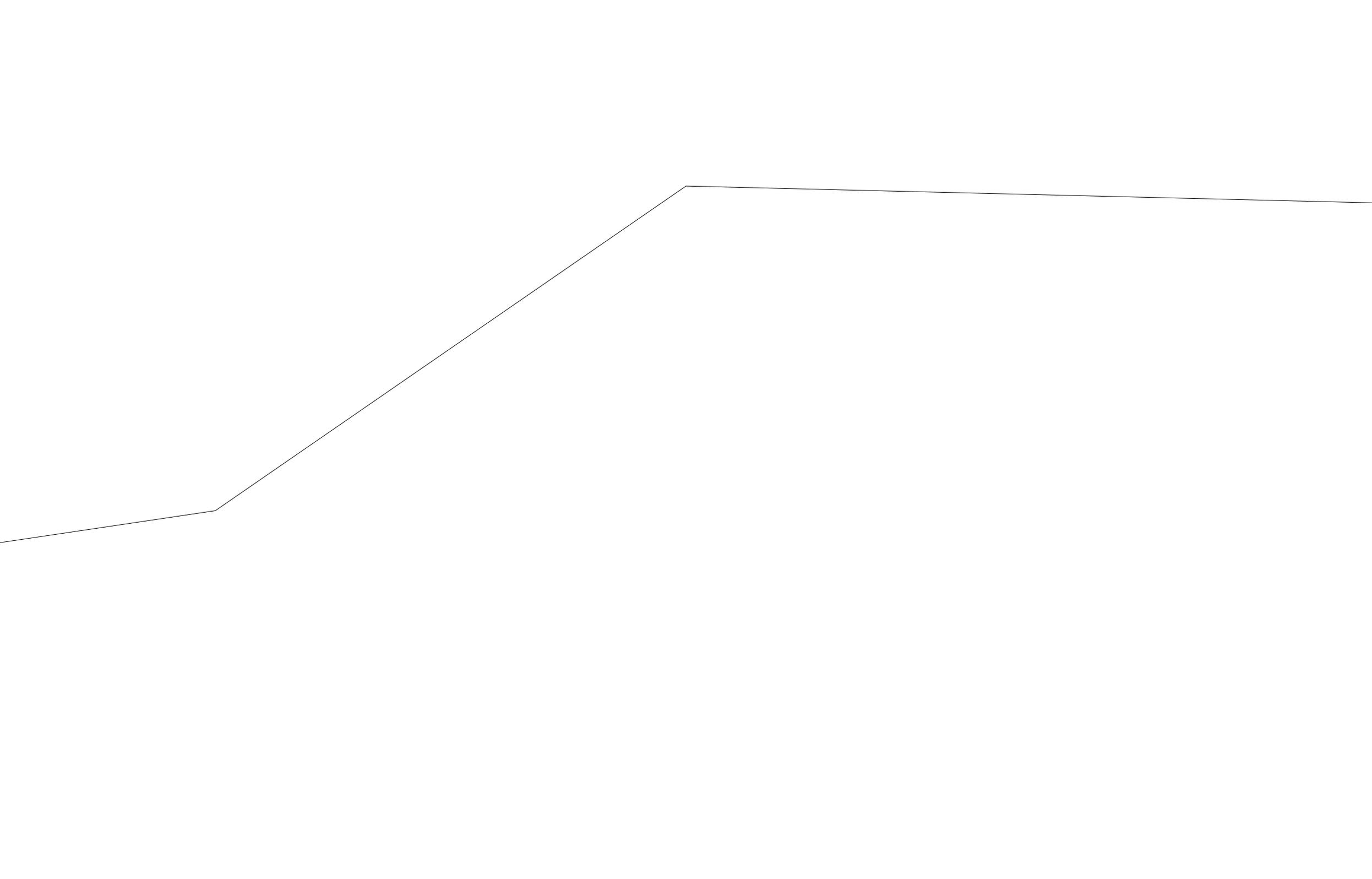


Creating  
spaces  
for  
dialogue

## A role for civil society

GPPAC Dialogue and Mediation Series  
Issue #1



# Colophon

## Creating Spaces for Dialogue: a Role for Civil Society

Dialogue and Mediation Series, Issue #1

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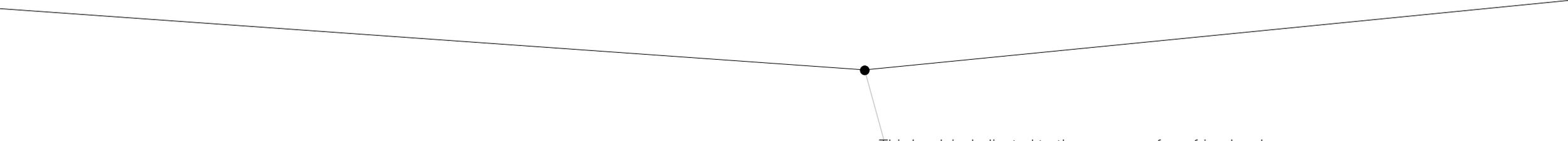


The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a network of civil society organisations working on conflict prevention and peacebuilding world-wide. Together, GPPAC members work to inform policy, improve practice and facilitate collaboration and action to prevent conflict and build sustainable peace. GPPAC is composed of civil society networks in fifteen regions, and brings together members from across the world in thematic working groups and projects. This allows us to link national, regional and global levels of action and learning.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the respective authors.

Creating  
Spaces  
for  
Dialogue

A role for civil society



This book is dedicated to the memory of our friend and colleague Dr. George Khutsishvili. His work as the Director of the International Center on Conflict and Negotiation and the Regional Representative for GPPAC in the Caucasus, revolved around his beloved Georgia, a country situated in a region with several complex conflicts.

George was a co-founder and a leading expert of GPPAC's Dialogue and Mediation Working Group. He contributed to this book as a co-editor and as the author describing a Russian-Georgian political experts' dialogue, which was an expression of his passion for the use of dialogue as a tool to prevent violence.

Working closely with George, we have been influenced by his enthusiasm for dialogue, his generosity in hearing concerns from all sides of a dispute and his support in developing robust conflict analysis. There will forever be an important voice missing when we come together to speak about dialogue and mediation, although the passion and wisdom he imparted will continue to be present in our work.

# Table of contents

United States

Cuba

Serbia

Kosovo

Georgia

Russia

Indonesia

**Foreword**  
Peter van Tuijl  
Page 08

**Introduction**  
Zahid Movlazedeh  
Page 10

**A challenging dialogue process:  
The Cuba-United States  
academic workshops (TACE)**  
Andrés Serbin and Ana Bourse  
Page 18

**The Istanbul Process and  
the problem of rebuilding  
Georgia-Russia relations**  
George Khutsishvili and  
Andrey Ryabov  
Page 44

**Lessons learned from dialogue  
work between Serbs and  
Albanians in Serbia and Kosovo**  
Steinar Bryn  
Page 58

**Mediation for grassroots  
reconciliation in Maluku,  
Indonesia**  
Ichsan Malik  
Page 88

**About  
the authors**  
Page 108

**List of  
abbreviations**  
Page 116

# Foreword

Peter van Tuijl

Preventing conflict means building relationships between people and communities so that they can talk about their problems, in order to prevent those problems from escalating into violence. Though it may seem like pushing in an open door, promoting talking instead of fighting continues to be difficult to achieve in practice. That is why dialogue with the intent to relieve tensions, remove prejudices, build trust and mediate grievances is such important work. Members of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), and civil society more broadly, are often at the forefront of creating these opportunities to talk. This publication presents four such stories.

We need more dialogue, because violence is becoming more diffused. There are fewer wars between states, but violence and

violent conflict are manifested increasingly across nations and regions, within large urban areas or in uninhabited, underdeveloped territories. Violence increasingly involves non-state armed groups, with a mix of motivations. The resulting confusion is hard to control within the purview of single nation-states. It needs new forms of networking, coalition-building and institutional development, and the involvement and collaboration of all actors, public or private, that are seriously committed to human security and human development.

Organising dialogue is a profession, it is not "just talking". If anything is made clear by the cases collected in this publication, it is how the devil is in every detail in a dialogue process: who participates, where and when to meet, how frequently, what will be discussed, in what sequence, do we meet in confidence or in public, who will facilitate the conversation, in what language, how do we formulate recommendations, addressed to whom, and conveyed in what way? There are many questions that need to be answered and all together they underline how meticulous the craft of fostering dialogue is.

I hope this publication will contribute to bringing out the true skill and delicacy of building effective dialogue by civil society. The effort deserves to be acknowledged at a time in which the accountability of civil society is increasingly framed in terms of tangible outcomes. Creating space for dialogue is one such outcome. It is essential to preventing violence.

Peter van Tuijl  
*Executive Director*  
GPPAC

# Introduction

Zahid Movlazadeh

The stories presented in this book are authored by those who initiated a conversation between communities and societies polarised and divided as a result of conflict. They carried out their efforts in challenging environments, with opposing sides convinced that their enemy was the epitome of injustice driven by the pursuit of power and domination. A careful conversation was needed to offer a way out of the trap of dehumanising “the other” and to change the aggressor-victim paradigm.

The key argument that cuts across all articles is that civil society has a particular added value in convening and facilitating dialogue processes to reach a point where derogatory images of wrongness no longer overshadow the needs of the opposing sides.

The book offers stories about four dialogue processes led by the members of the Dialogue and Mediation Working Group of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). They describe only some of the breadth of practical experiences retained by GPPAC in supporting dialogue processes around the world, documenting cases and observations that resulted from continuous exploration of dialogue as an approach.

Dialogue and Mediation has always been at the heart of GPPAC, with a significant number of member organisations employing dialogue and mediation as a means for conflict prevention, to decrease tensions during the conflict, or as a tool for reconciliation in a post-conflict context. To create a platform for learning and capacity building, and seeking to support the exchange of hands-on experiences among civil society dialogue practitioners, GPPAC brought together a number of its members for a Dialogue and Mediation Working Group.

This is the first issue of a series of publications that the GPPAC Dialogue and Mediation Working Group aims to produce. It remains subject to discussion how some of the lessons offered through the Dialogue and Mediation series can best be adapted to other contexts. As authors recount their experiences they pay particular attention to a number of questions, sharing their considerations on what they feel was important in designing a meaningful and productive dialogue process.

Is there such a thing as the most opportune moment to initiate a dialogue? Who should introduce the process? How is the process of participant selection approached, and what are the patterns of relationship transformation? Lastly, what follows once confidence and trust have been established?

The four dialogue processes presented in the book have been initiated under different conditions. The US-Cuba academic dialogue started around a time of softening in the relations between the countries in 2009. Raúl Castro stated his intention to normalise the relations with the US and Barack Obama reciprocated by committing to a fresh start. These developments seemed to offer a favourable opportunity for a dialogue. Conversely, the Russian-Georgian dialogue of political experts started immediately after the August 2008 war that interrupted all diplomatic relations between Moscow and Tbilisi. As two societies started to drift apart, a need emerged to initiate a first direct cross-border exchange of positions and opinions between the Georgian and Russian sides. The facilitators of the Christian-Muslim dialogue process in Maluku found themselves in similarly challenging circumstances. They started their efforts amid a high-intensity conflict, which led to a civil war segregating society along religious lines. As the government focused its attention on addressing political and economic aspects of the conflict, civil society offered a grassroots reconciliation that consciously addressed the divide along religious affiliations. The conditions were not particularly conducive to initiating a dialogue between Serbian and Albanian communities: the wounds of Yugoslavia's disintegration were still fresh, communications between ethnic groups were broken and travel across new borders and checkpoints was limited.

In all of the four processes, the individuals and organisations that introduced and supported the dialogue had something unique to offer. Having originated at the grassroots level, the dialogue and reconciliation in Maluku benefited from the facilitators' knowledge and understanding of local mechanisms for mediation ingrained in the traditional structures, values and language. The initiative to bring together Georgian and Russian political experts originated from within the context and was offered by the Tbilisi based International Centre for Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN) that had strong ties both with Georgian and Russian political experts. But questions related to which of the two sides initiates the dialogue, or how the neutrality of the process is ensured and sustained, made the first step very sensitive due to its politicised nature. The framework of GPPAC as a global network of civil society working on conflict prevention provided the politically neutral environment needed for the Russian and Georgian sides to engage with each other in a dialogue process. At the same time, both the US-Cuban dialogue, as well as the dialogue between Serbian and Albanian communities, were made possible in part due to having been initiated and organised by third parties. Building on its project, the Nansen Academy, based in Norway, convened groups from the Western Balkans for a joint analysis of Yugoslavia's break-up. This served as a first step on a long road consisting of more than 300 dialogue seminars. The key benefit that the Nansen Academy could offer right from the offset was their role as external facilitator offering space for a dialogue. A third party perceived by sides as trustworthy and impartial was needed to convene the US-Cuban dialogue as well. Having enjoyed trust and recognition as a credible institution, a member and a co-founder of the GPPAC network, La Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y

Sociales (CRIES) played the much-needed role of a third-party convener. CRIES's ongoing collaborations with academic centres and think tanks on the hemispheric level, including both Cuban and US research centres and civil society were a crucial factor for bringing the parties together.

Selecting and recruiting the dialogue participants played a vital role in shaping the dynamics of further processes and their consequent outcomes. Few could have predicted that four years after the start of the dialogue of Russian and Georgian independent political experts, some of the participants would assume key posts within the Georgian government, making use of the perspectives and understanding generated as part of the track 2 process to inform Georgia's official policies and steps with regard to mending ties with Russia. Throughout the years, the dialogue continuously expanded, engaging prominent media that would be instrumental in conveying conclusions and insights from the dialogue to both Russian and Georgian societies. Meanwhile, the US-Cuban dialogue started with a careful selection of those representatives of academic circles in both countries who had no institutional affiliation with their respective governments, but did have the agency to engage in direct consultations with decision-makers offering and testing suggestions deriving from their citizen diplomacy initiative. Additionally, the selection process served as a built-in confidence building mechanism, whereby both sides needed to approve of the participants of each dialogue seminar. For the Serbian-Albanian dialogue, recruiting participants proved to be nearly as difficult as facilitating the dialogue meetings. While people were drawn from diverse professional backgrounds, including lawyers, journalists, health professional and educators, the

challenge remained in selecting those whose institutional affiliations allowed introducing a change in their communities both politically and culturally. In that respect, the success of initial dialogue seminars encouraged further expansion to include individuals holding key positions within municipal administration. A different obstacle presented itself in recruiting dialogue participants in the Maluku context. During the peak of confrontation between Muslim and Christian communities, both sides saw peace and dialogue as an act of surrender to the other group thus betraying their own, which translated into hesitation to engage with the other side. It was the major achievement of facilitators to tailor the process creating a framework of reconciliation that built on culturally embedded references to common ties, kinship and most importantly to the traditional notion describing a state of affairs where there is no winner or loser in a conflict. The refinement of narratives acceptable to both sides subsequently allowed the facilitators to convene perpetrators and civilian victims.

