

### "Dirty peace?" The political economy of peacebuilding: conference documentation

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# “Dirty Peace?” The Political Economy of Peacebuilding

CONFERENCE DOCUMENTATION

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## SUMMARY

On 19 October 2017, BICC hosted its annual International Academic Conference on the topic of “‘Dirty Peace?’ The Political Economy of Peacebuilding” in Bonn. The conference brought together over 100 academics and practitioners from around the world to exchange concepts, empirical observations and lessons learned on the prerequisites, patterns and consequences of peace negotiations.

In her welcome address, Beate Wieland, Head of Department for Research at the Ministry of Culture and Science of the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia, underlined the importance of ensuring a lasting peace to prevent violent conflict in the future. She opined that a lasting peace comes from improving peoples’ living conditions in conflict regions.

The first panel examined some of the conditions for successful mediation in peacebuilding negotiations, while the second panel focussed on the consequences inclusivity or exclusivity have on the success of these negotiations. The third panel discussed lessons learned from practical experience and engagement in negotiations and peacebuilding processes in Afghanistan and South Sudan. A concluding roundtable highlighted several takeaways from the conference, including the added value of a political economy perspective, the critical need for capacity and local leadership of peacebuilding initiatives and the need to unpack the various agendas and interests that, left unexamined, make the peace process seem ‘dirty’ as opposed to what it really is: complex.

The conference was generously funded by the Foundation for International Dialogue of the Savings Bank in Bonn and the US Consulate General in Düsseldorf.

“Dirty” remnants of war: An artillery shell lying in a bombed house in the historical centre of Mosul, Iraq

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**Beate Wieland** \ Head of Department for Research at the Ministry of Culture and Science of the German State of North Rhine-Westphalia, in her welcome address highlighted:

“A way out of such seemingly hopeless confrontations can actually be put into very simple words: It’s a matter of ending a conflict or of preventing a fresh eruption. And first of all, it’s a matter of stabilizing and improving people’s living conditions in conflict regions.(...) Today’s expert conference will especially focus on incentives and impulses for successful peace negotiations.

How much we in North Rhine-Westphalia are affected by international conflicts has been outlined vividly by the Minister President of our Federal State, Armin Laschet, in his recent government statement. At the edges of the European Union in Ukraine, and beyond the Mediterranean in Syria and Libya, war still holds sway. Migration flows are increasing all over the world—and Europe and in particular Germany has become the main destination of a great number of refugees fleeing from war, but also from the misery in many African states. Their way may lead them from Aleppo to Athens, from Raqa to Recklinghausen, from Libya to Lipperland. What’s happening in conflict regions all over the world by now affects every community in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Times of unrest like these are a call to politics when it comes to offering orientation and taking action decisively. Times of unrest like these are a call to science when it comes to investigating reasonable conditions for lasting peace and discussing practical impulses. Peace and conflict research is a particularly modern human science. Today more than ever, we are possibly dependent on its results.

Therefore, we take pride in BICC and in its research that provides qualified and sound answers to the central questions of a modern world”.



**Conference participants** \ listening to the welcome address of Beate Wieland (above) in the Universitätsclub Bonn



Alex de Waal \ opened the conference with his keynote

## “Peacebuilding as a market place”

Alex de Waal is Executive Director of the World Peace Foundation and Research Professor at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University and is considered one of the foremost experts on Sudan and the Horn of Africa. His keynote focussed on the ‘political marketplace’ as an alternative framework for understanding state fragility and failure.

Building on a political economy perspective, Alex de Waal defined peacebuilding as a political marketplace where several actors are engaged. Conflicts that appear to be about identities often revolve around money, resulting in war economies where the lines between licit and illicit trade are blurred. As a negotiator during the Darfur peace talks, de Waal often observed that loyalty was traded as a commodity, the price dictated by supply and demand forces and the capability of actors involved. Accordingly, politics became a business model dictated by skill and error, with transactional and competitive politics dominating institutional politics.

