# Encounters of the Local and the International in the Governance of Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Action

Kumulative Habilitationsschrift

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This cumulative Habilitation consists of seven publications that explore the encounters between the local and the international in the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action from different angles and in diverse settings:

1. Kristina Roepstorff (2022): "Localisation requires Trust: An Interface Perspective on the Rohingya Response in Bangladesh", *Disasters* 46(3): 610-632.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/disa.12483 (contribution 100%)

Abstract: Under the label of localisation, local actors are promoted as important agents in humanitarian responses in the humanitarian sector's latest reform efforts. Opinions on the exact meaning and best practices of implementing localisation however diverge. Applying an interface perspective, this paper analyses how, when it came to localisation, the Rohingya Response in Cox's Bazar became an arena of contestation, competition and sometimes convergence among different actors. The paper shows how misconceptions and divergent understandings of localisation, as well as best ways for implementing it, were prevalent and hampered the joint efforts of both international and local humanitarian actors. Though both sides sought common ground and engaged in dialogue, conflicting views, interests and perceptions of self and other stood in the way of a common vision to emerge. A lack of trust between the international and local actors further intensified divisions. The paper thus argues that the humanitarian sector needs to engage in trust-building efforts between the various actors involved in the humanitarian response if localisation is to be realised, including addressing underlying structural and systemic issues of (neo)colonialism, racism and classism.

2. Kristina Roepstorff (2020a): *"A call for critical reflection on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action"*, *Third World Quarterly*, 41(2): 284-301.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2019.1644160 (contribution 100%)

Abstract: Calls for a greater inclusion of local actors have featured for some time in debates on how to make humanitarian action more efficient and address unequal power relations within the humanitarian system. Though the localisation agenda is at the core of current reform efforts in the humanitarian sector, the debate lacks a critical discussion of underlying assumptions – most strikingly, the very conceptualisation of the local itself. It is argued that the current discourse is dominated by a problematic conceptualisation of the local in binary opposition to the international, leading to blind spots in the analysis of exclusionary practices of the humanitarian sector. As such the localisation agenda risks perpetuating the very issues it wants to redress. A critical localism is thus proposed as a framework for much needed research on the localisation agenda.

3. Siddharth Tripathi and Kristina Roepstorff (2020): "Decentering Peace and Conflict Studies: Conceptualisations of Peace in India", *Zeitschrift für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung*, 9(1): 1-21.

Abstract: Peace and Conflicts Studies (PCS) seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the causes of violence and war and ways to resolve conflicts around the world. Despite its global reach, key concepts and theories dominating the discipline's discourse originate primarily in European intellectual history and Northern experiences of violence and war, even though the "objects of study" are today predominantly located in the Global South. PCS needs to be decentered to live up to its cosmopolitan aspirations, and voices of different regions affected by conflict have to be incorporated to co-author the idea of peace. Examining the specific case of India, the article illustrates how the historical, religious and spiritual traditions and the politics of the subcontinent have informed Indian discourses on peace with the potential to fertilise global dialogues on peace and peacebuilding.

4. Kristina Roepstorff (2019): „Chance für den Frieden? Die Lokalisierungsagenda im Humanitären System im Nexus von Humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung", *Die Friedens-Warte. Journal of International Peace and Organization*, 92(1-2): 40-58.

Abstract: Calls for a greater inclusion of local actors into humanitarian action are far from new yet they have gained momentum in the wake of the World Humanitarian Summit 2016. However, the inclusion of local actors raises a range of questions, both conceptually and regarding its implementation. This is particularly the case in the interplay of humanitarian action and peacebuilding. This paper seeks to contribute to the debate on the humanitarian system's localisation agenda within the context of the humanitarian-peacebuilding nexus. It argues that further research should be guided by a critical localism (Mac Ginty 2015) that overcomes a simple binary opposition of the local and the international and looks at power asymmetries in the humanitarian system.

5. Kristina Roepstorff (2018): "Armed Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises: Insights from the Anthropology of War", in: Heintze, H. and Thielbörger, P. (eds.), *International Humanitarian Action: NOHA Textbook*, Berlin: Springer, 357-370.

Abstract: The anthropology of war covers a broad range of topics of high relevance to understand contemporary armed conflicts and humanitarian crises. Looking beyond the immediate facts of the situation and highlighting the social dimension of armed conflicts, it allows grasping the broader context in which humanitarian crises occur. Understanding war as part of the social reality of human

beings and lived experiences, anthropology can offer humanitarian actors important insights into the social dimensions of war and peace. With the discipline's comparative and holistic outlook, anthropology thus offers important insights into causes, dynamics and effects of armed conflict. This chapter provides an overview of some of the key debates and themes in the anthropology of war to contribute to the understanding of armed conflicts and humanitarian crises.

6. Kristina Roepstorff (2015): "India and the DAC-donors: divergence or convergence principles and practices of humanitarian aid?", in: Sezgin, Z. und Dijkzeul, D. (eds.), *The New humanitarians in International Practice: Emerging actors and contested principles*, Abingdon: Routledge, 45-63. (contribution 100%)

Abstract: India is commonly perceived as a major recipient of foreign aid. Recent studies however draw attention to India's growing importance as a donor of humanitarian and development assistance. This change has not only been met with enthusiasm by established donors as concerns have been raised how "new" donors like India, who operate outside the DAC system, may threaten established humanitarian principles and practices. To understand how India emerged as a donor and the ways in which it may challenge and change the existing aid regime, one has to understand the broader context of India's foreign policy principles and priorities - which are informed by a confluence of (cultural) norms, historical legacies and current strategic interests. This chapter, in line with constructivist theory, finds that India's humanitarian engagement is not only influenced by the existing humanitarian organizational environment but also actively changes and constructs it by accepting, rejecting or modifying humanitarian principles and practices. While India subscribes to the humanitarian principles in general, some major points of divergence with DAC donor's approaches to humanitarian action can be identified. At the same time, the gradual integration of India into the international aid regime may also foster a steady harmonisation of approaches.

7. Kristina Roepstorff and Anna Bernhard (2013): "Insider Mediation in Peace Processes: an untapped resource?", *S+F, Security and Peace*, 31(3): 163-169.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5771/0175-274x-2013-3-163 (contribution 50%)

Abstract: Mediation is considered an effective and peaceful tool for the resolution of conflicts and has become an important instrument in international peacemaking. Interest in mediation has surged in recent years both at the international and regional level. In line with the discussion of local ownership in peacebuilding literature and practice, there is also an increased call for including local 'insider mediators' in peace processes. So far, scholars have paid little attention to the role of insider mediators in peacemaking. To gain a better understanding of their actual and potential role in peace processes, a systematic analysis of the phenomenon of insider mediation is therefore indispensable.

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**Summary in German/ Deutsche Zusammenfassung**

Die Entstehung einer internationalen humanitären Ordnung und die globalen Bemühungen, Auswirkungen von Naturkatastrophen und bewaffneten Konflikten auf gefährdete Bevölkerungsgruppen zu mildern und friedvolle sowie widerstandsfähige Gesellschaften (wieder) aufzubauen, sind eine bemerkenswerte Entwicklung (Barnett 2013). Mit dieser Entwicklung einher geht eine Zunahme internationaler Interventionen im Namen der Menschlichkeit und in Form von humanitären Hilfsmaßnahmen und friedensfördernder Bemühungen. Sowohl die Friedensförderung als auch die humanitäre Hilfe mit ihren etablierten Verfahrensstandards und institutionellen Strukturen sind heute ein nicht mehr wegzudenkender Bestandteil der Global Governance - "der staatlichen, zwischenstaatlichen und nichtstaatlichen Bemühungen und Mechanismen zur Verwaltung gemeinsamer öffentlicher Güter und zur Lösung internationaler Probleme" (Dijkzeul und Sandvik 2019, eigene Übersetzung). Hierbei werden friedensfördernde und humanitäre Maßnahmen als getrennte Politikfelder der Global Governance erachtet, die ihr jeweils eigenes Organisationssystem, ihre eigenen Finanzierungskanäle, Akteure und Leitprinzipien besitzen. Tatsächlich: obwohl Friedensförderung und humanitäre Hilfe in den meisten Interventionskontexten gleichzeitig stattfinden, verfolgen sie unterschiedliche Ziele und haben ihre eigene Kultur und Identität als Teilbereiche der Global Governance entwickelt.

Während sich bei der Friedensförderung internationale, mandatierte Akteure um den Wiederaufbau der Gesellschaft, die Förderung der Versöhnung und die Beseitigung der strukturellen Bedingungen, die Kriege verursachen, bemühen (Paris 2004, Autesserre 2014, Mac Ginty 2011), erfolgt die humanitäre Hilfe als unmittelbare lebensrettende Maßnahme inmitten von Naturkatastrophen, Konflikten oder im Kontext von Vertreibung und Flucht und Gesundheitskrisen (Barnett und Weiss 2011, Walker und Maxwell 2009). In ihrer idealtypischen Form versteht sich die humanitäre Hilfe daher als eine kurzfristige, bedürfnisorientierte Intervention, die sich an den humanitären Prinzipien der Menschlichkeit, Neutralität, Unparteilichkeit und Unabhängigkeit orientiert, um eine Politisierung der Hilfe zu vermeiden und den Zugang zur betroffenen Bevölkerung zu gewährleisten (Barnett und Weiss 2011, Lieser 2013). Dem hingegen zielt die Friedensförderung auf die Schaffung von nachhaltigem (positiven) Frieden ab und widmet sich der Beseitigung der Konfliktursachen, der Unterstützung von

Friedens- und Versöhnungsprozessen, sowie der Förderung der politischen und ökonomischen Stabilisierung (Ramsbotham et al. 2016, Paris 2004). Damit stellt die Friedensförderung eine langfristige Intervention dar und erhebt nicht den Anspruch, unpolitisch zu sein.

Diese unterschiedlichen Selbstverständnisse haben zu einer Trennung beider Politikfelder geführt, die sich auch in der Entstehung von der Friedens- und Konfliktforschung und *Humanitarian Studies* als eigene Forschungsgebiete und wissenschaftliche Disziplinen widerspiegelt. Zunehmend untersuchen Wissenschaftler:innen aus dem Bereich der internationalen Beziehungen (IB) sowohl die Friedensförderung als auch die humanitäre Hilfe als Teil der Global Governance (siehe z. B. Lidén 2019). Aus diesen Forschungen geht hervor, dass, obgleich die Friedensförderung als ein eigenständiges Feld der Global Governance zu verstehen ist, sie Gemeinsamkeiten zur sogenannten humanitären Governance aufweist (Barnett 2015). Diese rechtfertigt auf der Grundlage einer Ethik der Fürsorge die institutionalisierten und internationalisierten Versuche, Leben zu retten und Leid in der Welt zu lindern (Barnett 2013). Kritische Stimmen haben auf den doppelten Aspekt von Fürsorge und Kontrolle in der humanitären Governance - und in der Globalen Governance im Allgemeinen - hingewiesen. Motiviert durch ein humanitäres Ethos, den Schwachen zu helfen, beinhaltet sie Praktiken, um über ihr Leben zu bestimmen, und schließt damit die Ausübung von Macht ein und kann Formen von Herrschaft und Kontrolle rechtfertigen (Barnett 2013, Garnier et al. 2018, Roepstorff 2020a, Fassin 2012). Wie Aalen (2020) folglich feststellt, sind "Macht und Ungleichheit somit zentrale Aspekte der humanitären Governance", die sich nicht nur in den Beziehungen zwischen Gebern und Empfängern widerspiegeln, sondern auch in der alltäglichen Praxis der Friedensförderung und humanitären Hilfe ihren Ausdruck finden (Autesserre 2014). Es ist daher nicht überraschend, dass die Forschung zu beiden Teilbereichen der Global Governance sich ähnelnde Praktiken aufgedeckt hat, die auf die beider Politikfelder zugrunde liegende Interventionslogik zurückzuführen ist. Diese Praktiken haben unter anderem zu einer Marginalisierung lokaler Akteure und der betroffenen Bevölkerung bei friedensfördernden und humanitären Maßnahmen geführt (l'Anson und Pfeifer 2013).

