reconciliation. Yet the institutions of a state that has been the object of contestation and conflict for many years are often deeply mistrusted and unstable. Even after a peace agreement is signed, changes to political and security arrangements as part of statebuilding exercises (*see* Conciliation Resources (2016), 'Workshop Report: Peacebuilding and Reconciliation') can result in the emergence of new forms of violence and threats to sustainable peace such as electoral violence or the splintering of armed groups.

A gap in both current reconciliation and statebuilding approaches is how they address structural violence – a key conflict driver – and the relationships that underpin it. Conflicts are often asymmetric, driven by discrimination, marginalisation and inequality, and a core challenge for reconciliation efforts is to address unequal and intersecting power relationships. A focus on integrating reconciliation into statebuilding could help to address the political deficit in statebuilding that has been identified as a stumbling block to its effectiveness.

For example, the transitional justice process in Tunisia (*see* Conciliation Resources (2016), 'Workshop Report: Peacebuilding and Reconciliation') has targeted, among other things, political and economic corruption – the main rallying point for the revolution and removal of former President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali. The process is seen by many as integral to re-establishing citizens' trust in state institutions, and promoting the rule of law, equitable development and reconciliation. Yet recent political developments, including the emergence of former regime officials on the political scene, have favoured prioritising human rights violations over corruption, leading to stalemate in how to push the entire transitional process forward.

"A gap in both current reconciliation and statebuilding approaches is how they address structural violence, a key conflict driver, and the relationships that underpin it."

The case studies illustrate how questions of statebuilding are bound up in the possibility of transforming relationships. In Northern Ireland, while the two main communities share the same political institutions, they remain divided by physical, social and political barriers such as continued segregated housing and education. In Mindanao, the formalisation of a proposed self-governing territory of Bangsamoro with a predominantly Moro population is affected by negative stereotypes of Muslims from the broader (predominantly Christian) Filipino population. In the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict, territorially divided communities have little physical opportunity for interaction. This is driven by contrasting positions on statehood, whereby Abkhaz claims to self-determination threaten Georgia's territorial integrity. The distinction between intra- and inter-state conflict is also contested.

The case studies suggest that statebuilding cannot be a purely technical exercise to define the nature of the state and reform public institutions. While post-war institutions may bring

together former adversaries (most obviously in the security sector), significant parts of the public are likely to remain highly mistrustful of the state. Addressing this gap is vital to a transformative approach to statebuilding, and can support prevention of future conflict risk.

For example, González and Mendoza suggest that in Colombia a truth-telling process providing clarity on the failure of previous demobilisation negotiations with the FARC-EP, as well as accurate information rather than speculation about who committed particular attacks and massacres, would support community confidence in future disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration processes. In Mindanao, a key question is how community priorities highlighted in the listening process – such as discrimination and land dispossession – can be incorporated into a potential truth commission.

The example of police reform in Northern Ireland demonstrates the need for continued awareness of the past in institutional changes. Reform has involved a change in name, the incorporation of all political parties including Sinn Féin on the Policing Board, and stronger community involvement. This has been largely positive: the new service has greater accountability and trust among unionist and nationalist communities. It presented a clear break from the Royal Ulster Constabulary, which held significant and opposing conflict associations for both sides. However, broader political disagreements over how to deal with the past have left the new police service responsible for investigation into historical violence – leading to renewed suspicion and recurring questions on the contested role of the police during the conflict.

Conclusion

As the case studies testify, and Bloomfield stresses in this publication, reconciliation is not a soft or easy option: it is hugely challenging, and the stakes are very high – "if politics fail, or community relations revert to violence, then all is lost". Nor is it restricted to the 'local' or grassroots level, but involves concerted efforts to transform relationships at all levels.

Rather than, as is often presented, necessitating a binary choice between accountability or peacemaking, reconciliation involves difficult conversations and decisions happening simultaneously: how to provide redress for those who have experienced different types of violence (direct, indirect and structural); how to build trust in political institutions; and how future societal relations can be strengthened to ensure non-recurrence of violence.

The case studies highlight that reconciliation is also a political question that requires acute awareness of who is promoting it, at what moment, for what purpose, and from what perspective. Experiences from Northern Ireland reveal the danger of persistently prioritising political power sharing over a mutual future for all communities – resulting in a fragile political system that prolongs conflict-era polarisation (in this case between nationalism and unionism), and continued societal divisions.

A look at different phases of a peace process provides a better understanding of what types of activity are appropriate in the conflict cycle. The case studies highlight that upstream efforts can be effective when focused on changing relationships. Different contexts demand different emphases at different junctures – be it political design, development of civil society practice, or disarmament and reintegration. Rather than reconciliation as a single or fixed outcome it is more useful to talk about 'the art of the possible': to transform relationships according to the particular demands of local circumstances, and the cumulative and ongoing effect of multiple efforts, across levels and over time.

"Reconciliation is also a political question that requires acute awareness of who is promoting it, at what moment, for what purpose, and from what perspective."

This third Accord Insight aims to open up conversation on how efforts to transform relationships can effectively overcome the legacies of past violence and support sustainable peace. It identifies opportunities for further analysis, including: the possibilities for upstream and preventive reconciliation, and how these can be sensitively supported; the potential of efforts to address diverse forms of conflict-related harm, including structural change; and how progress in the quality of relationships can be measured.

Expert analysis

Connecting the dots: reconciliation and peacebuilding

Mark Salter

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This third Accord Insight publication responds to a striking contrast in the field of reconciliation over the last decade: while there has been relatively little conceptual development in the literature on reconciliation since the IDEA publication, *Reconciliation after violent conflict: A handbook* (2003) – with the exception of some specific aspects and practical tools – there has been a marked increase in applied focus on reconciliation frameworks and approaches in a range of conflict contexts.

Case studies examine four contexts at differing stages of conflict and peace process: a conflict that lacks a formal agreement between the parties (the Georgian-Abkhaz context); one where negotiations are ongoing (Colombia); a post-conflict environment where an agreement has recently been concluded (Mindanao); and another 15 years on from a formal accord (Northern Ireland).

At a theoretical level, the contributions in this publication enhance our understanding of the interaction between repairing and (re)building human relationships shattered by a legacy of violence, and the demands of reconstructing post-conflict societies, including political accommodation and institution building. On a practical level, the case studies offer important insights into reconciliation approaches that have, or have not, worked in societies with very different histories of violence and that are at very different stages along the conflict spectrum.

This Accord Insight project began with a series of discussions with local and international policy and practitioner specialists to identify gaps in the field. While policymakers and practitioners increasingly acknowledge the importance of supporting reconciliation for sustainable peace, two core challenges emerged: limited understanding of when reconciliation activities are possible and appropriate, and the impact they potentially have; and the real challenges of connecting to bottom-up initiatives in a context where dominant reconciliation frameworks are often top-down in both conception and practice, with the associated implications this may have for inclusive peacebuilding.

With an emphasis on seeking out and listening to the voices of all those affected by violence – victims and perpetrators alike, as well as the marginalised – initiatives of the kind discussed in this publication may be well placed to help foster genuinely inclusive peacebuilding strategies and approaches: for example, to help transform relationships between communities, and between society and the state in divided societies. And to the extent that they may also focus on involving and empowering women in particular, they can contribute to gender-sensitive peacebuilding efforts.

Understanding reconciliation

What *is* reconciliation, and what is its potential role in helping to build peace in the aftermath of violent conflict? There is a long history of ethical reconciliation initiatives understood in a variety of ways, including in religious terms, which focus on reconciliation as an *outcome* of acts of individual or collective forgiveness. Equally prevalent today are *political* approaches, within which reconciliation is viewed primarily as the *process* of rebuilding fractured societal structures in general, and human relations in particular, in the aftermath of violent conflict. This, moreover, is a process that does not necessarily involve or imply individual acts of forgiveness – even if it certainly does not exclude them.

Political reconciliation is specifically focused on the healing and transformation of relationships in order to enable a

society to function effectively. As David Bloomfield observes (*see page 16*), it recognises the need for transforming relationships at different levels: both vertically (between state and society) and horizontally (at the inter-community and inter-elite levels). The type of society political reconciliation strives to create is not necessarily one characterised by social harmony. As Gonzalo Sanchez Gomez, Director of the Colombian National Centre for Historical Memory, said in a discussion on memory and reconciliation in May 2016:

"Reconciliation…take[s] the form of a new pact rebuilding the institutions and the rules of democracy. …Make no mistake: a politically reconciled society is not a harmonious society, but rather a society that is militantly diverse."

How does reconciliation relate to other strategies for addressing the challenges confronting societies recovering from a violent past? Perhaps the strongest juxtaposition is between human rights and reconciliation. The two notions are sometimes presented as fundamentally contrary. While human rights might be seen to lean towards 'naming and shaming' for crimes committed, courtrooms, and the punishment of perpetrators to combat impunity, reconciliation might be thought of as pointing towards amnesties, 'strategic forgetting' and other measures that prioritise conflict resolution.

'Transitional justice' (TJ) emerged in the 1980s in recognition of the fact that post-violence societies, particularly those undergoing political transition (from dictatorship to democracy, for example), require specific, contextually tailored approaches. Linked to the development of truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs), initially in Latin America and later in South Africa, by the late 1990s TJ had moved to centre stage in the international inventory of strategies for addressing the past. While the TRC model suggested a degree of harmony and complementarity between its two conceptual poles of 'Truth' and 'Reconciliation', the reality, however, remained somewhat more fractured.

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In the last decade, a further category of practice has developed: 'Dealing with the Past' (DwP). Most of DwP's proposed instruments – justice, acknowledgement, accountability, reparation, an end to impunity, and ensuring non-recurrence – are to varying degrees shared with reconciliation and TJ. What renders DwP distinct is its specific emphasis on the past – to the potential exclusion, as some argue, of strategies that promote present and even future co-existence within a society recovering from violent conflict.

Today there is an increasing focus on the 'democratisation of reconciliation', including in countries such as Colombia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines (Mindanao) that are in the process of shaping their post-violence truth and reconciliation architecture. In all three cases, as well as the earlier process in South Africa, a primary civil society demand is for an officially sanctioned TRC and other related mechanisms to be designed with the needs – and participation – of ordinary victims at the forefront. This is a hopeful development, not least because it directly addresses a key challenge for peace processes: promoting and securing popular participation and ownership of institutions and mechanisms.

This publication is concerned with how efforts to address the legacies of past violence contribute to more inclusive and peaceful futures in conflict-affected and divided societies. A key challenge is that understanding of reconciliation and dealing with the past is highly contextualised, and varies for different people in different cultures and conflict environments. A core practical role for reconciliation in building peace is to create the space needed to transform, restore and (re)create relationships affected by violence, and to enable complexity with respect to issues and identities – complexity otherwise closed down by armed conflict – to thrive within society.

Reconciliation in practice

Today there is greater understanding that reconciliation, understood first and foremost as relationship-building, can be pursued via projects that, for example, promote localised economic cooperation and exchange as well as explicit larger-scale peace and reconciliation-directed initiatives.

Despite continuing variations in terminology, a fairly established itemisation of reconciliation's fundamental objectives and approaches has emerged from the combined experience of initiatives at different levels – top, middle and grassroots. *Truth-telling* gives victims the opportunity to recount their experiences and crimes they have suffered or witnessed. TRCs and TRC-type structures have emerged as the most common instrument for promoting the needs of both victims and society as a whole for truth(s) regarding the painful events of the past.

A second objective is *justice*. Violent conflicts of recent decades – such as those in Rwanda, the former Yugoslavia, Cambodia and Sierra Leone – have given rise to a new type of instrument: the international tribunal in the first two cases or the special/hybrid tribunal involving a mix of international and domestic judges in the latter two. In addition, while these instruments still rest on the basic tenets of traditional retributive justice, approaches based on restorative justice are coming to the fore, notably in societies where traditional or tradition-based practices still enjoy considerable popular support and legitimacy.

Perhaps the best-known example of this is Rwanda's *gacaca* courts, a modernised version of a traditional structure that in the aftermath of the 1994 genocide were used to try almost all but the highest category of the thousands of Rwandese accused of direct involvement in the slaughter.

Reparation is a third core objective: providing some form of compensation to victims for the suffering, injury or injustice they have experienced as a result of violent conflict. While redress can rarely equate directly to injury suffered (for example the murder of a wife, husband, son or daughter), reparations are a means by which a society can seek to square this particular circle, in the first instance through financial compensation, but also in other material forms – land or housing – and potentially on a collective as much as an individual basis.

The TRCs in Latin American countries such as Guatemala and Peru, along with South Africa, were pioneering: they gave full recognition to the structural roots of the discrimination, injustice and violence suffered by specific communities both prior to and during violence, and attempted to respond by recommending structural or community-based reparations programmes.

Fourth is the objective of fostering *healing* among the victims of violence. This can take many forms, ranging from psycho-social programmes to promote the mental health of individual victims, to broad-based initiatives designed to help rebuild community life and cohesion in areas affected by violent conflict.

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How has reconciliation featured in peace negotiations and agreements? While amnesty provisions were for many years a common feature of peace agreements and transitions to democracy, concerted campaigns against impunity have fundamentally changed the general acceptance of amnesty in peace processes. For example the *Belfast Amnesty and Accountability Principles* aim to assist all those seeking to make or evaluate decisions on amnesties and accountability.

While TRCs have become staple ingredients of peace agreements, there is also a more sober understanding of what such commissions can achieve in practice. In parallel, there is increased awareness of the need for an enabling political context for the proper functioning of a TRC. There is also greater clarity that setting up a TRC does not absolve the state from its continuing responsibilities in areas covered by the commission's mandate. The Peruvian TRC, for example, was very clear about the state's responsibilities for reparation and redress for victims of the country's decades-long conflict, in particular with respect to indigenous and other historically marginalised communities. A similar focus on victims of historic systemic exclusion might be relevant in the event that a TRC is set up in Colombia.

Whose reconciliation?

A key challenge for reconciliation in practice is securing consensus on what any process actually involves. Many contexts are marked by strong cultural interpretations of reconciliation or in some cases by its apparent absence from dominant social thinking and practice, at least in relation to how the concept is conventionally understood.

As noted, reconciliation can be viewed from a range of levels and perspectives. At the *individual* level there can be acts of interpersonal reconciliation: the South African TRC involved encounters between victims of apartheid-era crimes and their perpetrators, sometimes accompanied by public exchanges of apology and forgiveness. At the *communal or regional* level such encounters often take place in the context of processes addressing the wider legacy of civil war or other national-level conflicts, as occurred in Kenya in the aftermath of widespread election-related violence in 2007. *Institutional* reconciliation focuses on efforts to address a specific institution's abusive legacy, for example the judiciary or the police, while *psychosocial* reconciliation addresses the healing needs of victims traumatised by a legacy of abuse or violence.

Reconciliation is also highly contextualised. In a number of Latin American countries, including Argentina and Chile, there is a marked resistance to and suspicion of the notion of reconciliation, or at least to initiatives described as such. In the main, this is a response to the appropriation of the language of reconciliation by authoritarian military regimes to support amnesty for themselves and to promote a broader culture of impunity.

The opposite holds in West Africa and Francophone Africa more generally. Here, to the outsider it can sometimes appear as if just about anything and everything can be labelled 'reconciliation' – an inter-party congress, a backroom deal between political leaders, a new electoral law. Any genuine reconciliation-focused initiative therefore, has to begin by distinguishing itself from prevailing understandings of the term.

There are also plenty of cultures and languages in which the term reconciliation does not formally exist. For example, translators in Sri Lanka previously informed this author that there is no word for reconciliation in the island's two main languages, Sinhalese and Tamil. A Tamil Hindu professor later explained that the problem went deeper: since under the universal laws of *karma* a person will pay for their misdeeds in their next life, there was little point in practising forgiveness, as their fate was already sealed.

Finally, in many places religion plays a significant role in delineating the understanding of reconciliation. In countries with a strong Christian tradition or contemporary practice, for example, an ethical approach to reconciliation usually predominates. Indeed it may be no accident that a clear majority of countries that have established TRCs to date belong in this category. None of which, of course, is to suggest that TRCs cannot function in other cultural contexts – the *Instance Équité et Réconciliation* in majority-Muslim Morocco, the TRC in Nepal and the prospective TRC in majority-Buddhist Sri Lanka being three cases in point – as well as the Transitional

Justice and Reconciliation Commission established for the predominantly Muslim Mindanao region of the Philippines, (*see page 35*).

Insight into reconciliation

The case studies and broader analyses presented in this publication emphasise a transformative, relationship-focused approach to reconciliation. They also provide grounded, empirical insight into specific possibilities and challenges at different stages of conflict and peacebuilding: for example, Colombia, where a final peace agreement is still being negotiated, or Mindanao, where the focus has shifted to agreement implementation. The case studies develop understanding of *how* and *whether* reconciliation activities can support inclusive peace processes. In particular, they focus on how efforts to transform relationships at multiple levels facilitate progress towards peaceful and inclusive futures. They are complemented by analysis from David Bloomfield who seeks to clarify definitional aspects of reconciliation, emphasising the need for reconciliation to disentangle itself from the transitional justice framework. A synopsis of past articles from the Accord series brings together further practical experiences on dealing with the legacies of violence – including from Aceh, Guatemala, Lebanon and northern Uganda.

The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict case study looks first at the challenges of undertaking (and even talking about) initiatives to address legacies of violence in the absence of a formal political agreement, despite the cessation of direct violence. The article is co-authored by Rachel Clogg, Conciliation Resources Caucasus Programme Director; a Georgian colleague, Marina Elbakidze; and an Abkhaz colleague Arda Inal-Ipa. From their different perspectives, they chart the extent to which initiatives are feasible in a context of protracted conflict, and the role these initiatives play in peacebuilding. The challenge is profound as understanding of reconciliation itself is polarised and divisive because the term has been so highly politicised. Against a complex and sensitised backdrop, the authors explore the 'art of the possible' in trying to transform relationships.

