



# Peace agreements in the 1990s – what are the outcomes 20 years later?

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not only about poor waste collection, but against the entire sectarian character of the political system, which has been based on religious representation since the 1970s. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, thousands of people filled the streets in almost every urban center of the country in the February 2014 uprising. People screamed out “thieves, thieves”, and “mafia resign”.

These street demonstrations can be seen as a large trend of protests that have erupted from Cairo to New York. Current protest movements such as the Occupy movement, the Indignados in Spain and the Arab spring demonstrations have been described as a new global wave of protest (Flesher Fominaya, 2014; Krastev 2014). In contrast to many earlier protest movements these movements lack leaders, a clear set of demands, and ideology. In addition they reject formal organisational structures. While traditional protests have been aimed at gaining representation in state institutions, these new protest movements rejects them. Rather than trying to obtain political power, many of these movements have attempted to create their own forms of democracy (Krastev 2014, 6-7). In Bosnia, direct democracy was introduced when plenums, citizen assemblies, became an important part of the Bosnian protest movement. Thousands of people participated in these gatherings, where everyone had the right to speak for three minutes to voice his or her concerns. In four cantons, the local government also resigned, after demands by the plenums, and in at least one canton, Tuzla, a technocratic government was put in place (Jukic 2014). It is clear that these demonstrators want another type of peace that what has been achieved.

### ***Whose peace?***

The main beneficiaries of the peace that has been achieved in the countries where conflict ended during the 1990s is the elite. People feel that they have no real possibility of holding politicians accountable and elect others. Peacebuilding has become a matter for the elite and international community, rather than the grassroots. Sometimes, the very peace agreement, which has been negotiated under international auspice, hinders a democratic transition. It is also notable that most peace concepts lack the inclusion of people. I think it is problematic when scholars define peace and apply it to places where the residents largely disagree. When peace is defined in contrast to conflict, it is the elite behavior, elite attitudes and conflict issues defined by the elite that are in focus. While democracy and peace are two analytically distinct concepts, many norms, regulations and institutions associated with these concepts overlap. Similar to the centrality of demos for democracy, the people needs to be brought in to the concept of peace. Likewise, while there has been a lot of talk about local ownership, it has often meant efforts to transfer international ideas and trying to make local actors take responsibility to implement them. The practice of international peacebuilding needs to more seriously engage with the local discourses and movements that exist, beyond those that are created in relation to international donors.

## **Namibian peace since 1989: stunted promise?**

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### ***The conflict and its end***

Namibia was administered by South Africa since WW1, and between 1966 and 1989 the armed wing of the South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO)<sup>2</sup> fought various South African forces for independence. Already in 1976 the Security Council passed a resolution in favor of Namibian independence, and the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) was authorized already in 1978, even if implementation did not start until 1989. The mission was short

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<sup>2</sup> People’s Liberation Army of Namibia (PLAN).

(1989-1990) and its main objective was political. It has been classified as “one of the earliest ‘second-generation’ or ‘multi-dimensional’ peace operations” and noted to have a “clear and comprehensive mandate” and being very well-funded (Dzinesa 2004, 650-652).

The mission has been hailed as a success, some even note it as “the most successful multidimensional peacekeeping operation in its history” (Howard 2002, 99). A book by Zürcher et al sees Namibia as a successful case of democratization, and notes that adoption costs were initially low in Namibia, and regional problems were resolved and helped enable the peace process (Shaffer 2014; Zürcher et al. 2013). Howard continues and notes that the adaptability of the mission was a key reason for this success, and that it avoided being micro-managed from New York (2002, 127). While some lessons from this mission have travelled (see for examples Howard 2002, 128) the Namibian case seems to have limited importance in global comparisons. It is perhaps telling that Namibia as a case has been forgotten among those working with DDR policies (McMullin 2013, 80), and a review of the literature using Google scholar indicates that it has been forgotten as a peacebuilding case in general.