Similar patterns of relationship transformation occurred during all four dialogues. The identification and recruiting of participants was also accompanied by a careful process of scoping the issues acceptable to all parties to shape the agenda of initial meetings. While refining the agenda served as a basic precondition to ensure participants' ownership, it also helped to create a conducive environment by focusing on less controversial issues at first. As the dialogue evolved further, the trust developing among the participants helped in revisiting clashing perceptions of conflict history, causes and consequences. These negotiated narratives would subsequently function as bridges allowing more deeply seated grievances and unaddressed concerns in

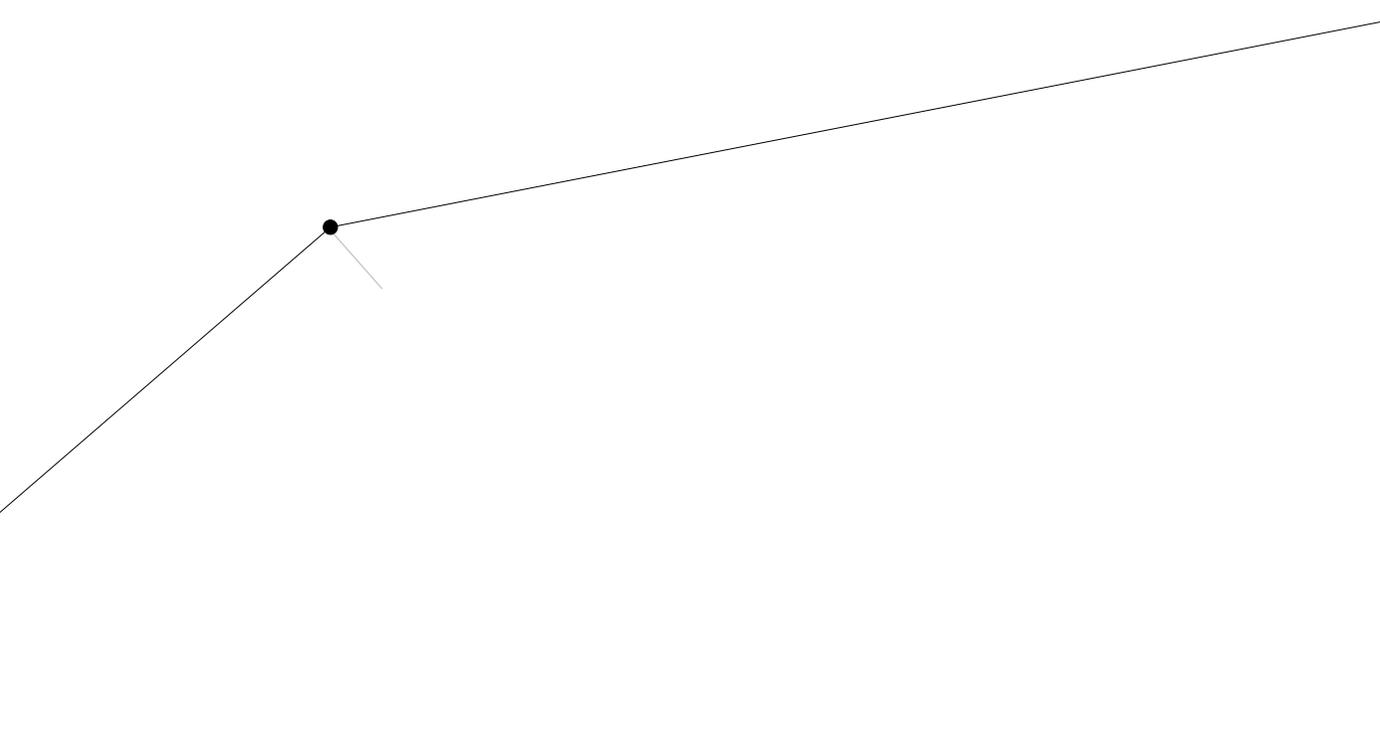
the relations between the sides to be approached. Importantly, however, all stories argue that while dialogue might have a self-sufficient function in transforming the relations and bridging the divides, for it to have a greater impact, a process cannot be sustained within itself and must be valorised through the action that follows.

In this manner, for the first time in the 50-year history of strained relations between Cuba and the US, a document was produced that presented policy recommendations jointly developed by Cuban and the US academia and former diplomats.

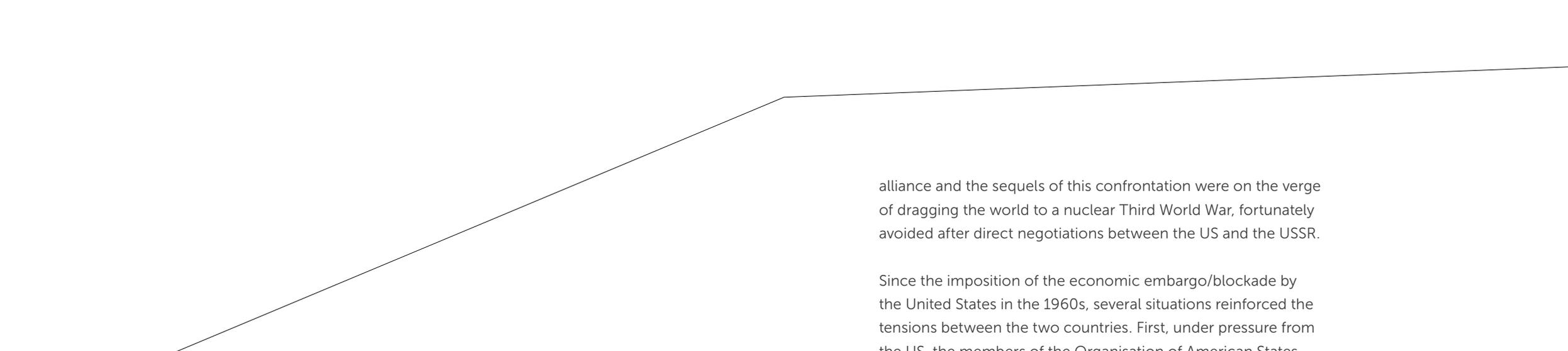
The dialogue participants continued by engaging their respective governments in Washington DC and Havana, advocating for the implementation of suggested policy priorities. This later transformed into a broader regional advocacy agenda, moving the bilateral issue to the multilateral arena. Likewise, the Georgian-Russian dialogue of political experts continuously produced policy recommendations on steps required to normalise the relations between the countries, channelling them domestically and to relevant policymakers in Europe and the US. Moreover, since the appointment of one of the former dialogue participants to the post of Georgia's Prime Minister's Special Representative for Relations with Russia, significant progress was observed, including the restoration of trade, transport and communications between the two countries. At the same time, while lobbying the elite was identified as one of the priorities for the follow up action to the Christian-Muslim dialogue in Maluku, the process also resulted in a number of peace campaigns in multiple cities of Indonesia and in Europe. The grassroots dialogue carried on further, setting up peace zones facilitating community-level cooperation on economic, health and other

social issues. 'Dialogue – reconciliation – integration' was the formula employed by the Serbian-Albanian dialogue, channelling the trust and energy generated over time towards the structural changes within societies. Dialogue leading to reconciliation is only a prerequisite to the integration of minority communities in Serbia and Kosovo - it may take generations, thus people-to-people dialogue must carry on.

We hope that you enjoy the stories that follow.



A challenging  
dialogue process:  
The Cuba-  
United-States  
academic  
workshops (TACE)



## Taking advantage of opportunities

During more than fifty years following the overthrow of the Batista regime and the victory of the revolutionary forces led by Fidel Castro in 1959, the United States and Cuba have been engaged in a tense and conflictive interaction, with crises and peaks of tension at different moments of their relationship. Since 1961, the US has adopted an official policy of diplomatic isolation and economic sanctions towards Cuba, including supporting a failed attempt by a paramilitary Cuban group to invade the island during the same year. Also in 1961, President Kennedy severed US relations with its neighbour through a series of Acts and enforcement measures, in response to Cuba's alignment with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which was perceived as the main threat to the Western world and to US interests. That alliance brought communism and Soviet presence close to the United States—90 miles from its coast—defying the superpower's containment doctrine in the Americas and threatening US security during the most difficult years of the Cold War. As illustrated by the October 1962 Missile Crisis, this

alliance and the sequels of this confrontation were on the verge of dragging the world to a nuclear Third World War, fortunately avoided after direct negotiations between the US and the USSR.

Since the imposition of the economic embargo/blockade by the United States in the 1960s, several situations reinforced the tensions between the two countries. First, under pressure from the US, the members of the Organisation of American States (OAS) expelled Cuba's revolutionary government from the organisation in 1962. Second, the US included its neighbour in the list of State Sponsors of Terrorism in the '80s, and passed the Baker Memorandum and the Helms-Burton and Torricelli laws that reinforced its embargo policies towards Cuba, aiming at a change of regime on the island. Meanwhile, Cuban immigrants and political exiles constituted a powerful political Cuban-American lobby group in the United States, which has influenced the position of various successive administrations, increasing existing restrictions over time. Therefore, as a Latin American analyst aptly put it, the bilateral conflict gradually became, within this context, an intermestic issue for the United States.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the above obstacles, throughout these years the two countries also negotiated and signed agreements. Since September 1977, offices of interests have been established in the capitals of the two countries. Occasionally a pragmatic approach has been adopted to solve specific problems and to cooperate on particular issues. Yet these ventures did not succeed in engendering trust or mutual respect. Consequently, the efforts were not sufficient to provide the basis for an ongoing dialogue that could lead to normal relations or to the cancellation of the embargo/blockade. Therefore, rapprochement times, generally

1 Wolf Grabendorf during a presentation at the workshop on "The multilateralization of Cuban-United States relations" organised by CRIES and held in Buenos Aires at the Argentine Council for International Relations (CARI, according to its Spanish acronym), on April 9 2013. See CRIES (2013) *Informe TACE-LAC*, CRIES: Buenos Aires, [www.cries.org](http://www.cries.org)

associated with Democrats in office, have repeatedly been derailed by new obstacles from both sides that have led to peaks of tension.

A window of opportunity opened for the improvement of US-Cuba bilateral relations in 2009 when Raúl Castro succeeded his brother Fidel Castro as President of Cuba and when Barack Obama was elected President of the United States.<sup>2</sup> During the Fifth Summit of the Americas<sup>3</sup> President Obama publicly committed himself to look for a fresh start in the relations with Latin America, while President Raúl Castro reiterated Cuba's intent to normalise its relations with the United States and to start a dialogue with the new administration to improve the bilateral relations.

Notably, when President Raúl Castro and Barack Obama came to power, both emphasised that respectful engagement must form the basis of peaceful international relations. Despite the initial enthusiasm, other internal and external priorities slowed down the pace of the expected changes. However, Obama's second term in the Oval Office opened new opportunities for improved relations.

There is growing recognition of the inefficiency and possible failure of the measures taken by the US towards Cuba during the past 50 years, as well as their humanitarian consequences. Attempts to foster change in the current Cuban regime have not been successful. Cubans have reacted reluctantly to any foreign intervention in their internal affairs, and have started a process of economic change on their own under the umbrella of the current "*proceso de actualización económica*".<sup>4</sup> Additionally, Cuba has managed to break international isolation through a proactive foreign policy and through being reincorporated in the Latin

American and Caribbean community.<sup>5</sup> American business groups are beginning to feel the missed trade opportunities. Agricultural and entrepreneurial lobbies are pressuring for an easing of the embargo/blockade as they are beaten out by European Union, Latin American and Canadian companies.

At the same time, the emergence of different interests among younger generations of Cuban-Americans is potentially channelling new perspectives on the relationship between the two countries. This could contribute to slowly eroding the current lobbying power of the Cuban-Americans and their influence on US foreign policy towards Cuba, which still reflects Cold War thinking.

With the end of the East-West confrontation, and the changes undergone by the international system, it is difficult to understand the reasons for the persistence of the embargo/blockade and the lack of normal diplomatic relations between Cuba and the US. Regarding the multilateral dynamics in the Americas, the changing leadership in both the US and Cuba has positively affected Latin America and the Caribbean. Yet the Inter-American system has not been able to overcome the bilateral conflict between Cuba and the US. Nevertheless, a shift in attitude within the OAS is evident. Latin American pressure on the US rescinded Cuba's government expulsion from the OAS in June 2009, although the country has not yet returned to the organisation. However, since the early '90s, Cuba has been attending most of the LAC regional Summits and has recently become a full member of the Latin American and Caribbean Community of Nations (CELAC), chairing the organisation from 2012 to 2013, and hosting a Summit of CELAC presidents and heads of state in January 2013 in Havana.

2 Luis Fernando Ayerbe and others, '¿Obama y América Latina: Hacia una nueva relación?', in *Pensamiento Propio*, Special Edition 31 (2010).

3 Fifth Summit of the Americas; held in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, from 17-19 April 2009.

4 Andrés Serbin, 'Cuba: A atualização do modelo econômico e a política externa em um mundo multipolar', in *Política Externa*, 21 (2013), 177-208.

5 Andrés Serbin, 'Círculos concéntricos: la política exterior de Cuba en un mundo multipolar', in Luis Fernando Ayerbe (ed.) *Cuba, Estados Unidos y América Latina frente a los desafíos hemisféricos*, CRIES: Buenos Aires, 2011.

Within this context, and following conversations with academics from Cuba and the US as well as international experts on dialogue facilitation, the Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research (CRIES) decided to launch an academic bilateral dialogue in 2009. CRIES is a Latin American and Caribbean independent think tank, a network of NGOs and research centres, as well as the founding member of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). Since its establishment in 1982, CRIES has enjoyed good relations and developed collaborative projects with Latin American and US universities, NGOs and think tanks, including Cuban research centres and civil society organisations. Indeed, CRIES was in a good position as a regional convener.

Lessons learned and best practices can be drawn from the developments along the last four years and can be shared with those dialogue practitioners and organisations that, like CRIES, intend to convene similar processes and are willing to learn from the exchange of experiences in order to improve their practice in the field of democratic dialogue<sup>6</sup> and citizens' diplomacy.<sup>7</sup>

## A brief history of the TACE initiative

In 2008, after a workshop in São Paulo, Brazil, a few experts came together and suggested initiating a dialogue process between the two countries, with CRIES as its convener, facilitator and coordinator. One year later, the undertaking became a reality, with the participation of both the American University (United States) and Havana University (Cuba) as co-coordinators of a

citizens' diplomacy process under the umbrella of the Cuba-United States Academic Workshops (TACE, for its acronym in Spanish: Taller Académico Cuba-EEUU).

After a year of preparation TACE finally came to life in mid-June 2009. The first event was a workshop and a conference on hemispheric affairs held at the Universidade Estadual de São Paulo (UNESP) in Brazil. It was attended by various well-known academics and experts in foreign policy, most of them with past diplomatic or government experience.

CRIES, in its role as convener, has had the permanent responsibility to enable safe and politically neutral spaces for the interaction between the two parties to ensure that decisions were reached by consensus, and that the Chatham House Rule applied to the discussions and exchanges during the whole process. These commitments made by CRIES set the basis for participants to explore common ground, to identify shared interests and develop new and innovative approaches to improve the relationship between both governments. These conditions also addressed the fear of being singled out in the media or by group members for what was said inside the room or in informal conversations.

Though at a later stage, CRIES has served as an effective platform for channelling the advocacy and outreach efforts, bringing recommendations and proposing viable options to relevant policy arenas especially at international and regional levels. In its role as an overall coordinator, CRIES has worked throughout the whole initiative with two national coordinators, one from each side of the conflict divide. The aim of the cooperation was to set the joint agenda of both the process as well as each event, to

6 *Practical Guide on Democratic Dialogue* (CRIES, UNDP, OAS, IDEA, July 2013).

7 Milagros Martínez Reinoso, 'Cuba y Estados Unidos: Entre la oportunidad y los desafíos de la diplomacia académica', in *Pensamiento Proprio*, 34 (2011), 29–41; Andrés Serbin, 'Diálogo académico y diplomacia ciudadana en las Américas', in *Pensamiento Proprio*, 34 (2011), 7–14.

develop criteria to select participants, to decide on the invitation of experts whenever input was needed on a specific topic, and to conduct monitoring tasks. Consequently, this has resulted in a positive experience of sharing responsibility, which has also stimulated ownership in participants.

The first phase of the dialogue was developed through meetings outside Cuba and the United States. However, once consensus was reached around several sets of recommendations in January 2012, meetings were held both in Havana and in Washington D.C. in order to make a first preliminary presentation of the results of the dialogue to officials and different audiences in both countries. These developments were accompanied by a low visibility strategy during the activities at the beginning, and a gradual increase in public outreach when trust was built within the group.

Four years after the first workshop in São Paulo, the participants from both countries, including well-known academics and experts in foreign policy predominantly with past diplomatic or government experience, were able to overcome mutual stereotyping and build trust. This allowed identifying avenues towards cooperation that could help improve, or, in the best case scenario, normalise the relations between the United States and Cuba.

As a result of the collective effort, and with the help of a facilitation team, a compendium of recommendations to both governments has been published and presented publicly and at official levels in the period between January 2012 and June 2013. The recommendations tackle the five priority areas of the bilateral agenda: Academic, Scientific and Cultural Engagement; Freedom to Travel; International Commerce and Development; Terrorism

and Security Issues; and Environment.<sup>8</sup> This policy document is the result of the consensus built along the initiative and aims at being a useful tool for advocacy and lobbying purposes in the coming years. The policy document is expected to help foster peaceful, respectful and constructive interactions between the two neighbours.

The final stage of the bilateral academic dialogue closed in June 2013 with a formal presentation of the document containing recommendations for cooperation in areas of mutual interest. The recommendations were presented in Washington D.C. to the Cuban Office of Interests in the United States, to the State Department and at a formal panel at the Latin American Studies Association (LASA) congress. Previously, in February 2013 similar presentations were made to the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the academic community in Havana.

New windows of opportunity have opened for improving bilateral relations given the re-election of President Obama for the period of four years and the fact that a number of recommendations included in the TACE agenda have currently gained momentum. Simultaneously, TACE participants are committed to advocating for the implementation of the recommendations suggested by the group.