Eine Reihe unterschiedlicher Akteure engagiert sich in der Friedensförderung und der humanitären Hilfe und interveniert in bewaffnete Konflikte, Naturkatastrophen oder im

Kontext von Vertreibung und Flucht. Die lange Liste von Akteuren umfasst neben Staaten, Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NRO) und internationalen Organisationen auch Solidaritätsbewegungen und Aktivist:innen oder den Privatsektor (Barnett 2013). In diesen Interventionskontexten kommt es zu Begegnungen zwischen den Intervenierenden und den Menschen, die Ziel der Intervention sind. Ein Großteil der Forschung zu friedensfördernden und humanitären Maßnahmen befasst sich daher mit der Interaktion zwischen diesen verschiedenen Akteuren, und damit, warum Interventionen trotz gemeinsamer Bemühungen oft scheitern - der Fall Afghanistan ist eines der jüngsten tragischen Beispiele (siehe beispielsweise Paris 2004, Jarstad and Sisk 2008, Mac Ginty 2011, Schuller 2012, Krause 2014, Autesserre 2014, Smirl 2015, Hellmüller 2018). Dabei wird die generelle Ausgrenzung lokaler Akteure und der betroffenen Bevölkerung als ein zentraler Aspekt für das Scheitern von friedensfördernden und humanitären Maßnahmen ausgemacht. So fordern Wissenschaftler:innen in der Weiterentwicklung der Debatte um den *local turn* und auf Basis postkolonialer und poststrukturalistischer Argumente nicht nur eine stärkere Einbeziehung lokaler Akteure in die Friedensförderung, sondern eine radikalere Veränderung dominanter Praktiken, um inhärente Machtungleichgewichte in der Friedensförderung anzugehen (Leonardsson und Rudd 2015). Eine ähnliche Debatte hat sich auch im Bereich der humanitären Hilfe entfaltet, wo diese unter dem Stichwort der Lokalisierung geführt wird (Roepstorff 2020a). Einige Fragen bleiben bislang dabei unbeantwortet, unter anderem: wie das Lokale zu definieren ist; wie sich die Begegnungen zwischen dem Lokalen und dem Internationalen auf die Friedensförderung und humanitären Hilfe auswirkt; und weshalb, trotz aller Reformbemühungen im Sinne des *local turn* in der Friedensförderung und der Lokalisierung in der humanitären Hilfe, die Marginalisierung bestimmter Akteure, Stimmen und Perspektiven bestehen bleibt. Die Erkenntnisse aus der ausgeprägten Debatte zur Friedensförderung haben dabei kaum Eingang in den jüngeren Lokalisierungsdiskurs in der humanitären Hilfe gefunden (Roepstorff 2019).

Betrachtet man die parallelen Diskurse in der Friedensförderung und der humanitären Hilfe, wird deutlich, dass die Marginalisierung bestimmter Akteure, Stimmen und Perspektiven nicht durch eine bestimmte Interventionspraxis bedingt wird, sondern auf allgemeine und grundlegende Strukturen der Global Governance zurückzuführen ist. Um ein besseres Verständnis dieser Strukturen der Friedensförderung und der

humanitären Hilfe als Teilbereiche der Global Governance zu erlangen, wurde die Habilitation daher von der folgenden übergreifenden Forschungsfrage geleitet: *Wie prägt das Governance der Friedensförderung und der humanitären Hilfe die Begegnungen zwischen dem Lokalen und dem Internationalen in Interventionskontexten?*

Dieser Frage wurde in theoretischen Analysen und empirischer Forschung nachgegangen. Die einzelnen Beiträge der Habilitationsschrift bieten dabei Einblicke in die wissenschaftliche Debatte der Friedensförderung und der humanitären Hilfe, indem sie die folgenden drei Schlüsselthemen herausarbeiten, mit dem Ziel, bestehende Forschungslücken zu identifizieren und zu schließen:

- die Konzeptualisierung des Lokalen und des Internationalen in der Friedensförderung und der humanitären Hilfe
- die Begegnung zwischen dem Lokalen und dem Internationalen in der Friedensförderung und der humanitären Hilfe
- die systemischen und strukturellen Faktoren, die diese Begegnungen prägen, einschließlich Fragen der Machtverteilung innerhalb des internationalen Systems.

Darüber hinaus wirft die Habilitation methodische Fragen auf und schlägt die Anwendung ethnographischer Methoden in Kombination mit anderen Methoden des politikwissenschaftlichen Standardrepertoires vor, die eine dichte Beschreibung der Interventionskontexte und der Begegnungen des Lokalen und des Internationalen in der Friedensförderung und der humanitären Hilfe ermöglichen. Damit trägt sie zur aktuellen Debatte über eine ‚ethnographische Wende' in der Politikwissenschaft im Allgemeinen und den IB im Besonderen bei. Durch die Verknüpfung von Forschung zu Friedensförderung und humanitärer Hilfe fördert die Habilitation zudem die Verzahnung dieser beiden Gebiete der wissenschaftlichen Auseinandersetzung und politischen Praxis, die bisher weitgehend voneinander getrennt sind.

Die Ergebnisse der Forschung im Rahmen der Habilitation zeigen auf, wie bestehende Praktiken eine Reihe von Akteuren, Perspektiven und Ansätzen marginalisieren. Diese Praktiken sind tief in den Strukturen und Arbeitsweisen der Global Governance

verankert und finden Ausdruck in der Konzeptualisierung und der Begegnung des Lokalen und Internationalen in der Friedensförderung und der humanitären Hilfe. Besonders problematisch ist, dass dabei in der Regel die Stimmen derjenigen marginalisiert werden, die nicht nur von bewaffneten Konflikten, Hungersnöten oder Vertreibung betroffen sind, sondern als Zielgruppe der Interventionen zählen. Die Arbeit kommt zu dem Schluss, dass eine Dekolonisierung der Forschung und Praxis im Bereich der Friedensförderung und humanitären Hilfe Antworten auf den problematischen Doppelaspekt der Fürsorge und Kontrolle in der Governance von Friedensförderung und humanitärer Hilfe liefern kann.

Ein dekolonialer Ansatz in der Friedensförderung und der humanitären Hilfe hinterfragt eurozentrische Analysen und stellt die Erfahrungen und das Wissen der Zielgruppen der Interventionen in den Vordergrund (Rutazibwa 2019). Dies erfordert eine kritische Reflexion der Art und Weise, wie das Governance von Friedensförderung und humanitärer Hilfe problematische Praktiken von Herrschaft und Kontrolle, epistemischer Gewalt und Diskriminierung aufrechterhält. Für die Forschung bedeutet dies, den westlichen Wissensbestand durch subalterne Perspektiven zu ergänzen (Müller 2016, Alatas 2006, Mignolo 2000). Dies verlangt, die Welt aus einer pluralistischen und nicht aus einer monistischen Perspektive zu betrachten und deckt sich mit dem Vorwurf des Eurozentrismus an der IB-Disziplin (Bendix et al. 2020, Picq 2013). Über die Einbeziehung von Kultur- und Kontextwissen hinaus, wie es ethnographische Studien bieten (Roepstorff 2018, 2019), legen die Ergebnisse der Habilitation auch die Notwendigkeit einer Dekolonisierung der Forschungspraxis nahe - einschließlich der ethnographischen Forschung (Kaur und Klinkert 2021). Denkbar sind inklusive Forschungsmethoden, wie die partizipative oder gemeinschaftsbasierte Aktionsforschung (Smartt Gullion und Tilto 2020, Lykes und Scheib 2015), die Koproduktion von Wissen durch Forschungspartnerschaften (Lokot und Wake 2021, Fast 2019) und die Einbeziehung indigener Wissenssysteme (Smith 2021, Exo 2015).

## 1. Introduction

"Contemporary global governance is organized around an odd pairing: care and control. On the one hand, much of global governance is designed to reduce human suffering and improve human flourishing, with the important caveat that individuals should be allowed to decide for themselves how they want to live their lives. On the other hand, these global practices of care are also entangled with acts of control. Peacebuilding, public health, emergency aid, human rights, and development are expressions of this tension between care and control." (Barnett 2015)

The emergence of an international humanitarian order and global efforts to relieve the suffering of distant strangers and build peaceful societies around the world are remarkable developments (Barnett 2013). This has been accompanied by an increase in international interventions in the name of humanity, informing humanitarian action and peacebuilding efforts to save lives, mitigate the impact of natural hazards or wars on vulnerable populations and rebuild resilient societies. Both peacebuilding and humanitarian action with their established standards of procedure and institutional set-up today form part of global governance - "the governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental efforts and mechanisms to manage common public goods and address international issues" (Dijkzeul and Sandvik 2019).

Generally, peacebuilding and humanitarian action are considered separate policy fields of global governance, with their own system of organisation, funding channels, actors and guiding principles. Although peacebuilding and humanitarian action occur simultaneously in most intervention contexts, they follow different logics, pursue different goals and have developed a culture and identity of their own. In peacebuilding, international, mandated actors seek to rebuild societies, foster reconciliation and address the structural conditions that fuel wars (Paris 2004, Autesserre 2014, Mac Ginty 2011). International humanitarian action, on the other hand, refers to the immediate life-saving activities in the midst of natural hazards, conflicts or displacement (Barnett and Weiss 2011, Walker and Maxwell 2009). In their ideal-typical forms, humanitarian action is a short-term, needs-oriented intervention that is guided by the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence in order to avoid the politicisation of aid and to guarantee access to the affected population (Barnett and Weiss 2011, Lieser 2013), whereas peacebuilding is geared towards creating

sustainable (positive) peace by eliminating the causes of conflict and supporting peace and reconciliation processes as well as fostering political stabilisation (Ramsbotham et al. 2016, Paris 2004). As such, peacebuilding presents a long-term intervention and does not claim to be apolitical.

These different self-understandings have led to a segregation, or containerisation, of these subfields of global governance, which is not only reflected in the workings of the two sectors, but also in the emergence of peace and conflict studies and humanitarian studies as distinct fields of research and scholarly debate. While peacebuilding today constitutes an established area of research within peace and conflict studies, and international relations more generally, humanitarian action is still a niche topic. Saying that, a surge of interest in humanitarian action can be observed over the last years, culminating in the development of new teaching programmes and growing scholarship in humanitarian studies, reflected also in the relatively recent establishment of the *International Humanitarian Studies Association*.[1] Despite this separation both policy fields are "legitimated and organised in and around international institutions, norms, and laws, and undertaken in the name of compassion, care, and responsibility" (Barnett 2013). International relations (IR) scholars are thus increasingly studying peacebuilding and humanitarian action as subfields of global governance (see for example Lidén 2019). Though peacebuilding may be considered a distinct field of global governance, both peacebuilding and humanitarian action exhibit similarities in the way they govern with an ethics of care and control. In what Barnett (2013) has labelled humanitarian governance, an ethics of care informs the institutionalised and internationalised attempts to save lives and alleviate suffering around the world. Critical scholarship has drawn attention to this double aspect of care and control in humanitarian governance (and indeed, global governance in general). Motivated by a humanitarian ethos of helping the vulnerable, it involves practices of ruling their lives and as such includes the exercise of power, and may also justify forms of domination and control (Barnett 2013, Garnier et al. 2018, Roepstorff 2020a, Fassin 2012). As Aalen (2020) finds, "power and inequality are thus central aspects of humanitarian governance" that play out not only in donor-recipient relationships, but also in the everyday politics of

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[1] For more information see: https://ihsa.info/about/background/, last accessed 22.11.2021.

peacebuilding and humanitarian action (Autesserre 2014). It is thus not surprising that critical scholarship in both fields has uncovered some shared practices that are linked to the intervention rationale underlying both policy fields and sectors within the international aid system. These practices have, among other things, resulted in the marginalisation of local actors and the affected population in peacebuilding efforts and humanitarian responses (l'Anson and Pfeifer 2013).

