



Interpeace

Partners Forum: Peacebuilding and Statebuilding

How to integrate groups that have influence in making or breaking peace into peacebuilding processes

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Interpeace is an international peacebuilding organization that helps divided and conflicted societies build sustainable peace.

Interpeace focuses on reinforcing local capacities to overcome deep social divisions and to address conflict in non-violent ways.

Interpeace works with local peacebuilding teams, made up of nationals from the country concerned, to facilitate dialogue with all sectors of society (governments, opposition groups, civil society, private sector representatives, diasporas, etc.). These dialogue processes enable populations directly affected by conflict to rebuild trust, to define priorities for social, economic and political rehabilitation, to find consensus-based solutions to conflict, and to assist with their implementation.

Interpeace supports 300 local peacebuilders working on 15 programmes in Africa, Asia, Central America, Europe and the Middle East.

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I. OVERVIEW OF THE MEETING

It is much easier to engage the groups that are already convinced of the need for peace, than it is to incorporate groups that are not. These groups, often categorized as spoilers, have agendas, interests that oppose the peacebuilding process and may or may not use violent actions to achieve their goals. They are often excluded or marginalized from the process by local or international actors, or self-marginalized. These groups can range from armed groups, diaspora, political parties, security forces, extremists, war veterans, traditional leaders, economic actors, etc.

Understanding **how** these groups can be brought in peacebuilding processes, the constraints and lessons learned, is an important step to support efforts to build viable and peaceful societies.

The purpose of the Partners Forum was to provide a space for reflection on these questions. It brought together approximately 40 people from different sectors (governments, UN, EU, NGOs). Participants spoke in their personal capacities.

The format of the sessions included a discussion with national peacebuilders on their experiences in working with different groups within their societies. This included some examples from Rwanda with its complex, multilayered and influential diaspora, Israel on the crucial importance of engaging the previously marginalized (and self-marginalized) traditional religious population and lastly, how extremist groups across the Middle East and Central Asia are rapidly evolving and what this means for efforts to moderate such influences. It also included a discussion with representatives of the international community on their experiences, lessons and constraints in supporting these types of processes.

II. WHY THIS TOPIC?

Peace may not be sustainable if too many actors or sectors of society feel it has been “imposed.” Large scale violence creates a vicious cycle of mistrust, opportunism, aggressive competition and confrontation. For a society to build peace requires changes in perceptions, mindsets, attitudes and behaviours not only of the leadership, but of a large segment of society. Genuine change is most likely to come about when those who need to change become active participants in the change process.

There is an understandable tendency, certainly among ‘external peacebuilders’ but to a degree also among ‘internal actors’ seeking to build peace in their own society, to bring into a peacemaking or peacebuilding process those actors and those groups that are already convinced of the need for peace and non-violence. However, there is a need to reach out to a broader constituency, especially if these groups have a role to play in the peacebuilding process. This can include, for example:

a. “Spoilers”/Those we are reluctant to talk with

Groups that appear opposed to non-violence and peace are easily portrayed and categorized as (potential) “spoilers”. They are seen to have agendas and interests that oppose the peace process and may or may not use violent actions to achieve their goals. They themselves may refuse to participate in a political process, but may be excluded from such process by local or international actors.

b. The hard-to-reach

Beyond those that we tend to feel ‘reluctant to engage’, there can also be sectors of society that can have influence on the peace making or peacebuilding process, but that are ‘hard to reach’. They may matter because they represent a constituency that, for a variety of reasons, can influence the behaviour of the political leaders or of certain sectors of society. That can also give them influence to ‘make or break’ the peace.

Broad categories such as ‘women’ and ‘youth’ are recognized as having actual or potential socio-political influence, and there are already various attempts to mobilize women and youth as peacebuilders. But there can be other sectors of society, e.g. the diaspora, the private sector, deeply traditional communities, a religiously inspired movement etc. We may not be ‘reluctant’ to engage with them, but they can be ‘hard to reach’, at least in more inclusive ways than just through a few individuals whose ‘representativeness’ may be questionable.

Peace makers and peacebuilders may not know how to engage the ‘hard to reach’ or may not be willing to invest the time and effort to do so. Alternatively, certain sectors of society may also oppose a peace making or peacebuilding process or may not have the cohesion, knowledge and confidence to actively engage with it.

c. Excluded from the process

Whatever the contextual reasons the net result is that various groups of socio-political actors, some ‘hard to reach’ and others that we are ‘reluctant to talk to’, may not participate in peace making and especially peacebuilding processes. That deprives them of the practical experience of participating in the difficult conversations that are often inevitable before a society is able to move constructively on the key issues that divide it. They are then also less likely to be committed to peace making and peacebuilding outcomes, which renders their sustainability more precarious.

For the above reasons, ‘inclusiveness’ is one of the core principles underlying Interpeace’s approach to peacebuilding. Inclusive peacebuilding processes may be more challenging to handle because they bring the diversity, differences and antagonisms into the process. But if those tensions are well managed and well facilitated the inclusion of all those that have the power or influence to make or break the peace is more likely to generate broad-based social and political support for peacebuilding outcomes.

III. INCLUSIVE APPROACHES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR STATES AND MULTILATERALS

Political dialogue with national governments

National governments are a key actor, not in the least for other states that want to assist with peace making i.e. coming to a political agreement, and/or with building sustainable peace. States and by extension multilateral organizations can carry significantly more weight than non-state actors. Still the engagement of a national government by a foreign state or by a multilateral organization is not without its challenges: External actors can encourage a national government to be 'inclusive' in its own internal political dialogue, and/or in its practical governance.

But national governments may be weak, uninterested and/or corrupt. A strong and assertive national government has advantages: it tends to be easier to know where its stands on various issues and has the capacities to pursue agreed objectives. But it also has the strength to ignore the wishes of some of the external state actors. Extensive general budget support by international donors to Rwanda for example, has been an expression of good partnerships and has brought some important benefits. But it has not provided a central or effective platform for dialogue about 'opening up the political space'. (Purcell et alii 2006).

Yet there are other challenges: States and multilateral organisations are bound to engage with the national authorities and to observe basic diplomatic protocol of respect for national sovereignty. That can lead to forms of self-censorship where the things that really matter are too sensitive to talk about. Alternatively, if an external bilateral or multilateral actor is too outspoken, this can lead to the expulsion of a diplomat or other staff members and a minor or major diplomatic crisis. On several occasions for example, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Burundi have insisted that senior diplomats from other states and from multilateral organisations such the UN leave the country.

