

# **Developing a Joint Berghof Vision 2008 – 2012**

## **Addressing critical issues of conflict transformation in research and practice**

David Bloomfield & Norbert Ropers

September 2007

1. The New Berghof Vision
2. Background: The Berghof Focus on Conflict Transformation
3. Central Insights from 15 Years of Action Research
4. The Policy Context: Critical Issues of Peace-Promoting Interventions
5. The Professional Context: Trends in Research and Practice in Conflict Transformation
6. Looking Forward

## Introduction

This paper elaborates a Joint Vision serving to guide and distinguish the work of the Berghof Research Center (BRC), the Berghof Foundation for Peace Support (BFPS) and the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies for the next five to 10 years.<sup>1</sup> The goal of this undertaking is to clarify the profile of the Berghof family as an internationally-acknowledged group of interlinked institutions promoting and pursuing research and practical work that responds effectively to protracted ethno-political conflict and political violence.

Building on on-going expertise developed over the last 15 years, the essence of this new Joint Vision is three-fold:

- Expand Berghof's traditional orientation of action-research at the Track 2 and Track 1.5 levels to more explicitly link this with Track 1 activities.
- Take a more focused approach to key strategic issues designed to make conflict transformation more effective, including a programmatic emphasis on: infrastructures and processes of peace support and reconciliation; the peaceful transformation of Non-State Actors; and developing the idea of Non-official Peace Envoys. These three areas define the primary work of BRC and BFPS. They also serve to guide the grant-making activities of the Berghof Foundation.
- Contribute to the general need to develop integrative approaches to conflict transformation (i.e., linking civil society peacebuilding with state-driven initiatives; more closely examining the interactions and interdependences between peacebuilding, development and human rights work), with a specific interest to explore the utility of introducing systemic thinking into this field.

---

<sup>1</sup> This document reflects considered input from many parts of the Berghof family, notably both the staff of BRC and BFPS, as well as the Board of Trustees of the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies and the Advisory Board of BFPS. The authors are very grateful for the cooperation and insights of these participants. It is edited by Kate McGuinness.

## 1. The New Berghof Vision

*We seek to establish a unique combination of vibrant research, practice and policy advice in three programme areas of conflict transformation:*

- (1) Infrastructures and processes of peace support and reconciliation;*
- (2) the peaceful transformation of Non-State Actors; and*
- (3) the contributions of Non-Official Peace Envoys.*

This new Berghof vision is based on three primary assumptions. First, to overcome political violence in protracted conflicts in a just and sustainable way, it is crucial to address a series of challenges that can be described as ‘gaps’. For in some way, all of these challenges indicate a lack of interaction and/or complementarity in efforts to promote peace. Seven key gaps can be identified:<sup>2</sup>

- Gaps between hard power, soft power and conflict transformation
- Gaps in liberal peace promotion
- Legitimacy gaps
- Issue area gaps
- Networking gaps
- Process/structure and non-linearity gaps
- Assessment gaps

Second, in order to address these and other gaps effectively it is important to work from a scholarly as well as practitioners’ point of view and, ideally, to combine the perspectives of action research and reflective practice. The guiding notion here is to work towards an integrative understanding and practice of conflict transformation and to explore various meta-theoretical concepts that might be inspiring for this undertaking.

Third, to be most effective and productively focused in our future work, it is necessary to take a strategic approach that: is well grounded in our past profile,

---

<sup>2</sup> See section 4 below for elaboration.

experiences and capacities; can contribute significantly to addressing some of the key gaps in our field as these are outlined above; and will help to sharpen the unique niche of the Berghof institutions in the context of the global conflict transformation community over the next five to 10 years.

The focus on the three specific programme areas identified above is based on the following considerations. First, we recognise that enabling infrastructures and processes of peace support and reconciliation is closest to what we have done in the past. But we see a need to introduce new elements to this work. In particular, we want to apply a multi-track-perspective (including Track 1), focus on the aforementioned critical gaps and explicitly integrate reconciliation as a key dimension.

Our second consideration in relation to the peaceful transformation of Non-State Actors programme area is that we already have begun working in this context (e.g., the comparative research project on non-state armed groups, or NSAG's; the Sri Lanka project). These experiences and the analysis of the overall importance of this subject have led us to the conclusion that the Berghof institutions have a unique opportunity to co-shape a new discourse on how to engage with NSAGs. Crucially, this is an area that so far has been dominated by terrorism studies and security studies, but neglected by the field of conflict transformation.

As we understand the third programme area, Non-official Peace Envoys, this is a direct outcome of our experiences in Sri Lanka and other conflict zones where we have collected practical insights. It also builds on a long history of private diplomacy, updating this in relation to the contemporary challenges of civilian peacebuilding and conflict transformation. Working in a fully complementary capacity to official Special Envoys (who face several difficulties and shortcoming related to their purely Track 1 role), Non-official Peace Envoys undertake similar activities, but focus these efforts in the civil society and party-political spheres.<sup>3</sup>

This new three-fold programmatic orientation is a clear step beyond our traditional focus on civil society and Track 2 approaches. At the same time, however, we remain

---

<sup>3</sup> In particular, Non-official Peace Envoys seek to: engage with unlike-minded parties; nurture domestic and regional networks of like-minded parties; build bridges between these two groups; encourage options for multiple peaceful futures; and weave a network of personal relationships between strategically important groups.

convinced that strengthening civil society actors and functions in crisis regions is crucial for effective peacebuilding. Thus we must sustain our roots in this area. But we also see a pioneering role in contributing to the urgent need to address the gaps that presently limit the field of conflict transformation.