In his 'market analysis', de Waal noted that participants of peace negotiations carry out symbolic action to drive up the price of their loyalty. The price of an actor depends on his impact on the overall negotiations. More actors drive the price up, while the market takes the shape of a rivalrous monopoly or an oligarchy, with actors exercising sufficient control to fix supply prices. In a fragile context however, the market is inherently unstable and tends to move towards a perfect competition model, as more

political actors enter. Bearing this in mind, de Waal criticized prevailing notions of state-building. While theoretically, state-building should be viewed as a long-term process spanning several generations, in practice it is often reduced to pragmatic short-term solutions which ignore the role of business and thus become entangled in transactional politics, failing to achieve stability. De Waal pointed out that conflict should be regarded as a state of constant instability that keeps afloat from week to week. The actors competing within a conflict setting usually understand each other very well and may even have personal relations. Conflict structures require them to fight from time to time, even if there is no deep personal enmity. Accordingly, the task of a peacemaker is to change the structural situation.

Building on this analysis, de Waal presented two cases of complex political marketplaces from his own negotiating experience: Sudan and Somalia. In Sudan, high oil revenues stabilized the political situation and allowed for the conclusion of peace agreements. When oil revenues plunged, flows of political finance and external actors entered the market, leading to a fragmentation of the actors involved and a destabilized country. Centralized oil revenues had put leaders in a place to buy loyalty, while the fragmentation of the market with opportunities to defect made negotiations difficult. In Somalia, remittances, foreign direct investments (FDI) and oil revenues were used to build up a patronage network. Government revenues were used as a political budget. This system collapsed as soon as the influx of money and arms decreased only slightly. As the system was very inefficient and the actors involved felt entitled to that money, they changed sides once they could be bought out by other leaders.

In summary, de Waal argued for a new analytical toolkit informed by a political economy perspective to analyze bargaining behaviour and to better understand the process of negotiations.



Elke Grawert (r.) \ and Luisa Denter (both BICC) following the keynote



Ambassador Günther Bächler \ explained how the cost-benefit calculus impacts upon negotiations

## The political economy of expectations

The opening panel, moderated by Owen Greene, University of Bradford, addressed the impact of the economy on bargaining behaviour and the outcome of peace talks. Andreas Kindl, German Federal Foreign Office, Véronique Dudouet, Berghof Foundation, and Ambassador Günther Bächler, OSCE, spoke from personal experience and own empirical research on the conditions for successful mediation in international negotiations.





Owen Greene \ moderated the panel

## The logics of bargaining behaviour

Andreas Kindl, Director for Strategic Communication at the Federal Foreign Office in Berlin, gave profound insights into the Yemen peace negotiations in Geneva, Biel and Kuwait. His observations showed that the pre-existing framing conditions, like United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2216 of April 2015, the diplomatic architecture and lack of collocation were substantial impediments that contributed to the failure of the ongoing peace process. On rare occasions when these conditions were not observed, positive steps could be made. Kindl also presented a simplified model that explained bargaining behaviour during negotiations: Houthi rebels as well as the Yemeni government, supported by Saudi Arabia, employed a wide range of negotiating techniques to delay or preserve the talks (differing narratives, good guy/bad guy, public disinformation and leaks). In addition, there was a lack of communication between the government mediators in Riad and Houthi leaders in Sanaa. Both conflict sides changed their bargaining tactics to attain advantages on the battlefield and to gain temporary personal benefits. The question that arises in this context is what the international community can do about this. Kindl suggested possible courses of action: Massively facilitate the victory of one side, intervene as peace enforcer, stop supporting warring parties or freeze the territorial status quo. In re

however, there is no appetite for this, and none of these parties were put under sufficient pressure to feel the need to give up core positions during the negotiation process.