As (at the time of writing) Colombia enters the final stages of peace negotiations between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP) insurgents and the Colombian Government, there are fundamental questions over how to reconcile state and society after decades of extreme violence, exclusion and mistrust. Rosa Emilia Salamanca and Ricardo Mendoza reflect that while transitional justice and victims' issues have been centre stage at the negotiations in Havana, implementation is still a concern. Difficult conversations will be needed so society as a whole can deal with the emerging truths of what happened during the war, and so real change can progress to build a peaceful future for all.

The Mindanao study looks at reconciliation discussions that have taken place since the signing of the *Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro* (CAB) in 2014. Rufa Cagoco-Guiam looks at the close links between previous reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts and the work of the Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC), set up as part of the 'normalisation' framework of the CAB. In particular she focuses on lessons from a 'listening process' under the TJRC to engage the needs and priorities of Mindanao communities, and the broader social and political challenges affecting the possibility for reconciliation, including delays to the passing of the Bangsamoro Basic Law by the Philippines Senate and House of Representatives.

Finally, the Northern Ireland case study explores how reconciliation has progressed since the 1998 *Belfast Agreement*. Duncan Morrow suggests that political leadership in Northern Ireland as well as key actors such as the British and Irish governments have opted for 'peace without reconciliation'. This has meant that securing and maintaining power-sharing arrangements between Unionist and Nationalist parties has been prioritised over developing a shared future for society. The article is accompanied by a synopsis of principles to address the gendered impact of the legacy of violence in Northern Ireland.

Our hope is that in focusing on transformative, relationship-focused and political approaches to reconciliation through practical experience in countries at different stages of the conflict cycle, this Accord Insight publication can make a distinct – and substantive – contribution to understanding the complex interrelationship between peacebuilding and addressing the legacies of a violent past.

The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict

Background

The Georgian-Abkhaz conflict has deep roots. Competing claims to territory and political power came to a head with the collapse of the Soviet Union, resulting in full-scale war in 1992–93. At the heart of the conflict is a clash between the Abkhaz claim for self-determination and Georgia's claim for territorial integrity.

By the time a ceasefire was signed in 1994, at least 12,000 people had been killed, and Abkhazia had broken away from Georgian control. Most of the ethnic Georgian population in Abkhazia, as well as many others, were forced to leave their homes: the numbers of displaced are contested but significant. Almost the entire population of Abkhazia experienced trauma and suffering during the war and its aftermath.

Different phases of official peace talks have not resulted in serious progress toward a negotiated peace, and prospects for a settlement are distant. Views differ concerning the roots of the conflict and terminology – the Abkhaz, for instance, use Sukhum or Gal as place names, where the Georgians use Sokhumi or Gali. The sides seek diametrically opposed outcomes from a negotiation process: the Abkhaz aspire to widespread recognition of their independence and insist on building relations with the Georgians on the basis of equal statehood; the Georgians aspire to the return of the territory of Abkhazia to Georgian jurisdiction, and insist on the right of return for the displaced population.

New layers of complexity were added by Russia's recognition of Abkhazia's independence after the 2008 war in South Ossetia. There is no agreement on who the parties to the conflict are – Georgia emphasises its conflict with Russia, while Abkhazia focuses on its conflict with Georgia. At the same time, though, many in Abkhazia would argue that with Russian security guarantees in the form of military bases, there is nothing more to talk with Georgia about.

The conflict is exacerbated by its location on a geopolitical fault line. Crudely put, Georgia is backed by 'the West' and Abkhazia by Russia. The divergence in the geopolitical trajectories of the two sides has most recently been exemplified by two signing ceremonies: the Georgian signing of an *Association Agreement* with the European Union in June 2014; and the Abkhaz signing of an *Agreement on Alliance and Strategic Partnership* with the Russian Federation in November 2014.

For well over twenty years the two societies have been living almost entirely separate existences. Years of blockade by all its neighbours cut Abkhazia off from the rest of the world and encouraged a siege mentality that continues today, in spite of ties with Russia in particular becoming increasingly close in recent years. There is minimal contact across the Georgian-Abkhaz divide, and limited contact between Georgians and Abkhaz within Abkhazia (see see Box 2, Gal/i region, page 22). Most of the younger generation on both sides have no experience of interaction with the other, let alone coexistence.

Unresolved conflict continues to shape the lives of many people – in restricted freedom of movement, contested identity documents, and infringements of basic socio-economic and human rights for people living in Abkhazia (Abkhaz and non-Abkhaz alike), as well as those who have been displaced.

The art of the possible: dealing with past violence in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict

Rachel Clogg, Marina Elbakidze and Arda Inal-Ipa

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Arda Inal-Ipa is a civil society activist, based at the Center for Humanitarian Programmes, Sukhum/i. By profession she is a psychologist, having graduated from Moscow State University. After the Georgian-Abkhaz war, together with like-minded people she established the Centre for Humanitarian Programmes (CHP). CHP works on civic education, human rights issues and democratic development in Abkhazia and for 20 years has been involved in Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue. Since 2007 Arda has been a member of the People's Chamber on Abkhazia.

Working on conflict is about the art of the possible. The absence of a political settlement to the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict presents an apparently insurmountable wall to efforts to pursue reconciliation. The legacies of violence and how different communities remember the past add additional barbed wire to this metaphorical wall: the very concept of reconciliation itself has become highly politicised, and for the Abkhaz in particular associated with capitulation.

The conflict parties largely do not inhabit the same physical space and continue with diametrically opposed visions of the conflict – as a Russian occupation of Georgian territory on the one hand, and a Georgian inability to recognise the reality of Abkhaz independence on the other. The notion of coexistence is therefore inextricably linked to a political settlement. It is understood very differently, in terms of the final outcomes the parties aspire to: independence for the Abkhaz; reintegration of Abkhazia and expulsion of Russian forces for the Georgians. For the Abkhaz, safe relations means being good neighbours with Georgians in separate states, where for Georgians it means the opposite – to restore coexistence within one state.

Yet if we start from the premise that reconciliation does not mean restoring past relationships, but creating new ones, can attempts to promote relational change not start in advance of a peace deal? There is certainly a demand for progress. The multi-ethnic populations on both sides of the conflict want and need a stable peace and secure relationships. And one could argue that in the absence of settlement, a process to deal with past violence is a necessary starting point for a negotiation process that has some chance of success. Trying to improve relationships prior to political settlement might have limited impact on the institutions or socio-economic developments that can lead to more widespread and structural change. But laying the foundations for an honest acknowledgement of perceptions and past violations of rights, and engaging both societies in deeper processes to address root causes of conflict is an essential component of conflict transformation, and is possible – and necessary – now.

Reconciliation before resolution?

For most Georgians, reconciliation is positive; the outcome of a peacebuilding process, and a necessary precursor to resolving the conflict. Reconciliation works toward restoring relations that were damaged by the war, which in turn brings the societies closer together and makes the Georgian political goal of restoring territorial integrity, and reintegrating Abkhazia into the fold more likely. There are of course other, minority views that are more nuanced, but the general attitude can be summed up as 'we need first to reconcile with the Abkhaz, in order for them to return to us'.

The Abkhaz, on the other hand, do not seek a return to earlier relations perceived as having threatened Abkhaz identity and led to armed conflict. In their eyes, the Georgian aggressor continues to attempt to reintegrate Abkhazia through 'soft power' – working to improve relations as a means to a political end. Repairing relationships therefore is perceived as a return to the status quo ante, an ongoing threat to a vulnerable Abkhaz identity, and a step towards conceding defeat in the Abkhaz goal of self-determination. Reconciliation implies forgiveness without justice, the restoration of broken relationships without an acceptable political solution of the conflict or security guarantees, and without a critical assessment of the war and acknowledgement of Abkhaz losses. As Box 1 illustrates, this is at times compounded by Georgians' conflation of 'reconciliation' with 'reintegration' – which spells victory for them and defeat for the Abkhaz.

This polarisation plays across many spheres in the Georgian-Abkhaz context to build up a complex web of barriers to progress on reconciliation, of which the absence of a political

settlement is perhaps the single most significant. And there are few prospects for reaching political agreement even in the medium future on the fundamental issues at stake.

Caution about the term reconciliation is in some respects a question of semantics. People living on both sides of the conflict divide aspire to live in safety, with their rights protected, able to prosper and develop. To many outside the context, this would appear to be what reconciliation is really about – the achievement of a positive peace, of sufficiently inclusive and just societies that are no longer driven by mutually exclusive ethno-nationalist narratives.

Yet the term reconciliation has become so invested with contradictory political meaning, it is not useful to use it. And there are real constraints, linked to the conflict dynamic, that go beyond the language we use and militate against change. If improving relations in the absence of a final settlement (or in the words of one Abkhaz "before we have built the fence that will make us good neighbours") is perceived on both sides as serving the political goals of one side more than the other, then the 'first steps toward peace' are unlikely to get very far.

Systemic change and the 'national project'

The past is highly politicised: current debates about the 'national project' on either side of the divide have at their core fundamental identity issues – based on unilateral, often contested and incompatible narratives about the past. The war and relatively recent and widespread experience of violence exacerbate this – mistrust, insecurity and unaddressed grievances from the recent past are core drivers of the ongoing conflict and of nationalist agendas on both sides. The Abkhaz speak of the war as an attempt to wipe them out as a nation.

BOX 1

What's in a name? The Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality

The renaming of the Georgian Ministry for Reintegration as the Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality in 2014 reflects a familiar dynamic in the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict. In 2004, Georgia set up the State Ministry for Conflict Resolution Issues to be responsible for addressing its conflicts regarding Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It was renamed in early 2008 as the State Ministry for Reintegration, making explicit Georgia's political agenda vis-à-vis the conflict regions: to reintegrate them back into Georgia.

On 1 January 2014, after a new government came to power, the name changed again, to the State Ministry for Reconciliation and Civic Equality. This was also intended to send political signals – that Georgia was approaching the conflicts from a reconciliation and inclusion angle, and to mark an end to the previous era in Georgian politics.

The latest renaming was seen as a positive signal that could boost confidence by many inside Georgia, as well as by international actors supporting Tbilisi to adopt a different approach. Yet the response on the Abkhaz side was negative: a new label for the old goal of reintegration, putting a gloss on Georgia's real intentions

This negative response reinforced Georgian perceptions that the Abkhaz are never satisfied, and that whatever Georgia does will necessarily be wrong in their eyes. Yet if anything, replacing reintegration with reconciliation has confirmed Abkhaz fears that the two are indeed synonymous, and has narrowed the space for 'reconciliation' work.

On the Georgian side, the fate of Georgians displaced from Abkhazia is seen as a gross violation of human rights.

Georgian political pressure on its Western allies not to support Abkhazia in statebuilding tends to prevent any form of cooperation between the West and Abkhazia, which in turn creates obstacles to potential reforms – for example in healthcare, policing and education – that could lead to improvements for the whole population, including Gal/i region, and to a political environment more conducive to embracing diversity.

On the Georgian side, the context of an unresolved conflict increases fears of potential secession of other areas of the country where non-ethnic Georgians live in compact settlements. This hinders work to create a more shared, pluralistic society in which citizenship as a defining factor overtakes the pride of place currently accorded ethnic identity.

Domestic politics

The unresolved conflict provides easy ammunition for political opposition on both sides – what better way of critiquing the incumbent authorities than to accuse them of complicity with the enemy? The Gal/i region in particular has become hostage to domestic political dynamics in Abkhazia (*see Box 2*). For Abkhaz leaders to reach out to their own Georgian population in the current context can be construed as being pro-Georgian, which is political suicide.

On the Georgian side, the Law on Occupied Territories, adopted under President Saakashvili soon after the 2008 war over South Ossetia categorises Abkhazia as a territory occupied by Russia. This ignores the Abkhaz perspective and limits potential starting points for a conversation about political aspirations. It restricts, among other things, freedom of movement and economic activities in Abkhazia, and places legal constraints on international actors to engage directly with the Abkhaz. A ban on foreigners entering Abkhazia via the Russian Federation creates an artificial 'dependency' on Georgia.

Yet, since 2008 voices calling for the Georgian-Abkhaz conflict to be resolved using military force have all but ceased, and surveys, including a Conciliation Resources report (2011), *Displacement in Georgia: IDP attitudes to conflict, return and justice*, indicate that the numbers of IDPs who believe return will be possible any time soon is now very small. There appears to be increasing readiness in some parts of the population to listen to and respect the rights of the Abkhaz, and to think beyond the mantra of restoring territorial integrity to consider a range of options for future relations. This includes discussion of the possibility of recognising Abkhaz independence under certain conditions as a means to transform relations.

In spite of arguably more diverse public opinion in Georgia, the government has felt under significant domestic political pressure not to rock the political boat. There are concerns that any attempt to lift the Law on Occupied Territories would be capitalised on by the opposition and presented as the government being soft on Russia.

BOX 2

Gal/i region

The one exception to otherwise very limited Georgian-Abkhaz inter-ethnic contact is the Georgian population in the Gal/i region of Abkhazia. They co-exist with Abkhaz and other ethnic groups, yet remain compactly settled in south-east Abkhazia along the river Ingur/i. There is much less interaction with them than among other ethnic groups in Abkhazia: many Abkhaz residents in the capital, Sukhum/i, have not travelled to the Gal/i region since the war over 20 years ago.

There is, though, more exchange than there was previously – some of the Gal/i population travel to Sukhum/i to trade in the market, to work in manual labour, or to study at the university – leading to the increasing distinction drawn in Abkhaz rhetoric between the Gal/i Georgians (often referred to as Mingrelians) and 'Georgians proper'. Many in Tbilisi see the emphasis by the Abkhaz authorities on Mingrelian identity as politically motivated: an attempt to assimilate the Gal/i Georgians by playing down, and indeed restricting, their links on the other side of the river Ingur/i.

What is clear is that the situation of the Gal/i Georgians has not created impetus for an improved relationship between the two sides of the conflict. The interactions that do exist across the divide are mostly hidden – people know there are Abkhaz travelling for healthcare in Georgia, for example, but they tend not to talk about it. Far more vocal are the hostile voices, particularly on social media, who feed the potential for destabilisation in the Gal/i region, and maintain the notion of a 'fifth column' as a live concern.

There have been improvements in living conditions for the Gal/i population, for example a reduction in crime, development of infrastructure, and transport links. At the same time, though, new legislation presents challenges to the right to school education in one's native language and to voting and property rights for the Gal/i population. This has a serious impact on the potential for relationships to improve among ethnic groups in Abkhazia. There have been attempts to initiate activities that build relationships – for example to jointly identify ways of addressing the problems faced by different ethnic groups within Abkhazia (*see* Conciliation Resources (2015), 'Dialogue and Diversity in Abkhazia') – but these are rare examples of collective exchange and action.

Geopolitics

There is also an overwhelming narrative among many Georgians that the Abkhaz in fact have no domestic agency: they are at best being cleverly manipulated by Russia and at worst have had their political agenda overtaken by Moscow. To engage with Abkhaz perspectives seriously, so the argument runs, is thus to play into the hands of the Russian aggressor, and weaken Georgia.

The language is changing in Georgia: it has become more acceptable in some circles at least to talk about a 'Georgian-Abkhaz conflict', and to acknowledge the Abkhaz as a party to the conflict. Yet a predominant focus on Russia as the architect of instability in Georgia, and doubts as to the ability of the

Abkhaz to control their fate, continue to undermine Georgian attempts to reach out to the Abkhaz. This predominant view affects many Georgians' attitudes to reconciliation: they view a return to the status quo prior to the establishment of Russian military bases as sufficient for restoring peaceful relations – that is, there is no fundamental conflict between Georgians and Abkhaz.

Many Abkhaz want external links beyond Russia, too. While Russia is clearly their key strategic partner, there is a vulnerability inherent in such circumscribed foreign relations. Some are concerned that a Russian-Georgian détente might damage Abkhaz interests. There is, though, little interest in developing international diplomacy if this is done exclusively via Tbilisi. A common perception is that Western interlocutors promote interaction between the Georgians and Abkhaz, and emphasise confidence-building measures across the conflict divide over other elements of direct engagement with Abkhaz needs, in order to support Georgia in its aim of reintegrating Abkhazia. In light of this, the Abkhaz authorities try to limit possible cooperation with Georgia and downplay what little exchange or trade relations exist between the two. This in turn distorts the reality of how relationships are developing, which is precisely what needs to be taken into account when aiming to build peaceful and stable relations across the divide.

Civil society

Civil society efforts to reach out across the conflict divide can also meet with unintended consequences. The 'Sorry Campaign', launched by a Georgian NGO in 2007 attempted to initiate a grassroots movement to apologise to the Abkhaz people, in order to 'change the dynamics and direction of relationships established between Georgians and Abkhazians in recent years [and to] encourage people to think about the horrors of war and the mistakes we have made'. While the campaign mobilised limited support, it never really gained momentum in Georgia. And on the Abkhaz side it was largely dismissed as either naive or insincere. Although designed to try to shift the debate in a positive direction, the framing of the text of the apology and the nature of the campaign arguably created more ill will in a context where acknowledgement, and even more so apology, were absent at the official level.

In 2010, a film made by a Georgian peace activist titled 'Absence of Will' was shown in Abkhazia. The film focuses on two young Georgians' journey of discovery as they set out to understand what the conflict with Abkhazia is about. It is a challenging film, which explores Georgia's role and responsibility. On the Georgian side the film was contentious and perceived by many as overly self-critical.

After several unsuccessful attempts by Abkhaz civil society to arrange a screening, an opportunity arose to show the film on Abkhaz state television. The last minute-decision to screen the film and the consequent lack of public preparedness was an aggravating factor. Even so, the depth of negative reaction to the film was surprising. Many Abkhaz were highly suspicious of this attempt to re-frame Georgia's role, and the agenda they presumed must lie behind this.