Smaller countries working in challenging environments may feel they don't have enough weight on their own and hence be "coalition seekers". The Netherlands policy for example is quite clear in this regard: *"We will go multilateral whenever we can, bilateral if need be."*

One perceived limitation about going multilateral however is related to the fact that multilaterals are may not be political enough. All of the critical issues are 'political' (in the broad meaning of the word), and peacebuilding, just like peace making, is political work. Internal actors will in any case perceive external actors as 'political', because they intend to influence the dynamics within their society, and the outcomes of those dynamics.

Working multilaterally, notably through the UN, has also become more problematic in recent years where the UN has been more frequently targeted and has responded by reducing its presence in countries seen as 'high risk'.

Bilateral and multilaterals of course not only work with and through national governments. They can work very directly or via NGOs with local authorities and a diversity of non-state local actors. That has been the case for example for the Netherlands in Uruzgan province in Afghanistan. The central authorities in Kabul were 'distant', but the Netherlands made it a point to ensure that they were kept informed and also regularly brought central government personnel to Uruzgan, to clearly signal the necessary connection between national and local actions.

International actors, be they bilateral or multilateral, often work with both national authorities and national 'civil society'. But these are often seen as 'different options'. The net result can be a growing antagonism between the national authorities and their 'civil society'. In the long run this is not constructive. Ultimately

effective governance (and a functioning state) requires capacities both within the state institutions and within society at large – and political processes wherein respective expectations and demands are negotiated and performance assessed. International assistance should really focus itself on supporting the constructive interaction between national authorities and the society at large.

“Statebuilding is intimately connected to the political processes through which social/political relations and power relationships between holders of state power and organised groups in society are negotiated and managed. (...)

A resilient state must be able to effectively deliver functions that match the expectations of societal groups. Equally important, it must be able to manage the process of change in those expectations and to withstand and/or manage internal and external shocks associated with change without recourse to violence. Changes in expectations can generate fragility: if people expect a different relationship with the state than the one they have, this can result in political tensions that may require a re-negotiation of the rules of the game.

Fragility can also arise from exclusion: where societal or political groups are excluded from the state or its key institutions, they may seek to challenge the state. Failure to manage such challenges through political negotiation or other responses may lead to these groups to have recourse to violent opposition.”

OECD/DAC 2008: State Building in Situations of Fragility. Initial Findings: 2.

Existing policy instruments, developed usually in foreign capitals, may turn out to be of limited value on the ground. Some international actors for example went into Afghanistan under the broad “3 Ds” policy framework – diplomacy, defense and development, but that offered little or no operational guidance once one had to deal with the fuzzy and complex local dynamics in and within every province of Afghanistan. Newly arrived external actors could not even easily assess whether someone claiming to be the ‘governor’ of the province actually was so, or whether that person had any real backing to exercise such function. There was no alternative but to go on a serious and sustained learning curve about local realities and local dynamics, which foreign state actors could not do without the assistance of NGOs and many local people.

Democratisation and elections

There are a number of assumptions that influence international bilateral and multilateral peacebuilding that need to be questioned.

One is that ‘democratisation’ quite directly contributes to peacebuilding. Reality shows that often it is not. ‘Democratisation’ implies a reshuffling of power relations with various actors perceiving a risk of losing power in the process. ‘Democratisation’ therefore creates situations of heightened tensions and fragility. We do not pay enough attention to the fact that there are many instances where ordinary people in countries that ostensibly are ‘democratising’ actually express themselves in very negative terms about something that should benefit them. Those critical attitudes among ‘citizens’ are an indicator that their lived experience of ‘democratisation’ is very much one of heightened tension and insecurity.

Another persistent assumption is that ‘elections’ are largely a good thing. It provides a mechanism for the people to express their will, and results in a government that is seen as having greater ‘legitimacy’ than an un-elected one. The reality is again more problematic:

- Elections are highly divisive and therefore also likely to increase tensions and a sense of insecurity.

- Too many elections are about the power hunger of individual leaders. There are no real 'political parties' that would represent a wider constituency, and no visions or political programmes.
- There are enough examples of countries where elections take place, but where the outcomes are often a foregone conclusion. Strong men (usually men) have learned to retain power even if they have to go through the motion of periodic elections, to create the semblance of a democracy.

The international community is far too 'election-obsessed'. Elections too soon can be deeply destabilizing. And too much attention and effort goes into the preparations and actual holding of the elections, not enough into managing the aftermath of elections. In Burundi's recent history for example, it haven't been the elections as such that sparked violence. Serious violence and massacres came after the elections, triggered by those not happy with the election results.

In fact, there is a problematic relationship between efforts by international actors to encourage the internal actors to search for 'common ground' and to be inclusive and look for governments of 'national unity', and the simultaneous promotion of elections that stimulate competition and antagonism.

The international community, and perhaps notably Western countries, have also lost a lot of credibility in their promotion of democracy – with and through elections- by not truly respecting either the process or the outcome. While international actors in recent years have repeatedly and increasingly vocally criticized Afghan President Karzaï for having warlords and corrupt people in his Cabinet, the full story has to mention that many of the Cabinet members were 'chosen' and imposed on Karzai by international actors in back-room deals. Even more damaging to the credibility of the international actors is the policy of isolating Hamas after they received a majority of votes in a Palestinian election that international observers financed and declared 'free and fair'.

The impression all this gives is that the international community, notably 'the West', wants to see elections but only elections that bring to power its preferred candidate. That is not viable in the long run. Attention should not only go to the 'winners' of elections but also the 'losers' – because democracies also thrive on responsible 'opposition' roles. Today's opposition can become tomorrow's government. Furthermore, the critical issue is a political culture in which all political players accept a system of rules of the political game, a system that persists and prevails through the changes in who holds the political power. Elections as such are unlikely to transform a political culture that sees 'power' as a zero-sum game.

External actors, particularly other states, of course can also have other agendas than democratization or peacebuilding: geopolitical and/or economic interests can come into play, as well as their own 'security' concerns, or simply historical ties with a country or between the respective elites. Not every foreign state can be seen as a 'neutral and trustworthy broker' in any type of conflict or as an 'international assistance actor' that is there only to support the initiatives and choices of the internal actors.