### ***Current political developments***

The development in Namibia has certainly been positive since the end of the conflict, and the country is today at peace. In an examination of 124 cases of civil war the peace in Namibia is categorized as firm (Doyle and Sambanis 2000, 779). Freedom House categorizes Namibia as free (score of 2.0), whereas freedom of the press is categorized as partly free (score of 33) (Freedom House 2015a, 2015b). Yet, there are worries. While the country has one of the most progressive constitutions in the region, yet the dislike for opposition is clear (Kishor 2014; Sims and Koep 2012). The main problems are the dominant position of SWAPO, high unemployment<sup>3</sup> and extensive white land ownership (Kishor 2014). Similarly, Bauer finds reasons for concern when evaluating Namibia’s democracy in 2001 due to single party dominance, centralization of power, “intolerance of democratic political practices, especially among some government leaders” (2001, 33). Focusing more on the assumed success of the peace mission, McMullin makes the following argument:

Aspects of Namibia’s transition are certainly conspicuous in their success. Where neighboring Zimbabwe has all but collapsed, Namibia’s post-independence path boasts an absence of renewed conflict [...]. But a critical literature has also emerged in the intervening years to call into question some of UNTAG’s achievements, focusing on the persistent inequality between the capital city and the north of the country, where most of the population lives. (McMullin 2013, 85).

Namibia is a country that since its independence has been run by one party SWAPO (consistently about 76% of the votes).<sup>4</sup> The first president Sam Nujoma was in office between 1989 and 2005 (president of SWAPO from 1960 to 2007), as the constitution was changed to allow him a third term. Nujoma was succeeded by Hifikepunye Lucas Pohamba (2005 to 2015) (re-elected in 2009). The last election in 2014 brought Hage Gottfried Geingob to the Presidency (in office since 21 March 2015). Melber notes that the party has if anything strengthened its hold on power over the

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<sup>3</sup> Unemployment rate was reported by Kishor as 51.2%, whereas a more recent article notes that while unemployment rates were high up until 2006 (in the range of 30 to 40 percent), by 2008 it had decreased to only 5.3% (Massó Guijarro 2013, 340). Yet again other sources, like the World Bank, note a steady unemployment rate at 28%.

<sup>4</sup> Election results for SWAPO over the years are as follows in the national assembly: 56.90% (1989); 73.89% (1994); 76.15% (1999) (Melber 2003, 272); 76.11% (2004); 75.27% (2009) (African Elections Database 2011); 80.01% (2014) (Government Gazette of the Republic of Namibia 2014).

years, as they were unable to dictate the constitution on their own. Actual votes have declined, but this has been compensated by lower levels of participation.

Voter fatigue has been investigated by the University of Namibia, and a study found that apathy, a perceived lack of choice and procedural constraints were some of the main causes. Bauer cites one of the conclusions of the study: “The sharp decline in voter turnout suggests that voters are abandoning electoral politics and the actors that operate within. The causes legitimate concern especially since a significant proportion of non-voters is disillusioned voters.” (Bauer 2001, 47f).<sup>5</sup> Another study (Friedman 2011) has focused on norms regarding paternalism, and is said to demonstrate that since the state is unable to provide the sought after development, this is starting to spill-over into a questioning of the state and its legitimacy, as well as democracy (Williams 2013). As will be noted below, in the discussion of the Caprivi Conflict, one article also suggests that citizens in favor of secession are not active voters (Massó Guijarro 2013, 351).

Returning to the issue of SWAPO dominance, the party has in general been described as hostile to the opposition and toward elements within their own ranks when they differ with the official party line: “Critical voices [...] were labelled as unpatriotic.” (Melber 2003, 274). While ethnicity seems to line up with political party identity, for instance SWAPO is predominantly Ovambo orientated, ethnicity as such seems to be little talked about in public discourses (Massó Guijarro 2013). While it is difficult to claim that SWAPO dominance is the result of the international community’s dealings with Namibia, this pattern was at least not eliminated by the international community’s behavior. Melber quotes Martti Ahtisaari (UNTAG’s Special Representative) on the issue: “As a result (the political forces not affiliated to SWAPO) were eliminated from that political opportunity and that of course diminished plurality and complicated matters. (1999:185)” (Melber 2003, 269).