The political opposition seized on ambivalent feelings, particularly among the 'Mothers of the Fallen' – a group of women who lost sons and other members of their families during the war – and publicly exploited negative responses to the film for political ends. Although the film provoked a more nuanced reaction among many people, the loudest public resonance was negative. Overall, civil society supporters of conflict transformation in either society, and particularly on the Abkhaz side, do not occupy a comfortable position and run the risk of marginalisation or even ostracism.

The art of the possible: dealing with the past

Over decades of Georgian-Abkhaz peacebuilding work, 'dealing with the past' has emerged as a key conceptual space to address the legacies of violence that are such a barrier to a peaceful future. In the words of one dialogue participant: "Only if the mistakes of the past are acknowledged will it be possible to talk about future relations." Initiatives that enable a more reflective, and potentially more inclusive, conversation about the violent past are essential to building the possibility for more constructive relations in future.

There are of course challenges in embarking on a process of dealing with the past in the absence of political agreement: there is no common legal framework within which to address the legacies of violence; there is no point in time at which a line can be drawn in the sand, and the parties can agree that the war and the deep-seated grievances associated with it are in the past. Moreover, some fear that to open up old wounds when settlement is a long way off would only further damage relationships.

"Over decades of Georgian-Abkhaz peacebuilding work, 'dealing with the past' has emerged as a key conceptual space to address the legacies of violence that are such a barrier to a peaceful future."

Activities that focus on the 'right to know' have proved most appropriate to a context in which political settlement is such a distant prospect. Significant work has been done by the International Committee of the Red Cross to conduct exhumations on Abkhaz territory and enable exchange of remains of missing persons between the sides. A number of different initiatives, some led by civil society and also at the level of the formal peace process, are working to transfer archival material from Tbilisi to Sukhum/i to restore a small part of what was lost during the 1992–93 war when the Abkhaz archive was burnt. This is in part a symbolic reparation, in part an effort to rebuild missing elements in Abkhaz cultural history.

Other work aims to create space for people to talk about their experience of the war years. International NGOs – the Berghof Foundation and Conciliation Resources/swisspeace – work with local partners to capture oral history accounts, with some

focusing more on 'ordinary' people's experience, and others on key actors' and decision makers' testimonies. Work of this nature, that acknowledges the existence of different narratives, is an important precursor to thinking about a shared narrative moving forward post-settlement.

These initiatives contribute to peacebuilding as they enable people to acknowledge there were victims on both sides. They entail bearing responsibility, an appreciation of the others' grievances, and a readiness to acknowledge the irrevocable damage done to people's lives, identities and relationships. If reconciliation is seen negatively by many in the region as seeking to restore prior relations, or even brushing over difference, dealing with the past is perceived as more transformative – it is about creating a new basis for building different relationships, not a return to what there was before. One colleague from the region put it this way:

> "If a vase was made badly and broke because it was not sufficiently robust, and we then try to stick it back together as it was – this is reconciliation. But if we try to understand why it broke and then rebuild it in a sturdy and lasting way – this is dealing with the past, and transformation."

There are a wide range of efforts within the separate societies for long-term conflict transformation: working with young people to try to equip them to address the myriad challenges resulting from isolation and a lack of post-war investment and development; work on governance and participation, including of marginalised communities such as Georgians displaced from Abkhazia during the war; encouraging greater transparency and access to information for the public in Abkhazia; and promoting inclusion, making links across the diverse communities within the two societies.

Civil society is active in identifying, through Georgian-Abkhaz dialogue, issues of common interest (or indeed unilateral interest) where there is potential for progress. These include the de-isolation of Abkhazia by promoting international engagement; a wide range of measures to improve the security and rights of the Gal/i Georgians; freedom of movement; access to education and healthcare; and economic development.

Looking forward

For talk of reconciliation to be meaningful in this context, it cannot mean restoring past relationships but rather creating fundamentally different relationships in the future.

In the absence of political progress in the peace process, activity at 'people-to-people' level, if done well, can have transformative impact on the individuals involved. Yet it can at best have limited impact on the structures or systems that need to change in order to begin a broad process of 'reconciliation' that impacts on the fabric of post-war society. Before this inclusive process of reconciliation can begin, and without political settlement, those working to lay its foundations remain largely marginal within their own societies.

While civil society initiatives can clearly feed into political-level processes, ultimately it is important that mechanisms are also found for decision makers to meet directly on key issues. Seeing practical returns from dialogue would strengthen relationships and potentially enable bolder steps to be taken, eventually kick-starting a serious peace process on the basis of mutual understanding, and taking into account each side's interests.

For example, a decision by Georgia to sign a non-use-of-force agreement with the Abkhaz would provide a clear statement of intent and would arguably open up more space for progress to be possible. It is only worth the paper it is written on in some respects, and there are clear reasons why it has proved impossible to agree the conditions for such a signing to date. Yet for many in Abkhazia, the symbolic importance of Georgians finding a way to sign is not to be underestimated. A signing would be perceived by them as a clear signal that Georgia rejects military means of resolving the conflict, which could open up space for a change in the conflict dynamic and enable new relationships to be forged.

While the contested past remains so much a part of the present, and acts as a block to progress towards peace, it is essential to find ways of engaging with it. Work focused on dealing with the past or conflict *transformation* in the shorter to medium term contributes directly or indirectly to challenging nationalism, and the unilateral and selective historical discourse that underpins domestic political agendas. In doing so, it promotes the potential for more just and stable political and social contexts in future.

In the longer term, this is key to creating the conditions for an open-ended negotiation on final settlement that can encompass very different perspectives on key issues, such as status or the return of the displaced. And in the meantime, such work can only help in building the mutual understanding and respect necessary to prevent further outbreaks of conflict.

BOX 3

The Memory Project

The Memory Project is an ongoing initiative to document the violent history of Georgian-Abkhaz relations, creating a basis for understanding the past. Groups are working in Tbilisi and Sukhum/i to collate and systematise existing materials (news clippings, video footage, official documents, photographs and personal archives) and new oral histories in two parallel archives, which together will create as full a picture as possible of Georgian-Abkhaz relations from 1989–94.

The impact to date has been limited – there is no public access to the materials at present. Yet when the core groups first watched eyewitness testimonies together, the potential for a different, and transformative, discussion was clear. At a future point, in the form of interactive websites, films or research, the archives will be a resource for coming generations trying to understand and assess the war through an inclusive lens.

Colombia

Background

Colombia is the only country in the western hemisphere suffering a major internal armed conflict. Since the mid-1960s a number of armed groups, most notably the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia –People's Army (FARC-EP) and the National Liberation Army (ELN), have engaged in a violent struggle with the Colombian government. To date, more than 220,000 have been killed and 8 million have been officially acknowledged as victims.

The conflict has its roots in a long history of violence against political opposition and dispossession of peasants' land. The assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitan, a leader of the Liberal party, triggered a period known as *La Violencia*, a violent power struggle between Colombia's two main political parties in the 1950s, the Liberals and Conservatives.

Ten years later, the 'National Front', a political pact between the two factions, brought stability but also repression of alternative political expression, particularly among Colombia's leftist groups. In this context revolutionary guerrilla movements such as ELN and FARC-EP emerged, made up of the marginalised rural poor, trade unionists and radical urban students.

Right-wing paramilitaries, notably the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC), formed in response to these movements and often operated in collusion with state security forces in fighting the guerrillas.

Over the past two decades the conflict has been fuelled by criminal activity including drug trafficking, extortion, kidnap and mining. Local communities in areas of intense rebel activity have borne the brunt of violence from all sides.

Successive governments have attempted peace negotiations, but have also pushed for war. Notable peace talks between the government and the FARC-EP occurred from 1980–84 and 1999–2001.

After eight years of war with FARC-EP under President Álvaro Uribe (2002–2010), President Juan Manuel Santos (2010–present) invested in reaching a negotiated settlement. Peace talks in Havana between the government and FARC-EP have been discussing a six-point agenda, initially without an agreed ceasefire, since 2012.

At the time of writing in August 2016, the government and FARC-EP appear close to reaching a comprehensive peace agreement. They have agreed on the five substantive agenda points (land reform and rural development, May 2013; political participation, November 2013; illegal drugs trade, May 2014; transitional justice, June 2014; and how to end the conflict, June 2016). Talks are now focused on the procedural issue of implementation of the peace deal.

Challenges ahead include how to increase public support for the peace negotiations (as there is limited trust in both the guerrillas and the government) and for the signatories of the peace agreements to deliver on their commitments.

In parallel, the government and the ELN have also been discussing an agenda for formal peace negotiations since 2014. In March 2016 they announced formal peace talks, but mutual distrust has prevented the negotiations from beginning.

Imagining peace and building paths to inclusive reconciliation in Colombia

Rosa Emilia Salamanca González and Ricardo Mendoza

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Colombia is a musical country. We sing our joy and our despair, and we dance to our victories and defeats. Music runs through our veins as a result of that peculiar mixture of African rhythm, indigenous cadence and gypsy song. Colombia's future harmony rests between the dance of peace and the dance of reconciliation.

Colombian society today has been shaped, both culturally and institutionally, by the tide of conflict rather than peace. As of 2012, in a country of 48 million, the conflict had resulted in over 220,000 deaths, close to six million forced displacements, 30,000 kidnappings, 25,000 forced disappearances, 13,000 victims of sexual violence, 11,000 victims of land mines and more than 10,000 victims of torture. Journalists, human rights defenders, indigenous people and women have all been victims of violence. Colombian society cannot imagine peace. Many Colombians have only known war, conflict and violence in their lifetime, and believe that a culture of war and warmongering is normal.

> "Tragically, the most perverse result of 60 years of conflict in Colombia is a culture of vengeance, in which the use of arms is considered to be the solution to everything. How can we change that culture, that narrative, in order to generate a culture of forgiveness and reconciliation?" *Leonel Narváez, President of the Foundation for Reconciliation, 'Elementos Básicos del Perdón y La Reconciliación', 2004*

The Havana peace talks between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP) have provided an important starting point for dealing with the legacies of this violent past, creating an environment for broader national discussions on truth, justice and reconciliation. Without them, many of the conversations, analyses and proposals for solutions within Colombian society would not be possible. However, while the peace talks provide an important juncture in the peace process, Colombian society must have many difficult conversations to transform relations of conflict and rebuild trust in the state and each other.

Understanding reconciliation in Colombia

In Colombia, reconciliation is both a personal and political issue. It relates to individual experiences of the conflict, but is also shaped by different ideological interpretations of the causes of the conflict.

> **"Many Colombians have only known war, conflict and violence in their lifetime, and believe that a culture of war and warmongering is normal."**

The immediate challenge that Colombia's ideologically diverse population faces is to learn how to coexist: this is the first step to reconciliation. Coexistence means accepting difference within society. Deeper reconciliation is about trying to talk to and understand each other, which requires building relations. Despite the enormous difficulties we face regarding sustainable peace and reconciliation, the current negotiations have opened a window of opportunity. The need to coexist while reconciliation is progressing is set out in the agreement reached in Havana on transitional justice:

> 'The [proposed Truth] Commission must promote coexistence in the territories. [...] it shall foster an atmosphere of dialogue and create spaces for dignifying victims; for individual and collective acknowledgement of responsibility; and, in general, for the consolidation of citizens' respect for and trust in one another, cooperation and solidarity, social justice, gender equality, and a democratic culture that fosters tolerance and does away with our indifference to others' problems. Thus shall the foundations be laid for non-recurrence, reconciliation, and building a stable and lasting peace.'

Four aspects of reconciliation are particularly relevant for Colombia, and are discussed below.

Forgiveness by victims

Just as forgiveness is an act of liberation for some victims, for others, it is a dangerous act that risks impunity.

The design of the negotiation process between the Colombian government and the FARC-EP has been highly innovative. The issue of victims has been central to the talks, an acknowledgement that all armed actors have affected the civilian population, and has become crucial to the credibility of the process: some 3,000 victims participated in discussion forums in Colombia, and 60 victims travelled to Havana to give direct testimony to the talks and offer recommendations, including on conflict-related gender-based violence. An *Agreement on the Victims of Conflict* was signed in September 2015, which sets out a wide-ranging framework for transitional justice. The prominence of victims at the talks can be attributed to the high levels of violence and the perseverance of human rights activists demanding that the state acknowledge its involvement in acts of violence.

Placing victims so centrally has had a significant impact on the peace process. The 2015 agreement will lead to a 'Comprehensive System for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Non-Recurrence', which has important implications for upholding human rights. It has drawn on the experience of the South African peace process, placing a strong emphasis on truth telling. The agreement provides for the creation of a number of structures: a Truth, Coexistence and Non-Recurrence Commission; a Special Jurisdiction for Peace (with a special tribunal for peace and special justice courts to deal with investigations, prosecutions and sentencing); and a special unit to search for the bodies of the over 25,000 disappeared. It also establishes comprehensive measures to provide reparations to victims, particularly those most vulnerable and most affected by the conflict, such as indigenous and Afro-Colombian rural populations and women.

There will be an amnesty for 'political crimes' such as rebellion. This will not be extended to crimes against humanity, serious war crimes, hostage-taking, torture, forced displacement, forced disappearance, extrajudicial executions or sexual violence – which will be subject to investigation and trial under the special jurisdiction for peace.

> **"Transforming relationships through forgiveness requires reformulating the victim-perpetrator dichotomy, while also respecting it – moving towards notions of shared responsibility for a viable and mutual future."**

Both the FARC-EP and the Government have engaged in acts of public apology. For example, on 4 December 2015, a FARC-EP commission led by guerrilla member 'Pastor Alape' travelled to Bojayá (Chocó) to ask forgiveness from victims of the 2002 massacre that left 79 dead and over a hundred injured. Likewise, in an unprecedented act, President Juan Manuel Santos accepted state responsibility and asked forgiveness for errors committed by the military during the siege by M-19 guerrillas of the Palace of Justice in 1985, in which over 100 people were killed. President Santos further asked forgiveness from the community of San José de Apartadó, which had opted for peaceful resistance in the midst of the armed conflict and had been wrongly accused by the authorities of supporting the FARC-EP.

Increased religiosity in some parts of Colombian society has also amplified discussion on forgiveness as a way for victims to achieve personal liberation and relief from pain. However, many victims also believe that asking for or providing forgiveness does not negate the need for truth, justice, reparation and non-recurrence. They see these as necessary so that acts of forgiveness are meaningful, fearing that personal acts of forgiveness lead to a loss of political agency and will jeopardise their ability to demand enforcement of rights. They feel the state might use forgiveness as an excuse to not provide reparative or restorative justice, and are sceptical that forgiveness will contribute to clarifying the truth of the conflict.

Transforming relationships through forgiveness requires reformulating the victim-perpetrator dichotomy, while also respecting it – moving towards notions of shared responsibility for a viable and mutual future. Constanza Turbay poignantly expressed this during a visit to the Havana talks, after FARC-EP negotiator Iván Márquez had apologised for the massacre of her family:

> "The meeting in Havana was very difficult at first, because I was face to face with the material authors of the assassination of the people I loved most in my life … But when Iván Márquez sincerely asked for forgiveness, that transformed the scenario of victims and perpetrators into that of a new beginning, which gives us the responsibility of building peace. Forgiveness is a personal act in which individuals opt for either the path of magnanimity or the abyss of hatred."

Truth

A key aspect of reconciliation in Colombia is to understand and acknowledge what happened during 60 years of violent and polarised conflict.

Reconciliation involves knowing what happened: why, when, how, by whom and to whom. But information about who did what during the conflict is fraught with confusion. Divisions based on fear have become embedded in Colombian society, particularly as a result of policies implemented during Álvaro Uribe's presidency (2002–10), when anyone critical of the government was accused of colluding with 'terrorists' – the FARC-EP and the National Liberation Army (ELN).

The media have played a key role in exacerbating suspicion and prejudice – demonising the guerrillas while justifying the paramilitary and self-defence groups as legitimate means to destroy the 'enemy', such that the gradual corruption of the state seemingly went unnoticed, especially at the local level. In fact, many people struggle to distinguish between armed actors, and atrocities perpetrated by paramilitaries are often wrongly attributed to guerrillas. Colombians have also experienced conflict very differently, depending on where they live, their proximity to the violence, their social conditions and the level of inclusion or exclusion they face, the history they have learnt in school, and their political ideology.

Public consciousness of the diversity of identity and of conflict experience is important for an inclusive society in the future. A considered process of education, information sharing, and truth telling across the country is needed to reflect the diverse cultural, gender-based, political, and religious identities in society. This involves rebuilding history based on accounts of those who experienced the conflict.

In Colombia, significant progress has already been made towards clarifying truth and constructing historical memory – in large part due to the continued commitment of human rights activists to document incidence of extreme and targeted violence, as well as unofficial civil society initiatives around the country.

The work of official processes such as the National Center for Historical Memory is important. Established by law in 2005 under the Uribe administration, it is tasked with contributing to the provision of comprehensive reparations and giving both victims of the conflict and society in general the right to hear the truth. It has been conducting interviews and undertaking research, including travelling to communities and speaking with victims to collect testimony. In 2013, the centre presented the *Basta Ya!* (Enough!) report, which documented the various forms of violence during fifty years of conflict, the key actors involved in it, and its impact on society.

> **"Reconciliation with the state also requires a state that is more representative of the diversity of its people."**

These are the first attempts to build an accurate record of events distinct from the versions provided by the state. Yet such efforts to piece together fragments of truths have been taking place during continuing conflict. A ceasefire and end to the war was only agreed in Havana on 23 June 2016, and at the time of writing there is an atmosphere of hostility, accusation and suspicion. Many people regard efforts to shed light on events of the conflict as threatening, and reconciliation initiatives as naive, believing that it is not yet possible to trust the FARC-EP. Significantly, human rights violations and displacements have continued during the peace talks. Violence and threats against civil society, including social movements like the Patriotic March (*Marcha Patriotica*) and Agrarian Summit (*Cumbre Agraria*), indigenous and Afro-Colombian groups, academics, and reporters, indicate an extremely worrying trend. According to Colombian non-governmental organisation *Somos Defensores*, 2015 saw a 13 per cent increase in killings of human rights defenders from 2014.