The 'good enough' principle

International assistance actors are well advised to work more with the 'good enough' principle. The question of 'whether the governance practice in country X' is 'good enough,' appears typically in donor discussions about budgetary support. It should be extended to the discussion about other issues. There also has to be greater tolerance for governance choices and 'solutions' by countries in or emerging from conflict that may not come close to Western aspirations. Political leaders everywhere have to consider what is politically possible at a given moment in time, and societies need time to pursue their own organic process of state formation and governance negotiations.

Along the same lines one should not be too rigid and demanding about who one is prepared to talk with. Here too pragmatism can best prevail: is this person or actor-group 'good enough', should be the question.

“Terrorists” and the “Global War on Terror”

The past decade has seen a proliferation of the use of the word ‘terrorist’, especially with reference to non-state actors (‘state terrorism’ has gone a bit out of vogue), evidently carried by the ‘Global War on Terror’ wave. This has had significant impact on policies such as a refocus from ‘human security’ towards the ‘security of the state’; a militarization of foreign policy, erosion of political and human rights, threats to international humanitarian law etc. It has also had significant impact on the willingness and possibility to talk with a range of actors and groups, even if they have quite some influence on the violence or peace dynamics.

There is of course a very complex story here, but some of the key observations made were the following:

Different governments adopt different attitudes, which include, for example:

- We will not talk to these actors and forbid anyone else to do so. This attitude in particular becomes very constraining for peace making and peacebuilding, all the more so as it gets enshrined in legal prescriptions under ‘anti-terrorist legislation’.
- We will not talk to these actors but have no problem if someone else does.
- We would like to talk to these actors but cannot be seen to be doing so...

The reality is often more murky than that. Various governments –and their secret services- have not only periodic contacts with groups they otherwise totally condemn, but may even ‘use’ and ‘manipulate’ such groups for their capacity to ‘make events’. They can shape the headlines, which in turn can determine how the political dynamics is being framed.

It takes two to have a dialogue

- It is healthy to remember that on the other hand certain violent groups are not interested in engaging in dialogue with external actors they believe cannot deliver. In the context of the Palestinian question for example, certain groups are not interested in really engaging with the Quartet, because in their analysis it is only the US that can deliver.

The ostensibly ‘principled position’ of not talking with terrorists, is quite surprising given the political pragmatism that has dominated throughout recent history. In the context of the ‘Cold War’, many governments, including developed and ‘peace loving’ democracies, did not hesitate to actively support often brutally repressive regimes, as long as they stayed in the ‘right’ camp. Peace makers trying to end civil wars recognized that they had to bring into the political mediation process also state and non-state actors that were directly responsible for tremendous atrocities.

It also goes against a fundamental premise of peace making and peacebuilding, namely that you don’t need to talk to your friends but with your enemies.

“If you want to make peace with your enemy, then you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.” (Nelson Mandela)

“Including in the political process those previously associated with violent groups can actually help. Sometimes it’s hard to stop a war if you don’t talk with those who are involved in it.

To be sure, their participation will likely slow things down and, for a time, block progress. But their endorsement can give the process and its outcome far greater legitimacy and support. Better they become participants than act as spoilers.” (Richard Haass and George Mitchell 2007)

“With whom are you going to discuss a conflict if you don’t discuss it with the people who are involved in the conflict, who have caused the conflict from the beginning and who are still engaged in trying to kill each other?” (Jimmy Carter)

'Red lines'

Unfortunately the use of violence, including violence intentionally directed against civilians also to 'terrorize' them, is not, in the world of 'realpolitik', a determinant for who we will categorically refuse to talk with.

The point was made that in practice there are red lines but these are not written in stone; they can shift in line with evolving dynamics on the ground or changes in perception and political postures. In practice it is often not too difficult to get around the fact that a group is on a proscribed list – although it is extremely difficult to get them off a list.

On the other hand, there may be actors whose ideology is such that it is impossible to talk with them. Al Qaeda type ideas for example simply reject the notion of the modern 'Westphalian' state. It is not a coincidence that various militant groups that sympathize with Al Qaeda type ideas call themselves 'Al Qaeda in Mesopotamia' or 'Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb' with no reference to a particular country or state. Their vision does not include the modern state, but inspires itself rather in the Caliphate, where furthermore religion and politics are not separated from each other.

Many analysts, researchers and other types of commentators have argued that totally refusing to engage and talk with the multiplying number of 'Jihadi' groups is not helpful:

- In the first place, labeling many different groups and people in the one category of 'Jihadis' is a crude generalization that is counterproductive. It ignores a lot about the origins, mindsets and diversity between and within these groups.
- In the second place it makes it difficult to see when the time may actually be ripe to try and bring them into a constructive process. Sometimes there is a brief window of opportunity that cannot be missed.
- Finally, it is likely to blind us to the deeper issues that have motivated people to become violent radicals in the first place.

A different perspective on engaging those Jihadis that we are so reluctant to talk with may have the following considerations:

- The militancy of 'extremist Jihadi' groups is actually an expression of their opposition against the political and economic project of Western powers and their allied elites in the Muslim world. As movements they often arise or grow significantly in reaction to a major event. The Hezbollah movement in Lebanon for example emerged in reaction to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982; Hamas in the Occupied Territories is related to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt but was not originally a fighting force – it became so in response to a deepening Israeli occupation especially after the First Intifada in 1987; Al Qaeda emerged in Pakistan and Afghanistan to fight the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and turned against the US when the US established a big military presence in Saudi Arabia in 1991 during the First Gulf War. Similarly there is now a whole new generation of 'Jihadis' that has emerged in response to the Second Gulf War (2003) and the perceived 'occupation of Iraq' since. This new generation, referred to in Arab language media as the 'veterans from Iraq' is often more militant and extreme.
- Many people are driven to extremism out of a sense of outrage and despair and/or by a messianic belief in a radically different (and better) future. Extremist movements however seldom represent larger populations. Often they operate and are powerful because they also instill fear in the population at large. They do not have real broad popular support. That has clearly been seen e.g. in Iraq and subsequently in Pakistan. The same holds for the Somali regions. And yet a population that gets alienated from one force, such as the Allied Coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan, may –for a while- turn sympathetically to those that are clearly opposing that force.

The language of 'winning the hearts and minds' signals that this is understood. What remains remarkable however is how little research there seems to be on what makes a strategy to 'win hearts and minds' effective, and how one would know if it were?