In an attempt to gauge levels and forms of violence in Namibia today (given the general characterization of Namibia as enjoying a firm peace), the results are in general positive. The country had no incidences of electoral violence in 1994 and 2004, and only violent harassment in 1999, thus it has never been classified as case of high electoral violence (Straus and Taylor 2012, 25, 27). Homicide rate in 2012 was 17.2 per 100,000 (world average same year was 6.2; and average rate for Southern Africa was 30). Yet, protests seem to be more common even if no systematic data has been found to support this. For instance former SWAPO guerillas have protested their living conditions and the government has often responded with extending work opportunities for former SWAPO combatants (Simon 2000, 113). The country also witnessed a secession attempt in the Caprivi strip (Bauer 2001, 53). Yet the conflict has received little attention. Unreliable sources (Global Security 2011 among others), describe the conflict as active between 1994 and 1999, whereas others limit the time frame of the conflict to events in 1998 and in particular to August 1999, with human rights abuses on both sides (Melber 2009). At least 14 people have been killed as a result of the conflict. The Caprivi Strip, with a population of about 80,000 in 2004,<sup>6</sup> has shifted in its belonging in the past<sup>7</sup> and the conflict has deep roots. Most of the leaders of the so called *Itengese nation*<sup>8</sup> were arrested and have been put on a trial for treason. Two leaders went into exile in Denmark (Melber 2009; Massó Guijarro 2013). During the last 12 years, 121 individuals have stood on trial for treason among other charges related to the Caprivi conflict.<sup>9</sup> In total they have been

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<sup>5</sup> Voter turnout has since this article actually increased. Parliamentary voter turnout (as percentage of voting age population, not as percentage of registered voters) was as follows: 101.65% (1989); 63.78% (1994); 61.71% (1999); 80.23% (2004); 67.53% (2009); 74.00% (2014). Presidential turnout was as follows: 62.22% (1994); 62.21% (1999); 80.85% (2004); 67.62% (2009); 73.75% (2014) (IDEA 2011).

<sup>6</sup> The population of Namibia is today about 2.3 million, at the time of the mission 1.8 million.

<sup>7</sup> The area was not a part of Namibia prior to 1989.

<sup>8</sup> The claim for independence was made in 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Originally 132 individuals were detained. Some of the prisoners died in custody. None were allowed bail. Amnesty International has critiqued the government on the holding of political prisoners.

imprisoned for 16 years awaiting the verdict. In September the verdict finally came, and 30 individuals were convicted of treason, as well as murder and attempted murder (Menges 2015). The scant attention given to this secession attempt is disturbing, and I share the surprise noted by Taylor in Melber's piece on the event: "the 'secession attempt – southern Africa's most recent instance of rebel armed insurrection – has surprisingly received barely any thorough analysis'" (Taylor (2008: 326) cited in Melber 2009, 464).

Finally, given my own interest in ex-combatants in particular, I have chosen to highlight some findings related to this group. The Demobilization, Disarmament and Reintegration (DDR) program was not run by UNTAG but incrementally expanded by the Namibian government after demands from the veterans themselves. Ex-combatants as a category has not faded away, but remain a salient category and make up about 5% of the population (McMullin 2013, 79). The legacy of SWAPO as a party is closely entwined with the notion of them as the liberators of the nation; the liberation narrative is central to who SWAPO is and their legitimacy. It is therefore not surprising that the state has treated various groups of veterans differently. In particular, SWAPO veterans in contrast to e.g. former South West Africa Territorial Force (SWATF) and Koevoet paramilitary police, have embodied the notion of a hero rather than just a security threat or someone in need (McMullin 2013, 103; Metsola 2015, 189-248). Thus, not all former combatants are equal, yet being a veteran is a position of political power. This is the result in part of the reintegration policies and processes, but also of a larger debate about liberationist history in Namibia which is used in debates over others issues such as land, jobs and education. This is why Metsola expresses "the significance of participation in liberationist history as a criterion of full membership in the political community" (Metsola 2015, 248). Namibia was fortunate enough to be in a position to handle reintegration programs and demands on their own, due to a strong state and economy, and as such this policy area became entwined with state formation in Namibia. Equally, however, it has become entwined with the making of SWAPO. And as Metsola notes, there has been no public scrutiny of the misdeeds during the struggle akin to the TRC process in South Africa (Metsola 2015, 238). Perhaps this is why the party has been so adamant about repressing internal conflict.