Since April 2013 a new phase of the project was launched in Buenos Aires, Argentina, aimed at spreading the results among Latin American and Caribbean decision-makers and academics, in order to move the bilateral issue to a multilateral arena. The reason behind this shift is two-fold. Firstly, as the TACE group developed ownership of the initiative and felt confident to organise activities

<sup>8</sup> 'Opportunities for US-Cuban Relations: Proposals for Cooperation in Areas of Mutual Interests' (CRIES, 2012).

and to lobby both governments for the implementation of the recommendations, it was time for CRIES, as the convener, to think of an exit strategy of the bilateral dialogue, that would, nonetheless, give continuity to its support to the process based on a re-definition of its role. Secondly, the coordinators of the process agreed that a hemispheric approach to the Cuba-US issue could be crucial for improving the bilateral relations. Therefore, CRIES, as a regional player, undertook the challenge to facilitate advocacy strategies to influence, through Latin American and the Caribbean counterparts and governments, the US and Cuban foreign policy-making processes in the coming years

## The TACE process as a citizens' diplomacy initiative

The Cuban-US Academic Workshop has been based on a widely tested version of what is generally known as "citizens' diplomacy".<sup>9</sup> These kinds of initiatives are perceived as one of a few opportunities for non-official communication between the parties from across the conflict divide. Through a series of workshops guided by professional facilitators, participants search for a common basis on which the two parties, as "partners in conflict",<sup>10</sup> can engage with each other constructively, so that, over time, success builds on success in order to establish a positive relationship and to influence, eventually, the relationship of the two governments.

The first step of citizens' diplomacy is to identify the right political conditions for initiating those processes. In the case of

TACE, the window of opportunity clearly appeared when tensions between the two countries were low and the political conditions, with political changes on both sides, were ripe for starting the process. Previous stages of the bilateral relations would have made it very difficult to initiate a citizens' diplomacy process because of the existing tensions and the weight of the so called "intermestic" character of the issue due to the influence of the Cuban-American community on US politics. Consequently, since the beginning, one of the established rules of TACE has been not to involve members of the Cuban-American communities and to keep the initiative as inter-state or inter-society as possible.

It is worth noting that citizens' diplomacy efforts differ from back channel negotiations, which involve representatives of the respective governments. In contrast, the participants in the citizens' diplomacy workshops have no official responsibilities and are not able to commit to anything or speak on behalf of their governments. Usually all the participants are based in an academic setting such as a university or research centre and have no government positions while participating but may have regular consultations with their governments without holding official positions. The participants usually have access to decision-makers with whom they could discuss innovative and realistic suggestions. They also engage in discussing issues they have selected and categorised in terms of difficulties they expect their governments would have in reaching an accommodation on a particular issue.

In the specific case of the TACE dialogue process, the initiative was designed to find solutions that fall outside the box of prior approaches. It was not the first time Cubans and North Americans

9 'Opportunities for US-Cuban Relations: Proposals for Cooperation in Areas of Mutual Interests'.

10 Edward Kaufman, 'Talleres innovadores para la transformación de conflictos', in *Construcción de paz y diplomacia ciudadana en América Latina y el Caribe*, ed. by Andrés Serbin (Buenos Aires: Icaria Editorial, 2008).

tried to find ways to sustain a non-hostile interaction in the search for solutions to their bilateral issues. In fact, before starting the TACE process, there was a long record of failed attempts to establish a dialogue process, particularly on a governmental level, which made the new efforts seem much more difficult.

Still, there were some distinctive features of the TACE process that provided reason to expect that this time the effort would bear fruit. First, the workshop was initiated and organised by a third party, a Latin American non-governmental network and think tank (CRIES) that was well-respected in both countries. Second, it involved a group of Cubans and North Americans some of whom had governmental experience or who had worked closely with government officials in the past. Third, an expert team facilitated the workshop. The team had a clear purpose, flexibility to adapt and a well-defined methodology. Fourth, the workshop anticipated a four-year period, which ensured sustainability. Fifth, it encouraged and enabled the participants to focus on solutions that by their nature contributed to a process of building confidence and trust among themselves and between the countries. Last, but very important in this specific case, the workshops were undertaken with the tacit approval of key officials in each government who were kept informed about progress.

The focused goal of the TACE process has been to develop trust and to collectively produce a series of recommendations. The recommendations were to shed light on how to advance cooperation in areas of mutual interest that could be a useful tool to influence decision-makers in both countries on issues of foreign policy, especially related to the bilateral agenda.

The first stage of the citizens' diplomacy initiative began in 2008, with a preparatory process of political exploratory interviews in both countries and the coordination of goals and expected outcomes of the programme with National Co-coordinators from the American University and the University of Havana. They were key in the process of selecting and inviting the group members from both countries, in coordinating the overall process together with the CRIES team and in facilitating inter-group communication.

The participants of the workshops were selected according to a set of criteria. Their capacities, area of expertise and knowledge, their political reach as well as representation among the academic and political community served as factors used in the selection process. As the list of potential participants from one country needed to be approved by the other side, the selection process acted as a trust building exercise. Such a selection process also guaranteed the consensus on the overall permanent members of the group. For example, the whole group was consulted if experts in particular fields were required to be invited to a particular workshop to address a specific issue.

The agenda was set from the beginning with the participation of the entire TACE group. During the first plenary meeting in São Paulo each side was to present a list of priority bilateral issues. Such a list was necessary to find the common ground upon which to base further discussion. At the first meeting each side presented 10 issues, but the discussion led to the identification of a final list of 23 issues, which were categorised. From this list were chosen those issues that the group saw as not having been addressed by the governments and that fell within the scope of the capacities and skills of the TACE group.

Since the São Paulo meeting in 2009, the workshops were held in locations outside Cuba and the United States with the idea of preserving the dialogue from any external interference in a neutral setting, preferably with a historically and politically symbolic meaning. The first day of the São Paulo workshop consisted of an academic symposium on hemispheric issues hosted by UNESP, as a way of showing international concern and political will to improve the bilateral relationship, which also affected the multilateral regional dynamics. The keynote speaker at the symposium was Professor Marco Aurelio García, at the time Special Advisor on International Affairs to Brazilian President Ignacio “Lula” da Silva, as Brazil’s role as regional player was also considered crucial for the process. This activity served as an icebreaker for the following TACE workshops because the symposium provided a space for initial exchanges among the American and Cuban participants, which were not necessarily directed at each other. It also enabled them to develop their ideas about topics of importance for both countries in a hemispheric context, and to begin non-confrontational discussions about their different perceptions.

After the symposium, the first closed TACE sessions were held. Seven participants from Cuba and five from the United States, along with a team of trained facilitators from Argentina, participated in the workshop. By the end of the first experience, participants expressed unanimous praise for the exercise and urged that the project should be continued in order to work on changing the legacy of distrust, and to maintain dialogue on the key points to which the group could contribute collectively as a means to improve the bilateral relationship. Thus they agreed to form working groups organised around the four broad thematic

categories of issues they had raised: (1) issues on which some agreement or ongoing collaboration between the two countries existed; (2) topics on which collaboration might seem possible in the near future; (3) economic topics; (4) issues mainly requiring unilateral action by one of the countries and/or that were sensitive to one or both.

In May 2010, a coordination meeting with 4 Cuban and 3 American delegates took place in the Ciudad del Saber,<sup>11</sup> in Panama. Representatives from Cuba and the United States presented draft documents on the topics selected during the TACE I (Environment and Bilateral Trade) and took a number of decisions on the overall dialogue process.

After the initial meeting in Brazil in 2009 and the workshop held in Panama in May 2010, a new meeting took place in the city of Buenos Aires at the Argentine Council for International Relations (CARI) at the end of July 2010. A few months later, the Toronto workshop was held before the opening session of the LASA Congress, from 2 October until 4 October 2010.

As for the implementation of the activities, the above workshops were preceded or linked to by academic conferences, which addressed issues of multilateralism, prevention of violent and/or armed conflict and citizens’ diplomacy in the Americas.

The workshop held in Buenos Aires in July had a threefold objective: (1) to work on recommendations based on the issues that were addressed in previous meetings (Bilateral Trade and Environmental Cooperation); (2) to incorporate new topics into the agenda of the process (Academic Exchange and Tourism as a

<sup>11</sup> <http://ciudadelsaber.org/>

sub-item under Bilateral Trade); and (3) to experience new group facilitation dynamics that may contribute to a shift of the general process resulting in a more prolific generation of proposals and consensus for the implementation of an Action Plan and joint advocacy strategies.

The following meeting in Toronto, Canada, in October 2010, was held just before the beginning of the Latin American Studies Association Congress (LASA). The work there was based on the agreements reached in Buenos Aires so that the extended TACE team could later resume work on the suggestions incorporated into the document with Preliminary Recommendations on the topics covered: Natural Disasters and Environmental Cooperation, Bilateral Trade, Tourism and Academic Exchange. Moreover, the workshop touched upon two new topics: Cultural Exchange and Terrorism. The group examined these new topics in an attempt to come up with ideas aimed at solving differences and promoting cooperation in those fields. Experts on specific issues were invited to contribute to the workshop with their insights. Participants proposed to agree on certain innovative ideas to start preparing an Action Plan for the next stage of the process.

The Canada meeting marked the outset of a consolidation stage for the group and the dialogue process. The exercises, dynamics and exchange of opinions and views on the different topics helped participants get rid of their biases and prejudices throughout the meetings, which helped to come up with out-of-the-box ideas, but also to reach a new consensus on the priorities. The participants unanimously agreed that this meeting represented a qualitative breakthrough.

A new plenary workshop took place in Mexico City in July 2011, preceded by a symposium on hemispheric affairs. Throughout the workshop, the participants presented on the latest political and economic developments in both countries and developed in-depth discussions on the following specific issues: Terrorism, Cuba's relationship with International Financial Institutions, and Subversion. There were also sessions aimed at going through the recommendations that were worked on in the Toronto meeting to polish their wording, and produce new ideas for collaboration in the issues addressed. The list of recommendations was also re-categorised and the suggestions were prioritised as well as divided in short and long-term implementation clusters. Finally, the work was oriented towards finding preliminary common ground for visibility and advocacy actions for the next meeting to take place in Havana, in January 2012.

The Mexico meeting prepared the ground for the implementation of the first activity of the TACE initiative in Cuba, which was a turning point for the process.

A few months after the event in Mexico, issue 34<sup>12</sup> of *Pensamiento Propio* was published. It was a special issue of CRIES' academic journal on "Academic Dialogue and Citizens' Diplomacy in the Americas", which included joint papers written by TACE participants, research and analysis, as well as comments on different aspects of specific topics addressed during the process which were relevant to the bilateral agenda. This publication was an important sign of the collaboration developed by group members, who decided to work together on the preparation of articles and comments. This meant that there was a common understanding of the problem being addressed, and that the

12 Download or read online at <http://www.cries.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/34.pdf>

participants were able to present different perspectives, reaching agreement on the final suggestions on possible policy formulation.

In January 2012, the *Fundación Antonio Nuñez Jiménez del Hombre y la Naturaleza*, a Cuban environmental research centre, served as host to the Havana workshop. This was the first time that the TACE process moved to one of the constituent countries. The agenda included not only working sessions for the group to finalise recommendations on the bilateral topics addressed so far, but also meetings with high authorities of the Cuban Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MINREX), the Ministry of Culture, the President of the National Assembly (ANPP). A dinner with a well-known Cuban writer who chaired the *Unión Nacional de Escritores y Autores de Cuba (National Union of Writers, UNEAC)*, a meeting with a member of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party, as well as a working session with a select group of Cuban economists were also part of the programme. Those meetings represented a golden opportunity to introduce the whole TACE group to Cuban governmental representatives and to exchange questions and reflections related to internal and foreign affairs.

On 21 May 2012, a presentation of the TACE process and the preliminary recommendations were held at the Brookings Institution (BI) in Washington D.C. Representatives from US research centres, congressional staff, experts and advisers were invited to this first event organised in the United States, under the title "Overcoming Obstacles to US-Cuba dialogue". The BI's event was well attended with more than a hundred people from different backgrounds being present. The programme included presentations by Theodore Piccone (BI), Philip Brenner (AU), Sally Shelton-Colby (AU), Jorge Mario Sánchez Egozcue (CEEC/ University of Havana) and Andrés

Serbin (CRIES coordinator of the project). The outcome of this activity was highly positive in terms of media coverage, television interviews with different TACE speakers, the level of participation and the interest that the process raised in the audience. Additionally, it had a significant impact in Cuba, including positive remarks on TACE by government officials and media including news releases, TV, Granma newspaper and radio broadcasts.

The preliminary set of recommendations presented at BI was circulated and disseminated in both countries and received good feedback from different sectors.

Finally, during the week of the 28th to the 31st of May of 2013 in Washington D.C., the first phase of the Cuba-United States Academic Workshops ended with the public presentation of the document *Opportunities for US-Cuban Relations: Proposals for Cooperation in Areas of Mutual Interest*.<sup>13</sup> This document was the tangible result of a four-year effort and went public during a week filled with activities around the publication, for both CRIES and the members of the TACE group present in Washington, which ranged from academic discussions to meetings with high level regional and US officials. As part of the former, Armando Fernández from the *Fundación Nuñez Jiménez* from Cuba and Andrés Serbin from CRIES chaired a panel at the LASA Conference with an attendance of over 130 people. During the panel the most relevant recommendations of the document were presented to the audience. Phil Brenner of the American University and Jorge Mario Sánchez of the University of Havana were the moderators of the panel, and comments on the document were made by Professor Jorge Domínguez from Harvard University. Ambassadors Anthony Quainton and Carlos Alzugaray, former US Under-secretaries of State, Richard Feinberg

13 Opportunities for US-Cuban Relations: Proposals for Cooperation in Areas of Mutual Interests'.

and Ted Piccone, and Professor Meg Crahan were the main presenters at the panel. The presentations and the comments were followed by a fruitful debate among the audience and the panel members. The success of the panel and the presentation of the document were reflected in a series of interviews by Washington and Cuban media in the following days. It is important to mention that among the issues highlighted during the interventions, was the fact that this was the first joint document of recommendations that has been elaborated by academia and former diplomats from both countries in over fifty years, and that these recommendations were addressed at the governments of each of the two countries.

Finally, as part of the advocacy strategy, the President of CRIES, Dr. Andrés Serbin, was received by Ambassador José Miguel Insulza, the Secretary General of the OAS. It was a golden opportunity to deliver a copy of the document with the request for it to be considered within the OAS, which was appreciated by the inter-governmental representative. On the same day, a reception took place in the Office of Interests of Cuba in Washington. During the reception a copy of the document was presented to Ambassador José R. Cabañas, Chief of the Section of Cuban Interests. Three days later, a TACE delegation was received by the United States Department of State. The official representatives attending the meeting included, among others, Ambassador Lilian Ayalde, in charge of Caribbean and Cuban Affairs; the coordinator for Cuban Affairs, Ray McGratch, and Cuban Affairs Advisor, Dan Erickson. During this meeting the TACE delegation presented copies of the document and further explained the reach of the recommendations included in it. Further TACE activities are expected in the future, focusing on

dissemination and debate among decision-makers, academia and civil society representatives in the hemisphere through a series of events, presentations, and advocacy strategies that will take place in different cities of the region, starting in 2013, and moving from a bilateral approach to the multilateral arena.

## **Lessons learned and final reflections**

Due to the overall goals of the TACE process, in addition to the concrete products and changes it has generated during the four years of the undertaking, the process outcomes are also expected to have a broader impact in the medium- and long-term period. At the same time, lessons have been learned from the process that might be useful to share.

Firstly, while the process was not linear, the initiative progressed in a sustained manner since its inception and clear progress was made in different dimensions during each meeting.

After the initial workshops in which trust was built among the participants and issues to be addressed were clearly identified, a set of policy suggestions was developed, with special emphasis placed on the planning of advocacy and outreach strategies. Additionally, participants undertook individual and group commitments to write articles and op-eds, to implement and to follow-up on some of the ideas developed, operationalising the more general recommendations into viable policy proposals. In time, and on the initiative of academics and civil society, these policy proposals would encourage the action and collaboration of both governments.

Secondly, as the programme developed, there was an evident need to maintain both the General Coordinator and the National Coordinators, as it was up to them to encourage work and oversee compliance with the commitments undertaken in the period between one workshop and the other. The good relationship among the Coordinators positively impacted the sustainability of the process and the positive working atmosphere during the activities. The relationship and communication also favoured the agenda setting process throughout the initiative, and allowed for consistency and clarity in the messages sent both to the group and external actors.

Third, it became evident that the core group took ownership of the project. The workshop in Havana, as well as the events at the Brookings Institution and LASA were clear indicators of the ownership that the participants from both countries had taken over the project. As a consolidated group, they identified the need to organise a series of events in their respective countries. They showed engagement with the process by suggesting new activities, thoughtful reflections on how to move the initiative forward, and introducing themselves as a cohesive TACE group during the Brookings Institution and LASA presentations and side meetings with political and cultural representatives in Cuba and the US.

It was essential to guarantee the sustainability of the initiative, as any impasse could discourage participation or undermine interest in the process or its credibility. In this regard, the commitment of the donors, the Ford Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, among others, was crucial.

Fourth, the participants managed to build trust among themselves and to find a common ground on which to build

concrete suggestions and policy options. This has led them to volunteer to write joint articles and op-eds on the topics of interest. Trust in the results of their work led participants to agree on specific outreach rules to progressively make visible the outputs of the process.