- Radical or extreme groups and movements are internally not monolithic. There is often a significant amount of internal debate. Their most violent fringe is seldom the majority. There often are significant others that are part of the movement, or have connections to it without being a 'member', that are more thoughtful and that continue to ask questions about objectives, strategy and tactics.
- While the most militant hardcore may not be open to any conversation and is thoroughly dangerous, it is definitely possible to engage various other people in or close to such extremist movements in meaningful conversations. Critical considerations here are: who approaches them, how are they approached and 'the right time'. It is not advisable to seek to engage such group in a conversation when it is actively pursuing a violent campaign and hence at its most explosive. Even if the time is right, both sides have to deal with the same problem: they may both want to talk to the other, but neither side can be seen to be doing so.
- Total 'separation' and a refusal to engage in any conversation at all, actually perpetuates the stand-off that comes from a reciprocal 'demonization' of 'the other'. Notably the new generation of 'Jihadis' are often people with less education and who don't understand English. They fantasize about the 'West' but have no exposure whatsoever to realities or views other than those prevalent in the worldview they grew up with. They have no idea about other conflicts in the world and what possible solutions there actually are to resolve them. Engaging with them therefore is important, for two reasons. In the first place so as to understand where they come from and how they see the issues. Thus 'the curtain is removed' and we gain a clearer understanding of what a group really believes and wants. We may not like what we hear but at least we know what we are facing. Secondly, to also make them discover that 'the other' they oppose, is actually not really as they had imagined him.
- Still, care is needed. The opposition and confrontation between 'extremist Jihadis' and 'the West' is not simply the result of ignorance and misunderstanding that therefore can be resolved through dialogue. There are radically different views about critical issues that cannot be easily reconciled. And there are deeper and structural issues in the relationship between the West and the Middle East that talking and dialogue alone will not resolve. Finally, the value and credibility and influence of a constructive dialogue will diminish and disappear if it is not followed by meaningful action. Our interlocutors will lose trust that we are serious when seeking to talk, or they may get sidelined and overridden by the more radical elements that lose patience.

"Be careful about ignoring the causes in whose name terrorists act" (Eli Weisel)

The Non-Distinction of the Distinct

The blinding effect of painting everybody whose actions and world views are not to our liking as a 'terrorist', irrespective of the context in which they emerge and operate, impoverishes our policy responses. It encourages us to adopt entirely confrontational positions that in practice often aggravate the situation and in the long run turn out counterproductive. A clear example of this has been the policy of isolation of Hamas after it was elected by the Palestinian people in January 2006.

Many observers have called this a strategic mistake for the following reasons:

- Hamas was by then a movement in evolution. It did take part in elections which at least implicitly took place within the framework of the Oslo Agreement. It had reduced its attacks on Israel and was already engaging in conversations on accepting the 1967 border. Moreover Mahmoud Abbas at the

time had a policy of seeking to bring Hamas into the political process, while Hamas showed openness to sharing power with Fatah.

- If Hamas had been allowed to govern, it would have been confronted with a different type of political, social and economic challenges, and very likely have evolved towards greater pragmatism. As Lincoln said “If you really want to test a man, let him govern.”
- The international isolation of Hamas eventually drove them out of power. But it also created a deep divide among the Palestinians, and the situation in Gaza those years later only has gotten worse. Rather than allowing Hamas to be in a position in which it very likely had to learn to moderate itself, the isolation ended up radicalizing the movement.
- It effectively ended the possibility of a genuine peace process between the Palestinians and Israel. “You cannot make peace with half the Palestinians while making war on the other half.”
- The refusal to talk with Hamas meant that some big powerbrokers such as the US and the EU voluntarily removed themselves as possible peacemakers. This is regrettable because, when they try to play that role, they tend to do it very well. Yet they went further and also made it very difficult for others to try and play such role.
- Moreover it sent a counterproductive message that has been heard far and wide beyond the Palestinian environment: we want you to embrace democracy and hold elections, but we will isolate and combat you if we don't like the outcome of your elections. Rightly or wrongly that is a message that repeatedly has been heard by many: after the (date) elections in Algeria, after the Palestinian elections in 2006, and also in Afghanistan when notwithstanding the Loya Jirga at the last minute the international actors decided which Afghan would occupy what post. Not surprisingly, quite a number of people have come to see ‘democratisation’ as an instrument of Western dominance.

Whatever legitimate criticism and condemnation one may have for Hamas’ tactics and even aims, there is the possibility for resistance movements to evolve. Decades ago, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation was also labeled a ‘terrorist organisation’ (like the African National Congress in Apartheid South Africa). Today Fatah, which is the dominant organization within the PLO, and controls the institutions of the Palestinian authority, is accepted as the legitimate interlocutor for the international community.

The forced return of pragmatism?

The polarized worldview in which ‘you are either with us or against us’ has encouraged militarized and repressive policies and practices. The aim seems to have been to punish and crush, rather than encourage a change in behaviour. But the inability to reach a decisive military victory eventually forces a return of pragmatism and with it the inevitability of political dialogue and negotiation. This is vividly clear in the context of Afghanistan. Initially ‘talks with the Taliban’ were utterly out of the question, and then an anguished climate emerged with rumours about ‘secret talks’ that some welcomed and others condemned. Today many actors quite openly concede that the fighting in Afghanistan can only be brought to an end through a political process, that this process has to be one by and among Afghans, and that they will have to find ‘Afghan solutions’ to get out of the complex quagmire the country finds itself in.

IV. INCLUSIVE APPROACHES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS FOR NON-STATE ACTORS.

Two case studies were presented of successful engagement of groups or sectors of society that has previously been excluded from any process, despite their influence. These were the Rwandan diaspora and the Shas movement in Israel.

1. The Rwandan diaspora

- a. Why is the Rwandan diaspora important?

With an estimated 11 million Rwandans in Rwanda and some 120,000 abroad, numerically the Rwandan diaspora may not be that important. But politically and emotionally, the diaspora carries weight beyond its numbers.

The importance of Rwandans living abroad can be better appreciated if one recalls how in its past and recent history Rwandans from different ethnic identities and political convictions have fled the country. Historically, significant political opposition has been from abroad; political parties have been formed abroad, and military incursions have happened from neighbouring countries. Not all Rwandans abroad have left for political reasons. There are others that have left to study and/or for economic reasons. But no Rwandan has been unaffected by the violence in her or his society and the mindsets that facilitated it.

When it started in late 2000, the Institute of Research and Dialogue for Peace (IRDP) and Interpeace's peacebuilding programme did not envisage engaging the Rwandan diaspora. It was Rwandans that got involved in the programme within the country who drew attention to its importance and encouraged IRDP to involve them. There was no objection in principle: inclusion of all Rwandans of all walks of life was a core premise of the programme.

b. 'Hard to reach' and 'reluctant to talk with'?