## **2. Background: The Berghof Focus on Conflict Transformation**

In 1992, the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies established the Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management (BRC) as a centre for applied research in conflict resolution, devoting a large portion of its philanthropic resources to the same area. For almost 15 years, BRC has used this mandate to build an institutional profile for developing, analysing and applying conflict transformation approaches in three primary ways: 1) providing conceptual support and practical tools for civil society peace activists and development agencies in ethnopolitical conflicts; 2) elaborating and developing the notion of peace constituencies; and 3) engaging in networking and policy advice to encourage innovative approaches to conflict transformation (CT), as the field is now called.

Based on these experiences, BRC has developed a sound understanding of and expertise in the processes of civil society peacemaking, as well as of the challenges of co-ordination between state and non-state actors. The primary channel for disseminating this expertise is the *Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation*, which now is widely used and highly regarded by practitioners and scholars alike.

In 2004, the experiences and implications of BRC's practice-based project in Sri Lanka led to the creation of the Berghof Foundation for Peace Support (BFPS). In turn, this fostered a commitment to a more explicit complementarity between these two organisations—one focused more on action-research and the other more on hands-on practical work. This development has become one of Berghof's unique features: the close interplay between both research and practice under one institutional roof.

Since the 1990s, Berghof has carved out an identity in the field as a leading member of a constituency of NGOs working in innovative ways to support and further civil society/Track 2 knowledge and practice in conflict transformation. During this same

period, at the international level, the field of conflict transformation was mainstreamed, co-opted and institutionalised in various ways. These developments made the Berghof contribution less unique in the new millennium than it previously was. Hence the current decision to re-focus and sharpen the Berghof profile.

### 3. Central Insights from 15 Years of Action Research<sup>4</sup>

From the outset, BRC's work has concerned what Lederach (2005: 49) calls 'constructive social change', which 'seeks to change the flow of human interaction in social conflict from cycles of destructive relational violence towards cycles of relational dignity and respectful engagement'.<sup>5</sup> This general framework gave rise to four distinct areas of interest that have defined BRC's research agenda for the last 15 years.

In 1993, the Interactive Conflict Resolution (ICR) approach was relatively new to Germany and continental Europe. Taking this on as an initial focus, BRC played a central role in promoting this approach and facilitating its further exploration and development. Several early publications, along with the Romanian-Hungarian Dialogue Project and, later, the Georgia-Abkhazia 'Schlaining' Dialogue Process were very much rooted in the ICR tradition.

These engagements gave rise to two guiding insights related to the role of cultural differences and power differences. The first was scepticism about how English-language political culture (which generally had inspired the ICR approach) might have created blind spots with respect to conflict resolution between members of different cultures. The second was the observation that nearly all ethnopolitical conflicts are characterized by significant power asymmetries.

These issues, especially their interaction, became the second focus of BRC work in the mid 1990s. While in English-language discourses the collaboration of the macro-political and the ICR approach, or civil society tracks (also known as 'conflict settlement and conflict resolution'; see Bloomfield, 1997), was one of the first key critical issues, the

---

<sup>4</sup> This summary is based on Bloomfield, David and Norbert Ropers (2005). *The Berghof Perspective: reviewing the past and outlining the future. Position Paper for the Board of Trustees meeting, November 2005.*

<sup>5</sup> Lederach, John Paul (2005). *The Moral Imagination, the Art and Soul of Building Peace.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

state-centred tradition in continental Europe made this collaboration more difficult. Consequently, this interaction became the third focus of BRC work: the contributions of civil society to peacebuilding and peacemaking. A key term in this context was ‘peace constituencies’, referring to a range of civil society actors engaged in peacebuilding. More recently, the meaning of this term has been extended to include representatives of stakeholder groups—insofar as they belong to those groups actively engaged in peacemaking.

The fourth BRC focus related to the nexus between peace and development. This started at the policy level, advising several development and humanitarian agencies about how to integrate aspects of conflict sensitivity and conflict transformation into their own work. Later, it moved to a ground-level exploration of concrete measures for linking the two in practice. Its integration into the conflict resolution discourse, or rather the integration of conflict resolution into the development discourse, was a central indicator of the mainstreaming of this area of work in the second half of the 1990s.

#### ***(1) Interactive Conflict Resolution initiatives***

In collaboration with several partner organisations, we co-facilitated three different dialogue and problem-solving workshops: the Romanian-Hungarian conflict in Romania; the Georgia-Abkhazia conflict; and the ethnopolitical conflict in Sri Lanka. We often combined these workshops with other Interactive Conflict Resolution (ICR) activities, especially multi-stakeholder capacity building (e.g., see Wolleh, 2000, a Ph.D. thesis completed under the auspices of BRC devoted to the analysis of this approach in Cyprus).

Four key insights from these various projects emerged:

- This almost classic approach of academically-inspired peace work requires a thorough contextualisation within the broader framework of engaging with the target groups of the workshops.
- This work cannot operate on a short-term basis if it is to ensure a sustainable peace process in the long term.
- Reflecting participants’ own perspectives of conflict transformation within the framework of comparative experiences (i.e., the prism concept) is one of the best ways of combining dialogue and capacity building.

- In terms of the overall impact of dialogue and problem-solving projects, the primary question is their linkage to key drivers of conflict, as well as potential drivers of peace.
- Based on these experiences and insights, we now would concur with Ronald Fisher's (2005) recent summary that the main weaknesses of ICR primarily are related to the fact that it is centred on a small-group approach.<sup>6</sup> Thus there remains a crucial question about how strongly participants are linked to, and can influence, their respective constituencies. This has become a central problematic for our present and future work.