Knowing what happened in the past also builds confidence about future prospects for peace. For example, some sectors of society have never accepted former combatants' entry into the political arena. Clarifying the reasons for the failure of negotiations with the FARC-EP in 1999–2002 could overcome some current fears on reintegration of ex-combatants, by revealing the shared responsibilities for the breakdown of the talks. The same applies to those involved in other previous peace talks, such as M-19 guerrillas who laid down weapons in 1994: decades later, they still face hostility, even after performing well in public administration.

Building trust in the state

Reconciliation means much more than forgiving the perpetrator and understanding what happened; it implies ensuring that the conditions that gave rise to the conflict change deeply, and trusting that the state will never again cause or allow that situation to occur.

The social contract is important in Colombia, where the state is seen to have been responsible for crimes similar to the FARC-EP, whether through negligence, incompetence or direct participation. State representatives – from government to military to judiciary – have been accused of, and in some cases found responsible for, supporting or cooperating with armed actors, including paramilitaries and drug traffickers. The state is seen to have systematically violated citizens' human rights and failed to provide for their security, and to have allowed and even encouraged local and national political parties to make pacts with criminal organisations, leading to violence and corruption.

There have been important positive developments. The Government has accepted responsibility for the state's role in the conflict, and the mandate of the transitional justice agreements covers state representatives. There are already investigations of politicians at the local and national level as well as members of Congress, focusing especially on links with paramilitaries. A high-profile investigation is looking into Colombia's former army commander, General Mario Montoya, for alleged complicity in the killing of thousands of civilians. However, there are concerns over gaps that will not be covered by the agreement, especially cases of 'false positives', where civilians killed by the army were later presented as guerrilla members.

Reconciliation with the state also requires a state that is more representative of the diversity of its people. It involves reshaping state institutions to build citizens' confidence that the state will not only repair past harm, but also can be trusted to work in the interests of its population after the conflict. An example of this starting is the suggestion by the High Commissioner for Peace in Colombia that impunity needs to be measured by the level of fulfilment of victims' rights.

FARC-EP guerrilla delegation Commander Pablo Catatumbo (L) shakes hands with victim of Bojaya massacre Leyner Palacios, during peace talks with the Colombian government at the Convention Palace of Havana, on 18 December 2014. © YAMIL LAGE/AFP/Getty Images

Such fundamental change includes more effective efforts to redress the structural violence that is a root cause of the conflict and the ongoing suffering for many *campesinos* (rural communities) and indigenous communities. For example, a land restitution process initiated in 2012, intended to return land to those who had been forced off it, has made slow progress. Amnesty International described how, by the end of 2015, very little land had actually been subject to judicial rulings ordering its return: 58,500 hectares of land claimed by peasant farmers, one 50,000-hectare indigenous territory and one 71,000-hectare Afro-descendant territory. The main stumbling blocks have been the state's continuing failure to guarantee the security of returnees and the lack of effective social and economic measures to ensure returns are sustainable. Furthermore, new displacements continue to take place.

Reconciliation between state and society involves difficult conversations about the nature of the social contract. The Women, Peace, and Security Collective offers an innovative example of how this process can start to happen. It brings together women from multiple sectors of Colombian society, including those traditionally opposed to each other, such as the security forces and human rights groups and civil society. Participants share their different experiences of the conflict so they can break down some of institutional and conflict-related stereotyping that defines their respective experiences and perspectives. The focus on women, peace and security helps participants to reframe their security paradigm from traditional hard security approaches and military capacity, to one with human security at its core.

In a speech on her return to Colombia in April 2016, Ingrid Betancourt – famously kidnapped and held hostage by the FARC-EP for six years in the 2000s – stated that genuine reconciliation:

> "is not just something that takes place between perpetrators and victims. … Rather, it is necessary for all social and political actors to come face to face with one another and come clean. And they should do so not in order to forget or to make pacts among elites, as has been the case before, but rather, to create a more inclusive and democratic society where …everyone else can coexist in disagreement."
> *Speech at Fundación Buen Gobierno forum, 'Reconciliación, mas que realism mágico', 5 May 2016.*

Inclusivity

After decades of exclusion and marginalisation, reconciliation also includes recognition of different groups within the country, and respect for different approaches.

Reconciliation means different things to different people, depending on their status, interests and priorities. For example, indigenous communities emphasise restorative justice over judicial processes, to promote good relations with other people but also with their environment. Respect for land and nature is important.

For this reason, reconciliation is relevant to and affected by power relations. Power here refers to people who exert influence – through regional, class, gender, or ethnic-cultural relations – over what reconciliation will look like, or at. In a practical sense, therefore, it is important to be aware of who is promoting reconciliation. Is it the result of efforts to achieve truth, justice, reparation and non-recurrence? Or to achieve the cultural transformation of people? Does it mean the construction of a new ethical and social pact for society? An important question is whether reconciliation that derives from existing sources of power can challenge those very power structures that have played a part in sustaining the conflict. A new perspective on reconciliation cannot overlook the powers inherent in it – de jure or de facto – and needs to consider how to involve marginalised voices.

One concern, for example, is that reconciliation as currently being prioritised publicly as part of the 'formal' peace process, with its emphasis on forgiveness rather than change, is not transformative – it is directed towards shallow conciliatory gestures, instead of questioning existing power relations.

While the Havana negotiations have provided impetus for conversations on reconciliation, valuable reconciliation projects have been running for a number of years, in the midst of fighting. Catholic and Evangelical Christian grassroots communities have been implementing development and reconciliation programmes in rural areas deeply affected by violence. Philanthropic organisations have promoted joint economic projects with demobilised actors from different armed groups. And organisations of women, victims and indigenous populations have been implementing national and local reconciliation initiatives.

> **"A transformative approach also requires re-thinking everyday practices."**

For example, the national women's network *Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres* (Women's Route to Peace) has been carrying out memory and truth work to highlight the specific experiences of women. They have collected almost one thousand testimonies of women victims of human rights violations from across the country. Such work should be used as examples for the truth commission proposed at Havana – particularly the methodologies of engaging with women and other vulnerable actors.

A transformative approach also requires re-thinking everyday practices. Women have repeatedly argued that while domestic violence is magnified in war, it can commonly be found in many 'ordinary' homes throughout Colombia's patriarchal society. Women speak of the 'continuity of violence' and of its enormous impact in the context of armed conflicts. Acknowledging this violence and its practice is fundamental to identify and promote individual and collective cultural transformation. Violent behaviour, as well as its structural causes, such as exclusion, discrimination and class, is an expression of disrespect of others. Reconciliation without recognition of other people's rights is not helpful.

The Women, Peace, and Security Collective, with over one hundred individual members, has challenged the convention of 'conversation among equals' and firmly opted for 'conversation amidst difference' – even 'with those we consider our enemies'. This peace process among women has made possible dialogue among disparate people that would previously have been unimaginable.

Conclusion: capacities for reconciliation

Peace and reconciliation in Colombia means much more than the agreement in Havana: it means generating numerous new pacts within society, among its different actors, in order to achieve a sustainable and lasting peace.

We Colombians are currently facing the challenge of overcoming a culture of militarism and vengeance that has taken root in our society, and of opposing, without violence, prevalent, pro-war voices that continue to polarise the country. These are the voices of de facto power holders for whom the confusion and combination of conflicts in Colombia has been profitable, suiting their economic interests and facilitating control of lands and populations.

Political actors alone should not shape a framework for reconciliation. Generating momentum for peace and reconciliation requires citizens to be active and overcome their own fears. One challenge is that the truth-telling exercise will unveil more than is digestible by the population. The solution is not less truth, but to increase the capacities of people, society, and the state to absorb it. Our proposal is, therefore, to develop capacity – personal, social, political, economic, institutional and cultural – in a population that currently lacks it, building on existing and past experiences of supporting reconciliation.

There is no exact formula for reconciliation that Colombia or any other country should apply. It is fundamental to envision and create the conditions that can provide adequate political and financial support to the diverse institutional and civil society actors in each particular context, so that they can develop their own legitimate processes of reconciliation and are able to influence the definition of new social pacts.

The inclusive social dance we envision requires imagining peace, overcoming fear, engaging in the transformative power of reconciliation, and creating a spiral of future truth and social justice for each and every one of us.

A look back

The Accord series on addressing the legacies of violence

Previous issues of the Accord series have documented reconciliation practice in peace processes. Summaries from a selection of articles from the Accord back catalogue highlight some of the synergies and tensions between official and unofficial efforts to address the legacies of violence.

Full articles are available on the Conciliation Resources website: **www.c-r.org/accord**

Accord 2: Guatemala (1997)
Violent truths: The politics of memory in Guatemala by Richard Wilson
The Commission for Historical Clarification was established in 1994 as part of a framework agreement for negotiations, before a final peace agreement was signed in 1996. Its shortcomings included limits to its investigatory powers and the fact that its findings could have no legal implications, raising concerns that the Commission's work would reinforce impunity. A 1996 amnesty law reinforced the vulnerability of the 'reconciliation' agenda. A 'Recovery of Historical Memory' project run by the Catholic Church succeeded in collecting testimonies on human rights abuses, particularly in rural areas.

Accord 3: Mozambique (1998)
Sealing the past, facing the future: Trauma healing in rural Mozambique by Alcinda Honwana
Five years on from the 1992 *Rome Accord*, which officially ended the Mozambique Civil War, intermittent violence and social unrest in rural areas continued to pose a persistent threat to the fragile peace. In the absence of national initiatives to address legacies of violence, local traditional practices proved popular in bringing stability to post-conflict communities. While there were concerns that customary traditions 'drawing a line' under past violence might foster impunity, the author argues that future justice mechanisms should be based on local demands.

Accord 9: Sierra Leone (2000)
Dialogue on justice and reconciliation, facilitated by Florella Hazely; notes taken by Alpha Abu
In March 2000, key figures in Sierra Leone's search for peace discussed the prospects for justice and reconciliation and the potential impact of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) envisaged in the *Lomé Agreement*. Discussions stressed the importance of acknowledgement and forgiveness, and the absence of vengeance, in order to achieve true reconciliation, arguing that the TRC should not be perceived as a legal undertaking based on Western notions of justice, but as a vehicle to rebuild societal relations.

Accord 11: Northern Uganda (2002)
Reconciliation and justice: 'Mato oput' and the Amnesty Act by Barney Afako
Because many Lord's Resistance Army combatants were forcibly abducted, many Acholi people prefer reconciliation to retributive justice as a way to create conditions to end the war. Weak institutional and political structures in Uganda made robust legal responses to serious offenses difficult, while traditional approaches such as *mato oput* have broad support within communities. The *Amnesty Act* of 2000 encouraged many combatants to return home and engage in these traditional reconciliation practices.

Accord 12: Papua New Guinea – Bougainville (2002)
Reconciliation: My side of the island by James Tanis
Traditional community-orientated processes have been complemented by newer Christian practices in Bougainville. A Ministry of Political Education and Reconciliation and Internal Affairs was created to enable reconciliation between the political leadership of Bougainville's various factions, which broadened reconciliation to communities and helped facilitate the establishment of a joint negotiating team for the final peace agreement. The publication recommends that post-war institutions should continue to focus on reconciliation at the community level to consolidate the fragile peace.

Accord 13: Public participation (2002)
Inter-community meetings and national reconciliation: forging a pragmatic peace (Mali) by Kåre Lode
In late 1994, local leaders in northern Mali began to organise inter-community meetings to agree local ceasefires. Civil society leaders subsequently formed a facilitation group to extend meetings across the north and to address broader issues. They helped promote reconciliation, serving as unofficial 'truth commissions' through which grievances were safely aired and solutions found. Efforts to scale-up these meetings with international support have led to an increasingly bureaucratised structure, threatening the delicate peacebuilding processes.

Accord 15: Angola (2004)
Peace and reconciliation by Carlinda Monteiro
Following military victory in 1994, the government advised that 'in the spirit of National Reconciliation, all Angolans should forgive and forget the offenses resulting from the Angola conflict' (Annex 6 of the *Lusaka Protocol*). This approach privileged the reconciliation of the warring parties without enabling local communities to address legacies of the conflict. Understanding past violence through approaches rooted in local social and cultural contexts became a crucial factor in reconciling victims, perpetrators and communities. It was hoped traditional rituals could create space for dialogue and provide the basis for a broader 'national reconciliation'.

Accord 20: Aceh-Indonesia (2008)
Human rights and justice in Aceh: The long and winding road by Faisal Hadi
Efforts to redress human rights violations during the war in Aceh were hampered by political resistance at the national level, international indifference to the human rights agenda, and weak civil society leverage. Growing recognition of human rights in Indonesia from the late 1990s did not extend to Aceh. A Human Rights Court for Aceh backtracked on considering wartime cases, while objections by Indonesia's Constitutional Court to impunity and amnesty provisions in a proposed Truth and Reconciliation Commission obstructed a truth-telling mechanism for survivors.

Accord 23: West Africa – Sierra Leone and Liberia (2012)
Fambul Tok: Reconciling communities in Sierra Leone by John Caulker
Fambul Tok was launched in 2008 out of frustration with the Sierra Leonean Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), which had struggled to engage beyond urban centres and enable locally led, community reconciliation. While TRC recommendations were poorly implemented and deprioritised, *Fambul Tok* attempted to create self-sustaining local reconciliation initiatives, identifying committees from a cross-section of existing community leaders, that also encourage economic ventures and other development benefits.

Accord 24: Lebanon (2012)
Section 2: 'Reconciling society' (10 articles)
This section of the publication, *Reconciliation, reform and resilience: Positive peace for Lebanon*, looked at social challenges to building peace in Lebanon, discussing issues of memory, identity, marginalisation, reconciliation and citizenship. It explored among other topics: the role of culture and of civil society in documenting and discussing the past; challenging 'state-sponsored amnesia' over the war years; the importance of a non-sectarian teaching of history; youth activism; the dangers of neglecting rehabilitation of demobilised militia; interfaith dialogue as a means of reconciliation; the challenges of confessionalism; and the participation of women and disability groups in confronting entrenched power structures.

Mindanao

Background

Conflict in Mindanao stems from historical tensions between minority Muslim and indigenous groups in the southern island of Mindanao, and a majority Christian population in the Philippines as a whole. Islam arrived in Mindanao in the 14th century, 200 years before the colonial Spanish Catholics. A number of Sultanates were able to resist external attempts to establish dominance, until the United States took over as the colonial power in 1898.

The US (and, after independence, the government in Manila) promoted the settlement of Christians from the rest of the Philippines to the fertile lands of Mindanao, displacing local populations – Muslim and non-Islamic indigenous peoples. By the 1960s the local population was in a minority in its own homeland.

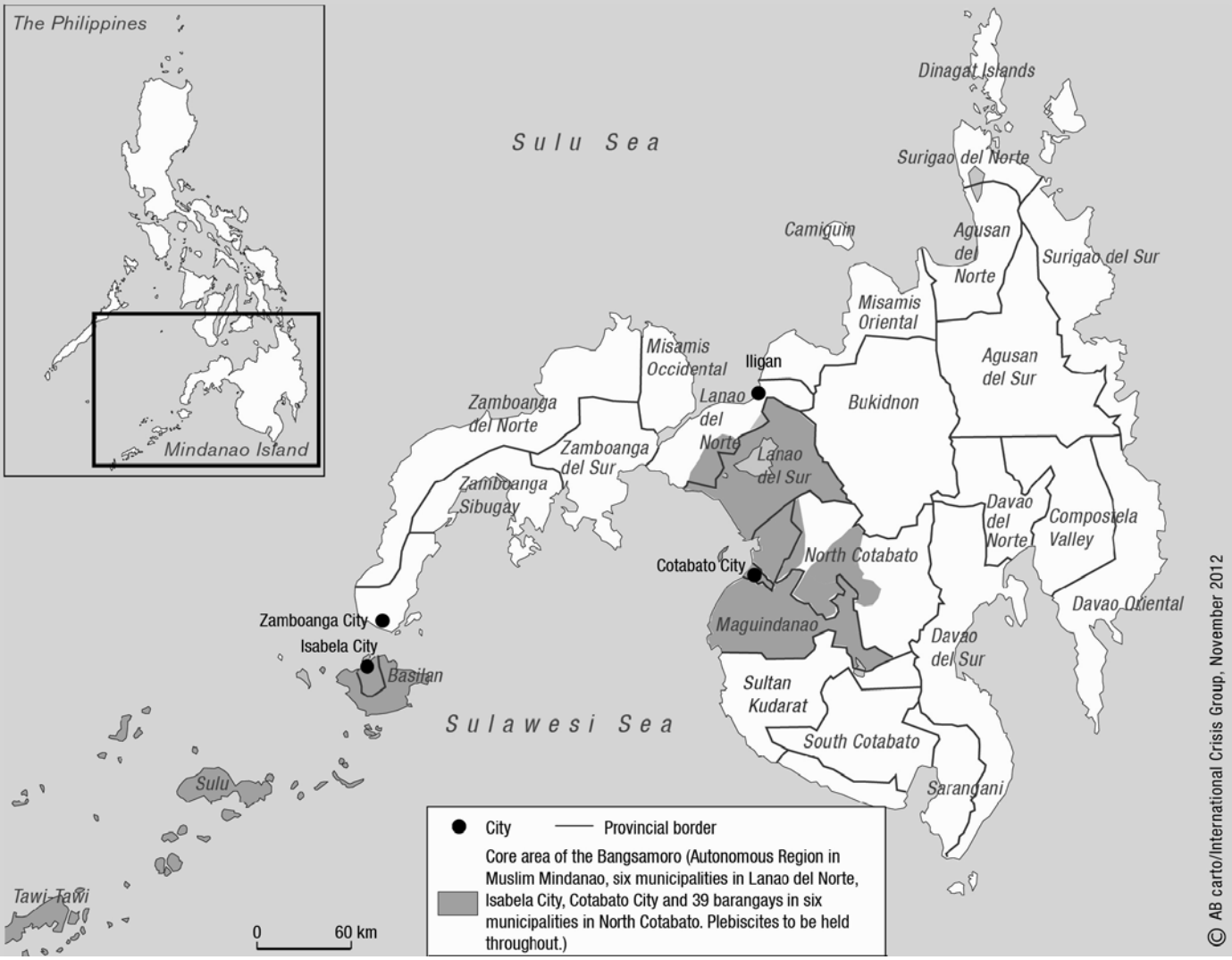
The armed struggle for an independent state began in 1969, led by the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), and was sparked by the alleged 'Jabidah massacre' of Muslim soldiers during their military service. The insurgency emerged in an environment of discrimination, Islamic revivalism and opposition to the Marcos dictatorship, and continued when democracy returned in 1986.