The challenges were on the one hand practical and financial. That made the diaspora 'hard to reach'. There are significant concentrations of Rwandans abroad in France, Belgium, Switzerland, the USA, Canada as well as Uganda, Mozambique, Zambia, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. A relationship had to be established that could only be initiated through face-to-face contact, which required a significant amount of international travel. While team members are abroad, the process within their own society may be slowing down or temporarily suspended.

But there was also a significant political challenge. When hard-line political opponents are living abroad, the diaspora may also contain influential figures that not everybody is keen on engaging with. While the IRDP team had no reservations about talking to people that had put themselves in political opposition, the Government of Rwanda was understandably concerned about their seeking out known political opponents, while some of the Rwandans abroad were suspicious that IRDP were operating on behalf of the Government.

c. Engaging the diaspora.

Transparency being usually a good strategy, IRDP informed the Government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and relevant Rwandan embassies. But it did not seek their formal involvement – the programme had always been clear that it would seek to talk with and try to engage all actors. Nor did it work through the embassies abroad to contact or convene the Rwandans living in another country. For that, IRDP sought local people, sometimes more than one in acknowledgment of the deep divisions among Rwandans also abroad, who were open enough to be able to assist as local facilitators. In some instances it was deemed best to meet individuals who were unwilling to meet in a group. International and Rwandan researchers and writers on Rwanda's conflict and its history were also met with as resource persons.

Then there were the sensitivities of facilitating conversations about deeply divisive and deeply emotional events, in an environment abroad where Rwandans tended to talk more frankly but therefore also more harshly than they would or could do in Rwanda itself.

A critical methodological element was the use of video. Video is regularly used in various Interpeace-supported programmes for different purposes. One of these is exposing people to the conversations that other members of their society are having, who are socially or geographically or politically too distant from them, for direct conversations to be possible. The IRDP team would show videos of public discussions of focus groups or community meetings in Rwanda about the situation and its remaining sensitive and divisive issues-and would film the conversations in the meetings with the diaspora and take these back to

Rwanda. This way the video enabled Rwandans to listen to each other across vast distances – revealing sometimes that Rwandans in the diaspora who had not returned to their country for many years, were not aware that things were evolving and changing in Rwanda itself. Since the videos showed the nature of the conversations and who was present, they also helped to protect the IRDP team against suspicions. The videos also help the IRDP team as reference material and archives which can be viewed to remember what was said on a given issue and in a given location while writing reports.

d. Initial results

The process of involving the diaspora paid off: where some Rwandans abroad had remained ethnically segregated, their involvement in the process brought them closer together again; some including political opponents, decided on a return visit to Rwanda as a result of having been engaged by the programme; and it contributed to the Rwandan government becoming more at ease about engaging some of its political opponents who were abroad.

For purposes of continuity, IRDP has maintained contact with the diaspora facilitators with the understanding that they will continue managing the dialogue process in the absence of the IRDP team, hence possible formation of permanent dialogue clubs in the diaspora. It was also the understanding that the diaspora will continue to contribute to the debate on the research process through internet and other IT facilities. However, this has not been effectively utilized to-date.

The government of Rwanda has also carried out diaspora missions to meet with Rwandans. Although government has created channels for collaboration with the diaspora through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and mostly in socio-economic activities, these have mostly attracted those already supportive of the present government.

2. The Shas movement in Israel

a. Why is the Shas movement important?

Shas is both a social movement (since 1983) and a political party (since 1984) in Israel. Its main constituency are orthodox Jews most of whom have come to Israel from the Middle East or North Africa. They make up some 20% of the total population of Israel. Rabbi Ovadia Yossef is the spiritual leader of Shas but also commands respect among a larger segment of the population.

For quite some time now, Shas has been part of many Israeli coalition governments. As a party with an agenda made exclusively of religious and social welfare issues of relevance to its constituency, it has had the freedom to ally itself with one or the other of the major parties on the right or in the left, which has given Shas significant political influence. Within Israeli politics, the conflict with the Palestinians and parts of the wider region has largely been managed by people with a military background and a secular outlook. Their perspectives and thinking are heavily oriented towards the 'security' dimension of the conflict. Yet there is also a religious dimension. In consequence, there is a growing strand of opinion that recommends that religious groups and figures be given more space in the debates about how to resolve those conflicts.

Already in 1969 Rabbi Ovadia Yossef ruled that 'the sanctity of life is more important than the sanctity of land', and although its political implications have not been officially developed by the movement, the ruling itself remains a guiding parameter which some of its members use it as the basis for their personal involvement in peace activities.

There is slowly growing wider recognition of the value of Shas involvement in a conflict resolution process. Some have even gone as far as to argue that 'only Shas and Hamas can make peace'. If prominent religious figures support a certain solution, then a significant part of the population may do so too. One survey in Israel for example indicated that a majority of those questioned would wait to hear Rabbi Ovadia Yossef's ruling on Jerusalem before expressing themselves on the issue.

b. Shas was “hard-to-reach”

Yet as orthodox Jews, many members of Shas are neither informed about nor active on the wider political questions in Israel and of Israel and the region. When Sharon implemented the unilateral disengagement from Gaza in the summer of 2005, many Shas members could not even locate Gaza on the map. The men tend to devote themselves to religious studies, and the primary concerns in the relation with the state have turned around social services, given that these orthodox Jews (like the Palestinian Arabs in Israel) tend to have large families. Although many speak Arabic, the command of the English language particularly among the men, is minimal. One therefore could say that, from a certain point of view Shas and the people it represents, was self-marginalised with regard to the wider question of conflict and peace.

c. Engaging Shas

Not surprisingly perhaps no peace initiative, formal or informal, has sought to involve anyone from Shas. Even the so-called ‘Geneva Initiative’ did not invite any Shas person to the discussion and dialogue process but only –belatedly- to the signing ceremony in December 2003.

The first serious attempt to engage institutionally this group and movement of orthodox Jews in peace efforts came with the UN-Interpeace programme. The leader of the small UN-Interpeace team in Israel approached that same person who had been present in Geneva with a very open question: Whether they wanted to become part of a process within Israeli society to create greater internal convergence around possible solutions to the conflict? Following consultation with Rabbi Ovadia Yossef, the answer was ‘yes’.