With regard to the visibility component of the initiative, it went through incremental steps. At first, due to political sensitivity, the TACE group decided to maintain a low public profile, only sharing documents with those stakeholders that were directly engaged. Over time they raised the profile by fostering collective undertakings by publishing some documents in *Pensamiento Propio* and presenting the TACE project, a first draft of the recommendations at the Brookings Institution, and the final recommendations in Washington D.C., in May 2013. All the above actions represented remarkable steps in the gradual public outreach and advocacy strategies previously agreed upon by the group. These actions also helped to tackle other crucial obstacles that would have differed from the original goals of the process, including the potential for political instrumentalisation, or being taken up by external stakeholders' political agendas.

Fifth, the incorporation of experts to address topics requiring specialised knowledge added value to the workshops. Although the members of the project's core group were experts or scholars from different research fields, they invited specialists on specific matters to build suggestions and proposals on a sounder knowledge base. Currently, a mid-term evaluation based on qualitative techniques is being conducted. The evaluation is expected to serve as a learning tool for the group, in order to reflect on the most significant changes and achievements that have occurred so far,

directly or indirectly inspired by the TACE initiative. If necessary, it will also allow adjustments to be made to the follow-up of the project and its objectives in the coming years. Furthermore, the evaluation is not only a reflection exercise for the group, but it will also contribute with facts and important information for other stakeholders, mainly donors, on the outcomes of the programme. The outputs inherent to the process could be used as well to document stories and lessons learned that the group could allow to be disseminated on the website, in newsletters or in a collective volume, as a way of sharing their experience with others, and potentially as an inspiration for similar undertakings.

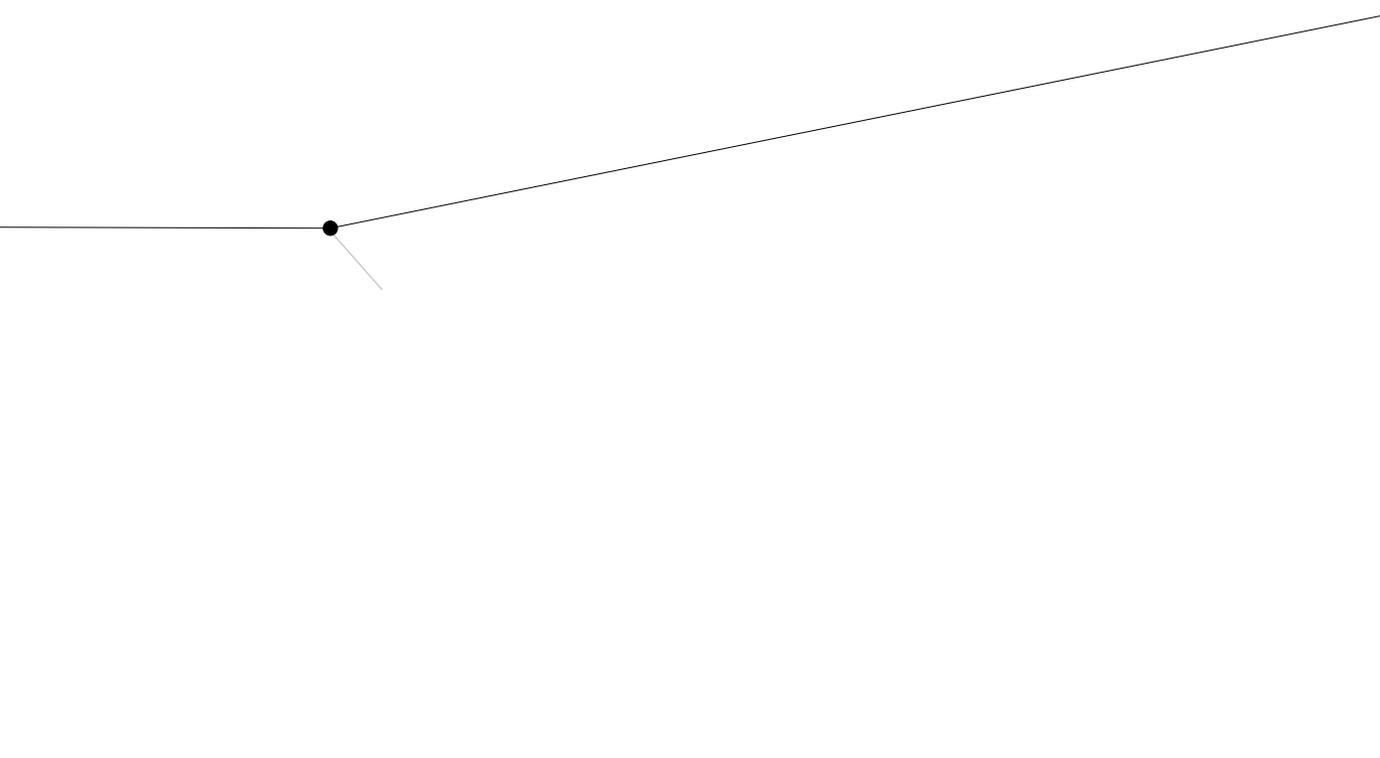
It must be noted that both Cuban and North American representatives were aware of the historic significance of certain developments taking place in both countries, and thus saw this situation as an opportunity to encourage change in the current status of Cuba-United States relations. The group unanimously acknowledged the need and the urgency of that transformation. It is for that reason that they view the TACE initiative as a one-of-a-kind opportunity to channel their expertise and knowledge and translate them into concrete ideas for action.

Finally, it should be noted that most of the current political events in terms of the bilateral relations between Cuba and the United States and the multilateral relations on the hemispheric level are beginning to assimilate some of the recommendations of the TACE project. This is not only a reflection of the success of the citizens' diplomacy process in providing some new insights to a situation of conflict and tension through unofficial dialogue, but mostly the adequacy of the timing and the political opportunity chosen by the TACE participants in starting and developing the

process in the expectation of influencing a 50 year situation of conflict. Citizens' diplomacy cannot substitute official, government diplomacy in solving confrontations, but can encourage and support the actions of the heavy traditional bureaucracy towards an improvement of relations and the overcoming of tensions.

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The Istanbul  
Process and  
the problem  
of rebuilding  
Georgia-Russia  
relations



## **The Istanbul Process: a dialogue of Georgian and Russian political experts**

Soon after the five-day war that broke out in 2008 with disastrous consequences for Georgia, in a political context averse to such initiatives, the idea of an unbiased dialogue between high-profile independent experts of Russia and Georgia emerged.

The goal of the initiative was to find out how Georgia and Russia

came to find themselves in the present situation, how we could overcome it, and what potential scenarios we should expect in short-, medium- and long-term perspectives. Consultations began between the experts. The expert dialogue was to result in joint recommendations to the political leadership of both countries. The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) readily supported the initiative of the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation (ICCN), which leads the regional network of GPPAC in the Caucasus, in developing such a dialogue. As it was impossible to conduct joint meetings of the experts either in Russia or in Georgia, Istanbul was selected as a neutral and opportune place for communications. The first meeting was held in early November 2008 and was followed by a total of nine meetings. The participants went on to fill the key positions in parliament and the government of Georgia after the change of power in October 2012. Later the entire endeavour was named the Istanbul Process, although meetings were also held in the USA and in Europe. The ICCN endeavour has entailed other initiatives and projects of the Georgian NGOs and expert groups, yet even now the Istanbul Process is known as the most famous, long-lived and continuous process of the Russia-Georgia expert dialogue.

The Istanbul Process commenced in the post-war situation when, of course, nobody could guarantee its sustainability. In the absence of diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia in the autumn of 2008, and in the context of information warfare, direct communication between the two countries and contacts at the level of institutions and organisations were interrupted. Importantly, the two countries on either side of the Caucasus Mountains lacked information of the current events of the other side.

In this context the project boiled down to solving a task which seemed simple at first sight but which was complex in terms of performance. As conveners of the dialogue, we needed to find representatives of civil society, such as political experts, analytical journalists and NGO activists, who would be interested in rebuilding normal relations between our countries. Potential participants would have to be ready for a dialogue seeking to understand what really occurred in the Georgia-Russia relations and how it could have happened. The aim was also to try to make suggestions towards re-establishing the relations between the two countries and people.

Although the first meetings were held in an open and confidential atmosphere, tension was still in the air, especially during the first meeting in November 2008. It was obvious that the consequences of the August conflict were not yet fully understood, the international situation around Russia-Georgia relations was highly strung, and the emotions about what had happened had not yet abated. During the discussions much attention was focused on the problems behind the origins of the war, as well as actions and responsibilities of the parties involved. The situation gradually began to change as the process progressed: the focus of the discussion shifted from “what happened” to “what to do”. In this context the idea of developing a joint collection of articles on the reasons and consequences of the August war, written by both Russian and Georgian authors, was perhaps the best decision. The aim of the joint authorship was to show society and both governments that the war, despite the obvious negative effects, had not erased the relations between people, and that it was still possible to conduct a dialogue and make joint efforts for solving the problems.

The book *Russia and Georgia: The Ways out of the Crisis* was published in 2010<sup>1</sup>. By that time there were already several formats of the Russian-Georgian non-governmental dialogue. There were plans of issuing joint papers of Russian and Georgian experts. The book *Russia and Georgia: The Ways out of the Crisis*, published within the framework of the Istanbul Process, was the first to come out.

While the key participants from both Russian and Georgian sides remained involved, providing stability and continuity, a significant achievement of the Istanbul Process was the continuous inclusion of new people in the project. The expansion of the participants’ pool positively affected the space of the dialogue, and the dynamics of conversations started to transform allowing the discussion topics to become more practical and matter-of-fact. Additionally, new contacts and bilateral collaborations at a personal level enabled the participants from two sides of the conflict to engage outside the dialogue process. Moving beyond political experts to also include key media figures allowed opportunities for more frequent media engagement in the two countries.

In the spring and summer of 2012, the research teams of the ICCN and the Carnegie Moscow Centre, the project’s implementing partners, conducted a joint study on Russian and Georgian public opinion of the two countries using similar methodologies.<sup>2</sup> The study showed how the traditional stereotypes function under the present-day conditions and demonstrated the newly emerging trends. The participants began to effectively translate the benefits of interaction within the framework of the Istanbul Process into other formats, including their professional settings.

1 George Khutsishvili and Tina Gogueliani, *Russia and Georgia: The Ways out of the Crisis* (Tbilisi: Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict & ICCN, 2010).

2 Perceptions of Georgia in Russian Society (Carnegie Moscow Centre, 2012); Perception of Russia and Russians in Georgian Society (International Center on Conflict and Negotiation, 2011).

However, right until the Georgian parliamentary elections held in October 2012, a key component was missing in the implementation of the dialogue process: the access to power structures. It seemed that the governments of the two countries showed no interest in bridge-building. This in itself limited the efforts of civil society. The situation changed sharply after the new government of the Georgian Dream came to power and stated its intention to rebuild Georgia's relations with Russia. Such a change in the Russia-Georgia relations created an opportunity to use ideas that emerged from the dialogue discussions to be offered to the power structures.

Currently, the bilateral relations are changing dynamically. The number of contacts between Russian and Georgian civil societies is increasing and the relations between teams and organisations interested in communication are becoming more open. This, however, does not mean that the Istanbul Process has attained its goals. The Georgian-Russian dialogue is just drawing up its contours and probably will be developing in a very complex political context. As an umbrella project, the Istanbul Process will most likely serve and benefit new initiatives in different areas of Russia-Georgia cooperation. Furthermore, as the relations are entering a new phase of their existence, the process' participants will probably be challenged by the need to provide new ideas and new approaches.

The first reactions of the Russian officials to the signals on the changing policies in Georgia were discouraging, to say the least. At the same time, based on the agreement of the Georgian government with the Russian side, regular contact started in November of 2012 between the official representatives of

the parties – Representative of the Georgian Prime Minister in Georgia-Ossetia Relations Zurab Abashidze (an active participant of the Istanbul Process prior to his appointment to this position) and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Russia Grigoriy Karasin (who also acts as the co-chair of the Geneva Talks over Georgian conflicts). The negotiations at a governmental level enabled the achievement of progress and particular results in economic and cultural cooperation. Georgian wine, mineral waters and agricultural products, all popular among the Russian people, started to appear on the Russian market. Triumphant concerts of Georgian artists took place in Moscow. Georgian and Russian Orthodox Churches traditionally maintain their friendly relations, which did not cease even in the heaviest post-war context of confrontation and the information warfare. Georgian society expects an easing of the visa policy from the Russian side which will increase people-to-people contact across the border.

However, according to the participating analysts' assessment, the dialogue between the two countries' is developing slowly and inertly. Such a pace has its own reasons. There are red lines, pertaining to the post-August status quo, related to the status of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, that the parties cannot cross in the talks. According to the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of 26 August 2008, Abkhazia and South Ossetia were recognised as independent states and later on, despite the protests on the Georgian side, bilateral agreements on the military-political and economic cooperation were signed. As a reaction to Russia's recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, Georgia severed its diplomatic relations with Russia and declared the entire territory of the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia occupied territories of Georgia.

Despite Georgia's new policy towards Russia, the government of Georgia declared that diplomatic relations could not be re-established as long as Russia has its embassies in the capital cities of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Georgia also demanded Russia call back its resolution on the recognition of the two republics.

However, in the context of severed diplomatic relations between Russia and Georgia, there are good chances of cooperation developing around humanitarian, cultural, economic and political areas. These areas of Russia-Georgia relations were addressed at an experts' meeting in Istanbul in November 2012, which was held after the Georgian parliamentary elections in October 2012. The discussions resulted in the following joint statement.

## **Istanbul Process Joint Statement, November 16-17, 2012:**

Taking into account changing conditions and emerging opportunities, and based on the interests of both sides, the dialogue participants suggest the following steps towards the normalisation of Russia-Georgia relations. Realising that the process is rather extensive and complex, we consider it appropriate to focus on those key areas that ensure evident effect in the short term. In our common view, this could create preconditions for finding solutions to a number of issues affecting relations between our countries in humanitarian, cultural and economic spheres.

### **As part of humanitarian and cultural areas it is appropriate:**

- To encourage contacts between socio-professional groups, particularly among youth groups;
- To restore communications in the field of science and education;
- To promote the development of expert cooperation in the form of regular consultations, particularly over the internet;
- To facilitate simplification of visa regulations for the citizens of Georgia until its complete elimination;
- To promote tourism development.

### **In the sphere of economic relations:**

- In accordance with the norms and rules of the WTO, accelerate resolution of the issue of certification and approval of the Georgian agricultural and food products to the Russian market;
- To promote cross-border trade;
- To institutionalise economic and trade relations by opening representative offices of key economic ministries and agencies, commerce and trade chambers, as well as by creating a permanent round table of Georgian and Russian entrepreneurs.

### **In the areas of politics and security:**

- To restore inter-parliamentarian and expert communication on important issues of regional security, including the crisis in the Middle East, as well as in the North and South Caucasus;
- To pay special attention to the fight against terrorism and religious extremism, particularly in light of ensuring security of Sochi 2014.

In our joint opinion, refraining from forms of rhetoric and negative stereotypes unacceptable to both sides, could contribute to the gradual process of normalisation of relations. We also believe that addressing a number of particularly complex problematic issues between the parties should be postponed for a while, pending the nature of further developments.

## The two doctrines of Georgian foreign policy

Currently, the political context in Georgia is defined by the strong confrontation of the Georgian Dream against the United National Movement. Public demand for establishing normal relations with Russia was one of the key reasons why most of the Georgian voters preferred the change of power. However, even now there is lively debate among the population over whether diplomatic relations should prioritise Russia or the West. These contradictory stances are the two doctrines of Georgian policy, which serve as the basis for the continuous fight between the opposition and the majority in the Georgian government. These two incompatible doctrines in turn impact the Georgian-Russian dialogue.

The new Georgian government not only states that a strategic partnership with the West is and will be Georgia's foreign policy priority, but also makes consistent steps to achieve such a partnership. At the same time, the dialogue with Russia is an important new dimension of the Georgian foreign policy. Yet the opposition argues that Ivanishvili's government swerved from the Euro-integration path and seeks to return Georgia into the Russian sphere of influence. The argument advanced by the United National Movement is that any attempt to establish normal relations with Russia automatically means Georgia's waiver of pro-Western orientation. The doctrine of the United National Movement is based upon the precondition that Russia, due to its imperialist nature, cannot accept the existence of independent states near its borders and uses the conflicts inherited from the Soviet period to delegitimise the sovereignty of those independent states. Thus, the dialogue with Russia is concluded

to be impossible on principle and the new policy of Ivanishvili's government to have no chance of success. According to the Nationals' doctrine, after August 2008, Georgia has no conflicts with the Abkhaz and Ossetians and the only reasonable condition for commencement of the dialogue would be Russia's readiness to make steps towards denouncing the decisions of 26 August 2008. It would, however, be naïve to expect such steps from Russia. Following this approach, it is evident that the situation is destined to a deadlock for an indefinite time, which will in its turn negatively affect the prospects for overcoming the critical shortage of communication and trust between the parties.