### ***(2) Cultural differences and power differences***

Key insights on these issues include the following:

- Conflicts commonly described as 'intercultural conflicts' are essentially social conflicts. To intervene constructively, it is crucial to identify the underlying differences that, like any other social differences, can become constitutive components of competition, rivalry and identity formation. It became important, therefore, to focus critically on the concept of neutrality. We therefore developed an approach inspired by multipartiality, in preference to multi-culturality or impartiality.
- The majority of protracted internal social conflicts are asymmetric with respect to power, governance and legitimacy.

Based on these observations, our conclusion was that third parties must address the interaction between power-political differences and cultural differences, and the rules according to which parties organise their negotiation processes. In other words, they have to facilitate a new 'system' of rules that allows both majority and minority parties to pursue their interests.

More or less an eternal challenge in our field, we now address this in two ways: 1) in the context of the 'transition perspective'—our research on and engagement with non-state armed groups (NSAGs), along with the work on transitional justice and

---

<sup>6</sup> Fisher, Ronald J. (2005). *Paving the Way: Contributions of Interactive Conflict Resolution to Peacemaking*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

reconciliation; and 2) in the context of the ‘systemic approach’— explorations of how to conceptualise these dimensions within adequate ‘mental frames’.

### ***(3) Support for peace activists and peace constituencies***

A central pillar of our engagement in the post-communist hemisphere, particularly in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and, later, in Sri Lanka has been providing support for peace activists through coaching, supervision, joint work with them on best practices and assessing their impact for peacebuilding and conflict transformation. The main insights here were related to the interaction between different spheres of action, or systems of reference: a) the interaction between official macro-political and unofficial social levels, largely captured in the multi-track metaphor; b) the interaction between different realms of support work, particularly peace, human rights, development and humanitarian assistance; and c) the interaction between international and domestic actors and organisations.<sup>7</sup>

Two further observations emerged:

- Peace support must be organised to empower partners in the region and nurture domestic peace constituencies, rather than to create another layer and culture of dependence. To be more effective, such partnerships need a systematic inter-organisational development strategy, as well as joint problem-solving on how to build sustainable domestic peace constituencies. In short, local ownership must move beyond international rhetoric.
- A fundamental linkage in peacebuilding and peacemaking relates to reconciliation and the integration of the legacy of past violence into the building of a new peaceful future. This was not sufficiently addressed by either local or international actors in the regions where we were involved in practical work and represents a painful obstacle for sustainable progress towards positive peace. Scholars and practitioners in the field of conflict transformation need a better understanding of interim reconciliation measures in phases between ceasefires and political

<sup>7</sup> Francis, Diana and Norbert Ropers (1997). *Peace Work by Civil Society Actors in Post Communist Societies*, Berghof Occasional Paper 10. Fischer, Martina and Julie Tumler (2000). *Friedensförderung in Bosnien-Herzegowina: Ansätze der Jugend-, Bildungs- und Kulturarbeit*, Berghof Report No. 5. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management. Fischer, Martina and Giovanni Scotto (2000). *Southeastern NGOs for the Stability Pact*, Berghof Occasional Paper No. 17. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

settlements, as well as in cases where political settlements are not based on sufficient social consensus.

#### ***(4) The nexus between peace and development***

Our contribution to improving understanding and practice in the nexus between peace and development in post-conflict reconstruction was two-fold. At the ground level, we explored innovative methods of linking the two.<sup>8</sup> At the research and policy level, we emphasised the need for a holistic approach. International intervention in Bosnia, for example, highlighted the fact that establishing democratic politics and free-market structures is too simplistic a strategy for addressing the complex and interlinked transition process and its problems.<sup>9</sup> Further, setting up a power-sharing model in a semi-protectorate fuelled, rather than mitigated, the existing ethnic divide. The war itself also produced illegal and semi-legal economic winners who took advantage of the weak situation of new borders and ethnically-separated decentralised structures of government.

At the end of the 1990s, it became clear that the effective transformation of ethnopolitical conflicts required a comprehensive approach which would:

- Put ICR activities into a broader framework of peacebuilding activities moving beyond the small-group approach
- Further elaborate the peace constituency concept
- Try to integrate the opportunities offered in the development cooperation realm for post-war societies
- Be sensitive to the complex of cultural and power differences

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Berghof assessment studies for the project “Youth Building the Future”, in: Martina Fischer (2006). *Jugendarbeit und Friedensförderung in Ostbosnien, Berghof Report No. 13*; and Martina Fischer, “The Need for Multidimensional Youth Work: Education, Interethnic Networking and Income Generation”, in: Martina Fischer (Ed.) (2007). *Ten Years After Dayton*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Berlin: Lit Verlag.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example: Fischer, Martina and Oliver Wils (2003). *Poverty Reduction and Conflict Prevention*, VENRO Policy Paper; Martina Fischer (2004). “Recovering from Violent Conflict: Regeneration and (Re-)Integration as Elements of Peacebuilding”, in: Austin, Alex, Martina Fischer and Norbert Ropers (Eds.). *Berghof Handbook of Conflict Transformation*. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften.

Importantly, these insights formed one of the starting points for the Sri Lanka project which, in turn, led to the step-by-step development and exploration of the systemic approach to conflict transformation.

As this historical overview clearly demonstrates, insights from our earlier work continue to inform our current activities and remain the basic building-blocks for constructing Berghof's future agenda.

