



Foreword

Jannie Malan

Whenever we think about or discuss conflict, or train others for dealing with conflict, we unavoidably make use of terms which serve as convenient codes to communicate concepts, views or approaches. And as we communicate, we are inevitably busy selecting the most appropriate terms. In most cases we do this almost unconsciously. When speaking, we often make our choices of terms and words in split seconds, without even realising that we do it. When writing, we usually devote more time to decide on the most appropriate words or phrases to convey the meanings we wish to share.

The written texts in this issue prompted me to re-look at the semantics behind some of the familiar concepts in our field – especially the two well-known and commonly used sets with, respectively, ‘conflict’ and ‘peace’ as common components. More than fifty years ago, we first became used to ‘conflict prevention, conflict management and conflict resolution’. More recently, the peace-oriented set, ‘peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding’, has gained currency, especially since the publication of the United Nations General-Secretary’s Report, *An Agenda for Peace* (Boutros Ghali 1992:I–VI). When looking again at this landmark document, I found the first sentence in the section on ‘post-conflict peacebuilding’ very meaningful: ‘Peacemaking and peace-keeping operations, to be truly successful, must come to include comprehensive efforts to identify and support structures which will tend to consolidate peace and advance a sense of confidence and well-being among people’ (Boutros Ghali 1992:VI 55).

It was to the potentially great value of peacebuilding in a post-conflict context that the contents of these articles have turned my thoughts. I realised how much meaning can be communicated by the concept of ‘post-conflict peacebuilding’. It duly emphasises that the objective of peacebuilding is nothing less than the consolidation of peace and the advancement of well-being among people. But at the same time it reminds us that the context of peacebuilding is a situation that was disrupted by conflict but was then restored by termination of the conflict. It may also remind us that the initial provocation for many, if not most, conflicts seems to be the disruption of the well-being of people through unfairness or plain injustice. Where that is indeed the case, ‘justice-restoring’ could very well serve as a synonym for ‘conflict-resolution’.

With regard to ‘post-conflict peacebuilding’ then, the pertinent and important questions seem to be: How ‘post’ is the ‘post-’ in ‘post-conflict’? If not, why not? Is an injustice problem perhaps still unresolved? My introductory suggestion to our readers, then, is to bear such questions in mind. Four of the articles – which arrived without any call for papers on a specific topic – are on ‘post-’, and one is on ‘pre-’, while the book review is on ‘in-’.

Angela Ajodo-Adebanjoko’s article has the goal of ‘ending conflict’ in its title. It shows how conflicts since early times were rooted ‘in the protest against injustice’, and how recent conflicts are driven by ‘the quest for [just] resource control’. It emphasises that an experiment to solve the injustice problem by declaring amnesty only led to an ‘uneasy’ and short-lived peace. In Tsegai Ghebretkle’s article we find the argument that formal litigation can bring natural resource conflicts to a legal settlement, but not to a social closure – for which traditional methods are usually more appropriate. In the article of Michelle Nel and Vukile Ezrom Sibiya, post-conflict cases where there is an urgent need for retributive justice are discussed. After serious international crimes such as genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes, impunity cannot be tolerated and perpetrators have to be held accountable. In his article, Siphamandla Zondi explores reasons why the African Union’s approaches to post-conflict peacebuilding have largely

had limited success. His finding is that the ‘post-’ in ‘post-colonial’ has not thus far been decisive enough, and that the independence of African states has not yet brought about a liberation from colonialism. Remnants of coloniality have stubbornly remained embedded in ‘state, society and politics’. Then, since any ‘post-conflict’ situation can unexpectedly become the brewing ground for a next conflict, we have in Joseph Adebayo’s article a very interesting and meaningful ‘pre-conflict’ perspective – the conflict-preventing power of art. Finally, the book review is on a publication that examined the in-conflict identities of people, and found that after the conflict, the question of national identity remained unresolved.

With sincere thanks to our authors and peer reviewers, we are sending out this issue, trusting that it will provide significant ideas about *ending* conflict and *preventing* conflict. And that it will encourage further exploring of *injustice* as caused by superiority-tainted identities (superior *we*/inferior *they*), identity-based interests of a dominating group or the inequality-inflicting hegemony of a ruling party, and of *justice* as contextually oriented to retribution and/or conciliation and/or conflict prevention.

In my concluding sentence, I just wish to emphasise the phrase ‘comprehensive efforts’ in *Agenda*, and the concept of ‘collective approach’ that can be read in or between the lines of this issue.

Source referred to

Boutros Ghali, Boutros 1992. *An Agenda for Peace*. Available from: <<http://www.un-documents.net/a47-277.htm>> [Accessed 14 June 2017].