In 1996 the government and the MNLF signed a *Final Peace Agreement*, which granted the Muslim majority areas autonomy. However, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) – which had split from the MNLF in 1984 – was unhappy with the deal and vowed to continue the struggle for independence.

The MILF nevertheless focused on a negotiated solution and signed a ceasefire agreement with the government as early as 1997, signalling the start of peace negotiations. The *Tripoli Agreement* (2001) defined a negotiation agenda between the parties, with three main elements: security (which had already been agreed on in 2001); humanitarian response, rehabilitation and development (agreed in 2002); and ancestral territories (2008).

On 7 October 2012, there was a historic peace breakthrough in the form of a *Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro*. This accord set the road map for a transition, envisioning the creation of a new self-governing region in Muslim-dominated areas of Western Mindanao, called the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region. The *Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro* was signed between the Government of the Philippines and the MILF in March 2014.

The focus is now on transition – implementing the peace agreement and creating the new Bangsamoro entity. However, the Philippines Congress in Manila has not yet agreed to enact the legislation – the Bangsamoro Basic Law – needed for the peace process to progress, which has led to a political impasse. At the same time there is an increased call for a settlement that responds to the needs and expectations of the diversity of ethnic and political actors in the Bangsamoro. A new national administration (as of July 2016) has the task of identifying paths to overcome this new stalemate in a very protracted peace process.



Grounding reconciliation: transforming relationships in Mindanao

Rufa Cagoco-Guiam

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Is reconciliation possible for Mindanao's diverse peoples, amid the suspicion and distrust embedded in their collective consciousness, and among groups that have fought each other on the battlefield? What about justice for those who have suffered as a consequence of violence and other forms of historical prejudice? Is a peaceful shared future possible from Mindanao's deeply divided past? There are no easy answers to these questions.

The establishment in 2014 of a Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) as part of the *Comprehensive Agreement on Bangsamoro* (CAB) was a significant milestone for dealing with the legacy of violent past in Mindanao, and a formal and functioning component of the current peace process and architecture. It was not, however, the first attempt to heal Mindanao's wounded communities. There are many examples of local reconciliation and conflict resolution initiatives among the communities of Mindanao and between Christians and Muslims that have survived years of war and Martial Law, and successive and often stuttering peace processes.

The TJRC has involved significant innovations to engage communities through an extensive 'Listening Process'. Still,

connecting local and national efforts remains a serious challenge. Grassroots reconciliation endeavours have struggled to reach upwards to make an impact on the broader national consciousness. They also remain vulnerable to the progress of the peace process and to 'higher' political developments – not least the attitude of the new Philippines President, Rodrigo Duterte, and the outcome of the stalled Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL).

Without a more holistic transformation of relationships damaged by violent conflict at all levels – among communities within Mindanao, between the Moro people and broader Philippines society, and between Mindanao society and the state – it is questionable how meaningful or sustainable peace can be for Mindanao's people. After the TJRC delivered its report to the Peace Panels in February 2016, the question remains: what next?

> **"Grassroots reconciliation endeavours have struggled to reach upwards to make an impact on the broader national consciousness."**

Peace process and core challenges to progress in reconciliation

The fate of Mindanao's current peace process, including the TJRC recommendations, is now tied to the political will and priorities of President Duterte. Outgoing President Benigno Aquino III had made it widely known that the peace process was a priority. President Duterte has made positive signs towards reinvigorating the process, but it is still early in his presidency and he faces significant resistance.

The CAB needs to be translated into a basic law that would pave the way for transformation of relationships between a predominantly Christian-led national government and the Bangsamoro-dominated Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM). Despite promises, President Aquino was unable to pass the BBL through the Philippines' two legislative houses – the Senate and House of Representatives – before he stepped down in June 2016. During emotionally charged debates on the BBL in the two houses, old animosities and stereotypes of Muslims and Bangsamoro resurfaced.

Instead, an 'alternative' Basic Law for the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BL-BAR) was pushed. For many peace advocates, the BL-BAR offers no alternative as it contains provisions that severely weaken the powers of the ARMM.

Mindanao civil society groups are still reeling from the failure of the BBL. Many in Mindanao feel it was 'killed off' by a national legislative body chiefly composed of Christian Filipinos, significant numbers of whom appear to hold deep prejudices against groups that have championed the Bangsamoro right to self-determination – principally the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Such deep prejudice stems from a long history of exposure in the Philippines to anti-Muslim literature and narratives that portray Mindanao Moros, especially those who have taken up arms against the Philippine state, as 'bloodthirsty' or 'violent'. This is exacerbated by shocking media headlines that identify 'Muslim' suspects with gruesome acts such as the beheading of kidnap victims by militant groups like Abu Sayyaf.

The BBL's death knell is widely believed to be the failed security operation at Mamasapano in Maguindanao province in January 2015 involving the Special Action Force (SAF) of the Philippine National Police. More than 60 people, including 44 SAF personnel, died in a fierce exchange with local armed groups. The groups were reacting to an SAF dawn raid to arrest Zulkifli bin Hir – aka 'Marwan' – a Malaysian national believed to be training local armed groups, including the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters, a breakaway MILF faction. Media reports largely blamed the MILF, and many Filipinos accepted this portrayal as the 'truth'. Before Mamasapano, the majority of Philippine legislators had reportedly been gearing up to stamp their approval on the BBL.

Local reconciliation in Mindanao during war and peace

Mindanao's popular image as a war-torn region belies enduring local initiatives for conflict resolution and reconciliation among warring parties and families within Mindanao. In Maguindanao community in south-west Mindanao, for example, the concept of reconciliation is understood and practised in three ways – *kapagulita* (reconciliation); *kapagayon* (agreement and consensus) and *kadsulia* (going back to the previous peaceful state or relationship). Influential traditional leaders (*datus*), play a crucial role. The *datu* calls the parties involved and conducts a series of bilateral talks with each, usually one after the other. Then the parties are brought together to come to an agreement over what needs to be done to go back to the previous state of the relationship.

Among the Iranun communities of the municipalities within the Maguindanao-Lanao boundary, local hybrid mechanisms have been organised – including special bodies like the Joint *Ulama* (council of learned men) and Municipal Peace and Order Council (JUMPOC). JUMPOC entails negotiations, paying 'blood money' as reparation for the aggrieved parties, and holding *kanduli* (thanksgiving feasts) to signify the restoration of harmonious relations.

An NGO called the *Pakigdait* ('promoting social harmony') has also conducted several conflict prevention and resolution initiatives since the late 1990s. In two municipalities in Lanao del Norte, the mayors created a Council for settling community conflicts, with its membership divided equally among influential Christian and Meranaw community Muslim leaders.

Community conflict prevention and resolution efforts have certainly contributed to promoting peace in localised areas. But 'best practices' in achieving horizontal reconciliation among feuding groups have remained restricted to low-intensity conflict. Conflicts among influential political clans have remained intractable and challenging, despite the presence

Peace vigil held in Marawi City, Lanao del Sur, Mindanao on 2 February 2015 to draw attention to civilian casualties of the Mamasapano incident
© Bureau of Public Information-ARMM

of military installations in many of Mindanao's so-called 'hot spots'. In some cases, the presence of the military has exacerbated an already uneasy peace. Some low-intensity conflicts have escalated when a political family has direct ties to the conflict, for example relatives either in the military or rebel groups.

The trajectory of the conflict also determines the extent to which broader reconciliation initiatives could occur, as well as their impact.

Under Martial Law
Starting in the late 1970s to early 1980s, the United Church of Christ in the Philippines (UCCP) in Mindanao initiated inter-faith dialogue. This strategy was dubbed *Duyog Ramadhan* (literally 'accompanying Ramadhan'), carried out during the holy month of fasting among Muslims. Christians 'accompanied' or visited Muslim communities, and stayed with families for the entire month.

While this was not explicitly building reconciliation skills, it was an insightful strategy for helping members of the majority Christian Filipino population understand the logic behind the practice of Ramadhan. Understanding the faith of the 'other' was already a step toward a reconciliatory process. Unfortunately, this initiative was not sustained after the period of Martial Law (1972–81), although the UCCP has remained fairly active in inter-religious dialogue.

Since 1984 the Silsilah Movement based in Zamboanga City has offered a distinctive type of inter-religious dialogue. Italian missionary Fr. Sebastian D'Ambra, who founded the movement, was deployed in various municipalities in southern Philippines from the 1970s, at a time when several areas of Mindanao were virtual battlefields between the MNLF and Philippines military forces. Silsilah continues its dialogue efforts to this day, despite many drawbacks and threats of violence against key workers.

Post-Marcos
A complex civil society terrain emerged in Mindanao after the fall of the Marcos dictatorship in 1986 and the rise to power of Cory Aquino. After years of conflict during the Marcos regime, the difficult process of healing and reconciliation could begin. At the same time, however, communities faced intense challenges due to lost livelihoods and a lack of resources to start rebuilding their lives after years of displacement. They also had to grapple with continuing structural challenges at the root of Mindanao's conflicts, such as landlessness and abject poverty. Politically marginalised communities continued to live in virtual 'evacuation-ready' mode. One community member, participating in the 'listening process' facilitated by the TJRC *(see page 38)*, expressed his agony over his family's experience: "How can we heal [our past wounds] when we hear [and evade] gunshots everyday?"

In 1999 the MILF placed nine central aspects of what it considered the 'Bangsamoro Problem' on the negotiating

table. These included: recognising the Bangsamoro ancestral domain; displacement and landlessness; reparations to war victims and for the destruction of property; human rights violations; social and cultural discrimination against Muslims; policies that corrupt the mind and moral fibre of the Moros; economic inequalities and widespread poverty among Muslims; exploitation by outsiders of the Moro homeland's natural resources; and the need for genuine agrarian reform.

The point on reparation stands out as directly relating to reconciliation. But in the series of talks between the MILF and the government there has been no explicit agreement or consensus on initiating a comprehensive programme for healing and reconciliation. Prior to the signing of the CAB, the idea of transitional justice was never mentioned. For many Bangsamoro communities, the pain of having to go through innumerable displacements lingers on, even if the skirmishes they had to evade took place in the past. How can shattered communities move forward with the healing and reconciliation process?

Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission

One of the CAB's provisions was for the creation of a TJRC as part of the Joint Normalisation Committee ('normalisation' aims to enable affected communities to return to a peaceful life). This was a significant milestone: for the first time in the country's long, drawn-out peace processes, there was a body with an explicit mandate for promoting healing and reconciliation among Mindanao's divided communities.

The TJRC's mandate includes undertaking research and consultations and making recommendations to the peace panels on how the peace process can address legitimate grievances, historical injustice, human rights violations and marginalisation through land dispossession among the Bangsamoro.

The TJRC uses the Swiss 'Dealing with the Past' (DwP) framework based on the 'Joinet/Orentlicher principles' against impunity. These principles identify four key complementary areas: the Right to Know, the Right to Justice, the Right to Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence. Taken together, the principles provide the basis for a holistic strategy for forging transitional justice in communities deeply divided by conflicts, adapted to the cultural, historical and overall social contexts of Mindanao's culturally diverse peoples.

Such a framework acknowledges and defines the rights of victims and the obligation of the state to provide remedies for serious violations of International Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. The DwP approach offers a constructive way of dealing with past wrongdoings and atrocities, while strengthening the peace and conflict transformation process. At a societal level, DwP is a prerequisite for reconciliation.

To carry out its mandate the TJRC designed a broad-based process of 'listening' to narratives of community members, combined with the organisation of expert study groups and a series of policy interviews. The TJRC Listening Process involved researchers visiting various parts of the region to document ordinary people's narratives in order to understand how their concerns could be integrated into prevailing national discourses. The Listening Process was conducted from March to July 2015 in more than 200 Moro, indigenous and settler communities in Central and Western Mindanao, involving 3,000 community members and local officials. The official TJRC report was handed over to the Government and MILF Peace Panels on 10 February 2016.

The TJRC used a number of different methodologies, including a review of past and current initiatives in the field of transitional justice and dealing with the past in the Philippines and key informant interviews with policymakers. The Listening Process was particularly innovative in that it allowed for direct sharing of community members' experiences and narratives. It was the first serious effort to reach out to a broad spectrum of conflict-affected communities in Mindanao. Most researchers were recruited from community-based civil society organisations, and were able to elicit a range of perspectives on healing and reconciliation, as well as reflect on their own experiences of the effects of war in their respective communities.

> **"The Listening Process was particularly innovative in that it allowed for direct sharing of community members' experiences and narratives."**

Diverse perspectives

Healing and reconciliation in deeply divided societies is an arduous process, entailing a complicated web of interacting and sometimes conflicting perspectives and approaches. It could be an opportunity for building social cohesion among Bangsamoro conflict-affected communities; if not handled appropriately and carefully, however, it could also be divisive.

Interviews conducted by the TJRC revealed a variety of views, including for example: "asking for blood will not bring back the life of our dead relatives"; "we need other narratives to complete catharsis and not forget the past"; "memorialisation is important"; "we need to recognise different truths"; and "there is a need for justice" and "addressing impunity".

For some people, healing can only take place when there is public acknowledgement of the wrongs and violent acts committed against them, along with an honest account of past injustices. Most of all, healing starts when those who acknowledge their violent acts propose how to 'mend' such wrongs. Accounting for past actions is an important element of healing and reconciliation; it is also among the first steps toward transforming relationships at different levels.

But remembering is not a priority for everyone. Some participants in the Listening Process expressed the belief that the past should be buried, along with all its painful experiences; that it should be forgotten to move on towards a more "peaceful" future. The common justification for

"forgetting the past" is that "our loved ones who died in the war can no longer be with us". This perspective is quite controversial for some people, as it seems to absolve past wrongdoers of their responsibility to rebuild broken relationships.

In a study of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Committee, Anastasia Kushleyko notes that granting amnesty to perpetrators is equivalent to "foregoing accountability and redress". Many people baulk at the impunity amnesty provides to those who have committed unspeakable crimes against humanity or against a specific group of people, such as the 'minoritised' Bangsamoro and Mindanao indigenous peoples. Concerns were raised when some politicians associated with Martial Law, including members of the Marcos family, argued for forgetting the past in their May 2016 election campaigns.

Reconciliation across levels

In Mindanao, there is growing social awareness of peace and its myriad dimensions, and of the cumulative outcome and positive impact of grassroots and middle-range peacebuilding strategies. Such awareness, however, has not led to development of a collective consciousness to support transformation of relationships at various levels. Nor have these efforts influenced national and other policymakers to make decisions in favour of peace, healing and reconciliation in Mindanao.

Collectively, grounded efforts have had an impact within grassroots communities and middle-level sectors, especially in conflict-affected areas. Case studies of these initiatives described by Rosalie Arcala Hall in 2015 show that some low-profile *rido* (vengeance killings) cases have been solved, and peace and order in former 'hot spots' in Central Mindanao have improved: largely through peace and governance interventions of locally organised NGOs alongside hybrid conflict resolution mechanisms.

The impact seems to have stopped at local communities and specific social sectors; such efforts have not, for example, created a peace constituency among the larger Philippines population. There is still a lack of understanding of the root causes of conflicts in Mindanao, such as longstanding discrimination, human rights violations and land dispossession, or of the effects of the violence and conflict on the Mindanao population.

A core issue is that the grounded and middle-range peacebuilding strategies did not have the strategic coherence to link the cumulative outcomes of diverse healing and reconciliation efforts. This required a strong, coordinated and strategic framework for elevating the issues and root causes of conflicts in Mindanao to the national consciousness, especially among legislators and executive levels in the Philippine bureaucracy.

The TJRC Listening Process provided several insights into why elevating the root causes of Mindanao's conflicts to national consciousness is important. The narrative of social exclusion dominated the sharing of experiences and lived realities in the different Listening Process sessions, as participants expressed their sense of alienation. It concluded that legitimate grievances, historical injustice, human rights violations, and marginalisation through land dispossession are the consequences of three mutually reinforcing phenomena: (1) systemic violence by the state expressed in terms of political, socio-economic, and cultural exclusion and in the disproportionate use of direct violence; (2) a pervasive culture of impunity that undermines the practice of the rule of law; (3) deep neglect by the state combined with the lack of vision for the common good.

In particular, the government has marginalised local histories and narratives of the diverse Mindanao ethno-linguistic groups, especially their struggles against both colonial masters and oppressive national policies and structures.

The education system also has a largely Christian perspective. For instance, class schedules only consider the holy day for Christians (Sunday), without recognising that for Muslims, Friday is the day of congregational prayer in the mosque. School calendars are also timed to coincide with Christian-based holidays such as Christmas and New Year, which Muslims do not celebrate. The curriculum of almost all higher educational institutions does not include the history of Mindanao and Sulu. This omission reflects the national government's Christian bias and its focus on Luzon, the largest most populous island in the Philippines and location of the capital, Manila.

Most troubling is the imposition of a 'homogenous' Filipino identity and Philippine state on people with diverse Bangsamoro ethnic identities, who see themselves as pre-existing nations and whose core characteristics and values revolve around Islam. For many in Mindanao, Islam is a total way of life and its precepts do not separate the religious from the political and social realms. In contrast, the Philippine state, forged largely through the efforts of Luzon-based 'nationalist' struggles, is quite explicit in its doctrine of the separation of Church and State.