#### **4. The Policy Context: Critical Issues of Peace-Promoting Interventions**

The 1990s seemed to indicate a promising new trend in responses to political violence. Internationally, conflict prevention, defined as addressing the root causes of conflict, was forthrightly and centrally enshrined in the EU's foreign and development policies.<sup>10</sup> Dialogue and negotiation helped to resolve peacefully the South African and Irish conflicts, and produced progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But subsequent events—in the Balkans, Somalia, Chechnya, and most fundamentally Iraq, Afghanistan and the 'war on terror' after 11 September 2001—rolled back that progress, silenced many of the more nuanced debates and demonstrated that the preferred methods of international politics had renounced multilateral approaches to security and reverted again to *realpolitik*.

At national levels, similar patterns can be discerned. Arguably these are a fall-out from the international debate. Post-9/11, many governments have instrumentalised the terrorism debate to justify increasing the ratio of hard to soft power in their own internal security policies, whether this refers to international actors tightening their security and hardening their civil liberties policies against the perceived external threat of terrorism, or to governments managing their own internal conflicts with much more overtly hard-power measures justified as necessary anti-terrorism policies. The material support for such shifts by powerful global actors, notably the US, has only emboldened these patterns of hardened behaviour.

---

<sup>10</sup> See: Debiel, Tobias and Martina Fischer (2000). *Crisis Prevention by the European Union: Concepts, Capacities and Coherence, Berghof Report No. 4*. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

Preference still is given to the application of military power as the dominant means of *realpolitik*, despite the fact that this repeatedly has been shown to be limited, inefficient and even counterproductive. Opposition to the second Iraq war, hard lessons there and elsewhere about the difficulties of achieving peace only through military means, and problems arising from the use of undemocratic measures of law and order in conflict-ridden and fragile states, have underlined the limitations of military force alone.

Notwithstanding the *realpolitik* trends in international and national politics, the alternative current of moderating and transforming behaviour in the international system has developed a momentum of its own, at least in those conflicts where the crucial interests of big powers were not affected. The guiding assumptions here are four-fold: 1) behaviour in the international system increasingly should be governed by international regimes and ‘legalised’ as much as possible; 2) the promotion of democracies eventually will lead to peace (‘democratic peace’); 3) outside actors should encourage, support and aid internal peace processes; and 4) these processes should follow principles of conflict transformation (i.e., inclusivity, fairness, interest-based). In English-speaking contexts, these approaches sometimes are summarized by the phrase ‘liberal peace’.<sup>11</sup>

These contemporary trends first began a century ago with the codification of international humanitarian standards, which later were consolidated with the establishment of international human rights regimes after the Second World War. But above all, the period after the end of the Cold War saw the emergence of concepts like ‘preventive diplomacy’, ‘peace-making, peace-keeping and peace-building’, ‘conflict-sensitive development’, ‘human security’, ‘transitional justice’, the ‘responsibility to protect’, and so on. In the first instance, these instruments were developed from the perspective of third parties trying to moderate conflicts from the outside. However, several now have developed dynamism of their own and can directly affect the behaviour of conflict parties.

The last 15 years saw a substantial increase in liberal peace approaches of this kind, along with a mushrooming of multilateral and development agencies, INGOs, scholars and consultants engaged in this work. The assessments of these efforts are

---

<sup>11</sup> This term was originally and interchangeably used to capture the discourse on democratic peace; i.e., the link between democratic forms of governance and peace. A current comprehensive project on this topic is PRIO’s “Liberal Peace and the Ethics of Peacebuilding 2007 – 2010” led by J. Peter Burgess.

mixed. On a positive note, we now have a broad and rich spectrum of concepts, tools and experiences for aiding peace in both a narrow (i.e., through development efforts and peace dividends) and broader sense (i.e., including political and other measures). There are several cases where this has led to some success, such as in Aceh/Indonesia and Nepal.

On a more critical note, it has become clear that the overall net impact of these efforts is still rather limited. This cannot exclusively be attributed to the on-going predominance of hard power and the resurgence of *realpolitik*—even if this can be interpreted as one factor. The multiplication of liberal peace efforts also has created a counter-movement in several crisis zones. Nationalist forces oppose neo-colonial foreign intervention based on soft power and conflict transformation, as well as obstruct direct engagements with domestic civil society (e.g., in Sri Lanka or Russia’s Northern Caucasus). These more recent practical experiences have been taken up both by the agencies and INGOs involved themselves and in scholarly discourse.

In our view, it is crucial to reflect on the drivers of *realpolitik* and the intricacies of liberal peace promotion. To this end, we elaborate the seven gaps, or clusters of concern, related to peace-promoting interventions already identified above. These represent critical challenges that our field must address in order to provide more effective support for responding to political violence.

#### ***(1) Hard power, soft power and conflict transformation***

An oft-used twin term for describing modes of political engagement in contemporary English-language discourses is ‘hard power and soft power’. These two related terms were popularized by Joseph Nye with the intention of encouraging a shift from hard to soft power in US foreign policy.<sup>12</sup> He argued that ‘the capacity to make others do what you want’ (hard power) is given preference over ‘the capacity to make others want what you want’ (soft power). In other words, the power to command, order and enforce is seen as more effective than the power to induce cooperation, legitimize and inspire.<sup>13</sup> Although scholarly and analytic debate has become far more nuanced than the

---

<sup>12</sup> Nye Jr., Joseph S. (2003). *The Paradox of American Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

<sup>13</sup> Ramsbotham, Oliver, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall (2005). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 20.

simple hard-soft power distinction, it is still the dominant approach and vocabulary of policy makers at the international level.<sup>14</sup>

Without going into the intricacies of this dichotomous power paradigm, it is clear that it is an insufficient guide for the nonviolent transformation of protracted violent political conflicts. It is necessary to differentiate at least two additional forms of soft power: exchange power (i.e., compromising on what both sides want) and integrative power (i.e., transformative joint problem-solving).<sup>15</sup> Moreover, it is also essential to reflect on how far the concept of power generally can go in terms of capturing the need to integrate all legitimate stakeholders into just and sustainable peace processes. We think that the term ‘conflict transformation’ is useful because it goes beyond the asymmetric connotations of the power paradigm. At the same time, however, it is also necessary to acknowledge that without an adequate link to the prevailing policies of hard and soft power it will be difficult to make conflict transformation more broadly effective.