Rather than imposing a process, Shas was then asked what sort of process they would find meaningful and be comfortable with. Following further extensive internal discussion, Shas decided that it needed to first put itself in a position of getting better informed before engaging with the actual difficult issues. That expressed need and priority was responded to with a study programme organized in collaboration with the Ono Academic College, a higher education institution working with the orthodox community. The programme was organized around three basic areas: a module on knowledge and understanding of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, including exposure to the wide variety of positions around this issue in Israeli society, and relevant field visits; a module on conflict management and mediation that allowed trainees to become officially recognized mediators; and English language courses, to allow active participation in international engagements. Shas itself selected 35 members to partake in the study programme, 15 Rabbis and 20 socio-political activists – and Shas retains control of the public profile of the process. The participants graduated from the course in early 2010.

Initial results

Although the process is in its early stages, some advancements are visible. The process has given the party the confidence to expand its political agenda: during the national elections in February 2009, for the first time in its campaign Shas included issues of security and national interest. Participants in the study programme are being increasingly invited to take part in Track 2 initiatives in Israel and abroad, and the UN-Interpeace team is increasingly approached by others who have come to realize the importance of Shas and seek access to the movement. Finally, in the context of the academic discussions, important questions and statements are being made that point to the fact that the process is indeed opening a serious reflection on these issues.

V. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR PEACE MAKING AND PEACEBUILDING?

The organizers of the Forum did not intend the one-day seminar to reach comprehensive conclusions or recommendations about effective peace making and peacebuilding, other than the message that failing to

exclude all those that matter can undermine the prospects of sustainable peace. Still, a number of insights and important attention points came up, that are captured here.

1. Mediation and peace capacities in society

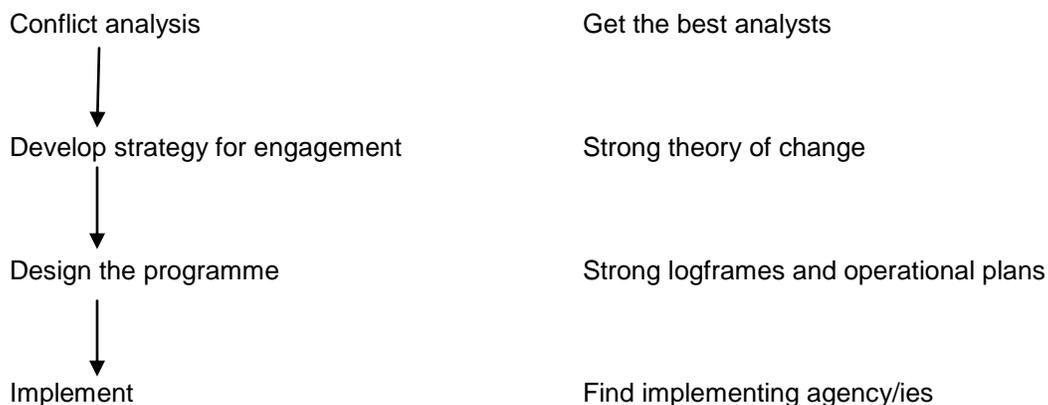
There will always be conflicts of interest, differences of perception and belief, different goals and objectives between human beings, within societies and between societies. The question is whether societies have the capacity to mediate these tensions without resort to violence. That is partially a question of how political competition is organized, but also dependent on the political culture, and on values and norms. Compromise, consensus building and problem-solving capacities need to exist within the state but also within society at large, and in the interaction between the state and wider society.

Therefore on the critical indicators and criterion for external peacebuilding efforts should be whether it has strengthened these capacities in that society. From this perspective, the relevance of inclusive –and participatory- approaches is clear. If certain influential actors and sectors of society are left out of the peace making and peacebuilding processes, they will not gain a basic trust in others and develop their own capacities to pursue their objectives non-violently and with scope for compromise and acceptance of diversity.

2. Identifying those that matter

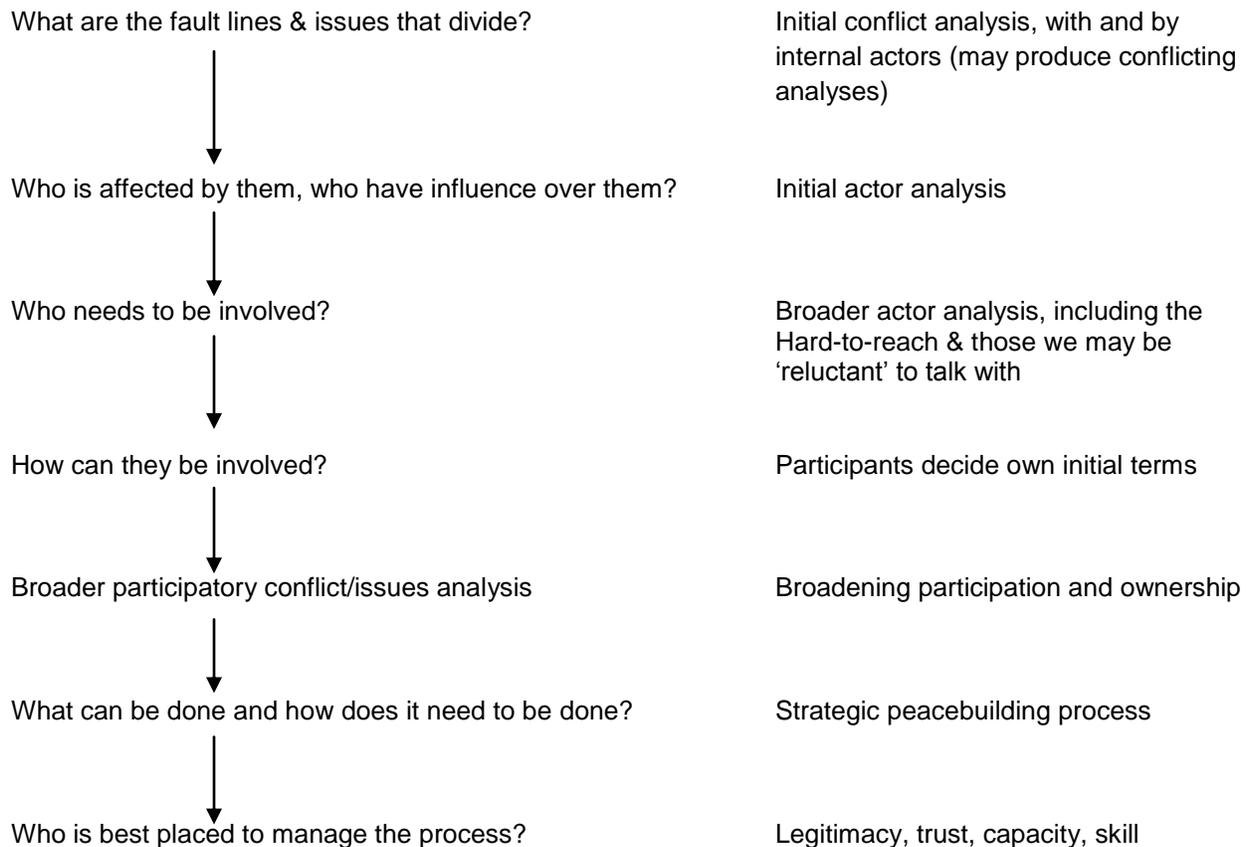
Progressively identifying all those that matter (and periodically updating that understanding) therefore has to become an integral part of the considerations informing the basic design of any peacebuilding effort. This will require a change in the dominant practice.