There is also the challenge of where to draw the line between historical injustices and legitimate grievances. If you wear the hijab and apply for a job in the Philippines today, for example, there is a high chance you will not get it, since the majority Christian society frequently finds traditional Muslim clothing unacceptable. Should such issues, then, be treated by the authorities as requiring active state intervention?

Politically too, the Bangsamoro have been marginalised, despite the establishment of an autonomous regional government in Muslim-dominated Mindanao provinces in 1989. Throughout its existence, the ARMM has never been truly autonomous. Past and present presidents interact with autonomous region leaders in a patron-client relationship, including different types of rent-seeking behaviour. Anointment by the sitting president is a guarantee of being elected governor, as shown in the past and present ARMM leadership.

An overall communications plan would help wider Filipino society understand the rationale for entering into a peace

process with a group that was previously denounced, most recently as part of a global network of 'terrorists'. There is a long history of prejudice and demonisation of Muslims. The Listening Process highlighted the need for a rewriting of histories from the Mindanao population's perspective.

The TJRC recommends the creation of a National Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Commission on the Bangsamoro to oversee a National Dealing with the Past strategy and to develop specific initiatives related to historical memory, impunity, promotion of accountability and rule of law, address land dispossession and promote healing and reconciliation in the Bangsamoro.

Conclusion

The road towards a shared, peaceful future in the Bangsamoro remains unfinished. The route has been mapped out, but there are huge obstacles along the way. A framework for reconciliation is yet to be crafted.

Government Chief Negotiator Miriam Coronel-Ferrer described what such a process involves in her speech during the TJRC public launch in October 2014:

> "The work of the TJRC and its outcome must set off a process that does not control, formalise, bureaucratize nor narrow down the avenues, but rather generates, in addition to the state's, people-driven initiatives to do transitional justice and reconciliation."

This requires civil society actors – including academic institutions, which have not yet mobilised their capacities as 'peace multipliers' – to talk to each other and outside of their immediate circles to enlarge the windows of opportunity. It is also important for civil society actors to continue with their grounded peacebuilding and reconciliation work. While government assessments have recognised the history of grassroots initiatives, that lack of broader national consciousness has meant that the transformation of relationship is not yet possible: from the personal and interpersonal, to the societal, and eventually to more structural, equitable relations, especially between the Manila-centred government and Mindanao's marginalised communities. At this juncture of Philippines history, a more focused and strategic framework for nation-building based on conflict transformation is crucial.

President Duterte can begin the arduous process of healing and reconciling Mindanao's communities through the institutionalisation of a body – as recommended by the TJRC – that will provide a strategic framework for dealing with the past and collectively forging a more inclusive future both for Mindanao and the country as a whole. Yet, given current uncertainties regarding the BBL, the TJRC also concludes that, while there is no replacement for a durable peace agreement and legal framework for peace, their recommendations can be implemented by existing institutions immediately, and later supported by any national transitional justice and reconciliation commission that is set up.

Northern Ireland

Background

Following Ireland's independence in 1921, the north of the island remained part of the UK, becoming known as Northern Ireland. Most of the Protestant majority in the north supported remaining within the UK (unionists). The Catholic minority largely considered itself Irish, with many desiring a united Ireland (nationalists).

A civil rights movement emerged in the late 1960s involving both unionists and nationalists. Many Catholics saw this as a call for equal rights after decades of political and economic marginalisation. Marches increasingly led to confrontations with the police, and involved more militant sections of each community. In August 1969, British troops were deployed to try to maintain control. There was also a rapid growth of paramilitary activity, including the nationalist Irish Republican Army (IRA) and the unionist Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).

In the early 1970s, a new phase of open and violent hostility developed. The IRA carried out numerous bombings and shootings including attacks on British army and state targets. Violence between the two communities also escalated, and included targeted shootings by paramilitary groups.

A number of early initiatives sponsored by the British, such as the *Sunningdale Agreement* of 1974, sought to exclude 'extreme' elements of Northern Irish politics such as Sinn Féin (the political wing of the IRA). In 1985, the Irish and British governments came together and signed the *Anglo-Irish Agreement*, signalling a new willingness to cooperate. However, it would be another 10 years before the majority of Northern Irish parties would agree to share a negotiating table and Sinn Féin was recognised as a legitimate participant.

By the 1990s, ethno-political antagonism shaped social and political life in Northern Ireland. Hostility between communities produced separate housing, education and leisure. Nevertheless, the political process progressed and multi-party talks began in June 1996, eventually leading to the *Belfast Agreement* in 1998. The agreement set forth arrangements for a Northern Irish Assembly and Executive Committee in which Unionist and Nationalist parties would share power. It also contained provisions on disarmament, police reform, demilitarisation and the status of prisoners.

Continued disputes over decommissioning of IRA weapons saw repeated suspensions of the executive from 2000. Decommissioning, overseen by the Independent International Commission for Decommissioning, was completed in 2006. Yet it was only the conclusion of the *St Andrew's Agreement* by the major parties in October 2006, which included devolution of policing and justice powers, that enabled the restoration of the executive in May 2007. While power-sharing has since continued, largely without interruption, there has been renewed paramilitary violence and continued social tensions and conflict triggered by contentious issues such as parades and flags.

In focus

Gender Principles for Dealing with the Legacy of the Past

The Legacy Gender Integration Group

In September 2015, the *Gender Principles for Dealing with the Legacy of the Past* were launched in Belfast. They consist of 10 principles to address the gendered impact of the conflict and were developed by a group of women from non-governmental organisations and universities in Britain and Ireland (the Legacy Gender Integration Group): Yasmine Ahmed, Sara Duddy, Claire Hackett, Patricia Lundy, Mary McCallan, Gemma McKeown, Andrée Murphy, Catherine O'Rourke, Emma Patterson-Bennett, and Leah Wing.

There are clear gender patterns to victimhood and survival in Northern Ireland, for example the vast majority of those killed in the conflict were men and the majority of surviving family members are women. The Principles were a response to the gaps and shortcomings with regard to gender – evident in previous government attempts to design a comprehensive process for dealing with the past – in the *Stormont House Agreement* (SHA) of December 2014. The SHA set out, for the first time, an agreed set of institutions to deal with issues of accountability outstanding from the conflict.

The Legacy Gender Integration Group came together with a sense of urgency about the need to draw attention to silence on gender and to make a positive intervention in an ongoing process. The resulting 10 principles provide guidance for the integration of gender in both the design and implementation of a process to deal with the past:

1. Gender integration: Fully integrate gender into processes for dealing with the past
2. Process-orientation: Understand gender and dealing with the past as a process, not an event
3. Empowerment, participation, ownership and control: Prioritise victim ownership and control of process
4. Inclusivity: Be inclusive and accommodate complexity
5. Addressing structural obstacles: Recognise and redress structural obstacles to inclusion
6. Holistic approach: Respond to the whole victim and survivor
7. Giving voice and being heard: Honour individual stories
8. Macro analysis: Be attentive to the bigger picture
9. Equality and diversity: Value gender expertise and lived experience
10. Local and global learning: Craft bottom-up local responses that draw on international good practice.

The Principles are accompanied by two case studies that illustrate the nature of the issues faced by women affected by the conflict in the Northern Ireland. They demonstrate how deaths from the conflict led to multiple related harms from state and non-state actors. These include impoverishment, neglect, harassment and vulnerability to other abuses that affect the whole family, for whom the woman may now be the sole caregiver.

We argue that failure to recognise the whole story of harm will affect how a particular case is understood and addressed. We also argue that individual experiences are part of a wider narrative of the conflict. Without scrutiny and investigation of patterns and policies, such as the lack of investigation of killings and abuses, impunity, media reporting, compensation policies, and the use of informers and agents, there is a greater risk of recurrence of these abuses in the future. Applying a gender lens brings individual experiences to bear in a wider process of acknowledgement, redress and building of the future.

A report on the consultation workshops carried out with bereaved women to inform the Gender Principles has been produced since they were launched. We have also advocated the adoption of the Principles throughout policy and approaches to dealing with the past by several key stakeholders in political and policy circles, such as the Department of Justice, the Victims Commissioner and the Victims and Survivors Service, political parties, the Northern Ireland Office and the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs. The advocacy work made clear the need to show how the principles could be translated into practice. Subsequently, we developed a further working document on implementation guidance for the structures envisaged in the SHA.

The implementation document recommends a series of measures including the establishment and resourcing of an oversight group to facilitate, support, monitor and oversee the integration of gender throughout the work of the SHA institutions. To give expression to the principles on empowerment, participation and inclusivity we recommend a provision for victims and survivors to make a single transferable statement that gathers as complete a picture as possible of victims' experiences, and can be used across the four institutions envisaged by the SHA. We believe this would enable victims and survivors to engage holistically with the proposed SHA institutions rather than deal with them separately, and would avoid victims and survivors having to tell their story repeatedly.

The single transferable statement would enable a fuller story of harm to emerge than has been possible to date, which could support the detection and investigation of specific gender harms. Such a victim-centred approach could potentially reverse a damaging pattern, whereby individuals have to respond to the requirements of official institutions for particular testimony in a legalistic framework that excludes some parts of the victim's story. Instead it facilitates the development of practice whereby the institution responds to the story of the person who has been harmed.

The document highlights the importance of multi-disciplinary investigation teams as another way of enabling victims and survivors to engage with the legacy institutions as integrated processes, rather than a series of institutions that they must adapt and fit into. This also brings a focus to the importance of gender expertise within the personnel appointed to the various institutions that make up the SHA legacy package.

The Gender Principles and our recommendations for implementing them are a blueprint for addressing the marginalisation of victims and survivors, both male and female. We believe they can create a more effective, inclusive and deeper process for dealing with the past.

Poster from The Detail infographic campaign, 'Future must be shared' (2015), to highlight major issues for conflict transformation in Northern Ireland © Allan Leonard licensed by CC BY-NC

From enemies to partners? Reconciliation in Northern Ireland

Dr Duncan Morrow

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Reconciliation in Northern Ireland ultimately describes the *possibility* that violent enemies in the past might have a future marked by partnership, civic equality and the rule of law – or even trust and friendship. In contrast to a negative 'absence of visible violence' or 'hostile truce', reconciliation carries a positive vision of sustainable peace as transformed political and social relationships. It involves a future-oriented commitment to good relations as well as drawing a line under the conflict and violence of the past.

In practice, reconciliation is only secure if linked to clear decisions, actions and gestures. Reconciliation is ultimately inseparable from the real-world decisions that respond to concrete challenges associated with addressing armed conflict, and which derive from fear, anger, resentment and discrimination. Yet how, and on what basis, can a bitter, violent 'economy of action and reaction' between rivals for power, become a partnership based on cooperation and even forgiveness? What does transformation from violent conflict to reconciliation actually entail?

A reconciliatory approach to peace is inevitably experimental: reconciliation is always 'learning to do what we don't know how to do'. Reconciliation describes both a goal and a journey, and peace depends more on the learning and agreements that come from answers to material questions than on actions based on formulae. Bland and Powell suggest that four questions are particularly critical:

- Is the future each party seeks to present bearable or acceptable, and in which each can see their fundamental interests protected? (Shared futures)

- What practical steps do each party have to take to make agreed change a realistic possibility? (Trust and confidence)
- What changes have to be made to politics, society and economy to enable sustainable peace? (Justice and entitlements)
- How do all parties address and manage the losses of making peace? (Adjusting to loss).

What reconciliation *is* depends on time and place. At different times in the Northern Ireland peace process, reconciliation has required different emphases – from political and constitutional design, to the development of non-governmental organisation (NGO) practice and the requirement for disarmament and reintegration. There is also no specific answer to the question of *who* leads reconciliation. Since threat and risk can re-appear at any level of society, leadership emerges opportunistically and ultimately depends on organic (holistic) rather than mechanical (linear) top-down or bottom-up theories of change.

"A reconciliatory approach to peace is inevitably experimental: reconciliation is always 'learning to do what we don't know how to do'."

Eventually reconciliation must come to characterise relations across the whole society. As South Africans learned, moving from enemies to partners can be modelled but never secured by a single event or person. The transformation of complex relationships has dimensions that require changes both between communities, and between communities and the state. The potential for abandoning the goal and returning to traditional antagonisms is considerable.

> "No one can say his heart is altogether clean, his hands altogether pure. Thus, as we wish to be forgiven, let us forgive those who have sinned against us and ours: That was the beginning of American reconciliation, and it must be the beginning of Northern Ireland's reconciliation." *US President Bill Clinton, Belfast 1995*

Antagonism and reconciliation

Societies polarised by violent struggles over inter-group justice are marked by extreme sensitivity to compromises that might put group security at risk. Reconciliation *always* proceeds alongside the conviction that the enemy remains aggressive. In practice, progress is measured by the resilience of the impetus for change, despite persistent and deep-rooted popular anxieties.

The resilience of reconciliation in Northern Ireland stemmed from three primary sources:

- By the mid 1980s, both the UK and Ireland's overriding interest was ending violence. This diplomatic alliance drew support from both the US and European Union (EU), and for two decades generated a mostly persistent and resilient commitment to negotiation.
- The 1985 *Anglo-Irish Agreement* generated new priorities in public policy, including policing and education reforms, equality legislation and funding for grassroots activity. Increasingly, direct political authority over Northern Ireland from London (known as Direct Rule) was mediated through locally recruited bodies that were required to comply with principles of ethnic neutrality, equality, human rights and operational independence. This process produced new norms of equality of opportunity in employment and encouraged significant bottom-up innovation.
- By the mid 1990s, few inside Northern Ireland doubted that the military situation had reached a stalemate. Popular desire for an end to violence enabled a pragmatic, if uneven, process of negotiation, despite recurrent setbacks.

Despite this, obstacles to reconciliation remained deeply embedded. The ability of governments to act as sponsors for peace was profoundly compromised by their own historic roles in Ireland. For Republicans, British imperialism rather than Northern Irish Unionism was the historic enemy. British responsibility for security had included direct Army deployment in many Catholic-majority areas for 25 years, internment without trial, secret operations including the recruitment of agents, state killings, torture and breaches of human rights norms. Unionists, in contrast, felt under existential attack by Republican 'terrorism' and deeply resented the claim to sovereignty over Northern Ireland outlined in the Irish Republic's constitution.

Reconciliation as a shared goal also imposed starkly different risks and burdens on the leadership of asymmetric groups – government, Unionist and Nationalist. The potential for any step in the negotiation process to provoke resistance from one part of the population was ever-present. Maintaining balanced process while addressing asymmetric issues created risks throughout.

The potential for bottom-up activity to sustain momentum was compromised by the fact that it was almost entirely financed by inter-governmental funding. The capacity of NGOs to innovate, establish inter-community relationships and engage as many people as possible in promoting reconciliation was thus in part dependent on a top-down commitment to paying for it, as well as grassroots commitment to action. Funding meant that NGO engagement was able to expand rapidly into a wide range of areas, but the relative weakness of autonomous action left much of this vulnerable to changes in policy and resources.

Reconciliation in practice

The practical significance of reconciliation in Northern Ireland falls into four distinct phases:

Setting the tone (1985–97)

The division of citizens into antagonistic ethno-political groups had defined society and politics in Northern Ireland since the 1920s, and included separation in residence, education and leisure. For both Unionism and Republicanism, justice and sustainable peace could only be pursued through victory and political control. As violence escalated, reconciliation

"Peaceline" between Catholic Short Strand and Protestant Cluan Place, East Belfast, 1993
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was the preserve of isolated and politically inconsequential groups of activists. As polarisation deepened in the 1980s, inter-governmental partnership on security and stability gradually emerged as the only viable alternative to chaos and confrontation.

The *Anglo-Irish Agreement* concluded that 'diminishing divisions and achieving lasting peace and stability' and 'the need for continuing efforts to reconcile and to acknowledge the rights of the two major traditions' took precedence over territorial sovereignty or assumed support for sides.

Apart from a declared destination, however, the policy implications of reconciliation remained undefined. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) rejected the *Anglo-Irish Agreement*, while Unionists organised protests and a campaign of civil disobedience. The formal agreement did elicit American and European support through the establishment of an International Fund for Ireland (IFI), which prioritised economic growth and social cooperation – the exploration of reconciliation could now also be pursued through community action. The IFI and EU promotion of redevelopment as well as engagement and dialogue cultivated a bottom-up peace process engaging community activity and partnership. All of this contributed to a wider atmosphere of dynamic change.

However, this phase also saw a shift from the framing of reconciliation in the *Anglo-Irish Agreement* as a shared inter-governmental goal to one requiring all-party negotiations. While Unionist failure to block the Agreement ultimately led to further talks, both Governments were also convinced that dialogue with Republicans was necessary, conditional on the suspension of violence. A fragile ceasefire among the largest paramilitary organisations appeared to open the door.

External intervention also provided momentum: proposals by US Special Envoy for Northern Ireland Senator George Mitchell provided a path to overcome the impasse on disarmament that would enable both Unionists and Republicans to engage in direct negotiations. The 'Mitchell Principles' – that paramilitary decommissioning was neither a prerequisite of negotiation nor dependent on the outcome of talks, but should proceed in parallel with them – created sufficient political room for the British and Irish governments to call for negotiations.

> **"While the scale of constitutional agreement was unprecedented, aspirational commitments to reconciliation left questions of implementation unresolved."**

Through the ups and downs of the negotiations that eventually produced the 1998 *Belfast Agreement*, reconciliation was the rhetorical device used to promote inter-community partnership. In parallel with attempts to kick-start the political process, the UK Government promoted community relations activity, integrated education and increased participation in communities, including by those with connections to paramilitary organisations. The Irish Government set up a Fund for Peace and Reconciliation and a Forum to encourage dialogue. With the approval of the two governments, the EU also established an enormous 'Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation' which focused on peacebuilding, social inclusion and restarting a conflict-affected economy.