### ***(2) Reforming states as a reference point for liberal peace***

Many of the political entities involved in violent conflicts, as well as in peacemaking and peacebuilding efforts, are characterized as fragile, failing or failed states. Recently, questions have arisen as to how useful these concepts are in guiding interventions towards effective states and good governance.<sup>16</sup> This is crucially important because most concepts related to liberal peace interventions are based on the assumption that their main purpose should be to create viable democratic states through various institutional provisions: power-sharing arrangements, electoral assistance, constitutional reforms, strengthening regional and local governance, the creation of democratic parties and multi-party democracy, security sector reforms, the establishment of rule of law, access to justice, protection of human rights, nurturing viable civil societies and so on.<sup>17</sup> However, empirical evidence demonstrates that institutional reform

<sup>14</sup> Tony Blair, for example, described British foreign policy as ‘liberal interventionism... characterised by a combination of hard and soft power’ (*Guardian*, 26 April 2007).

<sup>15</sup> These terms were introduced by Kenneth Boulding (who also describes hard power as ‘threat power’). See: Ramsbotham et al (2005), *ibidem*.

<sup>16</sup> See, for example: Pugh, Michael (Ed.) (2000). *Regeneration of War-Torn Societies*. London: Macmillan; Böge, Volker (2007). *Who is failing? Reflections on the discourse of ‘fragile states’* (Forthcoming, Berghof Handbook.) Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

<sup>17</sup> See: Large, Judith, Timothy D. Sisk et al (2006). *Democracy, Conflict and Human Security: Pursuing Peace in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. Stockholm: International IDEA.

measures alone are not sufficient to guarantee a sustainable process of conflict transformation.<sup>18</sup>

As the discourse on the ‘civilisation of conflict’ indicates, it is necessary to devise comprehensive approaches that address issues of institutional arrangements in the context of the wider society, culture and economy of the respective countries.<sup>19</sup> In any case, it is important to take into account the limitations of outside interventions and the importance of local ownership.<sup>20</sup>

In those conflict areas where Berghof has collected its primary experiences over the last 15 years, the core issues at stake have been secession, self-determination and access to state power. Here, we repeatedly have struggled with the question of what kind of power sharing and/or federalism would be the most appropriate solution when one side is not prepared to give up a unitary state concept and the other side demands secession, or at least a substantive level of autonomy (e.g., as in Georgia/Abkhazia or in Sri Lanka).<sup>21</sup> What happens if international actors are the only stakeholders propagating a power-sharing compromise?

### ***(3) Legitimacy of peace processes***

The legitimacy of peace processes and their support (especially from international actors) raises three different sets of questions. The first concerns issues of inclusivity and public participation in peace processes. To what extent are the peace initiatives of elite groups supported by the public? To what extent are all stakeholders integrated in processes of deepening and broadening peace efforts? How do the peace dividends that various parties receive from the peace process differ? Do sceptical parties have room to play a part in the process, or do they see more advantages in spoiling the process?

The second is the interaction between concrete steps to end wars (e.g., ceasefire agreements, amnesties, security guarantees for military leaders) on the one hand, and

<sup>18</sup> Bastian, Sunil and Robin Luckham (Eds.) (2003). *Can Democracy be Designed? The Politics of Institutional Choice in Conflict-Torn Societies*. London / New York: Zed Books.

<sup>19</sup> Senghaas, Dieter (2004). *Zum Irdischen Frieden. Erkenntnisse und Vermutungen*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

<sup>20</sup> See: Reich, Hannah (2006). “Local Ownership” in *Conflict Transformation Projects: Partnership, Participation or Patronage? Berghof Occasional Paper No. 27*. Berlin: Berghof Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

<sup>21</sup> See: Goodhand, Jonathan et al. (2005). *Aid, Conflict and Peacebuilding in Sri Lanka 2000-2005*. Colombo: Asia Foundation.

the upholding of human rights and principles of transitional justice on the other.<sup>22</sup> These perspectives can clash in the short term—even if in the long term there will be no just peace without respect for human rights and some kind of transitional justice. A specific challenge here is when to begin reconciliation efforts, with whom and on what level, and how to link this to on-going efforts for political settlement.

The third aspect of legitimacy relates to the fact that most internal conflicts are asymmetric in character.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, they often involve non-state armed groups (IRA, LTTE, Hamas, Hezbollah, etc.) or unrecognized, *de facto* states (Abkhazia, Transnistria). This creates difficulties in engaging with such stakeholders at all (i.e., when they are proscribed by the EU, the US or elsewhere) or puts the engagement in a dubious light—supporting terrorists or dealing with criminals.<sup>24</sup>

#### ***(4) Interdependence and interaction between different issue areas***

One of the first challenges in this cluster relates to the different aspects of security that often lead to tensions between various issues with direct implications for peace efforts. For example, violations of human security and international humanitarian standards often are justified for the sake of national security. Or again, Western governments focus their security interests on insulating their countries from perceived possible infection from external conflict zones, while conflict-zone governments instrumentalise the international ‘terrorism’ debate to justify cracking down on non-state forces.