## Financing armed groups during ceasefires

Véronique Dudouet, Senior Researcher and Programme Director at the Berghof Foundation, presented the results of her empirical research about the incentives that make a difference during negotiations towards achieving peace. She focused on the funding of non-state armed groups (NSAGs) in-between active fighting and the conclusion of a peace agreement. Through information gathered from the selected cases of ETA in the Basque Country, the LTTE in Sri Lanka, the KNU in Myanmar, GAM in Aceh and several armed groups in Mali, she analyzed whether ceasefires represent a fundraising constraint or an opportunity for non-state belligerents. Her research revealed that the impact of ceasefires on fundraising options always depends on the nature of the armed groups, their resources and the specific terms of the ceasefire. Overall, armed groups that were part of a unilateral or bilateral ceasefire



Véronique Dudouet \ analyzed whether ceasefires represent a fundraising constraint

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were able to more than offset the costs the peace process imposed on them by increasing their internal and external options for funding. However, some ceasefire collapsed partly due to the government's interpretation of armed groups' sustained rent-seeking activities as a sign of bad faith and predatory behaviour. Other ceasefires collapsed (or are currently deteriorating) because group leaders, not their combatants, profited from the state policy—which led to increasing division and polarization within the armed organization.

Doudouet concluded that the lessons negotiation advisors could draw from this are that the political and economic nature, interests, incentives and power of armed groups must be analyzed correctly. Also, NSAGs must have the possibility to continue to engage in fundraising opportunities if funds are used for peaceful activities. To prevent armed groups from developing a vested interest in protracted dialogue, visible and measurable progress must be the condition for direct funding of the peace talks. Therefore, mediators must build economic incentives into the details of the peace process early to compensate for the temporary loss of war-time revenues, allowing the leadership to have faith in the availability of economic opportunities as a result of negotiations.

### How does the cost–benefit calculus impact upon negotiations?

Ambassador Günter Bächler, OSCE, argued that economic factors have always had an impact on the willingness, interests and positions of conflict parties with regard to commencing, conducting or finalizing negotiations. Since the internationalization of civil wars in globalized markets, economic factors have become even more important and decisive when it comes to the probability of a negotiated settlement. At the same time, there has always been a plethora of factors that determine the power or the best alternative to a negotiated agreement between the parties. Focusing on the Geneva International Discussions of 2008, he examined the impact of the



Andreas Kindl \ gave profound insights into the Yemen peace negotiations

political economy on the peace process in Georgia's breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Ambassador Bächler stated that in these negotiations economic cooperation, separated from status and security policy issues, functioned as a connector between Russia and Georgia that were otherwise very hostile about the situation in the southern Caucasus. Mediators used economic dialogue about trade, customs and transport regulations to resolve negotiation problems in the peace process.

Participants from the plenary asked about the right number of players and external powers involved in peace negotiations, as well as about the influence of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and the associated payouts on bargaining behaviours. Doudouet replied that per diems can work as an incentive but only if they are combined with comprehensible signs of progress. She added that DDR provisions are limited in their incentivizing power because they are only time bound and paid to individuals. Kindl pointed out that there are too many players in the negotiations over Yemen. He recommended a number under ten and the stronger involvement of Russia. A critique was made that mediators may repeat the 1960s détente policy in South Ossetia and Abkhazia—freeze a conflict and then assist in creating a modus vivendi—, whereas a successful peace agreement would depend on achieving state control over the involved non-state armed groups.



The panellists (f. l. t. r.) \ Andrea Warnecke, Jocelyn Mawdsley, Henk-Jan Brinkman and Jörn Grävingholt

## How inclusive, how exclusive should peacebuilding be?

Moderated by Jocelyn Mawdsley, University of Newcastle, the three panellists approached this topic from different perspectives. Henk-Jan Brinkman, UN Peacebuilding Support Office, discussed the inclusion of non-armed groups in peace processes. Andrea Warnecke, Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, focused on peacebuilding implementers. Jörn Grävingholt of the German Development Institute provided a conceptual framework on the question of exclusivity and inclusivity.