Interventions to build peace or provide humanitarian assistance and protection are undertaken by a very diverse set of actors, including states, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations, solidarity movements and activists or the private sector (Barnett 2013). Such interventions produce encounters between the intervener and the people that are the targets of the intervention. Much of the research on peacebuilding and humanitarian action is thus linked to the interaction between these different actors and why interventions, despite concerted efforts, often fail – the case of Afghanistan being one of the latest tragic examples (see for instance Paris 2004, Jarstad and Sisk 2008, Mac Ginty 2011, Schuller 2012, Krause 2014, Autesserre 2014, Smirl 2015, Hellmüller 2018). Critical scholarship on peacebuilding interventions has identified the general side-lining of local actors and the affected population as a major reason for failed peacebuilding efforts. In the local turn debate, peacebuilding scholars have thus called for a greater inclusion of local actors into peacebuilding efforts in order to make interventions more effective, efficient and sustainable. Thereby the local turn debate in peacebuilding scholarship can be distinguished into two generations of critical studies and voices: while critical scholarship mainly promoted the concept of local ownership in peace interventions in what is now generally referred to as the first local turn, the second local turn calls for a more radical shift in peacebuilding practice and builds on postcolonial and poststructuralist arguments in order to address inherent power imbalances in peacebuilding interventions (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015). A similar debate has unfolded in the humanitarian field. In a critique of current dominant practices and an alleged general marginalisation of local actors and the affected population in the humanitarian response, the concept of localisation and locally-led humanitarian action has prompted calls for fundamental reforms of humanitarian practice and the humanitarian system itself (Roepstorff 2020a, see also Dijkzeul 2021).

Looking at the analogous discourse in peacebuilding and humanitarian action, it becomes evident that the marginalisation of certain actors, voices and perspectives cannot be linked to one particular intervention practice, but rather to more general and fundamental aspects of the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action. However, several questions remain unanswered, among others: how to define the local; how the encounters between the local and the international affect peacebuilding and humanitarian action; and why, despite all reform efforts under the banners of the local turn in peacebuilding and localisation in humanitarian action, the marginalisation of certain actors, voices, and perspectives persists. In this regard, insights from the distinctive peacebuilding debate have hardly found their way into the more recent localisation discourse in humanitarian assistance (Roepstorff 2019). To gain a better understanding of the fundamental and general workings of the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action and fill existing research gaps, the Habilitation has thus been guided by the following overarching research question: *How does the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action shape the encounters of the local and the international in intervention contexts?*

To answer the research question, the different papers that make up the Habilitation study the encounters of the local and the international in the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action from different perspectives and in different settings. Apart from examining these encounters in specific intervention contexts, the Habilitation addresses more systemic and structural factors that shape the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action. Theoretical and empirical research findings offer insights into the following three key topics, thereby identifying and closing existing research gaps:

- the conceptualisation of the local and the international in peacebuilding and humanitarian action
- the encounters between the local and the international in peacebuilding and humanitarian action
- and, on a more fundamental level, the systemic and structural factors in the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action.

Reflecting on the methodology, the Habilitation raises questions on how to study these encounters and proposes the combination of ethnographic methods that offer thick descriptions of intervention contexts and the everyday politics of peacebuilding and humanitarian action with other methods of the standard political science repertoire. Moreover, by connecting critical scholarship on peacebuilding and humanitarian action, the Habilitation contributes to the field of international relations in several ways. Firstly, it furthers the cross-fruition of these two areas of academic investigation and political practice that have largely been separated. Moreover, it contributes to the development and advancement of humanitarian studies as an academic discipline. Additionally, the Habilitation contains methodological reflections on the use of ethnographic methods in political science and thereby adds to the current debate on an 'ethnographic turn' in political science in general, and international relations in particular.

The next section presents the main findings from the Habilitation research on the three key topics outlined above and reflects on the methodology of the research conducted. This is followed by a conclusion and an outlook for further research, promoting a decolonial approach to research and practice in the field of peacebuilding and humanitarian action.

**2. The Local and the International in Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Action**

Both peacebuilding and humanitarian action as part of global governance present intervention practices of concern for IR scholars. Thereby, intervention contexts are shaped by encounters between external (international) interveners, the affected population and local/national responders. The cumulative Habilitation looks at these encounters from different perspectives and within various settings. The research was guided by the initial observation of the potentially conflictual nature of these encounters and the power dynamics that unfold in intervention contexts, which mirror more structural and systemic factors of the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action. Amid the research, three key themes emerged: first, the problematic conceptualisation of the local and the international; second, the tense encounters of the local and the international and how they affect peacebuilding and humanitarian action interventions; and underlying systemic and structural factors that shape these encounters and that manifest themselves, among other things, in epistemic violence, discrimination and racism and the unequal distribution of power in the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action.

*2.1. Conceptualisations of the Local and the International*

There are flaws within current intervention practices, and there is much critique on international interventions in the name of peacebuilding and humanitarian action. As the prevailing narrative goes, interventions have not yielded the envisioned results, and efficiency and effectiveness are lacking. At a more fundamental level, the critique hides the uneasiness with prevailing intervention practices that exhibit the power dynamics at play in global governance, and which seem to be a continuation of colonial practices and the civilising mission (Barnett 2013, Paulmann 2013, Lidén 2011). Critical voices of dominant intervention practices identify the side-lining of local actors and the tense relations between the interveners and the 'beneficiaries' as a basic problem that often results in the resistance to peacebuilding or humanitarian efforts (Mac Ginty 2011, Autesserre 2014). The encounters of the international and the local in peacebuilding and humanitarian action interventions have thus become a topical line of scholarly inquiry, a challenge for policymakers and an everyday experience for practitioners.

Indeed, assessments of interventions have revealed how dominant approaches to peacebuilding and humanitarian action marginalise certain actors and voices. Whether it is insider mediators in peace processes (Roepstorff and Bernhard 2013) or local actors in humanitarian action (Roepstorff 2019, 2020a), they are marginalised within a system in which a few (Global North) actors shape international intervention practices (Roepstorff 2015 and 2020a) and hold monopoly over the meanings of peace or humanitarianism (Tripathi and Roepstorff 2020, Roepstorff 2015). Once this problem is identified, it is a natural next step to see the solution in emancipatory and inclusive approaches to peacebuilding, as reflected in the so-called local turn debate (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015, Visoka 2021) and the localisation of humanitarian action (Roepstorff 2020a). As illustrated in *Armed Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises: Insights from the Anthropology of War,* this critique is shared by anthropologists who have questioned internationally driven peacebuilding interventions and emphasised the local potential for peace, studying peacebuilding activities at the grass-roots level, including the role of ritual for peacebuilding and reconciliation.

*A call for critical reflection on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action* discusses the two local turns in peacebuilding scholarship - from the first local turn of the 1990s to the current second local turn informed by postcolonial and poststructuralist theory. In a critique of standardised forms of peacebuilding interventions along the liberal peace paradigm, the two local turns in peacebuilding scholarship emphasise the importance of civil society actors, indigenous visions of peace in bottom-up approaches for sustainable peacebuilding, local infrastructures for peace and hybrid peace formations (Hellmüller 2020, Richmond 2013, Mac Ginty 2010). The local now features dominantly in the peacebuilding discourse, as it did in the development sector before and increasingly does so in the humanitarian field. Using insights from critical peacebuilding scholarship, the article extrapolates insights from peacebuilding research to scrutinise the localisation agenda in humanitarian action. It finds that the critique of a lacking conceptualisation of the local, the underlying binary opposition of the international and the local, as well as a Eurocentric worldview (Paffenholz 2015) can be extended to the current localisation discourse in the humanitarian sector.

Indeed, the problematic conceptualisation of the local vis-à-vis the international was one of the key themes that ran like a red line throughout the research for the Habilitation. Not only in relation to insider mediators (Roepstorff and Bernhard 2013),

but also in the context of the localisation agenda in humanitarian action (Roepstorff 2019, 2020a and 2021), a critical reflection of the labels 'local' and 'international' were at the heart of the inquiry. Findings from the analyses of the peacebuilding and humanitarian action discourse show that both labels are used in reference to a long list of a very diverse set of actors (Roepstorff 2013, 2020a, 2021). Different opinions on who is considered the local (and the international) circulate in academic writings, policy papers and practitioners' discussions. Some have thus suggested using the categories of insiders and outsiders instead. However, as it is argued in *Insider Mediation in Peace Processes: an untapped resource?*, attempts to differentiate between the insider and the outsider are as unproductive as the categorisation of the local and international as it is far from clear who should be considered as an insider or outsider in a given context. Rather, as the article concludes, it seems to be a question of both subjective and objective ascriptions and perceptions.

The perceptual nature of the categories of the local and the international is further worked out in *A call for critical reflection on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action*. Taking up the discussion of the second local turn in peacebuilding scholarship, the article critically engages with the current discourse on localisation in humanitarian action. As in the peacebuilding field, the marginalisation of local actors has come under increasing critique in the humanitarian sector. Donors and humanitarian organisations have thus committed themselves to the localisation agenda with concrete steps to reform the humanitarian system. Intriguingly, the localisation discourse in humanitarian action has largely ignored the parallel debate in peacebuilding scholarship (Roepstorff 2019, 2020a). However, much could be learned from the ongoing debate on the second local turn, not only when it comes to the very definition of the local, but also why - despite good intentions - the current ways of working are so resistance to change.

Similar to previous discussions in the peacebuilding field, the humanitarian sector struggles with conceptualising the local. Different views on who and what presents the local lead to different visions of how localisation should be implemented. The definition of the local is therefore not only a theoretical endeavour, but has implications for humanitarian practice. As argued in Roepstorff (2019), the various definitions of the local circulating in the humanitarian sector may result in the exclusion of certain actors.

For instance, the Charter4Change explicitly refers to NGOs from the Global South as local actors – which leads to an exclusion of local actors in the Global North that are active on Lampedusa, Lesbos or have provided humanitarian assistance in the wake of Hurricane Katrina (Roepstorff 2020a). Further investigation and empirical research on local humanitarian action in the context of forced migration moreover shows how the local is commonly equated with the host community, with refugee-led organisations being largely overlooked (Roepstorff 2021, see also Pincock et al. 2021). The same research also uncovers the way the label of the local is ascribed in terms of relative size and power (Roepstorff, 2021, see discussion below).

Underlying the discourse on the local turn in peacebuilding scholarship and localisation in humanitarian action is the distinction between the local and the international as binary opposites. *A call for critical reflection on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action* traces the colonial legacies and Eurocentric tendencies of this categorisation. As has been argued by postcolonial scholars and taken up by critical peacebuilding scholarship, the labelling of the local and international in peacebuilding and humanitarian action is based on an underlying ontological distinction that contrasts the 'Western'/'international/modern' to the 'non-Western'/'local'/traditional Other' (Kapoor 2008, Lidén and Jacobsen 2016). Following Paffenholz (2015), the paper argues that understanding the local and international as binary opposites has led to a blind spot on the role of local elites and non-Western international actors as well as an excessive critical focus on the international. It thus suggests a reconceptualisation of the local in line with a critical localism proposed by peacebuilding scholarship to overcome the problematic dichotomy of the local and the international and the associated (colonial) thought patterns. Such a critical localism understands the local as a complex conception of the everyday and space of action (Richmond 2011) and as a shifting, fluid concept that is highly contextual, relative and which is a site of ongoing construction and reconstruction (Mac Ginty 2015). Applying a critical localism in the study of the encounters of the international and the local understands the local not as a site that is opposed to the international, but one that is constructed within webs of power and politics in which different actors operate and interact. This includes the power with which some actors can define the local and determine how it is used (Mac Ginty 2015, Lambek 2011, Sabaratnam 2013). This also allows the analysis of heterogeneous interests and complex relationships between the various actors in the humanitarian

arena, in which 'being local' becomes a political resource and actors that claim to represent the local function as gatekeepers in the access to people in need and the distribution of aid (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010, Bräuchler 2018). For researchers, but also for practitioners, this requires a closer examination of the politics of the multi-local (Melis and Apthorpe 2020) in specific intervention contexts and at social interfaces (Long 2011) in which actors employ (discursive) strategies to legitimise their actions, gain access to people in need and generate social practices of inclusion and exclusion.