1998: A Constitution for reconciliation?

The *Belfast Agreement* depended on establishing legitimacy for shared governance arrangements on the basis of a definitive end to violence, agreement on constitutional principles and institutions, and guarantees of citizen equality. The implicit retreat by all sides from incompatible assertions of cultural and territorial domination was reconfigured as a common aspiration to reconciliation. The Agreement committed to 'fostering agreement and reconciliation' and to 'removing

the causes of conflict, to overcome the legacy of history and to heal the divisions'. Parties identified specific areas where reconciliation has a particular contribution: in acknowledging and addressing the suffering of the victims of violence, in developing mutual understanding and respect between communities, and in promoting a culture of tolerance.

Despite its high aspirations, much of the Agreement lacked detail. While the scale of constitutional agreement was unprecedented, aspirational commitments to reconciliation left questions of implementation unresolved. This was perhaps essential, insofar as further attempts to establish commitments might well have come at the cost of delaying, or even preventing, the Agreement's completion. However, these were indeed serious omissions, given that they included core issues of disarmament, the timetable for implementing devolution, responsibility for past violence, the role of victims, the status of released prisoners, and content of future changes to policing, community relations and rights. Furthermore, in the ensuing referendum Sinn Féin sought support on the basis that the deal was temporary and 'transitional to a united Ireland', while the pro-Agreement Unionist leadership emphasised that it 'copper-fastened the Union' with Great Britain.

While responsibility for implementation lay in London and Dublin, the political heart of reconciliation depended on power sharing in a devolved Northern Ireland Assembly. Government was to be rigorously consociational, complete with mandatory coalition, separate designation of elected representatives, and a requirement for mutual consent and the potential for veto. Despite all of these safeguards it rapidly became clear that without the mediation of governments, politics in Northern Ireland very quickly dissolved into recrimination and the potential for renewed antagonism. Paradoxically, it was unclear whether the Agreement's core aspiration – reconciliation – could survive implementation of its primary political vehicle – devolved government, which was riddled with ambivalence over a shared future.

Rescuing reconciliation? (1998–2007)

Despite a referendum producing a 70 per cent domestic majority in favour of the Agreement, four uncertainties still obstructed implementation:

- There was no timetable for paramilitary disarmament and no agreement over who was responsible for delivery or what consequences would flow from failure.
- The Agreement provided no guidance on dealing with the legacy of violence. Victim suffering was acknowledged, but there was no recognition of responsibility, or clarity as to how this would be taken forward. Meanwhile paramilitary prisoners were released early, but their criminal records were not expunged.
- Policing reform was agreed in principle, but the outcome still depended on the deliberations of an international commission.
- Commitments to address profoundly contentious issues such as rights, community relations, equality, symbolism and culture remained undefined.

The absence of clarity over disarmament proved toxic to power sharing. In the context of increasingly bitter recrimination, the Assembly collapsed, and political leadership passed to anti-Agreement Unionists and Sinn Féin.

Under renewed direct rule from 2002–07, the Irish and British governments relied on a combination of public policy and civil society to maintain the momentum of reconciliation. For example, the Patten Commission report proposed root and branch reform of policing including a changed name, badge and uniform, an independent Police Ombudsman and a new focus on accountability, representativeness, community policing and human rights. These proposals gained the unequivocal support of the British, Irish and US governments as well as the backing of wider Irish nationalism, and eventual acquiescence of Unionists. Sinn Féin found itself increasingly isolated.

Alongside policing reform, London engaged directly with civic activists on policy change intended to promote reconciliation. Many activists, especially those working on projects supported by the various funding programmes, were anxious to see the principles developed in small-scale local projects applied across the full range of government services. After wide-ranging consultation with civil society and local government, far-reaching proposals to prioritise inter-community relations were launched in 2005 under the title *A Shared Future*, declaring that 'separate but equal is not an option' and that 'parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable, morally and economically'. The primary vehicle for translating this into practice was the €1 billion made available through the EU Special Support Fund for Peace and Reconciliation (PEACE II) from 2000–04, and IFI. These explicitly supported civil society reconciliation and peacebuilding efforts in communities affected by violence and polarisation.

Inter-community partnership at grassroots and local government level, once largely confined to small-scale dialogue and initiatives on specific issues, expanded rapidly into a myriad of increasingly sophisticated and targeted projects. These included: investment in shared capital projects and strategic planning; support programmes for victims and survivors; systematic engagement with former prisoners and combatants from all sides; projects involving the police; human rights promotion; work in schools and with young people; economic regeneration; cross-border connections; and work to reduce tensions at interfaces or between churches.

Despite the political impasse, a significant consensus emerged on the conceptual core of reconciliation. Research by Brandon Hamber and Gráinne Kelly identified five interrelated elements:

1. Developing a shared vision of an interdependent, fair society.
2. Acknowledging and dealing with the past, including mechanisms for justice, healing and restoration.
3. Building positive relationships following violent conflict.
4. Significant attitudinal change towards a culture of respect for human rights and differences.

5. Substantial social, economic and political change to address legitimate grievances, identified inequality and injustice.

The formulation's simplicity was striking, and it was immediately adopted by funding programmes.

Belated clarity about the content of reconciliation was, however, of much less immediate significance than the imperative of restoring self-government and ensuring the absence of violence. Realistically, the participation of anti-Agreement Unionists depended on the commitment to an end to IRA violence, and at minimum cost to traditional community antagonisms.

Indeed, reconciliation, with its holistic agenda and emphasis on integration, sharing and cooperation, ran almost entirely contrary to this short-run objective. At St Andrews in 2006, the Governments re-engineered the *Belfast Agreement* to further limit the content of partnership as a means to facilitate partnership in practice. The prerogative of ensuring a sustainable truce (containment) trumped aspirational transformation (reconciliation).

Peace without reconciliation? (2007–present)
Renewed devolved government in 2007 was the triumph of *realpolitik*. While images of mortal enemies sitting on the same sofa suggested transformation, devolution was in reality a carefully managed retreat. Inclusive government was established because the key parties concluded that any alternative was worse. For Sinn Féin, apparent concessions on policing and decommissioning were less important than evidence of political progress. The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) concluded that leadership in devolved government on this basis was preferable to further concessions to Sinn Féin. Both parties assured their supporters that they had made no concessions on their mutually incompatible goals.

For governments, however, especially the British, the prospect of being divested of direct responsibility for Northern Ireland was the historic prize. The new realism rested on two assumptions: first, that the absence of violence was sufficient and urgent, whereas good relations were desirable but could be postponed; second, that while reconciliation was desirable, containment was *essential*.

If an aspiration to reconciliation had failed to secure the complete absence of violence, the new deal risked eliminating it without the prospect of underlying change. Over time, the strengths and weaknesses of this 'new realism' became obvious. The absence of any alternative to devolved government was clear, and violence on the old scale was contained. Reconciliation, however, was no longer a policy priority. Peace was now equated with the stability of the governing coalition. The first draft *Programme for Government*, launched in 2008 replaced the notion of 'a shared future' with 'a better future', and substituted economic prosperity for reconciliation as the primary policy goal. 'Sharing' clearly remained suspect in some political quarters, especially where it might impact upon political ideology or aspirations to traditional, exclusive national outcomes.

The result was an increasingly clear division between the cold peace on the ground and emphatic inter-governmental level insistence on reconciliation. The royal visit to Ireland in 2011 and the reciprocal Irish State visit to London in 2014 were designed to emphasise that both governments had now consigned Catholic-Protestant and post-imperial antagonism to history.

In Northern Ireland itself, however, inter-community government without reconciliation replaced permanent macro-crisis with recurrent mini-crises. Between 2010 and 2015, disagreements over unresolved cultural and historic issues required formal talks over: devolution of policing and justice; flags, parades and the past; budgets; and paramilitarism. It was only the threat that a crisis over flags would spoil the international image of harmony at the 2013 G8 summit that forced Sinn Féin and the DUP to produce any formal commitment to implementing the policies outlined in *A Shared Future*.

With the help of recurrent intervention, the order of the day has been 'crisis-managed containment'. After recurrent periods of polarisation and paralysis, the peace of 2007 was loveless but intact, and violence has essentially been contained.

Reconciliation and peacebuilding
Reconciliation has played a crucial role in peacebuilding in Northern Ireland. Since it equates progress with a transformation of relationships, reconciliation cannot be defined by a single technique. It has, however, had many practical implications:

- Recalibrating ethno-national goals towards accommodation.
- Reframing constitutional reform to allow for flexible citizenship.
- Establishing core political norms and values such as equality, human rights, consent and self-determination.
- Insisting on non-violence and the rule of law in all political activities.
- Developing extensive grassroots experience and capacity for building inter-group relationships.
- Addressing injustice and violence in the past and present.
- Addressing socioeconomic injustice and inequality.

Although progress is hard to measure in the short term, a longer-term perspective shows real change. The redefinition of political progress away from victory towards transformation, and the generation of a framework for political inclusion and non-violence are significant successes, leaving a lasting legacy on the constitutional landscape. Change involved sustained top-down engagement and significant progress through legislation and grassroots activity. In consequence, Northern Ireland in 2016 is unrecognisable from the violence of 1985.

Much of this is also due to the action of civic organisations. At violent interfaces between traditionally hostile communities, locally led organisations have been mediating when tensions flare and on key cultural issues, planning for future shared action, and working closely with police and business. Youth

and schools groups pioneered programmes for young people across the community.

The attempt to make a radical transition has, however, also highlighted significant challenges and limits. Firstly, there is and was no shared narrative regarding the origins and nature of conflict. While reconciliation gave shape to the quality and goals of peacebuilding, the complex nature of relationships meant that in practice it was not to be 'achieved' through a single approach, but rather pursued in a variety of complex and inter-related dimensions.

> **"Although progress is hard to measure in the short term, a longer-term perspective shows real change."**

Secondly, reconciliation remains a profound challenge to the coherence of communities, which over time had developed in opposition and hostility. Ending inter-group antagonism disrupts the ritual, cultural and narrative order as well as prevailing political norms and vested interests. Both Unionism and Nationalism were premised on the necessity of dominance and the permanence of suspicion and vigilance. Resistance to reconciliation was very strong, especially where symbolic or cultural behaviour was challenged.

Thirdly, reconciliation requires a reckoning with power and violence in the past. The 1998 Agreement included no assessment of responsibility for past violence except to acknowledge its tragic consequences. Progress depended on contentious but ad hoc measures addressing emergent issues, including: early release for paramilitaries; financial and institutional support for victims and survivors; public inquiries into specific incidents; and the establishment of uncoordinated investigatory opportunities by the Ombudsman and Police Historical Enquiries Team.

Meanwhile, both the court system and the police continued to operate under international obligations to investigate. An attempt by an independent group tasked with establishing a common approach in 2007, known as the Eames-Bradley report, came to grief over its suggestion of a recognition payment to acknowledge suffering. As late as 2015, the DUP and Sinn Féin agreed to continue in government without any deal on moving forward. Instead of providing a coherent framework or a set of principles, failure merely heightened the impression that the past was being denied and allowed to fester, rather than being faced and laid to rest.

Finally, commitments to reconciliation are subject to changes in the international order that produced negotiation. The Northern Irish settlement is increasingly at risk from constitutional turmoil in the UK, and the potential impact that withdrawal from the EU would have on British relationships with Ireland. The possibility that Scotland would exit the UK, and with it leave Northern Ireland as a geographical extension of an overwhelmingly English state, also represented a significant change in the structures that had led to the *Belfast Agreement*.

Reconciliation has provided a crucial direction for efforts to move away from violent conflict towards peaceful partnership, and this in turn shaped a wide variety of grassroots interventions. The recurrent crises of the political process and cultural disputes over historical issues, however, suggest that shared government has not yet made reconciliation the mutual destination; nor has it succeeded in prioritising reconciliation over traditional hostilities.

Expert opinion

Rehabilitating reconciliation

Dr David Bloomfield

David Bloomfield has worked in the field of conflict and peacebuilding for over 35 years as a trainer, practitioner, policy adviser, analyst, and consultant. He specialises in the relationship between reconciliation processes, dealing with the past and transitional justice, and currently advises governments, multilateral agencies and international non-governmental organisations around the world. He has worked in many contexts, including Iraq, South Sudan, Sri Lanka, Kosovo and Colombia. David was editor of the IDEA publication, Reconciliation after violent conflict: A handbook (2003). He was previously Director of the Conflict Management Programme at International IDEA in Stockholm; Director of the Berghof Research Centre for Conflict Management in Berlin; and Chief Executive Officer of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation in Ireland.

What is reconciliation?

Reconciliation is about rebuilding broken relations and relationships. If that sounds soft, or non-contentious, it most certainly is not. Nor is it optional: it is not something nice we will get around to when the harder-edged stuff is completed. Politicians in a new, post-agreement context urgently need working relations if they are to make politics function. Communities in a new post-war society urgently need to learn to co-exist so that the new society can mirror the new politics and begin to function without violence. We are talking about politicians and communities who have most likely hated each other, even killed each other, for a significant part of recent history. So nothing about this is soft or easy. On the contrary: it is hugely challenging. And the stakes are very high: if politics fails, or community relations revert to violence, then all is lost. That is the task of reconciliation.

Reconciliation is not an easy option. Reconciliation is tough, challenging, hard-nosed. Reconciliation is not just for peaceful people. Reconciliation has to happen between people who have hated and hurt. Reconciliation is not the gentle side of justice. Reconciliation is as important as justice. And as necessary. And as difficult.

> **“Reconciliation is about rebuilding broken relations and relationships. If that sounds soft, or non-contentious, it most certainly is not.”**

Reconciliation is the process of rebuilding damaged relations, without which society will not function properly again in any of its dimensions: politics, social interaction, justice, economy, education… everything. It means dealing with the past to construct an agreed future. This involves examining past relations and behaviours, acknowledging them and their consequences, and coming to terms with them and with each other in such a way as to share new relations for that agreed future.

A modest reconciliation

Before going any further, it is worth mentioning that reconciliation is no more of a magic bullet than any other approach or method in peacebuilding. It never works perfectly – it sometimes fails completely – but generally it makes a significant contribution to post-violence reconstruction. (And it is difficult to find a post-violence society that prospered without a reconciliation process.) Its effectiveness is based on a range of factors: context, history, political will, resources, quality of design and so on. Given that no society on earth is completely free of inequality and injustice, we should certainly not expect such results from societies emerging from the devastation of violent conflict. They face massive challenges, and we should be modest in our claims for any approach, including reconciliation, that might assist their progress.

Reconciliation: a process and a goal

Reconciliation is both a process and a goal. Practitioners, like me, have tended to put all their focus on the process. This is because most of us have all but dismissed the end-state of reconciliation as being too idealistic. Too often, it has been hyped up to be some kind of paradise of perfect interpersonal harmony, and we wonder how on earth people who have been fighting could possibly want or achieve that.

There are two reasons for this focus on process over goal. Firstly, while we may be inspired by such a vision, we suspect that in the real world we need to focus on the process of improving relations, which is challenging enough without setting ourselves such impossible targets as perfect harmony. Secondly, we know that many victims initially reject reconciliation because they see it as a demand to forgive and learn to love their former oppressors. In our wisdom, we suspect they are objecting to the end-state of reconciliation and that a shift of focus on to process will help us to convince them otherwise. Although, confusingly, sometimes we persist in this even when people involved directly in a reconciliation situation insist on their need to forgive, to understand, to pardon, or to heal.

How a reconciliation process is designed for a particular context obviously applies very specifically to that context: the history, nature, scale, scope, duration of the violent period; the nature and depth of the difference(s) that underpinned the conflict; the culturally accepted methods of conflict management, and so on. Thus, for some, reconciliation will involve healing (of selves, psyches, relationships, 'the nation', etc.). For some, it will involve forgiveness in some form. For others, it will involve neither of these.

> **"While contextualisation is very important, it cannot provide excuses not to tackle the core practices of reconciliation that are necessary in every post-violence context."**

But while contextualisation is very important, it cannot provide excuses not to tackle the core practices of reconciliation that are necessary in every post-violence context. Those practices do not even need to be termed 'reconciliation', as long as the basic requirements are met: rebuilding damaged relations so that social functions can recommence.

Realistic reconciliation

So the *goal* of reconciliation tends generally to be idealistic, but the *process* needs to be realistic.

But if a realistic reconciliation process involves former enemies building working relations and grudgingly learning to cooperate, to tolerate and to co-exist, what end-state does it produce? Clearly not perfect harmony and peace, by any means. What, then, is its goal? Why can't we have an equally realistic goal?

Perhaps that ideal end-state of harmony should remain in our sight always because, like all ideals, it serves the important purpose of inspiring us to keep struggling towards it.

Here's a realistic goal for a pragmatic process to work towards: a polity and society increasingly based on equality and fair rules that apply to all; a social compact that may creak as it functions but which steadily comes to include everyone; a redesigned governance system that prohibits the exclusionary practices of the past; an increasingly self-regulating system of justice that provides safety and security, and prevents and punishes violence from any quarter. In short, a society increasingly at peace with itself, in which all its members can begin to believe in a better future and a sustainable peace.

This is not paradise by a long shot. But it is tangible, attainable and acceptable. It is a context in which healing and forgiveness, when they are required, can begin to take place. And, if we're really lucky, it might even lead someday to that state of perfect harmony.

Reconciling past and future

So reconciliation requires a process to deal with the past which acknowledges (and thus reduces) the hurt, alienation, and sense of injustice felt by victims, and which acknowledges (and thus officially denounces) the responsibility and guilt of offenders.

The past is a central dimension of reconciliation. But reconciliation is essentially about the future: moving from a divided past towards a shared future. And so it means, at its core, building relations for the future. That happens in two dimensions. In the first, we engage in practices overtly labelled as reconciliation activities: meetings, dialogues and joint projects to focus on our differences and divisions, our hurts, our misdeeds, our history, our needs, our identities, our cultures. These activities help us to get to know and begin to understand our former enemies who are now our new partners, as they begin to understand us.