## Which stakeholders and external actors should be involved on what grounds?

Henk-Jan Brinkman of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office stressed the necessity of involving members of civil society and communities in the peace process. Peacebuilding needs to be inclusive, which means that unarmed groups also have to be part of the actual peacebuilding process. If groups are excluded from the peace process, peace is bound to fail. In his presentation, Brinkman focused on the example of women and youth as two groups who need to be considered in peace processes. According to him, there is strong evidence that when women are meaningfully involved in peace processes, peace has a higher quality and lasts longer. Whereas in the past, women were excluded from peace processes, there is now an increasing number of women mediators. While previously, youth were considered to be a risk, they are now recognized as agents of change. Brinkman also proposed to study and monitor horizontal inequalities, i.e. inequalities among groups. The focus should be on the people themselves, on their needs and perceptions.

## The role of norms in securing access, legitimacy and cooperation in intra-state peacebuilding

Andrea Warnecke of the Austrian Study Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution asked why peacebuilding has emerged as a depoliticized practice even though peacebuilding is an inherently political project. In virtue of their institutional mandates as international organizations, many peacebuilders follow the two guiding principles of neutrality and impartiality. At the same time, they have to address political contestation and engage with factions in most peace processes. In her talk, Warnecke demonstrated how development and humanitarian agencies who are engaged in peacebuilding efforts seek to resolve this dilemma. For example, humanitarian and development agencies reconceptualize the

principles of neutrality and impartiality by defining them in accordance with seemingly universal and objective standards rather than the perception of the parties. However, such highly de-contextualized principles do not take into account the local settings of the conflict.

## The demand and supply side of donors: The games of 'giving' and their impact on incentives

Jörn Grävingholt from the German Development Institute provided some conceptual ideas on the question of how donor incentives can contribute to inclusiveness. He pointed to the fact that even though the normative goal of inclusive peace has replaced the notion of liberal peace, the persistence of exclusivity in peace processes is still the reality. A consideration of inclusivity has to discuss the explicit goal of exclusivity as well—as exemplified by the discussion on the in- or exclusion of so-called Islamic State (IS) and the Taliban in peace processes. The topic of justice may not be ignored either. Grävingholt presented an overview table denoting the typical effect on inclusiveness of different types of external peacebuilding activities sponsored by international donors. With a political economy framework in mind, he concluded that by default most donor activities in post-conflict societies have a tendency to lean towards promoting exclusivity rather than inclusivity in peacebuilding. However, according to Grävingholt, this was not a necessity, as intentional choices on the part of donors could change much of this logic. Consequently, being aware of the political economy of donorship in peacebuilding was no less crucial for successful support than technical expertise.

The plenary discussion centred on the question of inclusivity of certain groups in peace processes, e.g. organized criminal groups or even regimes that oppose the peacebuilding process. The challenge is to establish special grievance and dialogue mechanisms.



The panellists (f. l. t. r.) \ Ambassador Kai Eide, Sami Faltas and Wolf-Christian Paes

## Why do conflicts 'transform': Is there a (marginal) gain in protracted conflicts?

In the panel moderated by Sami Faltas, University of Groningen (retired), Ambassador Kai Eide, Foreign Office (retired), Norway, and Wolf-Christian Paes, BICC, discussed lessons learned from peace processes in Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Afghanistan and South Sudan.

## Who owns the peace? Lessons learned from failed and successful peace processes

In analyzing the 'architecture' of peace processes, Kai Eide showed some aspects of different successful and failed peace arrangements that might point to some dos and don'ts for future peace negotiations.

One successful example of negotiations is the Colombian peace agreement of November 2016. Both parties, the Colombian government and the FARC, had been highly committed. Long preparatory and exploratory phases, during which both parties agreed on an agenda of a limited number of items, as well as the initial secrecy of the peace process, were decisive factors. Rather than acting as mediators, all international actors were facilitators, logistical assistants (e.g. ICRC) or humanitarian helpers (e.g. UN organizations) who guaranteed local ownership of the agenda-setting process.

