

Series  
Number  
  
12/07

# Keynotes

## Cranfield CSSM Case Study Series

Updated: August 2007

Author: Jeremy Astill-Brown, UK Regional Conflict Adviser, Southern Africa  
Contact: Telephone: + 27 83 676 0657 Email: [j-astill-brown@dfid.gov.uk](mailto:j-astill-brown@dfid.gov.uk)  
Authors contribute to the Keynotes Case Study Series in their personal capacity

### The Anatomy of an African Peace Process

#### **Aim**

To propose an holistic approach to peace processes in Africa, based on assumed weaknesses in practice to date.

#### **Introduction**

Violent conflict is widely accepted to have an adverse impact on African development. It destroys African capacity and vital human and physical capital. In recent years, the African Union and its partners have sought to build improved civilian and military capabilities to prevent, mitigate, manage and resolve conflict in Africa.

There is plenty of evidence of what works and what - in terms of capabilities and assets - is required to promote sustainable peace and to prevent a resurgence of conflict. But the vital role of a sound peace process is poorly understood. Indeed, every time the opportunity for a peace process occurs, the international community seems unable to recall the lessons of past failures.

Contrary to popular belief, peace agreements are rarely entered into for altruistic or humanitarian reasons. They normally result from a realisation by one or other party to a conflict that victory by purely military means is no longer possible.

#### **Cease-fires to stop the fighting**

The immediate – humanitarian – task in a conflict is to stop the belligerents from fighting. The opportunity normally arises only when one or another group is at a military disadvantage and sees advantage in a pause. The negotiations for a cease-fire are almost always opportunistic and pragmatic: Force A will stop fighting if Force B withdraws behind an agreed

line and declares its strength. The cease-fire should normally open up access to beleaguered communities. But crucially, it also allows forces to re-group and consolidate. And they also – unintentionally - legitimise rebel groups who are brought into the process merely because they are belligerents. Such groups are rarely any more representative of the ordinary citizen than their (usually governmental) opponents.

The main weakness of a cease-fire is also its main strength: that it is a pact between the leaderships of the parties to the conflict. Cease-fires do not address the fundamental original causes of conflict or why they have continued. Parties only sign (or indeed implement) a cease-fire when they see a degree of advantage in doing so. This may include political opportunity and/or military advantage.

### **Modalities agreements to keep the fighting stopped**

Often cease-fire agreements either contain or point to “modalities agreements” for monitoring them. An interposing force is brought in to verify to the satisfaction of all that Force A and Force B are where they say they are, are where they ought to be and that they have the right number of forces with them. The ability to obtain independent verification of the situation on the ground is essential.

The result of a modalities agreement is normally the deployment of a force with a primarily military capability. But often the time between signature of a modalities agreement and the actual deployment of a force is too long. Force generation constraints, complex logistic requirements (usually in hostile environments) and political issues often combine to mean that an under-resourced force ill-equipped for the task at hand and unable to either defend itself or to enforce its will is deployed at too late a stage.

The main weakness of a modalities agreement is, therefore, not the agreement itself but that the necessary capability to monitor or enforce the cease-fire cannot be deployed in a timely manner. There is therefore a danger that compliance by belligerents who seized on a cessation of hostilities as a way to buy time and space will lessen very quickly.

### **Peace Agreements to prevent the re-igniting of fighting**

In general terms, an effective cease-fire also opens the opportunity for the negotiation of a full peace agreement. But in practice, protracted peace negotiations take place against a backdrop of cease-fire violations – either actual or alleged. Indeed, cease-fire violations and threats to withdraw from negotiations are often levers pulled by the parties to the negotiations to influence the final form of the peace agreement.

A peace agreement often focuses on little more than power and wealth sharing – who will hold which post in any post-conflict government; how national resources will be allocated to areas loyal to one or another party; what powers (of influence; of patronage etc) key individuals hold.

The main weakness of a peace agreement is that it normally only takes into account the current interests of the leaderships of the parties to the conflict. The interests of both rank and file fighters and ordinary civilians are often overlooked or are co-opted by the parties to reinforce their negotiating position or perceptions of their legitimacy. Peace agreements do not normally address the root causes of the conflict in any meaningful way. The reasons why the parties to a conflict have continued to prosecute it are often very different to the root causes. Whilst these original causes of the conflict may remain real to the civilian population, they may not adequately explain why the conflict has continued. The opportunities to profit from the prosecution of a conflict or the prospects of future power and wealth may well form the main motivation for both rebel movements and governments.

### **Peace agreements for post-conflict governance**

Peace agreements do not normally make practical – as opposed to political - provisions for the administration of the national territory during any transitional period. Nor do they make provision for the longer term governance of the post-conflict state beyond the initial sharing of power and wealth and the holding of some form of referendum. The process of negotiating a peace agreement rarely supplies the parties with information about the consequences of the agreement, nor the capacities they will require to fulfil the governance roles allocated to them.

Re-starting the machinery of government, often in a new form, in such a way as to meet the political, livelihood and governance aspirations of both the parties and the civilian population is hard at the best of times. To do so with insufficient capacity, knowledge and understanding and with doubtful political commitment is doubly so. Many post-conflict administrations seem designed to fail.