In the second dimension, we engage in cooperative activities that most likely have no reconciliation label on them. They are, rather, activities that represent the normalising of social relations within a society. We naturally begin to do all the things that need to be done to build our society: the things that used to be done separately, or with bias and exclusion. We begin to cooperate on all the social issues and functions that a society needs to develop: doing politics together; devising social policies for education, health, employment, resource-sharing, housing and so on; forming the habits of social, cultural and economic co-operation and interaction; setting the rules for sharing our future. And when it comes to those rules, we address justice for the future.

Reconciliation versus justice

Transitional justice is one of the most important new concepts in peacebuilding to emerge over the last 15 years. But in its creation, the international legal community has done us, and itself, a serious injustice. In establishing transitional justice, it did so at the expense of the equally important concept of reconciliation, and in the process it over-extended transitional justice beyond its means. Reconciliation and justice, perversely, came to be seen in competition or opposition to each other, and in this falsely created zero-sum fight, justice won. We urgently need to rehabilitate reconciliation in this relationship.

That is because all the key ingredients of dealing with the past – retribution, reparation, restoration, acknowledgement, accountability, making amends, ending impunity, guaranteeing

non-recurrence – came to rely almost exclusively on justice. Transitional justice, to be exact. Reconciliation was relegated to a side-issue, or a minor follow-on, once justice had been completed. More, it was sidelined to something vaguely emotional or interpersonal – something rather too idealistic – that might be the feel-good business of community leaders or cultural leaders, but was probably not a priority for politicians and national leaders to bother with. Instead, transitional justice would bring all that was required to deal with the past and move into the future.

But transitional justice became over-used. First, it was narrowed down to a process that dealt with past misdeeds only, and prioritised offenders over victims, offences over suffering, punishment over acknowledgement. While transitional justice claimed to include Truth and Reconciliation Commissions as 'non-judicial' ingredients of its process, in fact non-judicial elements rapidly became minor outliers to a heavily court-based retributive process. In all the tribunals, hearings and legal proceedings, victims took second place to judges, defendants, counsel and due process.

Second, the 'transition' dimension of this retributive justice began to disappear, as punishment for past wrongs became an end in itself for the international community. Transition, it seemed, took us only from the past to the present, and ignored the future.

Third, beyond the justice meted out to address these past actions, within transitional justice little or no attention was paid to the reform and re-design of justice structures for the future: justice to address structural violence, justice to guarantee fairness, justice which would ensure that citizens would buy in to the new society offered at the end of the transition. Or, if such attention was paid (in the shape of constitutional reform, legal reform, judicial reform, security sector reform, and so on), it was disconnected from the transitional past-oriented justice, and seen as separate. But the prospect of a fair future is essential to an effective transition into that future. Justice for the past and for the future would both be strengthened by being properly linked together in the transitional process.

Reconciliation with justice

Justice for the future is at the heart of reconciliation.

Moreover, and crucially, this justice for the future is not simply a key part of peacemaking and reconciliation, though it is that; it is also a key part of the painful calculation that victims are forced to make in deciding how little justice, and of what kind, will suffice to move them out of their past and into a liveable future. No justice process is perfect: not all offenders get punishment; not all victims get satisfaction. Most victims, in fact, get much less than they deserve. Ultimately, many of them are forced to a further compromise on their needs in order to help society move forward. An expectation of a fair future – a just society for my children, for example – becomes a part of that compromise.

Reconciliation and justice are integrally interlinked and interdependent. Some things they provide separately (reconciliation, for example, does not in itself supply retributive justice, and transitional justice does not in itself alter relationships, even though they will both contribute towards both outcomes). But it is in their overlap that we need to bring some clarity. In particular, we have to recognise that reconciliation provides some vital ingredients of justice. Acknowledgement, for one example. Accountability, for another. Both of these are crucial elements of justice, but are often best produced from reconciliation processes.

Reconciliation is also a society-wide process, unlike retributive justice which focuses on law-breakers. There is always a constituency of bystanders and beneficiaries: those who committed no crimes but who benefitted from the injustice that prevailed – or at least looked the other way and thus gave it their tacit support. They will never be put in the dock, but their attitudes and beliefs, and their responsibilities, must be addressed, along with everyone else's. They are constituent parts of the communities whose relations must be challenged and changed, in a process that engages all of society.

One final thought: transitional justice often stresses the necessity of bringing an end to impunity and guaranteeing that the horror of the past will not return. Immediately, then, we turn to legal and judicial processes to provide these things. But what is the best guarantee of non-recurrence? What most effectively ensures that a society will not revert to division, violence and violation? Laws will certainly help, although perhaps nothing can provide a cast-iron guarantee. But the best hope of non-recurrence is a society at peace with itself. That means one where justice (as accountability and acknowledgement) has been done for the past and where justice (as fairness) is being implemented for the present and the future. And it means one where difference is managed non-violently, where there is no need to break the rules any more: a society where relations have been rebuilt in a process of reconciliation.

Without a process of reconciliation to build or rebuild relations, society will have difficulty functioning in any meaningful way, let alone functioning to build sustainable peace and permanent change. Reconciliation is not some peace-and-love state of paradise where all are one. It is an awkward, difficult process where former enemies find painful ways to begin co-operating for a better future.

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The Accord series

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INSIGHT ISSUE 2 (2015)

Local engagement with armed groups

This second Accord Insight publication looks at the interactions between armed groups and local populations. Case studies from Colombia, northern Uganda, Syria and Northern Ireland document the experiences of communities who have organised to influence the behaviour of armed groups – often in advance of more formal negotiations and in situations of intense violence and embedded conflict.

INSIGHT ISSUE 1 (2013)

Women building peace

Most peace agreements do not address the specific concerns of women, and women are still excluded from political processes. The first Accord Insight presents nine articles and new analysis drawn from the Accord series from 1998 to 2010, which examine the roles women have played in addressing violence and building peace – from Bougainville and Sierra Leone to Aceh and Northern Ireland.

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ISSUE 24 (2012)

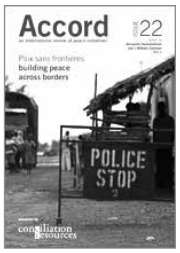
Reconciliation, reform and resilience: positive peace for Lebanon

Accord 24 includes more than 30 articles and interviews on peacebuilding in Lebanon: from diverse perspectives and from inside and outside the country. Together they show that the Lebanese are not passive victims of a violent fate determined beyond their country's borders. Many are actively pursuing opportunities for change.

ISSUE 23 (2012)

Consolidating peace: Liberia and Sierra Leone

A decade after the official end of wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone, Accord 23 draws on respective societies' experiences and insights to ask what headway has been made to consolidate peace, what challenges lie ahead and what lessons can be learnt. It argues that policy needs to focus on people, on repairing relationships and promoting inclusion, and that traditional mechanisms can play a crucial role.



ISSUE 22 (2011)

Paix sans frontières: building peace across borders

War does not respect political or territorial boundaries. This twenty-second Accord publication, looks at how peacebuilding strategies and capacity can 'think outside the state': *beyond* it, through regional engagement, and *below* it, through cross-border community or trade networks.

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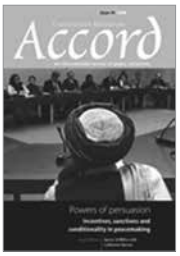
ISSUE 20 (2008)

Reconfiguring politics: the Indonesia-Aceh peace process

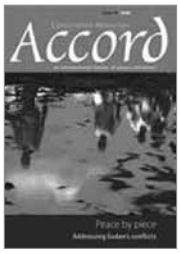
In 2005, the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) agreed a settlement ending 30 years of armed conflict. Accord 20 explores how that agreement was reached and subsequent challenges to its implementation.



ISSUE 19 (2008)

Powers of persuasion: incentives, sanctions and conditionality in peacemaking

International policymakers frequently use incentives, sanctions and conditionality as tools to influence intra-state conflicts. Using a range of case studies, Accord 19 asks whether and how these tools can constructively influence conflict parties' engagement in peacemaking initiatives.



ISSUE 18 (2006)

Peace by piece: addressing Sudan's conflicts

This Accord publication reviews the peace process that led to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan. It also explores questions that remain to be tackled, arguing that future Sudanese initiatives must be more inclusive and better coordinated.

ISSUE 17 (2005)

The limits of leadership elites and societies in the Nagorny Karabakh peace process

Since the 1994 ceasefire, the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over Nagorny Karabakh has remained deadlocked. Accord 17 explores the dynamics of polarisation, the obstacles to a sustainable agreement and the challenge of overcoming resistance to compromise.

ISSUE 16 (2005)

Choosing to engage: armed groups and peace processes

Non-state armed groups, key actors in many internal armed conflicts, have participated in peace processes across the world. Accord 16 draws on these experiences to explore the case for engaging with armed groups, and the different options, roles and challenges for such engagement.

ISSUE 15 (2004)

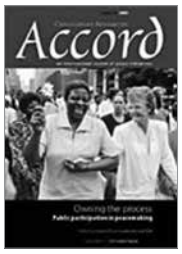
From military peace to social justice? The Angolan peace process

The Luena Memorandum of 2002 brought an end to Angola's 27-year civil war. Accord 15 reviews the history of peacemaking efforts in Angola, and analyses challenges that remain if the absence of violence is to develop into a sustainable and just peace.

ISSUE 14 (2004)

Alternatives to war: Colombia's peace processes

This Accord publication provides an overview of more than 25 years of peace initiatives with Colombia's guerrilla and paramilitary groups. It includes analysis of civil society efforts at local, regional and national levels and identifies the necessary elements of a new model of conflict resolution.



ISSUE 13 (2002)

Owning the process: public participation in peacemaking

This first thematic Accord publication documents mechanisms for public participation in peacemaking. It features extended studies looking at how people were empowered to participate in political processes in Guatemala, Mali and South Africa. It also contains shorter pieces from Colombia, Northern Ireland and the Philippines.

ISSUE 12 (2002)

Weaving consensus: the Papua New Guinea – Bougainville peace process

This Accord publication documents efforts leading to the Bougainville Peace Agreement of 2001. It describes an indigenous process that drew on the strengths of Melanesian traditions, as well as innovative roles played by international third parties.

ISSUE 11 (2002)

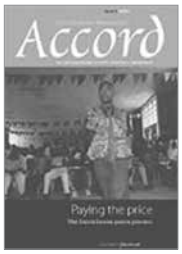
Protracted conflict, elusive peace: initiatives to end the violence in northern Uganda

While a meaningful peace process in northern Uganda remains elusive, Accord 11 documents significant peacemaking initiatives undertaken by internal and external actors and analyses their impact on the dynamics of the conflict.

ISSUE 10 (2001)

Politics of compromise: the Tajikistan peace process

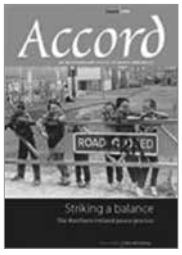
This publication describes the aspirations of the parties to the conflict in Tajikistan. It documents the negotiation process leading to the General Agreement of June 1997, looking at the role of the international community, led by the UN, and of local civil society.



ISSUE 9 (2000)

Paying the price: the Sierra Leone peace process

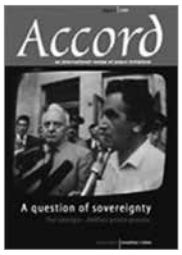
The Lomé Peace Agreement of July 1999 sought to bring an end to armed conflict in Sierra Leone: one of the most brutal civil wars of recent times. Accord 9 explores the Lomé process and earlier attempts to resolve the conflict, and draws lessons for Sierra Leone's transition.



ISSUE 8 (1999)

Striking a balance: the Northern Ireland peace process

This publication examines the factors that led to the negotiations resulting in the 1998 *Belfast Agreement*. It describes the complex underlying forces and the development of an environment for peace. (2003: Supplement Issue – see online index)



ISSUE 7 (1999)

A question of sovereignty: the Georgia-Abkhazia peace process

This publication explores the background and issues at the heart of the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict, providing a unique insight into a political stalemate and pointing towards possible avenues out of deadlock.

ISSUE 6 (1999)

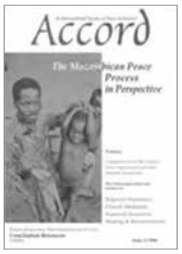
Compromising on autonomy: Mindanao in transition

The GRP-MNLF 1996 Peace Agreement was a milestone, as all previous peacemaking attempts over 24 years had failed. Accord 6 analyses elements of peacemaking in Mindanao and examines the challenges of implementation. (2003: Supplement Issue – see online index)

ISSUE 5 (1998)

Safeguarding peace: Cambodia's constitutional challenge

This publication documents issues around the signing of the 1991 Paris agreements that officially ended Cambodia's long war, and the subsequent violent collapse of the country's governing coalition in July 1997.



ISSUE 4 (1998)

Demanding sacrifice: war and negotiation in Sri Lanka

This publication documents the cycles of ethnic/national conflict that have blighted Sri Lanka since 1983. It analyses negotiations and other peace initiatives, and outlines fundamental concerns that need to be confronted in future peacemaking efforts

ISSUE 3 (1998)

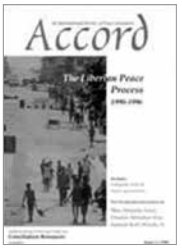
The Mozambican peace process in perspective

This publication documents the diverse initiatives that drove the parties to a negotiated settlement of the conflict in Mozambique. It further illustrates the impact on the country of changing regional and international political dynamics.

ISSUE 2 (1997)

Negotiating rights: the Guatemalan peace process

The signing of the peace agreement in 1996 brought an end to 36 years of civil war in Guatemala. Accord 2 analyses issues of impunity, indigenous rights, political participation and land reform.



ISSUE 1 (1996)

The Liberian peace process 1990–1996

This first Accord publication documents the lengthy and fractious Liberian peace process and provides insight into why thirteen individual peace accords collapsed in half as many years.

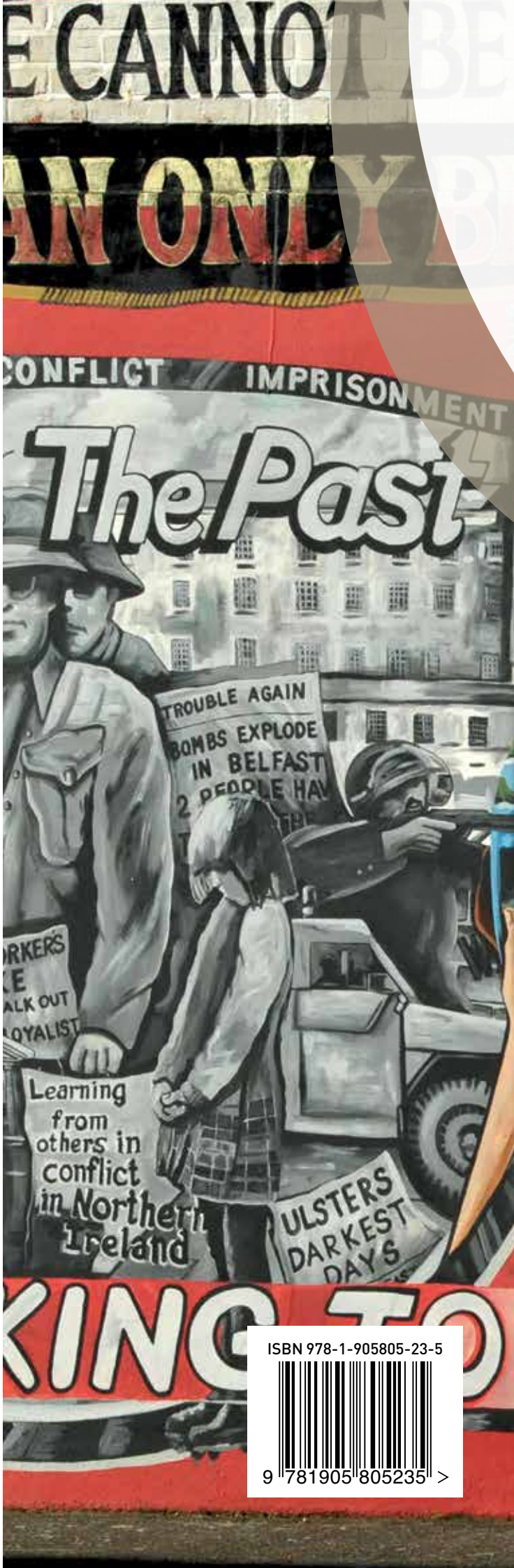
Policymakers and practitioners increasingly acknowledge the importance of reconciliation to sustainable peace. Yet it is often viewed belatedly, as a purely post-conflict concern. There is uncertainty about what type of reconciliation activity is possible at different phases of a peace process, and how to connect initiatives at different levels – from grassroots to elite.

This third Accord Insight reflects on practical approaches and challenges to address the legacies of violent conflict. Case studies examine contexts at differing stages of conflict and peace process: the Georgian-Abkhaz context (pre-settlement); Colombia (during negotiations); Mindanao (post-settlement: implementation); and Northern Ireland (post-settlement: consolidation). They illustrate the importance of a diverse range of efforts to support peace processes and the reconstruction of post-conflict societies, including political accommodation and institution building.

The case studies offer important insights into a diversity of approaches (successes and failures) in societies with different histories of violence and at very different stages on the conflict spectrum. They stress the need to 'transform relationships' – horizontally among people in society, and vertically between people and institutions. Transformation is aspirational and emancipatory: looking to build new peaceful relationships, not return to old hostile ones.

Conciliation Resources is an independent international organisation working with people in conflict to prevent violence, resolve conflicts and promote peaceful societies.

Accord Insight presents cutting-edge analysis and contemporary peacebuilding innovation by re-examining key challenges and practical lessons from our Accord publication series.



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