Applying the theoretical reflections on the constructions of the local and the international (Roepstorff and Bernhard 2013, Roepstorff 2019 and 2020a) to an empirical case study confirmed the relational understanding of the local and the usefulness of critical localism as a research strategy. The article *Localisation requires Trust: An Interface Perspective on the Rohingya Response in Bangladesh* not only illustrates the nuanced and relational understandings of the local, but also shows how being local became a resource in a competitive humanitarian arena (see also Miklian et al. 2011 on peacebuilding in Nepal). Research in the specific context of the Rohingya Response in Cox's Bazar exposed the ways in which actors used the label of the local in order to legitimise their presence and their actions. Moreover, the label of the local was commonly used in reference to the comparative size and powers of the organisation – the smaller the organisation and less leverage in the humanitarian arena, the more local it was considered.

Research on the conceptualisations of the local and international in peacebuilding and humanitarian action has thus shown that the distinction between the local and the international present an oversimplification of the complex encounters in international intervention contexts (Roepstorff 2021, 2020a, 2019 and 2013). This is not only reflected in the ambivalent use of these labels in the international discourse (Roepstorff 2020a), but also has concrete effects on peacebuilding and humanitarian action interventions.

## *2.2. Encounters between the Local and the International*

A wide range of actors in different capacities are involved in the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action, ranging from donor states, regional and

international organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), philanthropic individuals and societies to solidarity and diaspora groups and the private sector (Barnett 2013). It is this encounter between the many actors that informed the research for the Habilitation. As has been shown above, scholars, practitioners and policymakers alike thereby commonly juxtapose the international intervener to the declared local beneficiary of the intervention.

A common trope in the discourse on these local-international encounters is the complementarity of efforts and resources, and the comparative advantage of the different actors involved. This is not only reflected in the call to make humanitarian action "as local as possible and as international as necessary" (Barbelet 2018), but also discussed in a number of policy documents and scholarly enquiries of these encounters. This comparative advantage and complementary nature of different actors is a central aspect discussed in *Insider Mediation in Peace Processes: an untapped resource?* The importance of engaging with local actors involved in peace mediation has been acknowledged both in theory and practice. Most notably, the 2012 UN Guidance for Effective Mediation not only promotes the cooperation with and support of local actors to foster mediation capacity, but also encourages the use of indigenous forms of conflict management and dispute resolution. Research has shown that local mediators play a critical role in peace processes, amongst other things by linking external mediation efforts with local peace processes (Giessmann and Wils 2011). However, the question arises to what extent ideals of mediation professionalism clash with local ideas and practices of mediation and peacemaking (see also Mac Ginty 2011). Considering the proposed collaboration of local and international mediation actors, this begs the question of how they may work together and complement each other in specific peace processes. Looking at the encounters of local and international, or insider and outsider mediators, it is argued that in line with findings from peacebuilding literature, hybrid forms of mediation emerge. However, the paper identifes a research gap regarding the ways insider mediators may complement external peace mediation efforts or how the different actors interact in specific peace processes. What is highlighted in the scholarly and practitioners' discourse on insider mediation is, however, the idea of a comparative advantage of local and international actors in these processes – something that reverbates in the discourse on the localisation of humanitarian action.

The ways in which local actors may foster peace and reconciliation in conflict contexts while also providing humanitarian assistance and protection is discussed in reference to the Triple Nexus debate in *Chance für den Frieden? Die Lokalisierungsagenda im Humanitären System im Nexus von Humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung*. Despite the broad support of the so-called Triple Nexus of development, humanitarian action and peace, the consensus of the humanitarian sector remains fixed on the idea that humanitarian actors should limit their contribution to conflict-sensitive programme planning without becoming more actively involved in peacebuilding activities. With ambivalent findings on the potential contribution of local humanitarian actors in peacebuilding efforts, the article concludes that further empirical studies that offer thick descriptions of the intertwining of humanitarian action and peacebuilding in the humanitarian arena and the various actors involved are needed to determine the conditions under which local organisations, grassroots movements or *ad hoc* actions that unite across conflict lines could contribute to sustainable conflict transformation and peacebuilding in humanitarian settings. Similarily to findings presented in *A call for critical reflection on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action,* the comparative advantage of local actors is thereby generally linked to their in-depth context-knowledge, socio-cultural closeness to the affected population and their embeddedness in local social structures. This embeddedness and closeness to the affected population may however also jeopardize their efforts or carry security risks for local actors.

The assumption that local actors are per definition better placed to assess and identify needs due to their closeness to the affected population is indeed challenged on at least two grounds that are linked to the politics of the multi-local (Melis and Apthorpe 2020): first, depending on how the local is constructed (or who is considered as representing the local), this may include national elites that do not coincide with the affected population and as such may not share the same experiences, perspectives and needs (Lidén 2011, Paffenholz 2015). The local is not a homogenous group and power struggles play a role not only in international-local relations, but between local actors too, as documented in *Localisation requires Trust: An Interface Perspective on the Rohingya Response in Bangladesh.* Second, it carries the risk of producing blind spots regarding the space of action of local humanitarian actors (Roepstorff 2020b). Research on these encounters thus exposes the power struggles and practices of exclusion that

are being exercised in the governance of humanitarian action and peacebuilding and at various levels.

Indeed, the research on local humanitarian action in the Rohingya response showed how constructions of the self and other materialised in the context of localisation, with attempts to legitimise and delegitimise certain actors or their ways of working. 'Being local' became a resource in a competitive humanitarian arena in which the different actors were working against each other. Looking at the intersecting worlds of international aid workers and local humanitarian actors, the research showed how the Rohingya Response in Cox's Bazar presented a humanitarian arena in which power struggles also found their expression in divergent interpretations of localisation, thereby challenging dominant discourses and practices prevalent in the humanitarian sector. The research finds that although international actors had more power to shape the response, local actors used different strategies to challenge the ways the response was carried out and how localisation was interpreted and implemented.

This resonates with findings from research in India as a humanitarian actor, which challenge dominant discourses about the very meaning of humanitarian action and the practices that emerge from it. *India and the DAC-donors: divergence or convergence principles and practices of humanitarian aid?* argues that while India in general subscribes to the humanitarian principles, a major divergence to DAC donor approaches to humanitarian action can be identified that are shaped by Indian cultural values and foreign policy tradition. It moreover argues that by taking up the role of the leader speaking on behalf of countries in the Global South since independence, India has the potential to change and (re)construct the international aid regime.

As stated above, *Localisation requires Trust: An Interface Perspective on the Rohingya Response in Bangladesh* similarly shows how dominant definitions and practices were also challenged in this particular humanitarian arena, where struggles over meanings and practices arose (Long and Jinlong 2009). However, and as the article concludes, below the surface of these struggles lays a deep-seated mistrust between the different actors, amplified by the separated spaces they inhabit (see also Smirl 2015). The paper thus suggests that in order to fill localisation with meaning and implement it in humanitarian practice, the humanitarian sector needs to turn its attention to trust-building efforts between the different actors and invest in fostering their positive

relationships. This should include addressing the more fundamental issues of existing power imbalances, including the effects of (neo)colonialism, racism and classism in the governance of humanitarian action. This finding is echoed in the analysis of India as a humanitarian actor that shows how the growing engagement of Southern actors is met with suspicion and fear (Roepstorff 2015) and in the concerns raised regarding the inclusion of insider mediators in peace processes (Roepstorff and Bernhard 2013).

### 2.3. Systemic and Structural Factors

Research on the encounters of the local and the international in different intervention contexts has shown that in order to address shortcomings of current intervention practices and the governance in peacebuilding and humanitarian action, many of the reform efforts remain band-aid solutions if systemic and structural factors are not taken into account. Unequal power relations and a trust-deficit not only impact on the quality of relationships between the intervener and the affected populations, the humanitarian response and peacebuilding activities, but also raise questions of knowledge production and epistemological aspects in the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action. Struggles over meaning, expertise and knowledge are not only evident in the practices of peacebuilding (Roepstorff and Bernhard 2013) and humanitarian action (Roepstorff 2015 and 2021), but also in the different and sometimes conflicting interpretations of underlying concepts such as humanitarian action (Roepstorff 2015) or peace (Roepstorff 2019, Tripathi and Roepstorff 2020) themselves. For instance, and very fundamentally, one needs to ask the question 'whose peace' when peacebuilding interventions take place. In what Bräuchler (2018) has referred to as a cultural turn, peacebuilding scholarship has thus turned its attention to the cultural context and culturally determined conceptualisations of conflict, security and peace. However, this has so far not been accompanied by the required change in research culture. *Armed Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises: Insights from the Anthropology of War* shows how ethnographic studies that focus on everyday experiences of violence have challenged a narrow conceptualisation of war as being apart from the ordinary and have placed it in the daily lived experience of people. In this reading, war and peace are then not exclusive but coexisting social realities. Anthropologists have thus shown, if war is a social construct, so is peace. Fontan (2012) thus maintains that decolonising peace

studies not only "calls for an introspection of all aspects of the peace industry", but also the very concept of peace itself.

This argument is taken up in *Decentering Peace and Conflict Studies: Conceptualisations of Peace in India,* showing that many of the concepts and theories that are part of the toolkit in peace and conflict studies (and inform intervention practices), despite its many critical 'turns', are built on the legacies of a Eurocentric worldview (Müller 2016, Hobson 2012). As the article shows, the dominant conceptualisations found in peace and conflict studies can be traced back to religious and philosophical traditions in Europe (Tripathi and Roepstorff 2020). Though the article stresses the cross-fruition beyond the Global North and Global South divide, it also argues that the centres of knowledge production, gate-keeping institutions and funding opportunities are to a large part located in the Global North. As a result, the discipline's standard approaches and theories have acquired "a Gramscian hegemony" over the epistemological foundations of scholarship in India (ibid.).

Hegemonic power is thus not limited to the entanglement of peacebuilding and humanitarian action with other (foreign) policy objectives but more fundamentally refers to the continued marginalisation of different notions of peace or humanitarianism and ways of knowledge production. The ways of knowledge production, epistemic and gate-keeping practices that are dominant in the scientific community lead to the further invisibilisation of other voices and practices (Brunner 2018, Kapoor 2008, Spivak 1988, Mignolo 2002). Apart from disciplinary gate-keeping practices, an analysis of the IR discourse in India shows that it is generally not produced by scholars from the Global South but is "borrowed" or "adapted" from the Global North. This is due to the continuing predominance of the structures of Western philosophy backed by powerful institutions and the "intellectual dependency" of the Global South on the Global North (Behera 2008, Alatas 2006).

The dominance of Northern concepts in peace research and peacebuilding practice is also found in the discourse on mediation as a way to resolve and transform conflict. As laid out in *Armed Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises: Insights from the Anthropology of War,* ethnographic studies of different societies show a wealth of peaceful means by which conflicts are settled, including self-redress, avoidance, toleration, negotiation

and third-party intervention such as mediation. *Insider Mediation in Peace Processes: an untapped resource?* shows how international peace mediation is shaped by a Western ideal of professionalism that understands it as a formal process that follows a certain structure and makes use of a specific mediation toolkit of communicative strategies. Anthropological insights into the relationship between culture and conflict resolution has thereby informed theoretical models of mediation and reconciliation and has been put into practice by people working on conflict transformation and peacebuilding. At the same time, anthropological and sociological insights on conflict management practices in different societies challenge the universality of the formal model of mediation with its specific ideas about the proper process of mediation and the role of the mediator (Golbert 2009, Merry 1984, Mac Ginty 2011).