<sup>22</sup> Bloomfield, David (2006). “Strategies for Reconciliation: Are Justice and Peacebuilding Complementarity or Contradictory?”, in: Bleeker, Mo (Ed.), *Dealing with the Past and Transitional Justice: Creating Conditions for Peace, Justice, Human Rights and the Rule of Law*, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Bern, Switzerland; Mertus, Julie and Jeffrey W. Helsing (Eds.) (2006). *Human Rights and Conflict: Exploring the Links Between Rights, Law, and Peacebuilding*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press; O’Flaherty, Michael (Ed.) (2007). *The Human Rights Field Operation. Law, Theory and Practice*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishers; Parlevliet, Michelle (2002). “Bridging the Divide: Exploring the Relationship between Human Rights and Conflict Management”, in: *Track Two*, 11 (1).

<sup>23</sup> Among others, see: Curle, Adam (1971). *Making Peace*. London: Tavistock; Francis, Diana (2002). *People, Peace and Power: Conflict Transformation in Action*. London: Pluto Press; Metz, Stephen (2003). “La guerre asymétrique et l’avenir de l’Occident”, in *Politique étrangère*, 1/2003: 25-40.

<sup>24</sup> For a range of views on this debate, see: Policzer, Pablo (2005). *Neither Terrorists nor Freedom Fighters*, ISA Conference paper, Honolulu, 3-5 March; McCartney, Clem (2005). “From armed struggle to political negotiations: Why? When? How?”, in: *Choosing to Engage: Armed Groups and Peace Processes*. Conciliation Resources, Accord Issue 16; Soderberg Kovacs, Mimmi (2005). *Fractions, Followers and Friends: the fate of rebels in civil war peace processes*, ISA Conference paper, Honolulu, 3-5 March. Garibay, David (2005). “De la lutte armée à la lutte électorale, itinéraires divergents d’une trajectoire insolite. Une comparaison à partir des cas centra américains et colombiens”, in: *Revue Internationale de Politique Comparée*, 12(3): 283-297; Zahar, Marie-Joelle (2006). *Fanatics, Mercenaries, Brigands... and Politicians: Militia decision-making and civil conflict resolution*, Montreal: McGill University; Zunzer, Wolfram (2005). *Hintergrundstudie: Entwicklungszusammenarbeit im Umgang mit nichtstaatlichen Gewaltakteuren*, Berlin: Berghof Foundation for Peace Support.

Another challenge is connected to the complex interdependence of political and socio-economic development, or development cooperation and peace, without which sustainable progress is impossible.<sup>25</sup> This has led to impressive packages from the donor community for ‘aiding peace’ after ceasefires or peace agreements (as in Northern Ireland, South-Eastern Europe and Sri Lanka). Frequently, however, this has neither led to sound indigenous economic development (as in post-war regions of the Balkans), nor has it been a sufficient substitute for giving more political support to domestic peace efforts (as in Sri Lanka).<sup>26</sup>

Another related dimension was put on the international agenda by the ‘greed versus grievance debate’:<sup>27</sup> the economies of war and peace. Among several factors, wars also are driven by both national and international economic interests.<sup>28</sup> While there are sound arguments that at the macro-economic level national economies will eventually profit more from peace than war, and that there are also ‘peace-profiteers’ as well as ‘war-profiteers’, this does not translate automatically into enlightened policies. The reasons for this are manifold<sup>29</sup> and their neglect easily can undermine all well-intended peace efforts.

#### ***(5) Infrastructures of peace: vertical and horizontal networking***

One of the standard questions in conflict transformation is: How to design and implement *multi-track* peace policies?<sup>30</sup> This is in itself a multi-dimensional task because it relates to the complementarity of peace efforts (e.g., peacemaking, peacebuilding, peacekeeping) in different social realms (e.g., the military, political, civil society and business spheres), as well as to vertical links between Track 1, 2 and 3 approaches.

<sup>25</sup> See, for example: Donais, Timothy (2005). *The Political Economy of Peacebuilding in Post-Dayton Bosnia*. London: Frank Cass.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, the critique of: Uvin, Peter (1998). *Aiding Violence: Development Enterprise in Rwanda*. New York: Kumarian.

<sup>27</sup> Collier, Paul and Nicholas Sambanis (Eds.) (2005). *Understanding Civil Wars*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

<sup>28</sup> See: Pugh, Michael and Neil Cooper (2004). *War Economies in a Regional Context: Challenges of Transformation*. London: Lynne Rienner.

<sup>29</sup> See: Fischer, Martina and Beatrix Schmelzle (Eds.) (2005). *Transforming War Economies. Dilemmas and Strategies. Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series No. 3*. Berlin: Berghof Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

<sup>30</sup> See: McDonald, John and Louise Diamond (1996). *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace*. New York: Kumarian; Nan, Susan Allen (2003). *Intervention coordination* [Hhttp://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/intervention\\_coordination/?nid=1260](http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/intervention_coordination/?nid=1260)

Along with a few other INGOs, Berghof especially has examined the Track 1/Track 2 interaction, which also is termed 'Track 1.5'.<sup>31</sup> While this is a crucial link, there are also other factors that influence the overall system.