As concerns the peace process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ambassador Eide was critical of the leading role of the United States. Little impact of local ownership and insufficient commitment by co-owners, such as the European Union, NATO and OSCE, resulted in the failure of the implementation process.

On Afghanistan, Kai Eide discussed the contentious issue of negotiations with the Taliban. In his view, the establishment of a Taliban office in Doha was a positive step towards the realization of a peace process. But the fact that Afghanistan considers Pakistan to be a conflict party and the Taliban consider the United States a party to the conflict makes the process even more complicated. For Ambassador Eide, who favours a stronger role of the United States, a strategy based on a balance of security and dialogue is necessary. Furthermore, he pointed out the need for impartial international facilitators, strong ownership of the peace process by the Afghan government and the Taliban and confidentiality to prevent the process from being leaked to and interrupted by the public.

According to Ambassador Eide, the main reason for the complicated situation in Iraq and Syria is the significant number of highly diverse parties involved and their refusal to negotiate with each other. He pointed out that the possibility to learn from the success of the Colombian peace process is, unfortunately, limited because the Colombian conflict only included a few parties—in contrast to Afghanistan, Iraq or Syria.



A discussant from the plenary \ talks about his experiences in peacebuilding

## Guns, goons and gerrymandering— How military commanders benefit from conflict and peace

Wolf-Christian Paes pointed out three central problems of the peace process in South Sudan: First, Western actors tend to talk only to people with similar views and values as themselves, and thus the commitment of these actors does not necessarily affect the real power structures. Second, most of the people negotiating in South Sudan have little understanding of and experience with negotiations.



Wolf-Christian Paes \ reflected upon the problems of the peace process in South Sudan

Stimulating processes like demobilization, demilitarization and reintegration (DDR) or security sector reform (SSR) is difficult—primarily because of the massive gap between theory and implementation. Third, all actors involved in the South Sudan peace process—including international actors and institutes such as GIZ or BICC—are part of the peace economy and benefit in some way from it. This explains why some actors continue their activities even when changes in the political environment make it impossible for these activities to achieve their intended outcomes.

In addition, Wolf-Christian Paes observed a tendency towards remilitarization in the fight against terrorism, for example. This tendency leads to a military approach in parallel to negotiations, causing the dangerous approach of achieving peace as a result of military success rather than an investment in development or negotiations. He concluded by pointing out two contentious issues that BICC and other organizations are facing in South Sudan: Shall we give war a chance if peace negotiations and external intervention fail? In his view, this is highly problematic. The other issue is that while inclusive peace is desirable, it is simply not realistic for SSR processes, since not every party will benefit and thus accept the outcome. Therefore, to build peace,

the high political and economic costs of SSR must be faced—even against the positions of warlords or other actors.

To open the debate, Sami Faltas pointed out that long-running wars seem to have become a system that perpetuates itself. Looking at this from a rational choice perspective, as warring parties will weigh the costs and benefits of a war and a potential peace process, they need to be provided with incentives for supporting the peace process and disincentives for continuing war. In this framework, he stressed that ownership must be local and inclusive while external actors can assist in fostering peace as long as they do not take over the lead role in the process.

With the plenary open for questions, one question that was raised was whether German and European positions in peace processes should differ more from UN positions, which are more maximalist and therefore not often feasible or even helpful. Ambassador Eide observed that the European Union first needs to define a common position on peacebuilding, which Germany together with the Nordic countries can take the lead on. One participant questioned whether high hurdles for conflict parties to become part of the peace negotiations were indeed counterproductive to achieving sustainable peace. Ambassador Eide agreed and stated that more needs to be done on this topic, pointing out that, within this context, the trade-off between stability and progress has to be addressed. This opinion was seconded by Wolf-Christian Paes who suggested a reality check of assumptions in every conflict before models like DDR are implemented. He advocated choosing progress rather than stability to obtain sustainable peace, but stressed that actors also have to check their model for feasibility.



The concluding roundtable \ Alex de Waal, Andreas Heinemann-Grüder, Ambassador Günther Bächler, Elke Grawert and Ambassador Kai Eide (f.l. t. r.)