The Habilitation research shows that the invisibilisation of different voices – or 'epistemological violence' (Brunner 2018) - is not only limited to the concept of peace and practices of peacebuilding (Exo 2015), but that similar issues are also prevalent in humanitarian action. In *India and the DAC-donors: divergence or convergence principles and practices of humanitarian aid?* it is argued that for decades the discourse and practice of foreign aid has been dominated by a small group of industrialised states that have joined in the OECD Development Assistance Committee's (DAC) and who have established a set of principles, norms and best practices for delivering official development assistance (ODA), including humanitarian action. In recent years so-called "emerging donors"' or "new donors" who, to a large extent operate outside the framework of the DAC, have entered the humanitarian sector – with one of them being India. As the book chapter argues, the labelling of these donors as 'new' or 'emerging' is already problematic in itself, considering their long-standing record of providing aid. It thus contributes to the scholarly debate on humanitarian action in at least two ways: first, it addresses the problematic use of labels in reference to donors that operate outside of the DAC framework and as such highlights the exclusionary practices of the humanitarian sector and the ways in which actors from the Global South are met with suspicion; and second, it provides an in-depth examination of India's engagement in the humanitarian sector and its approach to humanitarian action, locating it within the broader cultural context. It shows how humanitarianism and the idea of giving to the needy lie at the heart of Indian cultural values and political identity (Meier and Murthy 2011; Bornstein 2012; Mauss 1990). Different conceptualisations of humanitarianism

and political norms have led India, together with other non-DAC actors like Brazil, to challenge the current hierarchical structures of the international aid regime. This finds its expression not only discursively in the preference of terms like 'partnership' over 'cooperation', but also in concrete humanitarian practices and standard approaches of providing aid (Roepstorff 2015).

Conceptually, donors such as India and Brazil usually – at least until recently – did not differentiate between the different policy sectors of development, peacebuilding and humanitarian action (Roepstorff 2015). This is not only reflected in donor policies and official discourse but also in the identity and ways civil society actors work, as shown in *Chance für den Frieden? Die Lokalisierungsagenda im Humanitären System im Nexus von Humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung* and *Localisation requires Trust: An Interface Perspective on the Rohingya Response in Bangladesh*. The (dominant) theoretical distinction of peacebuilding and humanitarian action interventions and the consequences for humanitarian practice is further examined in *Chance für den Frieden? Die Lokalisierungsagenda im Humanitären System im Nexus von Humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung*. It shows how local humanitarian actors challenge the conceptual and practical distinction between peacebuilding and humanitarian action. The question then arises whose understanding of humanitarian action or peace should guide interventions. The existence of vernacular humanitarianism, different conceptualisations of peace, modes of knowledge production and the experience of epistemological violence, among other things, call for a critical engagement with current practices that are embedded within, and therefore may perpetuate, problematic aspects of global governance, manifested in the exercise of domination and control and the marginalisation of certain actors, voices and perspectives at both a conceptual and practical level.

## 2.4. Methodological Reflections

The research conducted for the Habilitation is based on both theoretical and empirical analysis of the encounters of the international and the local in peacebuilding and humanitarian action within the broader framework of global governance. Thus, the argument is developed both deductively and inductively. Combining both inductive and deductive reasoning is here believed to strengthen the "interplay between theory and

practice", linking bottom-up approaches with conceptual considerations (Montison 2018). Conducting research implies a constant movement - one moves back and forth between theory, methodology and empirical material (Bueger and Gadinger 2018).

The arguments presented in the Habilitation have been developed on the basis of desk research that included academic literature on humanitarianism and peacebuilding and more general writings on local-international relationships as to be found, for instance, in postcolonial scholarship, but also in area studies and IR; relevant official documents and policies on the topic, such as the Grand Bargain, the Charter4Change, government statements, or UN documents; reports and case studies published by think tanks and (I)NGOs. This resulted in a systematic analysis and building of a theoretical argument regarding the role of insider mediators in peace processes (Roepstorff and Bernhard 2013), the localisation discourse in the humanitarian sector generally (Roepstorff 2020a) and in relation to the peacebuilding-humanitarian nexus debate in particular (Roepstorff 2019). Furthermore, the analysis and discussion of India's humanitarian policy and practice encompassed the study of relevant government documents, policy papers and scholarly articles on the topic (Roepstorff 2015); while an analysis of conceptualisations of peace in India relied on a scholarly discussion of the relevant academic literature, guided by postcolonial and decolonial thinking, and the integration of insights from expert interviews for further substantiation of the argument (Tripathi and Roepstorff 2020). To gain a deeper understanding of the encounters of the international and local in peacebuilding and humanitarian action and to enhance the theoretical argument, empirical studies are however required. As argued in Roepstorff (2019) and elsewhere, empirical studies offering a thick description of intervention contexts as well as a transdisciplinary research orientation are particularly suitable for investigating the encounters of different actors in the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action. The Habilitation therefore argues for a combination of ethnographic methods that offer thick descriptions of interventions contexts and the everyday politics of peacebuilding and humanitarian action with other methods of the standard political science repertoire.

Reflections on the specific insights that anthropological studies of war and humanitarian crises have to offer (Roepstorff 2018) informed the use of ethnographic methods for examining peacebuilding and humanitarian action interventions,

culminating in an empirical study on local humanitarian action in the context of the Rohingya Response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, for which six weeks of field research were conducted in February and March 2019 (Roepstorff 2021). Moreover, findings from field research in India[2] and Italy[3] were included in the theoretical analysis of the role of insider mediators in peace processes (Roepstorff and Bernhard 2013), the localisation agenda in humanitarian action (Roepstorff 2020a), and the nexus of peacebuilding and humanitarian action (Roepstorff 2019). Pre-existing area and context knowledge that were acquired through several research stays in India informed the studies on India as humanitarian actor (Roepstorff 2015) and Indian conceptualisations of peace (Tripathi and Roepstorff 2020).

*Armed Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises: Insights from the Anthropology of War* shows how ethnographic studies can offer important insights into the dynamics and effects of armed conflicts and humanitarian situations. By focussing on the lived experiences of the different actors involved, ethnographic studies enrich our understanding of intervention contexts. Interested in the social dimension of intervention contexts and the encounters of the local and the international in peacebuilding and humanitarian action, the empirical research for the Habilitation (and beyond) thus made use of ethnographic methods within an interpretivist research design. In contrast to a realist-objectivist methodology that rests on the assumptions of an objective social world in which knowledge can be achieved through observation, the constructivist-interpretivist methodology "rests on the belief in the existence of (potentially) multiple, intersubjectively constructed 'truths' about social, political, cultural, and other human events" (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow 2012). These multiple perceptions are to be accessed or co-generated through the interactions between the researchers and researched as they interpret events or phenomena. Ethnographic methods lend themselves well to such a research methodology, as they seek to "make sense of how others make sense of the world" (Kuus 2013).

Traditionally, ethnographic studies looked at the micro-level of a single bounded

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[2] Unpublished findings from research on conflict-induced displacement in Assam, North-East India, funded by the Government of Canada and for which three weeks of field research were conducted in 2012, including twelve expert interviews and a focus group discussion in Guwahati and Kokrajhar.
[3] See footnote 8.

community (Carney 2017).[4] By offering thick descriptions and immersing into the social context that was to be studied, ethnographers set out to gain an emic understanding of particular communities and how they create meaning (ibid; see Geertz 1973). This usually requires long-term field research, living with the 'locals' and taking part in the daily activities – while not falling into the pitfalls of 'going native'. Within political science, ethnography has so far taken a somewhat peripheral role, countered with scepticism. As Pachirat (2009, cited in Wedeen 2010) finds:

> Ethnography as a method is particularly unruly, particularly undisciplined, particularly celebratory of improvisation, bricolage, and serendipity, and particularly attuned to the possibilities of surprise, inversion, and subversion in ways that other methods simply are not. If we think of the range of research methods in political science as a big family, ethnography is clearly the youngest, somewhat spoiled, attention-seeking child, always poking fun at and annoying her more disciplined, goaloriented, and outwardly-successful older siblings. Ethnography is the method who [sic] comes home to family reunions with the new mermaid tattoo, with the purple hair, with yet another belly button ring, and with a moody, melancholic artist for a girlfriend. At the dinner table, she is the method who interrupts her older brother's endless description of his stock portfolio with tales of the last full moon party on Phi Phi Island in Thailand. Given that kind of unruliness, it's no wonder that the older siblings and father figures of our discipline often revert to the language of "disciplining" and "harnessing" ethnography, of bringing her wild and unruly impulses under control by making her abide by the rules of the dinner table. In short, ethnography maybe fun and exciting, but she might also get you excommunicated from the family.

In light of this somewhat pessimistic statement on the role that ethnography could play in political science it is noteworthy that within the 'House of IR' (Agathangelou and Ling 2004), ethnographic methods are increasingly forming part of critical approaches to studying world politics (Motinson 2018) and counter an over-reliance on formal written sources (Kuus 2013). The increasing prominence of ethnographic methods has led some scholars to attest an ethnographic turn in IR. As Lie (2013) notes, "The ethnographic turn seeks to direct greater attention to everyday practices and embodied

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[4] This view of ethnography associated with anthropologists such as Malinowksi (Falzon 2016) or Evans-Pritchard is informed by paradigms of clearly bounded fields or communities that can be studied holistically. However, latest with the crisis of representation and the writing culture debate within anthropology this traditional approach has been challenged on several grounds: communities could never be depicted as cultural islands isolated from the surrounding world; marking an important (reflexive) turn in anthropology it informed the discipline's continuous discussion of adequate forms of ethnographic writing (and therewith representation), the importance of self-reflexivity and the positionality of the researcher, and questions of objectivity (Naida and Maeder 2005).

actions, thereby countering the criticism of IR as a static and state-centric discipline ill-suited for grasping the complexities of political life". Challenging mainstream quantitative as well as state-centrist approaches, IR scholars have thus adopted and adapted ethnographic methods to study practices and produce autoethnographic reflexive studies or multi-sited fieldwork (Montison 2018). Ethnographic methods have also been used to study the everyday realities of international intervention contexts, and the community of interveners themselves, such as diplomats, peacebuilders or humanitarian aid workers and their everyday practices (Autessere 2014, Kuus 2013). Adopting and adapting ethnographic methods, IR scholars have however been accused of reducing the complexity of ethnography, using ethnographic methods as an empiricist data-collection machine, a writing style or a theoretical sensibility (Vrasti 2008). While this criticism may hold true in some cases, it can be countered in at least two ways. First, even in a reduced version, ethnographic methods allow for valuable insights that complement the standard repertoire of IR scholars. Second, anthropology by no means is a methodologically homogenous discipline. Critiques such as Vrasti allegedly take the role of a gatekeeper who has an idealised version of ethnography while at the same time ignores IR studies that have successfully applied ethnographic methods (Rantacore 2010).

The empirical part of the research is to be located within the framework of this debate and seeks to contribute to the "ethnographic turn" and the importance of regional knowledge in political science in general, and international relations (IR) research in particular (Lie 2013).[5] A multi-sited approach was chosen in order to highlight a common experience at different sites of intervention. Thereby, the selection of intervention arenas was chosen on the basis of "an a priori understanding of world politics" (Montison 2018) and as different windows (Cohn 2006) through which the phenomenon of interest can be studied, and common themes may be traced to contribute to theory-building on the encounters of the local and international in peacebuilding and humanitarian action. A typical problem of multi-sited case studies is the selection of specific locales, considering the sheer number of possible sites (Hannerz 2003). Thus,

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[5] Having said this, the Habilitation is not to be understood as an ethnography of intervention contexts. Rather - and in line with most IR scholarship - it has adapted and made use of ethnographic methods in addition to more standard qualitative research methods, such as semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions. One could call this a qualitative study with ethnographic sensibilities (Montison 2018, Cohn 2006).