The Istanbul Process, coupled with other civil initiatives aimed at developing the Georgian-Russian dialogue, serves as a confirmation that the confrontation policy has a realistic alternative that requires support from the international community.<sup>3</sup>

## Post scriptum: Recent developments

Since mid-2013 the Georgian-Russian dialogue of political experts is continuing within the framework of the project "Fostering Russia-Georgia Neighbourly Relations through Multi-stakeholder Networking and Expert Dialogue", supported by the Government of Switzerland. A number of meetings were organised by ICCN, in partnership with one of the leading Russian think tanks, the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC).

<sup>3</sup> George Khutsishvili, 'Intellectual Dilemma or Political Hoax?', *Democracy & Freedom Watch*, 2013 <<http://dfwatch.net/intellectual-dilemma-or-political-hoax-94405>> [accessed 18 August 2014].

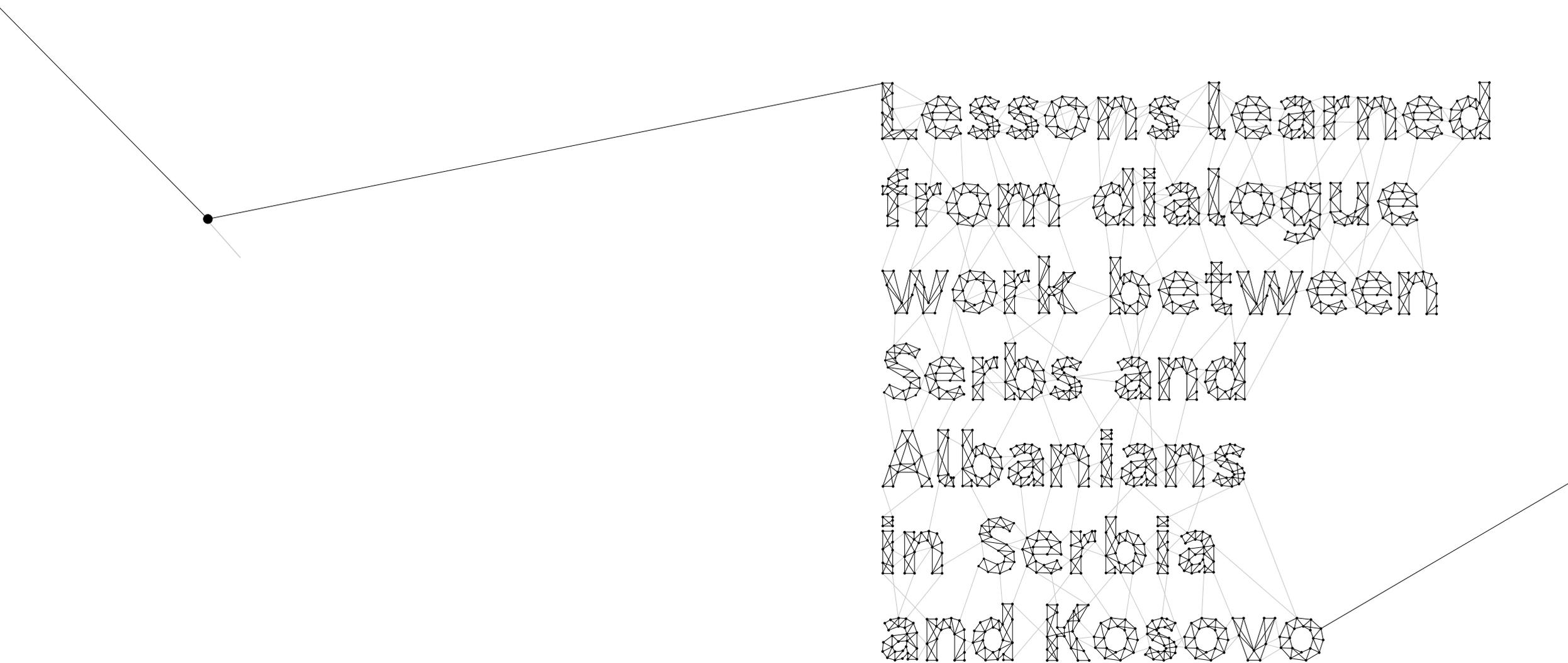
Cooperation between stakeholders progressed, with a number of meetings taking place both in Tbilisi and in Moscow, addressing a wider scope of areas reviewed by the sides. The overall process is currently developing from Track 2 dialogue to Track 1.5 diplomacy to support the official Abashidze-Karasin bilateral dialogue format. Along with political expert communities and civil society representatives from both sides, attendees now include the scientific and business communities, as well as the representatives of government bodies.

The presentation of a working paper, in the spring of 2014, was widely considered a remarkable achievement; authored by both Georgian and Russian experts, it was presented in Moscow. The most recent meeting of the Georgia-Russia dialogue took place in Moscow and was devoted to the issues of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement signed by Georgia. Following the recent meetings, the participating experts authored a collection of articles on issues including security and terrorism, migration, economic relations and historical relations, among many others. Additional papers covering the possibilities of economic interaction following the signing of the European Union Association Agreement by Georgia, as well as the economic and political analysis of the restoration of the railway connection through Abkhazia, were issued at the end of 2014.

An overall consensus from the meetings was that the development of security, humanitarian and economic cooperation is crucial, despite the existing political context. Considering the positive reception and the progress made so far, the dialogue is expected to continue.

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Lessons learned  
from dialogue  
work between  
Serbs and  
Albanians  
in Serbia  
and Kosovo

This article is an adapted version of Steinar Bryn's article "Inter-ethnic Dialogue between Serbs and Albanians in Serbia/Kosovo, 1996-2008", which first appeared in *Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the post-Milošević era* in 2011.<sup>1</sup>

Steinar Bryn

## Introduction

In 1995, the project "Democracy, Human Rights and Peaceful Conflict Resolution" began at the Nansen Academy in Lillehammer, Norway. As Lillehammer hosted the Olympics in 1994, it developed a strong solidarity with Sarajevo, at that time under siege. As a small academy with a dormitory, at the Nansen Academy we realised that we could contribute by inviting groups of people from the Western Balkans to come for three months to

analyse the breakup of Yugoslavia and to identify whether it was possible to rebuild trust, communication and cooperation. Such an endeavour was made possible with financial support from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

As facilitators, we did not have a dialogue handbook, but instead discovered what worked and what did not work through trial and error. During the first year we relied heavily on external lecturers who "told" us what was wrong in the Western Balkans before it became obvious to us that most of the participants had this knowledge themselves. The best value that the Nansen Academy could offer as an external facilitator was in providing a space where groups from former Yugoslavia could engage in dialogue. If the goal was to achieve a better understanding of the breakup of Yugoslavia, the stories told by their own grandmothers, parents, teachers, journalists and politicians were not sufficient, and people had to start listening to each other to get the whole picture.

This article describes some of the specifics of the Nansen Dialogue, which made both sides feel secure enough to share their stories. The article also sheds light on how the process increased the feelings of equality and respect among the participants. We did not have much impact on the participants' political beliefs and aspirations, but many of them learned that political differences could co-exist in a democracy. A valuable lesson learned was that if Kosovo wants to develop into a truly multi-ethnic state, dialogue can be a tool to increase understanding and respect between different ethnic groups. Improved ethnic tolerance is a precondition for democratic development of a state still marked by ethnic politics and segregation.

1 Steinar Bryn, 'Inter-Ethnic Dialogue between Serbs and Albanians in Serbia/Kosovo, 1996-2008', in *Civic and Uncivic Values: Serbia in the Post-Milošević Era* Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011, ed. by Ola Listhaug, Sabrina Ramet, and Dragana Dulić (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2011), LXXi, 369–97

### **Main strengths of the project**

Over time, it emerged that the main strengths of our project were the following:

- 1** The Nansen Academy provided a space where people could come together to compare notes and simply dialogue;
- 2** People could analyse what happened in a more neutral space, far from the conflict area and away from the pressure of family and colleagues;
- 3** People could interact with others of different ethnic identities in multiple ways, transforming perceptions of the “ethnic other” into a person with multiple identities; and
- 4** As a result of being together over time, relationships and friendships developed across the ethnic divide and most participants realised that their own ethnic group was not the only victim of the wars.

With over 19 years of listening to Serbs and Albanians, and having facilitated more than 300 dialogue seminars, it is clear that much more could have been accomplished over these years if dialogue and reconciliation had a higher priority within the international community. Unfortunately, the predominance of state and institution building has come at the expense of reconciliation among the peoples living in the state. This article distils the lessons from my experience.

### **Four lessons in working with dialogue**

Four important lessons learned for those who work in the area of dialogue:

- 1** Dialogue in itself does not solve conflicts, but rather increases the understanding of why the conflict is so hard to solve;
- 2** The most important element of a dialogue meeting is the follow

up, since dialogue cannot change things overnight;

- 3** Dialogue is more than merely words, for it can change the aggressor-victim narrative and motivate people into joint action to change oppressive structures;
- 4** Most importantly, the energy released through dialogue work needs to be channelled toward structural change. Although dialogue in itself does not solve conflicts, it lays the groundwork for mediation and negotiations and ultimately helps mobilise some people for social change.

### **The need for dialogue**

One consequence of the brutal territorial breakdown of Yugoslavia was the simultaneous communication breakdown. In the 1990s, as violent conflicts escalated, checkpoints and the creation of new borders prevented some people from even travelling across their own town.

The participants in Lillehammer learned that comparing notes was necessary. The different narratives from Zagreb to Skopje added important pieces to the puzzle known as “the breakup of Yugoslavia”. Our invitations to the seminars in Norway stressed that these seminars were not negotiations. Although unaware of it at the time, we developed a mode of communication distinct from debate and negotiation. The Nansen Dialogue grew out of the ongoing communications between people in deep conflict who wanted to understand why and how the conflict became such a destructive part of their lives. Dialogue is particularly needed and useful in situations where segregation allows for one-sided propaganda.

### **The need for analysis**

The dialogue groups themselves were not open-ended and a very specific methodology was used to analyse the causes of the conflict—Dessler’s methodology. Dessler’s methodology provided a means of talking about the causes of the break up that both delineated the causes and created an analytical distance from the events. The model functioned as a screen between the participants and their narratives. It enabled participants to talk about what happened and why, without stirring up the strongest emotions. The participants experienced first-hand that talking about the difficult issues was possible. A dialogue can be much more than just talk; it can provide both rational and analytical information and knowledge.

### **Building relationships**

The participants could not sit in the dialogue room all day. The Nansen programme included an understanding of social, physical and cultural needs. It is important to deal with difficult issues in dialogue, but it is equally important to know when to take a break and go bowling or swimming. This helps to release tensions and provides new arenas for people to interact. Some participants even fell in love across the ethnic divide. The importance of building relationships in the Kosovo dialogues has influenced the work of the Nansen Dialogue in such a dramatic way that we now say that we do not work from the political paradigm of power, but from the paradigm of building relationships.

### **The first Serb-Albanian seminars 1997-1999**

The dialogue sessions in Lillehammer were too exclusive and few people could set aside three full months to communicate with the enemy. While this did expand the participants’ horizons,

it was very difficult to transfer this into action back home. The lack of any network support and the lack of arenas for action led to several of the Serbian and Albanian participants from Pristina gathering back home as a Lillehammer group in Kosovo. They initiated the first three-day seminar in November 1997, in Herceg Novi, a coastal town in Montenegro. What could one accomplish in such a short period of time? The participants travelled 10 hours by bus from Pristina to Herceg Novi, which was too far to return home on your own if you got angry. Luckily, the first seminar was so successful that it became easier to recruit people to the next seminars. Seven dialogue buses drove over the Montenegrin mountains during the next 14 months.

These dialogue seminars took place as the situation on the ground got worse. Many people date the start of the Kosovo war as November 1997, as the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) began to control territory in the Drenica valley. The Serbian attack on the Prekaz village in early March 1998, culminating in the death of 58 people on 5 March, marked the turning point. During the summer of 1998, there were hard attacks from the Serb army and police on what they defined as KLA villages. The number of displaced Albanians increased to around 250,000 and hundreds of Albanian villages were destroyed, particularly in the buffer zone created along the Albanian border. There was a constant, though somewhat unlikely threat of bombing. Although there was dramatic destruction of property, there were no massive killings at this time. Several of the participants expressed fear and were in direct contact with war-like conditions, although Pristina itself was not a war zone in 1998.

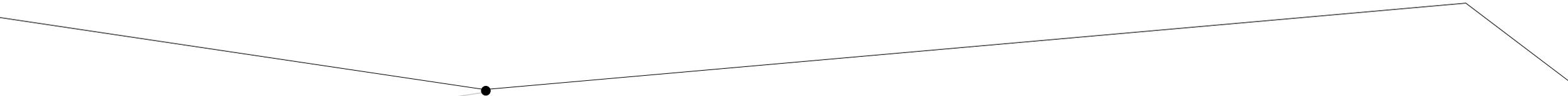
We would never have been able to start these seminars in Kosovo without the small Lillehammer group that had already gone through certain processes sensitising them to inter-ethnic thinking and acting. This group understood the need for improved communication. Individually, they put their own integrity on the line when recruiting participants to the first seminar.

At this point, local Serbs and Albanians would not have initiated these seminars without our support. They lived in a divided world, where even communication with each other was a suspicious activity. A parallel system had developed over time in Kosovo that created a deep divide, not only in institutional and social life, but also in perceptions of reality. Given this starting point, the difficulties with even recruiting participants must be appreciated. Why should anyone spend a whole weekend with the "other" who has destroyed one's possibilities to live a good life? Well, our answer is, "to make the 'other' aware of exactly that." As facilitators, we brought an impartial presence into the room.

In the period from 1997 to 1999, the Serbs felt stronger although they were under extreme pressure from both Albanians and the international community. Nevertheless, it was easier to recruit Serbs to the seminars. They had the most to gain if the problems could be solved through dialogue. Yet it was obvious that the participating Serbs heard stories they had never heard before, so the Albanians actually gained from being heard. At this time, it was usually the Albanians who would cancel at the last moment.

The last Herceg Novi seminar before the war was organised in the middle of March 1999. This seminar was filmed and shown

on Norwegian television, NRK, on 20 April 1999. The film was not shown to the participants themselves as they became refugees spread around the world. In the beginning of March 1999, a total of a few hundred people from Pristina had participated in Nansen seminars. We were optimistic. Most of the participants claimed that this had been the first time ever that they had sat down with the other side for three days to discuss the political situation. Many added that they had never even sat down with the opposing side for three hours to discuss any situation. The lesson learned was clearly that dialogue had not failed in Kosovo; it had never been properly tried.



## Lesson Learned #1: **Dialogue and truth**

A misunderstanding held by many critics of dialogue is that dialogue facilitators do not care about the truth as long as they can stimulate conversation between the parties in conflict. Critics argue that an academic discourse about what really happened is necessary, but an academic discourse requires a willingness on both sides to participate. Dialogue is not an alternative to academic discourse, but it is a place to start when the communication has broken down. Academic discourse is based on a mutual respect for each other's arguments—a precondition that has not existed in Kosovo over the last decades.

Some of the participants may have emerged from a period of boycotting all communication with members of the other nation. Typically, participants want the dialogue facilitator to be a judge and to confirm their own perceptions of reality. To do so would be a beginner's mistake on the part of the dialogue facilitator if the goal is to stimulate the dialogue.

A dialogue seminar is very much about making your own life visible and understood by the others and vice versa. The Serbian and Albanian historical narratives are so exclusive, that it often comes as a surprise to Serbs that Albanians feel they have an equally strong claim to Kosovo as the Serbs have themselves. Equally, there are Albanians who perceive Serbs as occupiers who deserve to be sent back to Serbia. When this is the starting point, the experience of listening to alternative viewpoints is highly valuable.

To misinterpret the above as there being no real truth ignores the fact that it takes some talk to start talking. Dialogue is not only about the physical act of talking and listening, it is about minds opening up. It takes time for minds to warm up and become receptive toward other competing truths. To invite opposing parties into a dialogue room is different from inviting them to a negotiation table. The dialogue facilitator must be able to make both sides feel safe enough to start telling their stories. The dialogue process is most likely to be hindered if the participants start to feel that the facilitator clearly supports certain truths. One or the other side can even decide to withdraw from the process of dialogue.

Some dialogue facilitators believe that the participants should accept certain stipulated truths before the dialogue process starts. An example is the School for Peace in Israel, which insists that Israeli participants accept that Palestine is an occupied territory. "But what about those who do not believe that?" I asked. "They would not come anyway," was the answer. Nansen Dialogue wants to include those who "would not come anyway". To engage in dialogue only between the already converted is almost futile.

Sharing truths in a dialogue space might not be that different from discussing any issue brought to the table, but in a negotiation, people position themselves and become defensive—it is more difficult to see movement in their positions. When a mind is opened, people may discover that there is not one truth, but that the other actually believes in another truth. For example, the Serb who expressed "You really believe we poisoned you? Now I understand why you hate us."