A very common way of developing peacebuilding strategies is roughly as follows:



There is likely to be a moment of ‘actor-mapping’ in this exercise, though this is usually limited to the more visible and influential among the organized actors. Some of the actor-mapping may be little more than a component in the descriptive ‘context analysis’, some of it only cast in terms of ‘threats’ and ‘opportunities’. Political operators of course will go further and look at ‘positions’ and ‘interests’ and probably at the power-base of the most obviously influential actors and at their past and current strategies and tactics. Still, many actors are seen as entities that need to be ‘managed’ so that they don’t become a ‘hindrance’, rather than as entities that need to be brought into a constructive process.

A slower but deeper and richer way of proceeding might go as follows:



3. Enabling spaces for peace makers and peacebuilders

The 'counter terrorism' agenda has in some ways restricted the policy options and the space for peace makers and peacebuilders.

The 'criminalization' of people with problematic behaviours can be justified, but cannot be the only response. In Central America, Interpeace's work with partners around the problem of violent youth gangs (maras / pandillas) is seeking to broaden the analysis and resulting policy options. Rather than focusing the analysis only on the violent behaviour of (certain) youth gangs, it seeks to broaden this by looking at the pervasive violence in Central American societies, and to reframe 'youth violence' from simply a 'security problem' to a wider 'social problem'. The resulting acknowledgement of the factors that drive youth into youth groups and violence, such as broken and abusive families, lack of educational and job opportunities, constant humiliation and stigmatization, opens up possibilities for policies focusing on prevention and rehabilitation and not just repressive or reactive measures.

In the same way the international response to the problem of 'Somali piracy' has very much been a 'security' one, with the deployment of naval forces to protect shipping. Virtually nothing has been done to address the original triggering problem i.e. that of the depletion of fish stocks and hence destruction of livelihoods along the Somali coast by international fishing vessels, whose presence and activities was not regulated by a licensing system operated by a Somali state.

This is not to argue that security responses are misplaced – but they are definitely not 'sufficient' and often by themselves will not 'resolve the problem' in the long run.

Absolute positions that one 'will never talk with' certain groups may be good political posturing, but past and current practice shows that they are more often than not counterproductive in the longer run.

Even where a 'refusal to talk with' can be fully justified for certain actors at a given moment in time, it is not wise to block all channels of contact and to prohibit all other actors from having any contacts.

4. Trusted brokers.

The question of 'who' convenes and who facilitates the conversations tends to be looked into with reasonable care in the context of (preparing for) negotiations aiming at a political agreement. In practice the lead is often taken by multi-lateral organisations, although there are of course various instances where an individual state plays a lead role.

One consideration for potential participants in a political dialogue will be whether the actor(s) that have the political weight to make something happen are – or are very likely to come- on board. But another critical consideration will be whether a convener and/or facilitator can inspire enough trust among all those who matter. That has to do with perceived impartiality, integrity, even-handedness etc.

The United Nations

The question was asked whether the UN has lost its independence to key member states and hence its ability to talk to anyone who matters and be a truly neutral and trusted broker.

It was argued that in the 70s, 80s and 90s the UN was talking to all sides, for example in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola etc. That enabled it to convey insights and messages to those who felt they could not engage with certain actors.

But in the recent Palestinian situation for example, following the unexpected election victory of Hamas in 2006, the UN eventually took the same attitude as the rest of the Quartet (US, Russia, EU) and refused to talk with Hamas.

The perception that the UN might be instrumentalised by certain member states would significantly undermine its ability to act as an effective broker that can talk with all those who matter.

The UN's willingness to lose its potential to talk to everyone and hence play a real brokering role has also been dented by the deadly attack in 2003 on its headquarters in Baghdad. At the time the UN was talking to various actors that the Coalition Provisional Authority could not, but the attack instilled a sense of vulnerability that has been subsequently reinforced by more targeted attacks in e.g. Algeria and Afghanistan.

The European Union

The European Union has been evolving in quite important ways and is likely to continue to do so. Even though 'political dialogue' was explicitly integrated in the 2000 Cotonou Agreement with its ACP partners, the actual experience at the time related mostly to development assistance. EU personnel acknowledge that they have had to go on a strong learning curve when it came to political dialogue related to peace making and peacebuilding, where thorny issues such as 'justice and reconciliation' appear on the agenda.

In the past decade, the EU has also gradually been engaging in a wider world. If in the 1990s its scope remained very much that of the 'near-abroad' with the wars of the break-up of Yugoslavia as dominant focus, that has changed in the beginning of the 21st century. The EU has now (had) operations in the Middle East, Aceh-Indonesia, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo etc. As a regional organization however, the EU is keen on seeing other regional organisations play a more active and effective role. In Africa for example, they have a strong interest in the evolving architecture between the African Union and sub-regional organisations such as SADC and ECOWAS.

There was a feeling that, so far, the EU has often been able to play roles with greater conceptual/mental and political flexibility sometimes than the UN, largely because it had a relative autonomy from its own member states. It tended to pride itself on its pursuit of 'soft power' and its willingness and ability to talk with everyone. It also did not itself represent a 'state entity' that is anathema to certain actors.

The Lisbon Treaty and the intent to pursue a Common Foreign and Security Policy can bring certain advantages, such as a single representation and speaking with a common voice. But there are also real risks that the new European Union thereby would lose that previous flexibility, and that its engagement with the wider world will also get increasingly shaped by a 'security agenda' and become more 'militarized'. That might reduce its willingness and ability to talk with everyone and be a trusted broker.