I constructed my field sites in accordance with my research interest and an *a priori* understanding of the phenomenon under study. Interested in studying the encounters of the local and the international in the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action, I selected sites that saw both an international response and the engagement of local actors – I also researched online and spoke to people who had been deployed to these contexts for verification. Second, I selected the sites on the basis of prior knowledge, existing contacts, networks and feasibility. Existing contacts and networks were particularly important for short-term field research - in contrast to long-term studies there is little time to build relationships and gain trust and therewith access. In order to more easily understand the site of study, a prior knowledge of the political, economic and socio-cultural context was also of utmost importance. Feasibility criteria thus encompassed security concerns, language skills, familiarity with the socio-cultural context and access to interview partners and intervention practitioners.

This approach merits some further clarifications and reflections. Though convinced about the assets of ethnographic methods for studying the encounters of the local and the international in the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action, problems arose: as typical when progressing with one's academic career I had limited time due to teaching and administrative obligations in my job at the university (see Falzon 2016). I also lacked the financial resources to conduct lengthy field research. However, as Hannerz (2003) notes, "ethnography is an art of the possible, and it may be better to have some of it than none at all". Thus, in spite of these limitations, I started reflecting on the assets of short-term or remote field research. This was based on the assumption that it is not just the methods or the length of the field research itself that make anthropology valuable for the study of intervention contexts, but rather the specific mind-set, or attitude that informs ethnographic research.[6] This includes a keen interest in understanding other persons' perceptions of the world and interpretations of events; a self-reflective practice; and the acceptance of multiple (informal) sources of information and research practice that is grounded in the everyday practices of people. Apart from certain research practices (learning a local language, participating in the daily life through ordinary and informal conversations and interactions, observing

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[6] Having said this, of course there exist different approaches in anthropology, ranging from positivist to interpretivist research paradigms.

events and fixating data in field notes), it requires a distinct 'sensibility' to study lived experience, and then linking them back to scholarly discourses (Wedeen 2010).

From the publications selected for the Habilitation, *Localisation requires Trust: An Interface Perspective on the Rohingya Response in Bangladesh* is the key text that offers a qualitative study with ethnographic sensibilities – though findings from other studies have been integrated into the more theoretical arguments of the other publications. This particular study was guided by an interest in the encounters of the local and international in forced migration contexts and against the background of the humanitarian sector's localisation agenda. The case of Bangladesh is maybe the most straightforward site for the study of local-international encounters in humanitarian action. Since the latest influx in August 2017, Bangladesh hosts about one million forcibly displaced Rohingya who are living in 32 camps in the country's Cox's Bazar district. It is considered the first big humanitarian operation since the adoption of the localisation agenda, with a high number of actors involved. Localisation has become a sensitive and contentious issue that has led to tensions between the different actors involved in the response. A number of actors are currently seeking to implement and operationalise the localisation agenda and identify best practices for this particular context. Due to previous research in Rakhine State, Myanmar, (2013) and Bangkok (2015) as well as my general focus on South Asia, I had decent background knowledge on the situation of the Rohingya and the challenges with the humanitarian response. Moreover, due to pre-existing networks I was able to get access to people and institutions – among them the Calcutta Research Group headed by Ranabir Samaddar, whom I have known since I conducted field research on conflict-induced displacement in Northeast India (2012), colleagues at the University of Dhaka - including an official invitation and affiliation at the same for the time of field research -, and humanitarian practitioners who have been crucial in briefing me before field research and brokering access once in the field.

Field research in Cox's Bazar consisted of different kinds of qualitative interviews with a variety of humanitarian actors, focus group discussions, limited non-participant and participant observation and – very importantly – informal conversations and deep hanging out. I took extensive field notes, mapped actors and networks. I also used statistical data for further insights on the number of humanitarian actors involved in the

response, the allocation of funds, and the number of national and local staff vis-à-vis international ones. This allowed me to gain a first-hand understanding of the actors, networks, dynamics and issues as well as building relationships and gaining access. Thereby the approach follows Schatz's (2009) suggested research strategy for political scientists using ethnographic methods: "immersion through participation and an ethnographic sensibility going beyond participation to gain an understanding of the meanings that the people under study attribute to their social and political reality". The collected data was then transcribed and inductively coded with MAXQDA to allow for better organisation and systematic analysis of the same. Findings were triangulated with available official data, newspaper articles and reports by non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The same approach has been applied to field research in Italy, and previously in North-East India[7]. Though not forming part of the Habilitation, research on local humanitarian action in forced migration contexts has also been conducted in Italy with two field research stays in Lampedusa and Sicily in 2018 and 2019, raising a number of ethical questions regarding the research design and issues of positionality, for example when participating in helping at disembarkation at the port of Lampedusa or when interviewing Rohingya in the camps in Cox's Bazar. The multi-sited research will culminate in a monograph entitled *Local Humanitarian Action and Forced Migration: Contested Spaces of International Aid,* for which a contract has been signed with Routledge. Publication is planned for 2022.[8]

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[7] See supra note 2.

[8] Part of the book's argument is that the localisation agenda is targeting the Global South, while local humanitarian action in the context of forced migration also takes place in the Global North. The case of the Mediterranean has hence been selected to add a view from the Global North. Though the localisation agenda is not implemented as such, also here local humanitarian actors are often the first responders. Especially in reference to Greece the importance of local humanitarian actors has thus been stressed and their capacity strengthening been supported. Maybe a particularity of the Mediterranean context, civilian organisations conducting SAR operations are important actors who not only operate translocally but form strong networks and have come under severe pressure. At the time of research, Italy was the country where most people arrived, and Lampedusa having become a symbol of the 'crisis'. Lampedusa was also selected as a research site as – like in Cox's Bazar – people were arriving and being assisted at least since the 90s. This allowed assessing the changing or shifting environment for local humanitarian action in these sites. Moreover, the focus on Italy is owned also to my language skills and cultural familiarity with Italy, especially Sicily, since childhood. This has proven to be of utmost importance when getting access to activists and first responders on the island. The sites however extend geographical boundaries: actors were travelling (for instance, a main protagonist and local humanitarian actor in Cox's Bazar was living in Dhaka and frequently travelling to Geneva for international meetings on the localisation agenda) and using social media, such as Facebook, to connect with other actors, disseminate information and inform about their activities beyond their geographical localities.

**3. Conclusion and Outlook**

The above discussion shows that a fundamental concern in relation to the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action are the ways in which existing practices and structures marginalise a number of actors, perspectives and approaches in the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action. What is particularly unsettling is that these voices are generally the ones of the population not only affected by armed conflicts, famines or displacement, but are to be the 'beneficiaries' of the interventions.

Humanitarian action and peacebuilding with their global reach assume a universality of humanitarian reason and aim at generating values and principles with global reach (Hutchings 2019). However, the humanitarian system as a carrier of these norms and principles has its origins in Western missionary thinking (Paulmann 2013). In a continuation of the dominance of Northern actors and organisations and their values, the 'humanitarian club' of an exclusive elite sets the rule and establishes the infrastructure of the humanitarian sector (Barnett 2021). The peacebuilding sector, with its dominant liberal peace paradigm and dominant actors from the Global North intervening in Southern contexts, has been criticised for stabilising an unequal and unjust international order and reinforcing the status-quo of Western dominance (Finkenbusch 2021). Although some actors from the Global South attempt to enter the club, membership remains exclusive and conditional upon shared values, norms and rules which are by no means neutral, but strongly rooted in colonial legacies and the mission to civilise (Jabri 2016, Paris 2002). This is not to say that other cultures and traditions do not encompass humanitarian reasoning, values and institutions. Yet, the club's members – despite their differences - are largely homogeneous. Most funds are channelled through these organisations, which in light of the local turn or the localisation agenda, still choose their partner organisations in the Global South on the basis of ethical and organisational closeness.

One of the consequences of this is that peacebuilding and humanitarian action suffer from a "white gaze" problem in which whiteness is considered the standard category against which everything else is being judged. This means, in the words of Pailey (2020) that "the white gaze…is measuring black, brown and non-white people against the standard of northern whiteness… and uses that standard of northern whiteness to

measure economic, political and social processes in the so-called global South". This resonates with critiques of the discipline of IR more generally (Bendix et al. 2020), accusing it of Eurocentrism that enforces a narrow understanding of the world. As Picq (2013) notes, "the problem with an imagined West as the central subject and referent of global politics is that it deprives the discipline of a multiplicity of ways of being in the world". But it also finds its expression in power inequalities within the peacebuilding and humanitarian sector and hierarchies between donors, INGOs and the affected population in intervention contexts. It preserves the dominance of certain actors, but also is linked to issues of racism, xenophobia and discrimination (Roepstorff 2021). This has led to more recent calls for decolonising the international aid system, requiring more fundamental reforms that go beyond the localisation of humanitarian action (Boateng 2021).[9] Without acknowledging the historical and socio-political context, the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action thus risks perpetuating harmful practices of (neo)colonialism and oppression (Pyles 2017).

Coloniality manifests itself in the perpetuation of colonial systems and technologies of domination into the present (Rutazibwa 2019). According to Mignolo and Walsh (2018), decoloniality follows, derives from, and responds to coloniality and the ongoing colonial process and condition. It is a form of struggle and survival, an epistemic and existence-based response and practice – most especially by colonised and racialised subjects. As such, "a decolonial approach to humanitarianism thus challenges Eurocentric analyses, foregrounding the experiences and knowledges of the intended targets of humanitarian aid. It poses questions not so much about the political will, operational implementation and technical capabilities of humanitarians as it does about the perpetuation of colonial power relations in seemingly benevolent activities" (Rutazibwa 2019). Similarly, the findings of the Habilitation suggest that both peacebuilding and humanitarian action research and practice need to be decentered with the purpose not to reject concepts and models that emerged in the Global North, but to enrich them (Tripathi and Roepstorff 2020). A decolonial research strategy and praxis helps augmenting the Western body of knowledge with subaltern perspectives (Müller

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9 See also: Barnett, M. (2021), „Humanitarian organizations won't listen to groups on the ground, in part because of institutionalized racism. Here's what prompted the push toward localization — and what's blocking this change", Washington Post, available at: https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/06/08/humanitarian-organizations-wont-listen-groups-ground-part-because-institutionalized-racism/, last accessed 22.11.2021.

2016, Alatas 2006, Mignolo 2000). The aspiration then becomes one of "connecting (rather than uniting) many projects and trajectories in a global process of de-colonial cosmopolitanism, toward the horizon of pluriversality as a universal project." (Mignolo 2010). This requires thinking of the world from a pluralist, rather than a monist perspective. Such a pluralist argument has the potential not only to disrupt hegemonic one world stories but also to revalue other ones – with the experience of dissonance that can bring about constructive change through practices of negotiation and reflective interaction as opposed to the imposition of one view of other's (Hutchings 2019).

Beyond the inclusion of cultural and contextual knowledge as offered by ethnographic studies (Roepstorff 2018, 2020a), findings from the Habilitation moreover indicate the need for decolonising research – including ethnographic research practices, including issues of representation (Kaur and Klinkert 2021). As argued in *Armed Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises: Insights from the Anthropology of War*, scholars from the Global North speaking or writing on behalf of people affected by armed conflicts and humanitarian crises in the Global South may unwittingly reinforce existing power relations. On the other hand, precisely because of their privileged status, researchers who witness injustices have the responsibility to bear witness. This requires an approach that challenges Eurocentric research methods undermining the knowledge and experiences of marginalised population groups (Keikelame and Swartz 2019). Inclusive research methods propagated to decolonise academic endeavours include participatory and community-based action research (Smartt Gullion and Tilto 2020, Lykes and Scheib 2015), co-production through research partnerships (Lokot and Wake 2021, Fast 2019) and the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems (Smith 2021, Exo 2015). This further calls for decolonial research ethics[10] and the decolonisation of peacebuilding and humanitarian practice, including a critical reflection of the ways in which the governance of peacebuilding and humanitarian action perpetuates problematic practices of domination and control, epistemic violence and discrimination.