### **Characteristics of post-conflict governments**

Most post-conflict governments are formed either from an uneasy coalition of former belligerents or from the members of a liberation movement. These groups are often ill-equipped either to quickly become familiar with the immediate post-conflict challenge or to deal with the less than glamorous business of day-to-day post-conflict governance.

The main pre-occupation of members of a coalition will be their own position within that coalition and either protecting themselves from future justice or undermining the peace agreement. Post-conflict coalitions which include the former government are also likely to have to use mechanisms and structures of government inherited from the former regime which are not well suited to the post-conflict dispensation. And there is a danger to joining such a coalition: The integrity of former opponents who join a post-conflict government can be co-opted and – under certain circumstances – eroded.

Post-conflict governments composed of members of liberation movements can be more effective. Although they too may have to work with an inherited governmental architecture, they do tend to be more disciplined and to have a clearer vision of the kind of state they want to build. But the high level of self-justification forged in the liberation struggle tends not to

tolerate any form of opposition – constructive or otherwise. And with time, these positive characteristics of a liberation movement can also give rise to corruption and opportunism, undermining the legitimacy of its administration.

### **Capabilities post-conflict governments require**

In order to ensure that the opportunities presented by an end to hostilities can be fully exploited, post-conflict governments need:

- A comprehensive peace agreement which, through detailed planning for the post-conflict period, sets out an agenda for governance in which the roles, responsibilities and capabilities of all the parties are described and which, through its execution, addresses the original causes of the conflict;
- To be able quickly to develop and lead implementation of an immediate post-conflict plan, including keeping essential services such as health and education running and ensuring that the security and justice sector contribute towards stabilisation (Security and Justice Sector Reform – SJSR);
- The ability to implement the security provisions of a peace agreement, including for example the integration, right-sizing and/or reform of the security and justice sector and the timely implementation of any disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes which cater to former combatants;
- The ability to integrate the execution of DDR and SJSR programmes with the delivery of other post-conflict activities targeted at the wider population;
- To be able to staff key posts in government at both the strategic and tactical level;
- To have access to timely, quality and co-ordinated advice matched with a predictable and similarly timely flow of re-construction funds.

Very few peace processes factor these issues into peace agreements, which inevitably means that post-conflict governments miss opportunities and almost immediately suffer from strategic drift. And even where a peace process does address these critical issues, the post-conflict administration rarely has the capability or access to an independent source of advice and expertise to play the leadership role effectively.

### **Post conflict capabilities required by the international community**

Undoubtedly, there is a role for the international community firstly in helping to facilitate an end to hostilities and secondly in supporting the transition from cease-fire to effective post-conflict governance. In order to play this role well, the international community needs:

- The ability to see longitudinally from the cease-fire through to support for post-conflict governance;
- The ability to support one or a series of mediators through the process of agreeing a cease-fire, a modalities agreement and a peace agreement in such a way as to ensure that alliances, agreements and capabilities that support the desired end-state – a peaceful, capable, people-centred state administration – are built from the outset;

- The ability quickly to deploy civilian and military capability and to constantly adjust the force levels and balance of skills within a mission as dictated by the events on the ground;
- A willingness to co-ordinate and to be co-ordinated, and to match funds to priorities in a timely manner;
- Commitment to the process from start to finish, including for the “long haul” through immediate post-conflict and into a sustainable transition.

### **The ideal anatomy of an African peace process**

An African peace process should, wherever possible and practical, be African-led, but with significant external – expert, logistical and financial - support as required. It should begin with the stopping of a conflict, but should have as its centre of gravity the need to build a more conflict-proof state through better governance, more inclusion and improved equity. The process should also facilitate the reconciliation of former enemies.

But before entering into a peace agreement, the parties to a peace process need to be assisted to understand fully what they are signing and how they will need to conduct themselves in order to implement it.

Given the origins of a peace process and the need to end violent conflict, it is probably unrealistic to bring ordinary citizens into the process from the outset. But as the ultimate beneficiaries of a post-conflict dispensation, the ordinary citizen’s interests and aspirations need to be factored into the process as early as possible. These will inevitably centre on personal and livelihood security, requiring the post-conflict state to have a firm grip on the security and justice sector and to ensure that the benefits of an end to conflict in terms of service delivery are real and timely.

Finally, in the absence of better discipline by the international community, post-conflict states need access to a credible yet independent source of advice on stabilisation planning and post-conflict recovery. They require some form of “mentor” to work with the members of the post-conflict administration throughout the peace process and into the post-conflict period to help ensure that weak institutions are able to lead, plan and prioritise activity and are not overwhelmed by the task of co-ordinating donors.

### **Questions**

- How - practically - might a post-conflict administration be helped to lead the process of stabilisation planning itself?
- How might issues of security and justice sector reform (SJSR) and disarmament, demobilisation and return (DDR) be raised with the parties to a peace process in such a way as to ensure that they are implemented effectively in a post-conflict state?

- Aside from purely military skills, what other capabilities might an internationally mandated peace support operation require in order to support a transition from conflict to post-conflict stability?

### **Points for discussion**

- Do belligerents make good governors?
- What might a good peace process "resource pack" or template look like?
- Is peace negotiated on the back of a military victory by one party to a conflict really a peace?
- Is negotiating the peace best left to soldiers or politicians?