I have experienced that such a process can lead to a direct interest in finding the “real truth” and a joint, committed search for the “real truth” can often be revealing for one or both of the sides, like the Serb and Albanian who wanted to find out what had really happened in Racak. The challenge for a dialogue facilitator is to create a space where minds start to unfold and open, permitting participants to hear for the first time alternative explanations from those communicated by their own families, teachers, journalists and politicians.

Many political talks are called dialogue meetings, while in reality they are at the opposite end of the spectrum of human communication. When leaders come together and share their positions it can be a sign of strength not to compromise too much. Too often we hear that these kinds of conversations did not lead anywhere. A real dialogue is an alternative way of communicating which is more likely to lead to changes in positions, simply because it does not have to end in signing an agreement, but rather a better understanding of why we disagree.

#### **Restarting the seminars after the 1999-war**

It was challenging to restart the dialogue after the war in 1999 and it took about a year before the people who organised the earlier seminars actually met in Ohrid, Macedonia in May 2000. The first gathering of Serbs and Albanians in which I participated was on the roof of the OSCE building in Mitrovica South in October 2000. We restarted the traditional dialogue seminars with participants from Mitrovica. The focus had shifted from Pristina to Mitrovica, since Pristina had experienced retaliatory ethnic cleansing to a large extent during 1999-2000. Pristina had become a city with almost no Serbian population.

A series of Mitrovica seminars were organised near Lake Ohrid in Macedonia, in the mountains of Bulgaria and along the Adriatic coast in Montenegro. Altogether around 200 people participated. These seminars were less focused on the break-up of Yugoslavia and more focused on the Serbian/Albanian conflict and the possibility for reconciliation. They followed the pattern of sharing how the war had affected personal lives. Several of the participants had tragic stories to tell about lost family members, burned down houses, destroyed villages and lost opportunities. The need to talk was obvious and at times the two sets of tables were observed moving closer toward each other during the day, revealing the engagement of the speakers. In one seminar for journalists, two of the participants recognised that they had been in the same battle in April 1999, trying to kill each other. Over coffee three years later, they each expressed how glad they were that they had not done so.

In the beginning, the participants would take separate buses out of Kosovo, but join the same bus once they crossed the border. The fear of not being a good Serb or not being a good Albanian was very strong. This also put pressure on the organisers.

A method developed during the Mitrovica seminars was to invite the two parties to ask each other questions under the condition that they spent time preparing the questions and the answers. These questions would be very specific. How do you feel about what happened? Do you feel guilty? Do you feel any responsibility? Both sides felt a strong need to hear which actions the other side acknowledged had happened and whether they felt responsible for their actions. I would say that in all my seminars, the method of Q&A still turns out to be the most powerful and stimulating way to make honest conversations.

Mitrovica was not a completely divided city before the war in 1999, nor did it divide as a direct consequence of the war. Finally, a series of clashes and incidents throughout 1999 and into 2000 divided the city. Although the citizens had spent only a short time apart, they were very curious about everyday life on the other side. How much is the coffee? How many hours of electricity do you have? How much water? Internet access? Both sides felt the other had gotten the better deal. Much of this was corrected in direct conversations and there was also a sense of more balance in the room, compared to the pre-bombing seminars, where the Albanians dominated with verbal attacks. The triviality of many of the questions also eased the tensions.

While using the method of asking each other questions, a Serb leader from Mitrovica North asked, "Why did you not help us last winter when the electricity was cut off in our villages?" This was a rhetorical question asking for the admission of "we didn't help you because we wanted you to move", verifying a soft ethnic cleansing strategy. The surprising answer was that electricity was also cut off in Albanian villages. The Serbs had been convinced that the electricity cuts had been ethnically motivated. In further conversation with each other they discovered that an Irish company cut off electricity to everyone who did not pay for the services.

One could argue that it was now the Albanians who would gain the most from demonstrating inter-ethnic tolerance and participating in these seminars, but the Serbs would also gain a lot if they could inform Albanians about the conditions they experienced in the enclaves. Some argue that dialogue always favours the dominant party, but my experience is that the weaker

party can make itself heard and become visible to the dominant party through dialogue. Without a doubt, after 1999, the Albanian side was easier to mobilise for participation and, if someone cancelled at the last minute, it would be a Serb.

In the years 1996-1999, I seldom heard any references to the historic period before World War II. After the war in 1999, I seldom heard references to the period before 1999. I mention this to modify the general opinion that Balkan people are just too full of history. The focus on the part of the Albanians was on the 1990s, and particularly the spring of 1999, when history ended for them. It sounded to me as if the Serbs thought that history began on 24 March 1999.

Before March 1999, Albanians were on the attack and Serbs were trying to justify the existing system. Post-1999, the Serbs were attacking and Albanians were defending the changes related to the new status of Kosovo. A question often asked by Albanians to Serbs was "Why do you not accept the new realities of Kosovo?" The Serbs claimed these realities were forced upon them and compared their rejection of the current system with the Albanian rejection of the Serbian state pre-1999. The pendulum had swung back, although the Albanians would not accept the comparison: "Nothing will be worse than under Milosevic."

I felt that the need for the participants to express themselves had increased and because of this no energisers, icebreakers or simulations were necessary to get the group started in dialogue. The conflict itself immediately opened all doors. Often people tell me that I must have a difficult job. I am not so sure. Participants from Kosovo have nothing to lose. The conflict in Kosovo was

by now an open bloody wound. Dialogue is not as difficult as people think when the parties agree that they have a conflict. This meant that I seldom would have a programme for a seminar, but developed the ability to follow the process in the direction it went.

These Mitrovica seminars gained more and more respect and began to draw participants with local power. In January 2006, 25 Serbian and Albanian leaders from Mitrovica (among them the mayor of South Mitrovica and the leader of the Serbian Renewal Party) gathered in Lillehammer and I received a phone call from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK): "Where is everybody?"—apparently, they were surprised at their absence. The dialogue meeting was to be held for two weeks, with the first week focused on building relations. As the first week came to an end, the sad news of the Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova's death reached us. As a consequence some of the politicians had to go home for the funeral. The rest found it improper to continue dialogue with the Serbs, as their people were in mourning.

No operative goals were developed during these seminars, but there are Nansen alumni in Mitrovica who can be mobilised if the situation on the ground demands it. To work in a political climate full of far more powerful events than dialogue seminars requires patience and generational thinking. Change does not happen overnight, but maybe over a generation.

The most important effect of the Nansen Dialogue is that a symbol of integration, openness, tolerance, non-violent communication and a more inclusive way of thinking was established and coexisted with nationalist propaganda and the

construction of hatred on both sides in some of the most war-torn areas of Europe since World War II. As a Serbian leader told me after a bomb was thrown into Café Dolce Vita on the north side of the Mitrovica Bridge in April 2006, he went onto the bridge to speak with the people who had already decided to cross to the other side to punish the guilty. He managed to convince them to go back and added to me, "Before my participation in Nansen activities, I did not even think about that as an option."

Eventually, we felt we hit a wall. To break through would be to transform the dialogue work into community-based peacebuilding. A lot of positive energy had been released, but it had not yet been put to use.

## Lesson Learned #2: **Dialogue—more than words**

The first challenge for the Nansen Dialogue was to take the dialogue from the more exclusive long-term setting in Lillehammer to a more intense short-term setting closer to home in Herceg Novi. The Nansen Dialogue stressed open dialogue on the causes and consequences of what happened for people living through the conflicts and wars. This is a necessary first step in reconciliation and must be recognised as such. Still, donors and other critics wanted to see more concrete results. It is nice when people come together to dialogue, but then what? The coordinators of the Nansen Centres started to become more ambitious as their positions in their respective local communities were strengthened. Is it possible to mobilise dialogue participants to take part in social change at large?

The challenge became to recruit participants who belonged to social institutions with the agency to implement change. Our patience, stamina and the fact that we were setting up local, registered centres staffed by local people, and not foreign centres, had given us more credibility. Consequently, when we started to invite strategically important people in the local community, they accepted the invitation. Participants such as the mayor, the chief of municipal administration, the president of the municipal assembly, the director of the local high school, the editor of the local newspaper, and others, agreed to meet. The following story on Bujanovac is an example of how dialogue work was taken directly into the community to build peace.

**Community-based Peacebuilding: Dialogue work in Bujanovac**

As the conflict intensified in southern Serbia, we could not help but ask the question whether there was something we could do. Could we apply our experience from Kosovo usefully in South Serbia? The previous strategy of the Nansen Dialogue was to work only in areas where previous participants in Lillehammer could prepare the groundwork, recruit new participants to dialogue seminars and pave the way for meaningful peace work. They were like barefoot soldiers on the ground. In the case of South Serbia, we had no connections of this kind, which is why we were somewhat slow to respond to the escalating inter-ethnic conflict in that region.

A break came in early 2002 when representatives from the Nansen Dialogue Centre (NDC) Belgrade, Serbia were approached by the OSCE and asked whether they could assist in training NGO workers in south Serbia. The first contacts were made and a strategy was developed. The challenge was to

identify the individuals who exercised influence on the political and cultural life, particularly lawyers, journalists, politicians, medical doctors, teachers and other professionals who could make a difference.

It was obvious that the Preševo valley was marked by similar conditions known to us from Kosovo. It was a segregated society with little or no communication across ethnic lines, reflected in divided schools, fairly homogenous villages, unmarked division lines for Serbian and Albanian cafes, restaurants, shops, information systems and the like. Little or no confidence and trust existed between ethnic groups. This situation intensified during the fighting in Kosovo, when historical and current arguments for joining Preševo with Kosovo surfaced. Serbs started leaving Albanian-dominated areas and were unable to understand or respect Albanian claims to Serbian territory. Albanians were overtly treated like second-class citizens and gathered in the areas bordering to Kosovo. Their civil status as citizens of Serbia had worsened after the war. They felt little hope of gaining powerful positions or any meaningful influence within the Serbian state.

There were violent outbreaks in 2000, but Nebojša Čović's plan put a temporary stop to these and introduced more democratic ways of dealing with the problem, although his plan was clearly viewed as the result of pressure from Belgrade. The Serbs felt they gave up too much power to the Albanians and the Albanians did not believe that they received the position they deserved. Serbs felt that they were becoming a minority in their own country and Albanians felt that, while getting local power, it was only a symbolic token. This looked like a situation where the Nansen Dialogue could make a difference.

Nansen coordinators from NDC Serbia used their contacts in the OSCE and different NGOs to identify important stakeholders. Both by travelling to the region and speaking individually with people, they slowly succeeded in convincing important actors on both sides that the time was long overdue for gathering both Serbs and Albanians for political dialogue. The first seminar was planned in Vrnjačka Banja in March 2002. The same process as in Kosovo was observed. While the participants showed a fair bit of reluctance and defensiveness in the beginning, the experience of the dialogue space and the opportunities it provided for discussion of meaningful political issues in a safe and supportive setting changed their attitude toward the dialogue itself.

The dialogue facilitators gained legitimacy as a result of their lengthy experience in Kosovo. The foreign presence gave the process a sense of importance and seriousness, as well as the feeling that somebody out there cared about the participants' situation and wanted to assist and stimulate the process of dialogue. The hardest job in these initial seminars was always to identify and to recruit the right participants. The recruitment process is tough and direct contact must be kept with the participants up to the last week before the start of the seminar to counter potential cancellation arguments. Recruiting the dialogue seminar participants was almost as difficult as facilitating the seminar.

We were now to draw upon our large experience from divided communities and, by looking at their situation from a bigger perspective, participants moved from individualising the problems to seeing them as part of larger structural patterns. The conflict was caused by a perceived inability on the part of both

ethnic groups to influence the future development of their own society—a future they somehow would have to share, whether they liked it or not.

The above shift became the strength of our approach because it moved the participants from looking at each other as the main problem to seeing how the structural patterns of underdeveloped infrastructure, high levels of unemployment, local corruption, ethnic stereotypes and segregation created an extremely vulnerable situation. This reduced strong blaming of the other and opened the space for human interaction.

The question of Serbia's minority politics became an important issue. NDC Serbia had experience with similar seminars in Vojvodina and Sandžak, where there were significant populations of Hungarians and Bosnians. The town of Subotica in Vojvodina had segregated the schools, just like Bujanovac. When NDC Serbia gathered experiences from these three regions, it provided solid background for discussions of structural problems because of the similarity of the regions and similar stereotypes, attitudes and behaviours of individuals. The latter was often a result of the propaganda in homes, schools, the media and local politics.

#### **Norway as a neutral space**

A wish to see how Norway dealt with some of these problems were expressed by many of the participants in the Bujanovac seminars and a trip to Norway was carried out in the summer of 2003. Visits to schools and media institutions, meetings with local politicians from municipalities of different size, and even an encounter with Jostein Gaarder (a famous Norwegian author) were part of the programme. The underlying goal was that the

Serbian and Albanian delegations would visit Norway together, with plenty of space to continue their own political dialogue in a safer and freer environment. The main purpose of the visit was not to learn from Norwegian ways, but to explore Norway together as an inter-ethnic group. Bujanovac and Preševo are small municipalities. Most people know each other. Most people know who did what during the violent uprising in 2000, making it difficult to hide behind lies and evasions. These visits provided a breakthrough for local reconciliation work. To sit on the white benches outside the Nansen Academy at midnight provided space for conversations that would have been almost impossible in Bujanovac. A new level of honesty was reached.

Furthermore, the local contacts made in Lillehammer municipality triggered a return visit in October of the same year. The mayor of Lillehammer, the Deputy Mayor of Oppland county, the Deputy Chief of Administration and four other delegates developed personal relations with local Bujanovac politicians. Lillehammer municipality visited Bujanovac again one year later and interviewed around 50 people in municipal administration. Based on these interviews, Lillehammer officials proposed 64 different recommendations to Bujanovac.

The assumption was that Serbia, in addition to spending too much material and human resources on conflicts and wars, had also lost 20 years of normal municipal development. A country like Norway had, under more peaceful circumstances, developed more efficient municipal administrations. Through discussions with the Bujanovac mayor and local administration, Lillehammer and Bujanovac agreed to focus on five areas: business development, further development of the local service centre,

training the heads of departments, strengthening local politicians and developing the position of a city manager. In addition, the Lillehammer-Bujanovac School Cooperation project was developed, focusing on capacity building in school mediation and social skills for teachers and students from Serbian and Albanian schools. The project was officially supported by Serbian Ministry of Education in 2009.

While the work of the Lillehammer officials obviously had a reconciliatory effect, the local politicians learned fast that politics could still get in the way of modernising the local municipal administration. There are no quick fix solutions. Ethnic tensions were still strong and a strategy for how to deal with this must be integrated into all municipal development strategies.

The Nansen approach stresses the need to work at different levels in the community. Dialogue work among students and youth was followed up with a unique theatre performance. The students identified 20 scenes from everyday life, among them corruption in schools and in the health care centre, inefficiency in the post office and a remarkable scene where an Albanian boy takes his Serb girlfriend home to meet his family. The actors were amateurs, but they performed for a mixed ethnic audience of 700. This was probably the largest multi-ethnic event to be held in Bujanovac since Tito's death. Another group of students travelled to the Acropolis to experience the reconciliatory effect of their common cultural heritage just south of the border. These young people are together challenging the divided structures of Bujanovac.

On 8 June 2012, the Albanian mayor of Bujanovac, Nagip Arfeti, formed a multi-ethnic coalition with two Serbian parties.

He received 12 seats in the Assembly election, but required nine more to secure a majority. He could have secured those nine seats in a coalition with two Albanian parties, but chose a coalition with Serbians - Stojanca Arsic, "Group of citizens", and Nenad Mitrovic, "Serbian Progressive Party-SNS". One can always argue that this happened because of external pressure, but that neglects the value of the dialogues we facilitated between Stojanca and Nagip. It is unfortunate that nobody is willing to financially support the next step in Bujanovac, which is to take multi-ethnic cooperation into new institutions such as kindergartens and primary schools to prepare the next generation for multi-ethnic coexistence.

It is an important part of the story that around 200 people from Lillehammer visited Bujanovac during this process. There has been a lot of mutual learning and the dialogue between Lillehammer and Bujanovac has shifted and expanded the perspectives of local politicians and teachers from Lillehammer who are involved in this process.

#### **Community-based peacebuilding in Kosovo**

The step from classical dialogue work to community-based peacebuilding that began in Bujanovac inspired other Nansen Centres to focus on selected target groups within the local municipality administration, the local schools and media. Dialogue seminars were used to set up local Nansen Coordination Boards, which today are essential in carrying out much of the local work.

The regular dialogue work was discontinued in Kosovo in 2010. The community-based peacebuilding approach focused on

two municipalities where Norwegian Kosovo Force (KFOR) had been present: Kosovo Polje and Obiliq. Kosovo Polje is a municipality only five kilometres from Pristina. As a consequence of the conflict, the village Miradi e Eperme/Gornje Dobrevo was abandoned by the Serb community and the houses were burned down.