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[10] See for example: https://decolonialityeurope.wixsite.com/decoloniality/charter-of-decolonial-research-ethics, last accessed 22.11.2021.

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## 5. Cumulus

### 5.1 Localisation requires Trust: An Interface Perspective on the Rohingya Response in Bangladesh.

# Localisation requires trust: an interface perspective on the Rohingya response in Bangladesh

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*Local actors are promoted as important agents in the humanitarian sector's latest reform efforts. Opinions on the exact meaning and the best means of implementing localisation differ, however. Applying an interface perspective, this paper analyses how the Rohingya response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, became an arena of contestation, competition, and sometimes convergence among different actors in relation to localisation. It shows how misconceptions and divergent understandings of localisation and the best methods of achieving it were prevalent and hampered the joint endeavours of international and local humanitarian bodies. Although both sides sought common ground, conflicting views, interests, and perceptions of 'self' and 'other' stood in the way. A lack of trust between international and local organisations intensified divisions. The paper argues, therefore, that the humanitarian sector needs to engage in trust-building between the various entities involved in humanitarian response if localisation is to be realised, including addressing underlying structural and systemic issues of (neo)colonialism, racism, and classism.*

## Introduction

Localisation has become a key concept in the humanitarian sector, impelling changes in funding practices, partnership models, and organisational structures to make the humanitarian response more efficient, effective, and emancipatory. Through commitments enshrined in international documents such as the Grand Bargain[1] or the Charter for Change[2] of 2016, the humanitarian sector is seeking to put local actors and the affected population at the centre of a more contextualised and sustainable humanitarian response (Gibbons et al., 2020). It is hoped that greater participation in the planning and implementation of the humanitarian response will mitigate the unequal power relations prevalent in the humanitarian sector, whereby a handful of international actors continue to dominate and determine the allocation of funds and aid priorities.

Taking stock of progress in the implementation of localisation, it becomes evident that the humanitarian sector has not lived up to its commitments so far (Van Brabant and Patel, 2018, p. 8). This may be attributed to a number of factors. Apart from resistance to relinquishing power and money, localisation requires systematic

change in the humanitarian sector and the ways in which humanitarian organisations operate—something that is bound not to happen overnight (Gingerich and Cohen, 2015; Harris and Tuladhar, 2019). What complicates matters further is that varying definitions of localisation circulate in the humanitarian sector, and it seems to be far from clear what localisation actually means and how it should be implemented. As Van Brabant and Patel (2018, p. 6) note, 'the key challenge for successful localisation is to know what "localisation" means in practice'. Empirical studies of localisation as an inherently contested process may shed some light on the opportunities afforded and on the obstacles to realisation of the humanitarian sector's localisation agenda (Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, 2021).

This is not only an abstract issue in the international discourse, but also a matter that becomes tangible in specific humanitarian arenas where conflicting ideas on the very meaning of localisation emerge when different humanitarian actors meet and negotiate the humanitarian response (Hilhorst and Jansen, 2010). As socially constructed sites in which contests over issues, resources, values, and representations take place (Long, 2001), these arenas become 'battlefields of knowledge' (Long and Long, 1992) in which actors and their understandings, interests, and values are pitched against each other (Long and Jinlong, 2009). The Rohingya response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, constitutes such a humanitarian arena in which conflict over differing understandings of localisation has surfaced. Faced with continuing migration of Rohingya from neighbouring Myanmar, Cox's Bazar has become the site of a large-scale international humanitarian response—a peak was reached in August 2017 when almost one million people fled persecution and violence in their home state of Rakhine. Described by many as a 'second influx', referring to the arrival of large numbers of international humanitarian entities, the Rohingya response also represents one of the first major interventions since the humanitarian sector committed itself in 2016 to work 'as local as possible, as international as necessary' (Barbelet, 2018).

Based on original qualitative empirical research conducted in Bangladesh in February and March 2019, this paper illustrates how localisation became a contentious issue in this particular humanitarian arena. The findings are based on 20 semi-structured interviews with representatives of local organisations and on six semi-structured interviews with representatives of international counterparts. Moreover, numerous informal meetings, discussions, a focus-group discussion, and visits to Camps in Teknaf and Ukhyia yielded additional insights.[3] The data were subsequently transcribed and coded using MAXQDA software to achieve better organisation and facilitate systematic analysis.[4] The findings were then triangulated with available official data, newspaper articles, and reports by non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Following a constructivist-interpretive methodology that 'rests on the belief in the existence of (potentially) multiple, intersubjectively constructed "truths" about social, political, cultural, and other human events' (Schwartz-Shea and Yanow, 2012, p. 4), and employing an interface analysis (Long 1999), the research was guided by interest in the encounters of international and local humanitarian actors in the context of the Rohingya response in Bangladesh against the backdrop of the localisation agenda.

The focus was thus on the perceptions of local NGOs (LNGOs) of the humanitarian response, as these were generally considered to be 'the local' humanitarian actors in this particular setting.

The research reveals how divergent interpretations of localisation emerged in Cox's Bazar, challenging dominant discourses and practices prevalent in the humanitarian sector. Moreover, it demonstrates how constructions of the 'self' and the 'other' emerged in the context of localisation, with attempts to legitimise and delegitimise certain actors or their ways of working. 'Being local' became a resource in a competitive humanitarian arena in which the different entities were working against each other. The study also discovered that below the surface was deep-seated mistrust between the different actors, amplified by the separated spaces they inhabited. The paper concludes, therefore, that to give localisation meaning and to implement it in humanitarian practice, the humanitarian sector needs to turn its attention to trust-building between the different actors and invest in the fostering of positive relationships between them. This also requires addressing underlying structural and systemic issues of (neo)colonialism, racism, and classism. Only then will constructive negotiations in the humanitarian arena be possible, allowing for a much-needed shared vision of the humanitarian response that is as local as possible, and as international as necessary, to materialise.

## The Rohingya response and the localisation of humanitarian action

In August 2017, almost one million Rohingya fled to neighbouring Bangladesh to escape persecution, systematic discrimination, violence, and the reprisals of the Myanmar Army. The United Nations (UN) and human rights experts speak of a 'textbook example of ethnic cleansing', which is now being investigated by the International Criminal Court (UN, 2017; BBC, 2020). This was, however, only the latest episode of massive displacement since the country's independence from Great Britain in 1948. Already in 1962, 1978, and 1991–92, thousands of Rohingya had fled across the border to Bangladesh and sought shelter in camps in the country's southwest region of Cox's Bazar (Wake and Bryant, 2018, p. 3). Others fled to countries such as India, Malaysia, Thailand, and even Australia by land and sea. Although boat migration continues as of this writing (summer 2020) (Shirak, 2020), it was in 2015 that the Rohingya made the headlines as boat refugees when they drifted for weeks in the Andaman Sea after trafficking networks were destroyed and those responsible arrested (Amnesty International, 2015, p. 7; UNHCR, 2015; Chaudhury and Samaddar, 2018).

The dire humanitarian situation in Cox's Bazar has its origin in the violent conflict in Myanmar's Rakhine State, on the border with Bangladesh. Considered the most persecuted minority in the world by the UN (UNHCR, 2022), the predominantly Muslim Rohingya differ both religiously and linguistically from the majority

Buddhist population in Rakhine and the rest of the country. Intercommunal violence, the ongoing conflict with the government, and burgeoning Buddhist nationalism nationwide have contributed to the continuing expulsion of the Rohingya from Myanmar (Leider, 2015; Burke, 2016; Cheesman, 2017; Prasse-Freeman, 2017; Ware and Laoutides, 2018). The situation has worsened dramatically in recent years due to further military offensives, especially in the northern part of Rakhine State. Violence escalated again in August 2017 when the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army —a Rohingya group founded in 2016—launched attacks on police posts in northern Rakhine. The counteroffensive of the army and the police, as well as continued intercommunal violence, drove around 700,000 Rohingya out of the country within two months (International Crisis Group, 2017). Today, approximately 1.5 million of the estimated two million Rohingya live in exile, about one million of them in camps in Cox's Bazar, currently the largest refugee settlement in the world (Wake and Bryant, 2018).[5]

## The humanitarian response in Bangladesh

Faced with the high number of Rohingya entering the country, first the local population of Cox's Bazar and later the Government of Bangladesh expressed solidarity and initiated various forms of help (Lewis, 2019). In what could be best described as everyday humanitarianism (Richey, 2018) or citizen aid (Fechter and Schwittay, 2019), ordinary people, local businesses, and civil society actors responded spontaneously to the needs of the Rohingya, offering food, shelter, and money. Soon, volunteers and organisations from other parts of the country arrived to lend their assistance (Lewis, 2019). After some weeks, the government took control of the unfolding humanitarian situation and the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar. In reaction to earlier arrivals of Rohingya, the government had already developed a National Strategy on Myanmar Refugees and Undocumented Myanmar Nationals in 2013. This now underpinned the basis of its National Task Force (NTF) in charge of the response (Lewis, 2019). Despite their longstanding presence in the country in general, and in Cox's Bazar in particular, the UN and international organisations had to renegotiate their role in the response, accompanied by inter-agency discord over mandates and responsibilities. Humanitarian activities are now coordinated by the Strategic Executive Group (SEG) in Dhaka, a body that is chaired by the Resident Coordinator, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and the United Nations Refugees Agency (UNHCR).[6] At the district level, the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) works under the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief and is responsible for issuing permissions to organisations wishing to work in the camps (see RRRC, 2018). Within this structural set-up, the District Commissioner is responsible for the operations among the affected host community, while a Senior Coordinator directs the humanitarian response on behalf of the humanitarian agencies (Farzana, 2017, p. 149; Lewis, 2019, p. 1890)[7]. Thereby, the government follows a temporary policy and approach to the response with the ultimate

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goal to repatriate the Rohingya as soon as possible (Farzana, 2017). This manifests itself in various ways: for example, it introduced the Forcibly Displaced Citizens of Myanmar (FDCM) term to avoid the official refugee label and the rights that come with it (Lewis, 2019).[8] Moreover, the policy not to teach Bangla in the camp schools or allow Rohingya to work is geared towards preventing their long-term integration into Bangladeshi society (International Crisis Group, 2019).[9] Increasingly, the Rohingya are framed as a security threat, leading to strict security measures in the management of the camps, including an internet blackout (Hölzl, 2020) and the construction of barbed-wire fencing (Rahman Rabbi, 2020).

When high numbers of people started arriving in August 2017, only five UN agencies and a handful of international NGOs (INGOs) were present and responded to the situation. The international response was quickly scaled up, however. The government sought international support to meet the growing humanitarian needs of the Rohingya who settled in official and unofficial camps in Cox's Bazar. In early 2018, the number had risen to 12 UN agencies and more than 120 international and national NGOs working on the Rohingya response (Buchanan-Smith and Islam, 2018; Wake and Bryant, 2018, p. 7). Lewis (2019, p. 1891) observes:

> As the government, the army and the agencies took control of the situation, the humanitarian arena was transformed into a more tightly governed and ordered refugee space. Tensions emerged not only within the different levels of the formal response (for example between international and local NGOs, religious and secular agendas, and government and non-state actors) but also with local responses.

Localisation thus soon emerged as a critical issue, with representatives of Cox's Bazar's civil society becoming vocal in their demands for a more localised response (Wake and Bryant, 2018; Barbelet, 2019).