New state and multilateral actors

The 'War on Terror' has, especially in the Muslim world, created a certain distrust of an aggregated 'West', that can make it more difficult for 'Western' countries to be perceived as trustworthy interlocutors. Beyond that of course there is the rise of China, with a growing economic footprint in many countries that will also translate into more political influence.

That may mean that there is scope and need for new actors to take leading roles as conveners, facilitators, mediators, trusted brokers, and intermediaries.

In recent years we have for example seen AU peace keeping missions in south-central Somalia and in Sudan; Saudi Arabia has been called upon to help facilitate conversations with the Taliban; South Africa has been active e.g. in Burundi and in Zimbabwe, Qatar has played a role in brokering an important deal in 2008 among the rivaling Lebanese factions and has been very active around the Darfur crisis. Turkey was also playing a constructive mediating role in the Middle East until the deterioration of its relationship with Israel, but in 2010, together with Brazil, offered an agreement with Iran regarding its nuclear programme.

5. Partnerships

Various participants in the Forum recognized that in many instances states and multilaterals need the help of non-state actors, typically though not exclusively 'NGO's.

"Working with NGOs can bring depth and width to bilateral/multilateral political dialogue, because they can have better insight in what really lives in a society, beyond the picture painted by government officials."

Yet there remain issues that can unhelpfully complicate and constrain the development of those partnerships that are contextually most relevant:

- Various state or multilateral administrations can only enter into a formal partnership with an entity that is legally constituted. Not all non-state actors meet that criterion, so even if they are the most credible and best placed, it may not be possible to have a direct, operational partnership.
- De facto partners are not necessarily chosen because of their local credibility and actual skills for the task, but on whether they have mastered a donor's bureaucratic requirements. The ability to write a convincing project proposal with a sharp log frame however is something entirely different and no guarantee for the ability to be perceived as a trusted convener and/or process manager. The practice of screening 'proposals' in capital cities, far removed from the actual operational context (and even sometimes outsourcing the shortlisting to a consulting company), offers very little possibility to actually assess other very important aspects.
- Although everybody acknowledges that peacebuilding requires time and is a long-term process, and although it has been repeatedly stated that peacebuilding is not a linear process, in practice peacebuilding work continues to have to be forced into fairly linear and shorter-term 'project' formats.

- Similarly, although there is now broad acknowledgement of the vital importance of 'local ownership', in practice peacebuilders have to present proposals with predetermined, detailed results written in from the design phase. It is not realistic to expect participants in a process to take ownership of something that appears already heavily pre-designed.
- In practice states and multilateral institutions often – though by no means exclusively- partner directly with international NGOs who then in turn work with or partner with local organisations. Most of these INGOs are 'Western', or are likely to be perceived as such. One can imagine situations where it will become difficult also for 'Western NGOs' to get enough trust of all the local actors that matter. Perhaps in future NGOs rooted in other societies and cultural backgrounds will be better placed to gain broad acceptance e.g. a Malaysian, Indian, Kenyan or Brazilian one.

6. Local solutions.

If we accept that (sustainable) peace cannot be imported but has to be created by the members that have to share the same society and political community, then we also must accept that sometimes these will come up with 'choices' and 'solutions' that may not conform to Western aspirations but that 'work for them'.

7. Personal and practical learning points for effective peacebuilding.

- Peacebuilding involves taking risks, there are risks for the peacebuilder, but also for those in groups or sectors of society that engage with the peacebuilders.
- As a peacebuilder, you have to challenge yourself and be prepared to go beyond your own comfort zone. The leader of the small UN-Interpeace programme team in Israel for example is a secular woman. Approaching and then working with Shas has been a particular personal experience for her, requiring her to learn another Hebrew than she normally uses, as well as behaviour considered appropriate in Shas-circles.
- A team of very skilled local actors is –for peacebuilding work- usually preferable over one of external actors or one that is directed by an external actor. If you work as a team, carefully constitute a 'mixed team' that has within the team the relevant diversity (from across the dominant fault lines or divisions). Such profile will help building trust with all sides, while its ability to work constructively together will be inspiring for participants in the process.
- Show your seriousness by going to the ones you want to engage, rather than ask them to come to you.
- Allow the group or sector of society you want to engage to determine who will be the principal contact and interlocutor(s).
- Do not suggest and certainly not impose a process or entry points: ask the group "how can you discuss a solution to the conflict?, what process is relevant but also comfortable for you?" Allow the group also to determine the steps, and the degree of visibility of their involvement. Give the group control over key decisions regarding their participation in the process.
- The use of video as a methodological tool carries certain risks: it can trigger a 'playing to the camera', induce self-censorship as people feel they are 'talking on the record', and potentially put at risk those who spoke frankly on camera. But it can also be a very powerful tool to affect images and perceptions that one group has of another, or of the situation in their country of origin or another part of the country, and to open up more frank discussion about the difficult issues.
- The Israeli example is one of the tactical options to do what has become known as 'single identity' work before bringing together people across internal divides. This has also been part of the peace work in Northern Ireland. It can play a vital role in helping a group or sector of society define its own thinking and views on key issues and develop greater internal coherence on them, while also strengthening their capacities to engage better informed and more confidently in cross-sectoral processes. But this should not blind the peacebuilder to certain risks in this approach: there is a possibility that it actually leads to the hardliners' views coming to dominate the group as a whole.

Some additional reading – and viewing:

Building Bridges: IRDP Video about consultations with Rwandan diaspora. Kigali Institute for Research and Dialogue for Peace

Cheterian V. Et Iraq accouche d'une nouvelle génération de djihadistes. *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Déc. 2008

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Cronin, A. K. Negotiating with Groups that Use Terrorism. Lessons for policy-makers. Geneva, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

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Haass, R. & G. Mitchell 2007: Irish Lessons for Peace. Common Ground News Service (<http://www.commongroundnews.org/article.php?id=20901&lan=en&sid=1&sp=0>)

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Purcell, R., C. Dom & G. Ahobamuteze 2006: Rwanda Country Report. A Joint Evaluation of General Budget Support 1994-2004. Birmingham, Univ. of Birmingham, International Development Dept.

Rashid A. 2008: Descent into Chaos. The United States and the Failure of Nation-Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia. London, Viking Penguin

Thorne, K. 2006: "Terrorist" lists: A brief over view of lists and their sanctions in the US, UN and Europe. Geneva, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue

WSP International and the International Peace Academy 2004: Building Effective Partnerships. Improving the relationship between internal and external actors in post-conflict countries. Conference document. Geneva, Interpeace