Applying the peace triangle as suggested by Höglund and Söderberg Kovacs (2010), the Namibian case is hard to categorize as a particular type of peace. The main conflict issue is resolved, even if land distribution is still problematic. In terms of peace behavior, levels of violence are relatively low, yet homicide rates are above the world average and the Caprivi Strip conflict does raise questions. Examining peace attitudes using Afrobarometer data (Afrobarometer Data 2014), a large majority does not fear or have experience with crime and violence, and as many as 65% have no fear of electoral violence. However, only 28% believe the opposition should criticize the government, and as many as 20% do not trust the opposition at all. Thus, Namibia's peace does not seem to be particularly deficient, whereas there are obvious democratic deficits.

### ***Concluding remarks***

Are there any lessons we should learn from the Namibian case? Any insights into how current challenges can be dealt with? The first question to answer is whether new cases can be compared with Namibia. There is often talk of Namibian exceptionalism, and while this is partially true, we should be careful to rule out such comparison. Do other cases face similar challenges? If not, the success of the UN may not be as transferable as others make it out to be. More important, perhaps is whether the UN mission itself is comparable, particularly given the clarity of the mission, its clear exit conditions, the long preparation leading up to it and its funding.

I would like to highlight a few opportunities or challenges that at least to me seem noteworthy. SWAPO dominance is one of the main challenges today, and thus the question of what voices are recognized as legitimate internationally may matter a great deal. Not only in terms of leverage, space

and voice in the transition process itself, but also because it may carry long term consequences for pluralism like the Namibian case seems to suggest.

Melber makes a critical reflection related to some of the democratic shortcomings in Namibia, namely that the colonial legacy was the main menace the new state tried to deal with, rather than democratization. Yet, even in relation to the colonial legacy Melber is pessimistic and notes that there are “lasting structural and psychological effects resulting from the colonial legacy” in Namibia (Melber 2003, 267). This may be central in understanding why we only see election deep democracy in Namibia today.

Finally, I want to comment on the centrality of having the capacity for doing politics; a state that can respond to demands from citizens even early on in a transition process is more likely to develop the typical relationship between the state and its citizens. Parts of the peacebuilding process can be more locally owned and change over time. Naturally, this is also dangerous as it gives the state tools to entrench specific identities and narratives about itself and the ruling party as Namibia has demonstrated; status signaling matters. The question of who you were in the war lives on, many years after the end of the conflict.

## **Guatemala: twenty years after the signing of the peace accords**

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### ***Introduction***

Next year, 2016, marks the twenty-year anniversary of the signing of the “Accord for a Firm and Lasting Peace” between the government of Guatemala and the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Front (URNG). The signing of the accord marked the end of an armed confrontation that had lasted for 36 years. The purpose of this section of the paper is to i) explore, in brief, developments in Guatemala since 1996, in order to, ii) draw conclusions as to whether or not peace prevails today. The final part of the section discusses some lessons that can be learned from the Guatemalan peace process which may be of relevance for current, and future, peace processes.

### ***What has happened since 1996?***

Open warfare between the military and the guerilla alliance URNG had already come to an end prior to the signing of the peace accord in late 1996. After nearly four decades of fighting, the URNG had become increasingly weak, increasingly disorganized as well as increasingly unable to find financial means for continuing the war. Because of these circumstances, the movement was successfully demobilized and disarmed, even ahead of the time schedule prescribed in the peace agreement, and by 1998 it had turned itself into a political party. Perhaps a bit surprisingly, the ending of open warfare was actually not the primary challenge in Guatemala (Stanley & Holiday 2002). The main challenge, rather, concerned how to achieve democratization, justice and social/cultural inclusiveness in a country with a considerably high degree of discrimination against its majority indigenous population (Brett & Delgado 2005). In responding to this challenge, the peace agreement addressed issues of how to democratize the state apparatus (including how to reform the legislature, the executive branch, the judiciary), how to achieve fair economic and social development, how to involve the indigenous populations living in rural areas in decisions concerning their land, and a number of other issues that, if implemented, would have resolved some of the main causes of the conflict as well as brought significant and necessary changes to the structure of the Guatemalan state.



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