Apart from the difficulties of creating vertical links, there is also a horizontal complement: establishing effective networks between and among like-minded actors and forces, as well as between like- and unlike-minded constituencies. In most crisis regions, the social, political and economic fabric of the society in transition is put under enormous pressure, resulting in highly fragmented structures, an erosion of solidarities, the re-establishment of feudal dependencies and so on. This also has an effect on like-minded civil society actors working for peace, human rights, good governance, development, gender and humanitarian issues. The overall effect is a striking fragmentation of civil society, which is also often unintentionally supported by donor organisations that want to have their 'own' civil society organisations on the ground.

#### ***(6) Conflict transformation as non-linear processes and structural change***

Probably the most complex challenge is related to the fact that processes of transition from (protracted) war to peace take many years, if not decades, and that they are, in most cases, extremely non-linear.<sup>32</sup> They often include previous unsuccessful attempts at ceasefires and peace agreements, mutual disappointments, fragile levels of trust, unpredictable shifts, changes of power within one side, and stalemates that can last for decades. This long-term protractedness and non-linearity is difficult for many outside agencies to handle, the engagement of which is usually short term.

Closely connected to this challenge is the interaction between structure-related measures and interventions (e.g., constitutional reform initiatives; international security guarantees) and process-related activities (e.g., confidence and relationship building; interim arrangements) that must support one another to generate progress.

---

<sup>31</sup> Nan, Susan Allen (2005). "Track One-and-a-Half Diplomacy: Contributions to Georgian-South Ossetian Peacemaking", in: Fisher, Ronald J. (2005). *Paving the Way – Contributions of Interactive Conflict Resolution to Peacemaking*. Lanham: Lexington Books, pp. 161-174

<sup>32</sup> Among others, see: Lederach, John Paul (2005). *The Moral Imagination, the Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; Dudouet, Veronique (2006). *Transitions from Violence to Peace: Revisiting Analysis and Intervention in Conflict Transformation*, Berghof Report No. 15. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

Finally, domestic counter-movements against international support for peace efforts and the empowerment of civil society by external actors create a difficult dilemma for many civil society organisations in crisis zones. On the one hand, they need external funding and support, but on the other they have to portray themselves publicly as independent and ‘indigenous’ organisations.

### ***(7) Reflecting on planning and assessing peace support activities***

This represents another level of challenge: the need to reflect on the impact and evaluation of peace interventions. While hard power measures automatically come with an obvious implication of impact (even if it is a counter-productive one) this is less obvious with the more subtle forms of engagement of liberal peace and conflict transformation. Nonetheless, this has led to an enhanced effort to develop concepts and instruments of impact assessment in the last couple of years.

This process is unfinished. While it is possible to find impact indicators in a local context, it is very difficult to identify the impact of single peace support measures on ‘Peace Writ Large’.<sup>33</sup> Some experts therefore argue that the strategic planning and evaluation of peace interventions must be closely linked and that peace processes should be framed as ‘learning processes’ for stakeholders and third parties alike.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> This is a term introduced by CDA in the context of their “Reflecting on Peace Practice” programme. See: Anderson, Mary B. and Lara Olsen (2003). *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. Boston: Collaborative for Development Action.

<sup>34</sup> For an overview of the complex issues involved, see: Anderson, Mary B. and Lara Olson (2003). *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners*. Boston: Collaborative for Development Action; Anderson, Mary B. (1999). *Do No Harm: How Aid can Support Peace or War*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner; Paffenholz, Thania and Luc Reyhler (2007). *Aid for Peace: A Guide to Planning and Evaluation for Conflict Zones*. Baden-Baden: Nomos; Lederach, John Paul, Reina Neufeldt and Hal Culbertson (2007). *Reflective Peacebuilding. A Planning, Monitoring and Learning Toolkit*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame & Catholic Relief Services; Austin, Alex, Martina Fischer and Oliver Wils (2003). *Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment: Critical Views on Theory and Practice, Berghof Handbook Dialogue No 1*; Neufeldt, Reina C. (2007). *Frameworkers and Circlers: Exploring Assumptions in Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment. Berghof Handbook*. Berlin: Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management.

## 5. The Professional Context: Trends in Research and Practice in Conflict Transformation

Parallel to and as part of the expansion of liberal peace approaches, conflict transformation (CT) also started to flourish both as a topic for academic research and as an area of practical engagement in conflict zones.<sup>35</sup> This has led to a current of CT research within the broader field of peace and conflict studies (and partly international relations), and to a mushrooming of academic teaching programmes, particularly in conflict zones. For practice, the focus primarily has been achieved through the mainstreaming of CT into the work routines of multilateral and bilateral development agencies, INGOs and NGOs, and through the establishment of specific budget lines by some bilateral donors.

A key—perhaps *the* key—conceptual guideline in all these efforts was the concept of multi-track diplomacy, first created by McDonald and Diamond (1996),<sup>36</sup> in combination with the idea of a ‘pyramid’ of peace work, as developed by Lederach (1997).<sup>37</sup> This was later complemented by a multiple multi-dimensional approach to peace work: from a multi-track approach to multi-actor, multi-issue, multi-step, multi-strategy, multi-resources, etc. approaches. Most practitioners and scholars in this field would subscribe to this concept as the most reasonable guideline for making CT efforts as effective as possible. As we already have mentioned, however, it has been extremely difficult to effectively link together these different dimensions.

With partial success, a variety of INGOs now aim to influence decision making on the macro-political level, lobbying multilateral international organisations in questions of arms export control, limiting the fuelling of war economies, and developing more coherent policies for conflict prevention, and so on. In contrast, INGOs and NGOs in crisis zones operate largely at the civil society level, with the majority confined to Track 3 and

<sup>35</sup> The terminology for the field is still contested. The Bradford school argues strongly for ‘conflict resolution’ as the best overarching term. With the publication of its Handbook, Berghof consciously decided to use ‘conflict transformation’. However, in our mutual subject area, there is no substantive disagreement with Bradford colleagues.