The Nansen Dialogue in Kosovo was responsible for talks between the returning Serb community and the receiving Albanian community. During the first meeting in 2005, returning back to the village was not discussed. It was their first meeting in six years and a lot of curiosity about everyday life was observed. Is your cow still alive? What has happened to my field? How are your kids doing? On the second meeting, the issue of return was tabled and questions and worries discussed. In Mitrovica North, there is a multi-ethnic neighbourhood, Kodra e Minatoreve / Mikronaselje. The Nansen people in Mitrovica have spent years in this neighbourhood, stimulating dialogue, supporting project development, opening a Nansen library, organising joint classes in English and Information Technology. In Kosovo Polje/FKP, a street was named the Fridtjof Nansen Street. At the moment we work in six multi-ethnic municipalities and a new theme presents itself in all our dialogue seminars—"is integration possible"?

#### **From Reconciliation to Integration**

I have argued that dialogue and reconciliation are a prerequisite for democratic development in Serbia and Kosovo. Tolerance for opposing political views must be developed. Continuous ethnic conflict will slow down the development of democratic multi-ethnic states. My experience is that dialogue can foster democratic changes, but it takes work to create structural

changes that provide more dialogue space where people can meet. Serbia and Kosovo cannot continue to practise segregation at home if they preach support for integration abroad.

The main challenge for the Serbs and the Albanians is to realise that the development of a civil state does not have to threaten ethnic identities. A civil state separates the state from the nation and eliminates ethnic politics. In the new Europe this challenge is similar to the one the Danes, the Austrians and the Norwegians are facing as well. Nation states are being replaced by multi-ethnic states all over Europe. A civil state simply implies a state where all citizens have equal access to resources and opportunities, independent of their ethnic affiliation. In order to develop such states, a corresponding culture of dialogue is essential.

The situation in Kosovo might call for stronger measures. The experience from dialogue seminars there is that the status of Kosovo was not the only problem; the relationship between Serbs and Albanians is a serious problem in itself. As long as dialogue and reconciliation are not given higher priority and exclusive narratives continue on both sides, the conflict is transferred to the next generation and it will persist in homes and schools and certain politicians will continue to exploit this to gain power, status and profit. The good news is that the main actors in international peacebuilding have the power and the ability to make dialogue and reconciliation a much higher priority. It is a question of political priority and not the lack of will on the ground.

There are obvious reasons why communities are divided. War crimes and heinous acts committed by civilians, as well as military, are only part of the explanation. Politicians have gained positions using victim rhetoric and made ethnic division into an organising principle of everyday life. The argument that an Albanian doctor takes better care of an Albanian than a Serbian doctor can be very seductive when put into political rhetoric. There are always stories in divided communities about those who cross the ethnic divide when the need for professional help is strong enough and the potential help is on the other side of the river; an example is the Serbian eye doctor in Bresje who was visited by Albanians after dark, immediately after the war was over.

It seems difficult to work for integration in Kosovo and Serbia, but one should think in terms of generations. It is my argument that the citizens of Kosovo and Serbia must take integration seriously. To be a member of the European community has certain legal obligations, such as inclusive education. One cannot want to integrate with the EU and segregate at home.

Maybe the most important lesson learned is that you have to start somewhere. The people-to-people approach, the ethnically mixed summer camps, the joint activities, multicultural music festivals, joint trips to the coast are all steps in the right direction. It is very important to create unconditional spaces where people can meet to step outside the conflict bubble. Most of these kinds of events lack appropriate follow up. Reconciliation will not happen as the result of peace events and dialogue seminars, it requires generational thinking and process-oriented activities that will ultimately lead to structural changes.

## Lesson Learned #3: Dialogue and integration

Minorities have at times chosen self-exclusion, boycotts and parallel structures as a way to resist the dominant culture. These are efficient acts when the goal is resistance, but from the perspective of strengthening one's own identity, such a strategy is rarely fruitful. Ethnicity can be strengthened in dialogue meetings with ethnic groups different from your own.

It is in the interest of an ethnic minority to become more visible to the majority, to make its hopes and dreams known. This article has shown that there are paths toward reconciliation, but no shortcuts, no quick solutions, only the slow patient walk down the road of rebuilding trust and communication. An important lesson learned is that there is a direct link between dialogue and integration. Integration can only work when there is a high level of visibility and understanding between different ethnic groups. An integrated society means equal respect for all ethnic cultures. Unconditional dialogue spaces are the meeting ground where this respect can be built.

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Mediation  
for grassroots  
reconciliation  
in Maluku,  
Indonesia

1 Sri Yanuarti, *Konflik Di Maluku Tengah: Penyebab, Karakteristik, Dan Penyelesaian Jangka Panjang* (Jakarta: Lembaga Ilmu Pengetahuan Indonesia, Proyek Pengembangan Riset Unggulan/ Kompetitif LIPI/ Program Isu, 2003).

## The context of the conflict in the Maluku Islands

Categorised as a high-intensity intergroup conflict, the violent conflict in the Maluku Islands took place between 1999 and 2003. The conflict not only destroyed 80% of buildings and houses, it resulted in 5,000 casualties, 500,000 internally displaced people<sup>1</sup>

and led to a civil war. Religious identities used by the warring parties caused society to polarise into Muslim and Christian groups.<sup>2</sup>

Before being divided into the provinces of Maluku and North Maluku, Maluku was the largest province in Indonesia covering over 850,000 square kilometres. In the year 2000, the estimated population of Maluku province was 1.15 million, consisting of 49.1% Muslims and 50.2% Christians. After the division, 85% of the population of 670,000 in North Maluku were Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

Almost the entire population of the Maluku Islands, including various age groups and professions, was involved in the conflict, either in self-defence or to attack the enemy. In that respect, there was no division of perpetrators and victims, most were both at the same time. The people of the Maluku Islands became divided and segregated into Islamic and Christian groups.

Identity played a crucial role in the conflict of the Maluku Islands. However, in the aftermath of the conflict, reconciliation efforts by the Indonesian government often ignored the issue of identity. The top-down approach used by the government had little effect, as its primary concerns were economic, political and related to security. The *Baku Bae*, a bottom-up reconciliation movement in Maluku, offered an alternative process that was characterised by the participation of the people from the lower-middle classes, including both perpetrators and victims of the conflict of Maluku.<sup>4</sup>

The *Baku Bae* movement mediated through informal meetings in the form of gradual and sustained *Baku Bae* workshops that were similar to the Interactive Problem Solving workshop of Kelman<sup>5</sup>.

2 Ichsan Malik and Hamdi Muluk, 'Peace Psychology of Grassroots Reconciliation: Lessons Learned from the Baku Bae Peace Movement', in *Peace Psychology in Asia*, ed. by Cristina Jayme Montiel and Noraini M. Noor (New York: Springer Science & Business Media, 2009).

3 Malik and Muluk.

4 Malik and Muluk; Hugo van der Merwe, *The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Community Reconciliation: An Analysis of Competing Strategies and Conceptualizations* (Fairfax, Virginia: George Mason University, 1999).

5 Malik and Muluk.

From April 2000 to January 2003, the *Baku Bae* movement carried out 19 workshops for different groups reaching out to 335 people<sup>6</sup>. The movement also campaigned for peace between Muslims and Christians in the Maluku Islands and abroad. Other significant activities included two polls reaching 11,843 people on the Maluku Islands; the establishing of the *Baku Bae* market within the neutral zone and Nania Pule tree Ambon city; the founding of Legal Aid *Baku Bae*; the establishing of the Maluku Media Centre; and lastly, the forming of *Majelis Latupati Maluku*, an assembly of traditional leaders in the Maluku Islands. The role of facilitators who created the trust, mutual understanding, cooperation and expectations between the two groups is crucial to the *Baku Bae* movement.

#### **Mediation process by the *Baku Bae* movement in Maluku**

In this section, the 10 stages of the grassroots reconciliation process, initiated by the *Baku Bae* movement, will be described. Having been developed based on an ongoing situation, the overall process was designed in a way that each stage strengthened and informed subsequent action with the number of participants, with the scope of activities increasing over time.

6 *Jajak Pendapat Masyarakat Maluku* (Maluku Islands: Joint Committee Baku Bae Maluku, April 2002); Indiran Tagor Lubis, 'Laopran Evaluasi Baku Bae' (Jakarta, 2003).

## Stage One: Action research

Between April and July 2000, action research was carried out in Maluku for 22 days and in the surrounding Maluku Islands for 3 months. The action research aimed to map the escalation of the conflict, the actors involved, as well as the hotspot areas. Facilitators conducted interviews and discussions with parties and identified actors involved in the conflict, including both perpetrators and victims. The groups that were interviewed included officials from local NGOs, *Hualopu* Christian groups, as well as Muslims from *Innovation Group*. Further discussions were held with 10 priests from *Klasis* of the Lease Islands. A group of Christian refugees under *TIRUS* NGO and *Baileo*, Muslim refugees in the region Waihaong in Ambon, the Rajas (head of village) of Southeast Maluku, were also among the discussants. *Jafar Umar Thalib*, a Jihad group from Kaliurang, was also approached. From the action research it was concluded that the escalation of the conflict was at its peak in April 2000, at a time when a total number of 6,000 Laskar Jihad fighters from outside the Maluku Islands became involved in the conflict. The actors involved in the conflict were predominantly young people. The island of Ambon and the Lease Islands acted as hotspots from where the violence spread to the whole region<sup>7</sup>. Different discourses of the conflict of the Maluku Islands circulated in the community and the media lacked the capacity to confirm which one was real and which one was not.

7 John Braithwaite and others, *Anomie and Violence: Non-Truth and Reconciliation in Indonesian Peacebuilding* (Canberra, Australia: ANU E Press, 2010).

## Stage Two: **Baku Bae workshops for combatants and civilian victims**

The structure of the *Baku Bae* workshops was generally the same for all groups, but substantially adjusted to the level and types of groups involved. Each workshop included the following components:

- a. Exploration of the attitudes and values that existed within each group that were described in the form of images;
- b. Analysis of the sources of the conflict and groups involved;
- c. Analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats to the reconciliation process;
- d. An action plan for the reconciliation process.

At the time when the conflict was at its highest, the first workshop for combatants and victims was conducted in a private space in August 2000 in Jakarta, and kept confidential. The workshop brought together six people from the Muslim civilian combatants and six Christian civilian combatants. The participants of the workshops were individuals who could influence both the government politically and the community culturally. The participants of the first workshop representing the Muslim civilian combatants included a leader of the Muslim group who was accused of coordinating violence during Eid, a secretary of the Indonesian Ulema Council to the local Muslims, a Marine with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, young combatants and youth leaders, as well as a coordinator for the refugees. The Christian civilian combatants in the workshop included the Protestant church synod leader who was in charge of 29 people from a stronghold of the Lease Islands, a coordinator of the legal team of the

church, as well as young combatants, youth leaders and refugees. During the first *Baku Bae* workshop, the facilitator displayed workshop banners reading "Peace Maluku". Both Muslim and Christian groups reacted very negatively towards the banner, stating that the word peace should not be used before positive peace was established. The rejection resulted in a strong opposition to the goal of the workshop and created an interesting dynamic. It also resulted in the removal of the word peace from the workshop agenda, which led to a search for an alternative word that participants could agree on. Despite these obstacles, the workshop continued for 20 days, paying particular attention to the discussions of ongoing attitudes and values related to the conflict. Eventually, the first meeting produced the document entitled "Words of Victims".

The second workshop followed in October 2000 in Bali, reuniting the combatants and civilians who participated in the first workshop and introducing new participants. The total number of participants grew to 40, with 20 people from the Muslim community and another 20 from the Christian community present. The participants of the second workshop included traditional leaders, women leaders, and NGOs.

The facilitators and participants of the second workshop in Bali continued the process of finding alternatives for the word peace. That was the time when the term *Baku Bae* came to be seen as a potential alternative. The word was inspired by *Bae Raw*, a term used by children after a fight as a sign of an intention to make up. When saying *Bae Raw*, children press their thumbs against each other. The newly found term was a source of inspiration among the movement to bring about reconciliation.

Having found the word *Baku Bae* as an alternative for the word for peace, the workshop process started running smoothly. A symbol of the movement was created representing a drawing of the two thumbs attached. After the second workshop, the facilitator and the team of the *Baku Bae* movement began to emphasise the importance of a local approach, which would be understood by both parties to the conflict. Such a take on the reconciliation process resulted in a more focused approach towards peace and reconciliation in the Maluku Islands.

The third workshop, conducted in Jogjakarta in December 2000, brought together 40 Muslims people and 40 Christians. There was still more variation in the background of the participants, among them victims, journalists, intellectuals, and religious leaders.<sup>8</sup>

After agreeing on *Baku Bae* as a term and a framework, the process was further inspired by the concepts of *Pela* and *Gandong*. The words *Pela* and *Gandong* are both related to traditional ties or relationships and have been in use in the Maluku Islands since the 19th. *Pela* is defined as a covenant relationship between two countries or as a relationship with a country due to war or disaster. The *Pela* relationship usually manifests itself between villages on different islands. It can also concern relationships between different religions. *Gandong*, on the other hand, literally means siblings. While *Gandong* refers to kinship, it also carries the meaning of separation due to colonialism, separation that was often followed by a change in religious identity.

There are three types of *Pela*. The first one is the *Pela keras* (hard; rock; blood) which is often caused by an everlasting war, without winners or losers. This relationship may also occur because there

is a particular support from one country to another country. The second one, *Pela gandong*, is a relationship based on the ties of descent. More specifically, the families living in the villages that have a *Pela* relationship think of themselves as having the same ancestors. The third one is *Pela tempat sirih*, established after an insignificant incident, or as a result of a good deed offered by one country to another. There is a special oath between the bounds of *Pela keras* and *Pela gandong*, if violated, the oath incurs a terrible curse.

The *Pela* and *Gandong* bond has so far affected two or three villages. The *Baku Bae* movement resulted in the emergence of a kinship, which can be understood in terms of *Pela gandong*, meaning unity in times of war. Indeed, all of the workshop participants are expected to maintain the *Baku Bae* brotherhood. The tradition of *Panas Pela*, on the other hand, acts as a review or a warning, a ceremony to recall and strengthen the bond of brotherhood previously agreed upon. *Panas Pela* is a joint national event that unites the whole country in the form of dining together or eating *patita*. Through *Panas Pela* all Muslims and Christians are invited to re-strengthen the brotherhood.

There is a traditional song that captures the spirit of the *Pela Gandong* relationship and this song is understood by most Moluccans, allowing it to be used in the meetings. When the meeting stagnated because discussion became too heated, the facilitator played the traditional song. The emotional content of the song moved some participants to tears. The high emotions meant the meeting had to be suspended, but it allowed for a great sense of relief and expression of feelings. The facilitator's role at this stage was crucial; the facilitator aimed at making use of every opportunity in such a complex and emotional situation between

8 MSA, 'Strong Needed Role of Mediation Institution', *Bernas* (Jogjakarta, 9 December 2000); Ati Nurbaiti, 'Christians, Muslims Meet for Reconciliation in Maluku', *Jakarta Post* (Jakarta, 9 December 2000).

both parties. He did this by digging up collective memories about the people's togetherness in the past. The emotional release cooled down the heated sensibilities, and after three hours allowed the meeting to continue in a much more productive and understanding atmosphere. Referring to Kelman<sup>9</sup>, the song helped create a supportive environment to start a negotiation process.

### Stage Three: Public polling

The first public opinion poll was conducted in September 2000, reaching as many as 1350 respondents from the Muslim community and 1500 respondents from the Christian community in the Ambon Island and the Lease Islands. The objective of the poll was to gauge the levels of popular support for *Baku Bae* in order to assess people's perceptions on the mandate and legitimacy of the one-month old movement.

The second poll was conducted in November 2000, reaching as many as 7800 people from both communities—Muslims and Christians. The objective of this survey was to find out what the public wanted and needed regarding the economy, education, and health.

At the time of the second poll, the *Baku Bae* activists suffered casualties, with Hashim Sanaki being shot while at work. Hashim Sanaki was not only regarded as a martyr who was devoted to peacebuilding efforts, but his death also made members of the *Baku Bae* movement aware of a need to act carefully in a rapidly changing conflict context.

9 Steven Kelman, *Unleashing Change: A Study of Organizational Renewal in Government* (Brookings Institution Press, 2005).

### Stage Four: The peace campaign

Peace Campaigns were organised both at an international and national level. In Indonesia the Peace Campaigns took place in Jakarta, Jogjakarta, Surabaya, Makassar, Palu, Manado, and ended in Ambon. At the international level the campaign was organised in Belgium and in the Netherlands.