## Which fundamental issues must be addressed by peace agreements (power sharing, participation, equity, rights)? Lessons learned

In a concluding roundtable, Alex de Waal, Tufts University, Ambassador Günther Bächler, OSCE, Ambassador Kai Eide, Foreign Office (retired), Norway, and Elke Grawert, BICC, reflected on the main takeaways of the day in a session moderated by Andreas Heinemann-Grüder, BICC.





**One lesson learned** \ It is critical to have a good understanding of the local situation

De Waal opened his remarks with a reminder: Just as conflicts are diverse, approaches to resolving them must be as well. A first diagnostic task, he noted, is to identify the structural parameters of the conflict—the power, order and resources of the parties in conflict. A second diagnostic task is to determine at what level the conflict is driven. Rather than identifying where or at which level the ‘root cause’ of the conflict is, it may be more productive to identify the locus at which to best stabilize the conflict. The third diagnostic task is to clarify the flows of political finance and security support in order to understand what other interests need to be tackled, while a fourth diagnostic task is to identify barriers of entry to the political scene. The purpose of this fourth diagnostic is to on the one hand, increase the barriers for military entrepreneurs while decreasing the barriers for nonviolent groups. Finally, the last diagnostic task is to identify the meaning of the violence that is used in a conflict: For example, violence as looting, violence as signalling, violence as bargaining, violence as conquest or elimination or violence as enforcement.

### **‘Less is often more’**

Ambassador Eide underlined that, when it comes to the inflow of donor funding, ‘less is often more’. During his tenure, Afghanistan was the second largest recipient of aid from Norway; however, there was no structure or capacity in Afghanistan to absorb the massive influx of aid. Norway contributed funding for health and education programmes, but there were no institutions in the country that could use it for these purposes effectively. Institution-building, on the other hand, is a very low priority on many donor agendas, which creates a mismatch between what donors want to give and what the countries actually need to begin the peacebuilding process. While establishing security must be a priority, this should be followed by local institution- and capacity-building to be able to handle the process of rebuilding.

## It is critical to have a good understanding of the local situation

Ambassador Bächler confirmed that the international community is often too quick to pour in money to rebuild after conflict because of the magnitude of development and humanitarian needs that exist. In so doing, they often do not properly study the situation on the ground. He pointed to a general naivety among the international community about the need for inclusivity in peace negotiations, because some political actors are trustworthy while others are simply corrupt. He admitted that, as an external, it is extremely hard to determine who is who. This is why it is critical to have a good understanding of the local situation and good relationships with local actors.

## Preventing violent conflict is crucial

Elke Grawert reflected on her experiences with mediation by elders in conflicts in Darfur who have the control over the arms of the community members and thus the capacity for building peace at the local level. Grawert also commented on how donor funding influences peace processes—setting incentives but also creating a dilemma: Ever new agendas—either for building capacity and encouraging non-state armed groups to participate in peace negotiations, or for the professionalization of mediators, or for inclusiveness—accompanied by money flows also create competition among implementing agencies that are drawing in some and excluding other groups. In this sense, peace processes function like a marketplace. She underlined that preventing violent conflict is crucial. Conflict prevention has to tackle a complex entanglement of interests, which include, among others, business interests, interests in exploiting mineral resources, interests in arms exports and in the strategic stabilization of autocratic regimes.

## 'Dirty' or 'pure'—Peace is complex

In the plenary discussion, a critical point was raised concerning the lack of time in peace processes to implement activities. Time is a luxury that implementing agencies do not have, and money is often wasted because large budgets must be spent quickly and deliver results immediately. Finally, an observation was made that the question is not whether peace is 'dirty' or 'pure'; peace is complex. The challenge remains to unpack this complexity and to take a more granulated approach to engaging in peacebuilding activities and to be clear on the ethical framework in which one operates.



The audience \ shared the observation: Peace is not 'dirty' or 'pure'; peace is complex

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