<sup>36</sup> See: McDonald, John and Louise Diamond (1996). *Multi-Track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace*. New York: Kumarian.

<sup>37</sup> Lederach, John Paul (1997). *Building Peace. Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Track 2 work. Either they have little access to Track 1 actors or have chosen to avoid that realm for various reasons.

In fact, very few INGOs, NGOs and government agencies have managed to establish multi-track linkages between these different levels. One way they work to enhance their impact is to operate through networks. But, as noted above, there are not many successful examples of such implementation.<sup>38</sup> In particular, local civil society organisations have difficulties linking up with initiatives at the state level and searching for alliance partners in ministries, parliaments and administrations. Instead, they generally work in isolation or with like-minded partners at the grassroots level. Conversely, for a variety of reasons, Track 1 actors are similarly challenged in terms of forging relationships with civil society organisations.

A closer look at the range of institutions and organisations that either influence the intellectual discourse on conflict transformation (insofar as the communication is in English!) and/or work visibly on the international level demonstrates that there is now a multiplicity of agencies constituting the global arena of conflict transformation. It is in relation to this that the new Berghof Joint Vision is uniquely situated.

Like Berghof, some of these started on a small scale with only one or two areas of work, but now have developed into multi-functional entities. Others have kept their original profile, and a few institutions have vanished altogether or shifted their focus towards other areas of engagement (e.g., environmental conflict settlement).<sup>39</sup> These organisations roughly represent five areas of interest:

- Research and reflection
- Advocacy and policy advice
- Networking
- Reflective practice
- Training and teaching

<sup>38</sup> See: Ricigliano, Richard (2003). "Networks of effective action. implementing an integrated approach to peacebuilding", in: *Security Dialogue*, 34/4, December 2003, 445 – 462. An inspiring article, he also offers interesting reference points for systemic conflict transformation.

<sup>39</sup> See the general overview in the edited volume that was prepared for the "Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict" (GPPAC) 2005 from European Centre for Conflict Prevention; van Tongeren, Paul et al. (2005). *People Building Peace II. Successful Stories of Civil Society*. Boulder/ London: Lynne Rienner

Few, if any, of the internationally-renowned organisations and university departments working in the area of conflict transformation consciously focus on the research-policy-practice combination that defines the emerging Berghof agenda. This makes our unique hybrid approach an innovative and compelling contribution to the field. Importantly, this is solidly grounded in and builds on Berghof's historical strengths and experiences.

In the 1990s, for example, the Berghof Research Center started out as an institution that primarily focused on practice and research at the Track 2 level in third-party intervention. We also critically reflected on the potentials and limitations of civil society initiatives for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. From the very beginning, policy advice was likewise an essential aspect of our work—not only for civil society organisations and development agencies, but for governments and parliaments.

It is of course crucial to maintain our roots in the Track 2 realm, and to cultivate further our expertise in the Track 1.5 area. However, we also see a strong need to go beyond thinking in tracks so as to explore the potential for linking activities on the various levels and creating synergies between them. We are convinced that peaceful social change can only happen through the creation of alliances between persons and groups on different levels, especially by forging linkages between diverse initiatives in complementary or joint strategies.

We envision Berghof taking on such a role in its own right, but also in partnership with like-minded institutions that have collected similar experiences and are interested in taking the discourse forward towards a broader and more effective approach to peace support and conflict transformation. Several organisations are now emphasising the need for an integrative approach and there is an emerging interest in the systemic approach expressed by some practice related, as well as research oriented institutions.<sup>40</sup> In particular, we see Bradford University's (UK) 'cosmopolitan conflict resolution' very much in line with our own reasoning.<sup>41</sup> This perspective foresees the necessity to relate

---

<sup>40</sup> For example, for practice, the Reflecting on Peace Practice project of CDA in Boston, MA and, for research, the Dynamic Systems Approach of Peter Coleman and his team at Columbia University, NY.

<sup>41</sup> Ramsbotham, Oliver, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall (2005). *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 316 – 331. In order to relate this field to different concepts of power, they have introduced an interesting alternative terminology by differentiating between 'threat power' (conflict containment), 'exchange power' (conflict settlement) and 'integrative power' (conflict transformation).

the traditional approach of conflict resolution to the current, partly contradictory, trends in globalization and global governance, while upholding humanitarian values as the core ones for our field.

## 6. Looking Forward

This, then, defines the path that Berghof will take over the next five to 10 years. The strategic orientation laid out in this Joint Vision confronts some of the key challenges currently faced in the field of conflict transformation, both in terms of research and practice. Based on careful consideration drawn from 15 years of experience, the Joint Vision specifies three programme areas that can enable Berghof to make a constructive contribution to addressing these crucial issues. In particular, this includes focused attention on: infrastructures and processes of peace support and reconciliation; the peaceful transformation of Non-State Actors; and the development of Non-official Peace Envoys as a multi-track instrument for civilian peacebuilding.

These three programmatic interests serve to guide and define the present and future activities of the Berghof Research Center and the Berghof Foundation for Peace Support. They also underpin the grant-making practices of the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies. In our view, this Joint Vision represents a new opportunity for the Berghof family to creatively combine its unique capacities—for research, practice, policy advice *and* funding—mobilizing all of these valuable resources so as to develop a more comprehensive and effective understanding of conflict transformation.