During the campaign period, the conflict was still at its peak in the Maluku Islands. During the peace campaign in Makassar, representatives of the *Baku Bae* movement were attacked, the meeting documents were torn and bombs were found in the venue<sup>10</sup>. A backlash against the *Baku Bae* movement also took place in Ambon. Militants from the Islamic and Christian groups justified their actions by accusing the people involved in the *Baku Bae* movement of being traitors.

Both parties to the conflict considered the campaign's usage of the term peace a betrayal; it was interpreted as an act of surrender to the other groups. Therefore, each group tried to prevent its members from being involved in the *Baku Bae* movement.

### Stage Five: The *Baku Bae* workshop for moderates

Despite the efforts of the Peace Campaign and meetings between the combatants and the victims, people's attitudes and emotions did not seem to change. To tackle the problem, the *Baku Bae*

10 Ade Nining, 'Reconciliation Effort, Baku Bae Campaign' <makasar.com> [accessed 18 December 2014].

movement felt that it was important to involve the middle classes in the reconciliation process. While the middle classes were affected by the conflict and occasionally got involved, they were not directly affected. As a result, together with the Alliance of Independent Journalists the *Baku Bae* movement conducted a workshop for 30 Muslim and Christian journalists in January 2001 in Bogor.

A variety of activities followed. In May 2001 workshops for 40 intellectuals and educators of Muslim and Christian background were held in Ambon and in Malang. The initial meeting of the Raja, the heads of villages in Ambon, was conducted in June 2001 in Ambon that resulted in a workshop for 20 Muslim and Christian religious leaders. Another workshop in November in Ambon involved 30 soldiers, police officers, and other public servants. A workshop for 30 lawyers from churches and the Al-Fatah mosque was held in January 2002 in Jakarta, while the workshop for 20 Raja of Muslim and Christian villages was conducted in July 2002 in Bogor.

### Stage Six: **Building of neutral zones and *Baku Bae* market**

In order to provide a platform for the two segregated communities to cooperate, especially regarding the economy, education and health, neutral zones and the *Baku Bae* market were built. According to the poll held in November 2000, issues of economy, education, and health were considered the most vital in the reconciliation process. At that time, the Maluku

Islands were in a state of a civil emergency and were under a daily curfew. Following negotiations with the military and police representatives, the *Baku Bae* market was successfully established by the end of July 2001 on the border between the Muslim and Christian communities. The *Baku Bae* movement also established a neutral zone in Nania, a border area between the Christian community in the Paso region and the Islamic community of the Leihitu peninsula. Another neutral zone was set in the heart of Ambon in the Pohon Pule region.

The principle of a "superordinate goal",<sup>11</sup> meaning the acceptance of a common goal to be achieved by both parties, was applied in the neutral zones and the *Baku Bae* market. Applying this principle resulted in a sense of interdependence between the two groups and demanded cooperation from both sides to the conflict.

### Stage Seven: **Small group consolidations**

In order to strengthen the commitment between the conflicting groups, as well as to enhance the socialisation through the reconciliation process, small group consolidations were organised. After the second *Baku Bae* workshop, a *Baku Bae* joint committee was established by a local NGO, a Maluku Media Centre was eventually formed by journalists, and a Legal Aid Lawyer (LBH *Baku Bae*) was established by lawyers. These undertakings actively enhanced the reconciliation process.

<sup>11</sup> Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto, *Social Dominance: An Intergroup Theory of Social Hierarchy and Oppression* (Cambridge University Press, 1999).

## Stage Eight: Lobby the elite

The *Baku Bae* movement lobbied elite groups and asked for support from the government, military, police, and religious organisations for the implementation of the *Musyawah Masyarakati Maluku* (The Gathering of the People of Maluku) for sustainable peace. The meeting was conducted with the President, the Parliament, the Governor of Maluku, the Commander, the Regional Police Chief, the Bishop, and the Leaders of the Protestant Church and the Islamic Council in Maluku.

## Stage Nine: The Baku Bae gathering

On January 11, 2003 in Ambon, the *Baku Bae* movement collaborated with Pattimura University in order to organise a *Musyawah Masyarakat Maluku* meeting for sustainable peace. More than 187 representatives of the different community groups attended the meeting. The attendees had previously been brought together by the *Baku Bae* workshops. All the attendees unanimously agreed that the violence in the Maluku Islands had to be stopped, society should be rebuilt and all the damage caused by the conflict should be repaired. Trauma recovery should also be provided for all the people of the Islands.

## Stage Ten: Institutionalising the movement

On 10 April 2003, three months after the *Musyawah Masyarakat Maluku* meeting, the facilitator and initiator of the *Baku Bae* movement founded Institut Titian Perdamaian (ITP), a peacebuilding institute in Jakarta. The Institute represents a transformation of the *Baku Bae* movement. ITP was established with the aim of preventing the recurrence of conflict in the Maluku Islands and in other areas in Indonesia and Asia. The institution also aims at educating campaigners for peace by building the conflict resolution capabilities among facilitators, peace activists, and intellectuals as well as the public domain. To date, 93 people have joined the Peace Facilitator training with a focus on Indonesia. The facilitators have also begun to study and work in other conflict zones such as South Africa, Mindanao and Myanmar. Seven years after the launch of the process, the ITP and the Raja village leaders involved in the *Baku Bae* movement eventually succeeded in establishing the *Majelis Latupati Maluku*, a congregation of 836 villages in the Maluku Islands. The main function of the Council is to act as a bridge between the people and the elites in sustaining peace in the Maluku Islands and to work on areas of conflict prevention.

### Closing remarks

Mediation conducted by the *Baku Bae* movement can be classified as transformative mediation,<sup>12</sup> in which a mediator encourages the conflicting parties to find their own solutions. As both parties feel recognised, the undertaking empowers both parties. The mediator should not be affiliated with either side of the conflict, and must not exercise any influence over

12 Ridley-Duff, Rory, and Anthony Bennett, 'Towards Mediation: Developing a Theoretical Framework to Understand Alternative Dispute Resolution', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 42 (2011)

either side, thus enabling sides to increase the level of comfort, hope and confidence towards each other and towards the reconciliation process itself.

The bloody conflict in the Maluku Islands, with its religious distinction, can be described as an “intractable conflict”<sup>13</sup> conveying the difficult nature of the conflict with little hope of resolution. Historical injustices, complex interrelated issues in the field of economics, politics and culture are among the root causes of the conflict. This high intensity conflict is very emotional, violent, full of insults and involves all levels of society. Such a complex, personal situation demands the creativity of the mediator, who must use local knowledge, local language and local approaches to address the situation.

Grassroots reconciliation or “bottom up reconciliation”,<sup>14</sup> as implemented by the *Baku Bae* movement, does not involve the political elite in order to encourage input from both the victims and perpetrators in the reconciliation process. The process takes the form of an informal workshop, and aims to build up gradually and sustainably.

The establishment of the Maluku Media Centre by journalists from Muslim and Christian groups to promote peace journalism indicates the sustainability of the peace efforts undertaken by the *Baku Bae* movement. The *Baku Bae* Legal Aid, established by lawyers belonging to Islamic and Christian groups, provides legal assistance to victims of conflict and resolves issues related to civil matters such as land, housing and refugees.

The *Baku Bae* movement does not emphasise forgiveness and

justice. Instead, the movement focuses on efforts to reintegrate the people of the Maluku Islands and encourages togetherness as a manifestation of bringing reconciliation to the Moluccans. The mediation process also resulted in the use of the term *Baku Bae* as a substitute for the word peace<sup>15</sup>. Peace and war are inherently linked to ideas of winning and losing, and can be characterised as a zero-sum situation. *Baku Bae*, on the other hand, is free from that connotation. Rather, *Baku Bae* implies a win-win situation. It frees the participants of the sense of shame involved in losing a conflict. The use of the word *Baku Bae* as a substitute for the word peace was crucial in the way it enhanced the reconciliation process by changing the discourse for the better.

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# About the authors

## Ana Bourse

Ana Bourse holds a graduate degree in International Relations and was appointed Executive Director at CRIES in 2013. She also works at the Secretariat of the Latin America and the Caribbean Chapter of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC LAC). She is currently the Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Chair of the Preventive Action Working Group of GPPAC.

She has been facilitating training courses on Monitoring & Evaluation and training courses on citizens' diplomacy throughout the region with CRIES and UNDP, aimed at building local and regional capacities of civil society organisations. She has also worked as a facilitator in dialogue and conflict transformation workshops for government officials in El Salvador, together with Dr. Edward Kaufman. Between 2009 and 2012 she participated in the co-facilitation team of the academic dialogue between the US and Cuba, known as the TACE Process.

In 2012 she participated in the validation of the *Practical Guide on Democratic Dialogue*, a publication of UNDP and the OAS, in collaboration with CRIES and IDEA.

## Steinar Bryn

Steinar Bryn has a Bachelor's and Master's degree from the University of Wisconsin and a Ph.D. in American Studies from the University of Minnesota. He has been a student, teacher, researcher and acting principal at the Nansen Academy. Over the last 15 years he has been developing dialogue centres in the Balkans. Steinar Bryn is responsible for the planning and implementing of inter-ethnic dialogue seminars in Lillehammer and in the Western Balkans.

Bryn has always prioritised lecturing, but is currently focusing on documenting and publishing his experiences in peace and reconciliation work. He is particularly concerned with transferring the experience from numerous years of dialogue work in the Balkans to other areas of conflict, including Norway.

He has received numerous awards, especially for the dialogue and reconciliation work done in some of Europe's most war-torn areas after World War II, such as: Prijedor, Srebrenica, Mitrovica and Kosovo Polje.

## George Khutsishvili

As a Professor and prominent Georgian conflict researcher, George Khutsishvili was one of the founders of the study of conflict in Georgia and the Caucasian region. Originally contributing significantly to the problem of infinity in the field of mathematics and philosophy, from the 1990s onwards he dedicated his life to establishing the academic field of peace and conflict studies in Georgia. Over the years he lectured at many different universities, published various journals and founded the independent non-profit organisation International Centre on Conflict Negotiation (ICCN).

In 1995 he initiated the Georgian-Abkhaz and Georgian-Ossetian dialogues. Through ICCN, public diplomacy was started through the remaining contacts that existed in the otherwise divided societies.

In 2003 he founded the Public Movement Against Religious Extremism, together with various other prominent figures, to counteract the violent actions of religious extremists that had been increasing at the time.

Professor Khutsishvili was one of the initiators and a founder of the Public Constitutional Commission (PCC). Created in response to the existing political crisis in the country, the PCC developed a completely new and more acceptable edition of the Constitution for the country, which was free from political and party interests. After the Russian-Georgian War in August 2008, Professor George Khutsishvili, initiated the Istanbul Process, a Georgian-Russian dialogue.

George Khutsishvili published over 200 articles and edited and co-authored many books. He remained involved in mediation in many different conflict zones throughout the world. In 2013, Professor George Khutsishvili sadly passed away at the age of 65. He is fondly remembered by his many colleagues in the fields of peacebuilding, mediation and conflict studies.

## **Ichsan Malik**

Ichsan Malik is a Chairman of Institut Titian Perdamaian Indonesia, and a member of the GPPAC Dialogue and Mediation Working Group representing the Southeast Asia network. He is the initiator and facilitator of Maluku's Baku Bae Peace Movement, which established peace in Maluku, Indonesia.

In 2009, he facilitated training on Conflict Early Warning and Early Response for the Shalom Foundation activities in Myanmar. In 2011, he became facilitator for teams from Nahdatul Ulama Indonesia to Create Peace in Afghanistan.

He obtained his Ph.D. in Peace Psychology from the University of Indonesia in January 2012 and currently lectures at the Department of Psychology at the University of Indonesia. Additionally, he lectures in Conflict Resolution at the Indonesian Defence University. With GPPAC South East Asia, he is involved in a solidarity mission to South Thailand, Kachin, Myanmar, and Mindanao, in 2013 and 2014.

Ichsan Malik received the Sani AhuSiwalima Award from the Congregation of Traditional Leaders of Maluku in 2011.

## Andrey Ryabov

Andrey Ryabov graduated from the Moscow State Historical Archive Institute with a Master's degree in Political History of Russia and the Soviet Union in 1978 and obtained his Ph.D. in History Archives in 1981.

Since 1992 he has worked as a political analyst and researcher of the Post-Communist transformation of Russia, becoming a well-known media commentator on Russian politics. From 1999 to 2013 Ryabov worked as a Scholar-in-Residence at Carnegie Moscow and as an expert at the Gorbachev Foundation.

He was one of the key figures from the Russian side in the Istanbul Process, and contributed his analysis of the relations between Russia and Georgia to the book *Russia and Georgia: The Ways Out of the Crisis*, published as part of the project.

Currently Andrey Ryabov is editor-in-chief of *World Economy and International Relations*, a journal of the Russian Academy of Science. He has authored a number of publications and articles on issues such as the contemporary Russian political system, democratisation and modernisation, the future of Post-Soviet transitions, identities and politics during Putin's presidency and many other subjects.

## Andrés Serbin

Andrés Serbin holds a Doctorate in Political Science and is currently the President of CRIES. He is the former Chair of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, and an appointed Adviser to the Board of the Argentine Council of International Relations.

He is a founding member of the International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect and of GPPAC. He is currently the Chair of the Dialogue and Mediation Working Group of GPPAC. He is also a founding member and current President Emeritus of the Board (1993-2013) of the Venezuelan Institute of Social and Economic Research. He retired as Full Professor of the Central University of Venezuela in 2001 and since 1990 holds the higher level (Categoría IV) as Emeritus Researcher at the Venezuelan National Council of Science and Technology.

He also served as Adviser to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Venezuela from 1991 to 1993 and as Director of Caribbean Affairs with the Latin America Economic System from 1995 to 1997. Since 1997 he is the Director of the trilingual academic journal *Pensamiento Propio*, and one of the editors of the Latin American and Caribbean Integration Yearbook. He has authored several books both in Spanish and English, edited more than 30 collective volumes in both English and Spanish, and published more than 200 academic articles in Spanish, English, French, German and Russian. His most recent book in Spanish is *Chávez, Venezuela y la reconfiguración política de América Latina y el Caribe*, published in 2011.

## List of abbreviations

<b>ANPP</b>	President of the National Assembly	<b>UNEAC</b>	Unión Nacional de Escritores y Autores de Cuba (National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba)
<b>AU</b>	American University	<b>UNESP</b>	Universidade Estadual de São Paulo (São Paulo State University)
<b>BI</b>	Brookings Institution	<b>UNDP</b>	United Nations Development Programme
<b>CARI</b>	Consejo Argentino para las Relaciones Internacionales (Argentine Council for International Relations)	<b>ITP</b>	Institut Titian Perdamaian (Peace Building Institute)
<b>CEEC</b>	Centro de Estudios de la Economía Cubana (Cuban Centre for Economic Studies)	<b>IDEA</b>	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
<b>CELAC</b>	Comunidad de Estados Latinoamericanos y Caribeños (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States)	<b>PCC</b>	Public Constitutional Commission
<b>CRIES</b>	Coordinadora Regional de Investigaciones Económicas y Sociales (Regional Coordination for Economic and Social Research)	<b>ICRtoP</b>	International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect
<b>GPPAC</b>	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict	<b>INVESP</b>	Instituto Venezolano de Estudios Sociales y Políticos (Venezuelan Institute of Social and Economic Studies)
<b>GPPAC LAC</b>	Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict Latin America and the Caribbean	<b>CONICYT</b>	Consejo Nacional de Investigaciones Científicas y Tecnológicas (National Council for Scientific and Technological Research)
<b>ICCN</b>	International Center on Conflict and Negotiation	<b>SELA</b>	Sistema Económico Latinoamericano y del Caribe (Latin American and Caribbean Economic System)
<b>KFOR</b>	Kosovo Force		
<b>KLA</b>	Kosovo Liberation Army		
<b>LAC</b>	Latin America and the Caribbean		
<b>LASA</b>	Latin American Studies Association		
<b>MINREX</b>	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Cuba		
<b>NDC</b>	Nansen Dialogue Centre		
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation		
<b>OAS</b>	Organization of American States		
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe		
<b>RIAC</b>	Russian International Affairs Council		
<b>TACE</b>	Taller Académico Cuba-EEUU (Cuban-United States Academic Workshops)		

## GPPAC Dialogue and Mediation Series

This book offers four stories about dialogue processes supported by members of the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC). They show that civil society plays a vital role in rebuilding trust and in enabling collaborations between communities and societies polarised by conflict.

The authors describe how the dialogue processes unfolded, and share resulting lessons and observations. They also present their views on the questions that need to be addressed in designing a meaningful process.

The first two stories provide an account of civil society contribution to normalising inter-state relations between the US and Cuba, and Russia and Georgia. The next two chapters offer chronicles of community dialogues between Serbs and Albanians in Serbia and Kosovo, and Christians and Muslims in Indonesia.

The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC) is a global network of peacebuilding organisations and practitioners. [www.gppac.net](http://www.gppac.net)