## Localising the Rohingya response

The importance of local actors has long been acknowledged in the humanitarian sector, but the push for localisation grew strong during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2016. As a result, donors and INGOs signed agreements and made commitments to localise humanitarian action. The main pledges revolve around issues such as a fairer distribution of funds, the strengthening of local capacities, and more equitable forms of partnership (Van Brabant and Patel, 2018). Yet, the exact meaning of localisation and the best ways of implementing it remained vague (Wall and Hedlund, 2016; Fabre, 2017; HLA, 2019). Moreover, in the international discourse on localisation that ensued, the 'local' label was used in reference to a variety of actors, ranging from national and local authorities to civil society organisations at the national and community level to the affected population itself. It is far from clear, therefore, who these local actors are that should profit from the localisation agenda, but a strong focus on LNGOs as key players can be observed. This

spotlight on LNGOs is not only apparent in a number of documents, reports, and studies by humanitarian organisations, but more so in the ways in which localisation is implemented in practice (Roepstorff, 2020). This may be because they are commonly among the first responders to sudden-onset disasters (Zyck and Krebs, 2015) and are organised, registered entities that operate over a longer period of time, thus making them more reliable partners than ad hoc volunteer groups or social movements. These LNGOs form part of local civil society, deeply entrenched in the politics and social fabric of the particular locality.

In the specific context of Bangladesh, the vibrant civil society is characterised by longstanding traditions of citizen action, resistance, and social movements (Khan and Rahman, 2007; Quadir, 2015; Lewis, 2019). Indeed, LNGOs were among the first to respond to the needs of the Rohingya in August 2017. Although religion plays a powerful role in civil society action and is an important factor in understanding the national and international humanitarian assistance supplied to the predominantly Muslim Rohingya, national narratives of displacement, persecution, and the freedom struggle also inform acts of help in Bangladesh (Lewis, 2019).[10] Today, numerous LNGOs continue their work in Cox's Bazar alongside an ever-more structured and formal response by the government and international actors.[11] Being confronted with a massive 'influx' of international actors, the LNGOs soon organised to fight jointly for their interests and to make their voices heard. In so doing, being local became an important resource and legitimising reason for their engagement in the Rohingya response and localisation became a contentious issue in Cox's Bazar.

## Localisation as a bone of contention: an interface perspective

Based on original data gathered during six weeks of field research in February and March 2019 in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, this paper employs an interface analysis to understand better the encounters between international and local entities in this particular humanitarian arena and in light of the localisation agenda. Developed by the British sociologist and social anthropologist Norman Long, the interface approach focuses on how encounters between actors with different perspectives, experiences, and worldviews are shaped by unequal power relations (Gerharz, 2018).[12] These actors are active stakeholders with specific knowledge, resources, and scope of action, as well as ideas regarding self, others, and context (Long, 1999; Gerharz, 2018). However, their interests and views are manifold and struggles over authority, status, reputation, and resources are informed by the extent to which they see themselves as capable of manoeuvring within particular settings, responding with resistance, accommodation, or compliance in their everyday actions (Scott, 1985; Long, 1999). The interface perspective lends itself, therefore, to the analysis of localisation as a contentious issue in humanitarian settings. Such an analysis can reveal how the different players through their discursive practices and in their encounters perpetuate,

use, manipulate, and transform dominant discourses (Long, 2001) and how networks develop between individuals or organisations that lead to the emergence of standardised modes of relating to non-members and outsiders (Long, 1999), shedding light on social differentiation and conflict among different actors in the humanitarian arena (Chiweshe and Bhatasara, 2016).

Applying the interface perspective to the Rohingya response in Cox's Bazar in general, and the issue of localisation in particular, two main themes emerged: (i) the juxtaposition of self and other and respective identity constructions to legitimise one's own actions and to delegitimise those of others; and (ii) divergent interpretations of localisation to challenge dominant discourses and the practices of the humanitarian sector. Both were mainly informed by specific interests, the relative position of power and competition pertaining to resources,[13] and reputation. However, at a deeper level, what appeared as a main issue at the interface was the lack of trust between the different actors, which seriously hampered the effectiveness of the humanitarian response and the realisation of localisation.

### Who is the local: perceptions of self and other in Cox's Bazar

One of the key questions that arises in relation to localisation is who should be considered as local. An array of definitions of local can be found in the discourse on localisation (Wall and Hedlund, 2016; Els, 2018, p. 3). Different opinions exist, for instance, regarding the inclusion of internationally affiliated local organisations such as national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, local branches of INGOs, the private sector, individual volunteers, diaspora organisations, or the local staff of UN agencies and INGOs (Roepstorff, 2019; Wall and Hedlund, 2016; Apthorpe and Borton, 2019; Barbelet, 2019). Another question that arises concerns to what extent there should be a differentiation between national and local actors, with the latter often being equated with the affected population. This is particularly debatable in forced migration contexts, where local humanitarian actors to a large degree represent the host rather than the displaced community—as was the case in Cox's Bazar. Moreover, some entities may view themselves as more local in comparison to others.

Being aware of the conceptual vagueness of 'the local' and its perceptual and relational nature (Roepstorff, 2019), I started my own research on localisation in the context of the Rohingya response by tracing self-identifications and ascriptions in this particular humanitarian setting. My search for the local thus started with a two-pronged scoping study of the actors in Cox's Bazar: first, and prior to the field research, I talked to staff of humanitarian organisations with whom I had contact through my own personal and professional network; and second, I scanned documents, newspaper articles, social media posts, and the internet for additional cues. As a result, I came across the Cox's Bazar CSO-NGO Forum (CCNF), a network of civil society actors with its own internet presence in English and Bangla, sharing relevant information on the Rohingya response and members of the Forum and their activities.[14] As the website states, these local and national NGOs are:

*always fast responders to any disaster of humanitarian crises in Cox's Bazar. As usual, regarding the recent Rohingya crises in Cox's Bazar, these NGOs and CSOs have come fast with humanitarian supports. As the CSOs and NGOs working in Cox's Bazar consider the current Rohingya refugee problem as an extreme, complex and transitory problem for the people of this district, and they feel that a strong coordination is needed among the humanitarian responders, they have formed this forum.*

The promotion and implementation of localisation is mentioned as one of the principal objectives of the network. In fact, the Forum, especially some of its most active members, turned out to be very vocal in demanding their 'right to localisation'. It was natural, therefore, to start my investigation with the CCNF, but other actors, such as government officials, representatives of INGOs and UN agencies, and Rohingya people, were also included in the empirical research to gain a better understanding of localisation from an interface perspective.

Varying definitions of the local were expressed during the interviews. In most cases, these served to differentiate between the self and the other and revealed a pattern of identity construction in which the labels of the local and the international were clearly used in reference to the relative distribution of power, money, and resources. Moreover, self-identification as local seemed to occur to stress one's own legitimacy in being engaged in the Rohingya response and to delegitimise others.[15] Interestingly, an organisation was perceived as local by some, and 'accused' by others of being from outside Cox's Bazar and hence not really local. This was based on the location of the main office and whether it had been operating in Cox's Bazar before the Rohingya response of 2017. Other actors, mainly those that had their office in the capital, Dhaka, still referred to themselves as local, contending that they were operating in only a limited number of districts and not the entire country. A pattern that thus materialised in the interviews was that the label of the local was mainly applied in reference to four factors: (i) the time span that an organisation was working in Cox's Bazar; (ii) where the main office of the organisation was located; (iii) the area of operation/reach of the organisation; and (iv) from where the staff came. Moreover, in almost all interviews, being local was linked to the idea of being first responders, the first ones on the scene to help. This included the host community, which in the absence of donors, INGOs, or national NGOs shared their food, let people camp on their land, and generally welcomed the Rohingya.[16] At the same time, LNGOs emphasised their own unique role in responding to the needs of the Rohingya, setting themselves apart from other local entities or national NGOs.

Nuances came to the fore between the local and the more local. Many interview partners of LNGOs made a distinction between the local and the 'real local organisations', the 'very local', or the 'really, really local'. These attributes were used in reference to organisations that were considered as particularly small in size, with limited capacity and resources, few projects, and having their main office and origin in Teknaf or Ukhiya—the areas of Cox's Bazar where the refugee camps are located. One representative of an LNGO used the description of 'very local' in reference to

an NGO from Khulna, a different part of Bangladesh, highlighting the importance of embeddedness, small size, and limited operational reach for constituting the local. That size mattered in the identification of local also became clear when one representative stressed several times that his organisation was local despite its bigger size. Consequently, the perception of a really local organisation was linked to limited power, scope, and resources. Yet, among the LNGOs, some were considered to be more powerful than others and referred to as big leaders, characterised by one study participant as 'being closer to international organisations with better access to information and funding and having publicity', along with more qualified staff. In the description of such a powerful organisation, another interviewee concluded that these were actually national organisations with a 'big presence in Cox's Bazar', demonstrating again the local being used to describe a position of limited power and size.

Generally, the relationship between the different actors seemed to be simultaneously one of competition and close cooperation to advance one's own and common interests. In what elsewhere has been depicted as 'competitive humanitarianism' (Stirrat, 2006), INGOs were under pressure to find and select suitable local partners, leading to rivalry between the different LNGOs. This found expression in the demand to distribute funds and projects more equally between the local partners. Indeed, that some organisations profited more from the funds available for the humanitarian response than others was viewed critically by many LNGOs. Contempt was expressed about how INGOs only worked with the same few organisations, which, as a result, grew in size and amassed more power—and were accused of being overwhelmed and working beyond capacity. In explaining this bias towards certain organisations, LNGO representatives pointed to their social capital, including better English-language proficiency and having earlier experience of working with international organisations and therefore better networks with which to access funding. To emphasise their own legitimacy and capacity, organisations that considered themselves as local—and hence smaller in size and with limited resources—stressed their comparative advantage over bigger or national ones. This was justified on the basis of language and cultural proximity to the affected population and a continued presence in the district, allowing for a more cost-efficient and immediate response. 'We are the pioneers in . . .', 'we were the very first ones . . .', and 'we are the only ones' were common refrains, indicating a competition between the LNGOs, which also reflected the ways in which other organisations were portrayed. Being local thus became a resource in the competition for funds, legitimacy, and prestige against the backdrop of the localisation agenda (Roepstorff, 2019). At the same time, and in spite of these differences and tensions between the different entities, a high level of cooperation existed. Not only did the different actors organise within the CCNF (although some were more active than others and views and standpoints were not uniform), smaller organisations also profited from being subcontracted by the larger ones. For some, this was the only way to work on the Rohingya response, as they often lacked the required registration with the government.[17]

The identity of being local was not only construed in contrast to national, but also of course in relation to international. At the time of the research, the relationships between local and international actors were tense, with international actors being perceived as 'VIPs' (very important persons) with a lot of money, having their offices in five-star hotels, and their presence and operation being very costly.[18] This may be linked, too, to the ways international aid workers segregated themselves, a common phenomenon in intervention contexts (Autesserre, 2014; Smirl, 2015). Owing to security risks and separating themselves in their 'expat bubble', international actors seemed to have very little social interaction with the local population and their partners (Autesserre, 2014; Roth, 2015; Schuller, 2016).

Maybe as an outcome of that, representatives of INGOs perceived their local counterparts quite critically. Reflecting the conflict that was already in full swing at the time of the research, LNGOs were believed to be spreading rumours and instigating protests against international organisations and not interested in participating in meetings to which they were invited. Moreover, INGOs struggled with the unclear mandate and wide-ranging activities of LNGOs, with some considered as being more neutral and independent of government than others. It was also thought that due to their embeddedness in the local context, LNGOs faced pressures from both the host community and government authorities, thus only having limited space for action (Roepstorff, 2020). In addition, the common argument of LNGOs' cultural proximity to the affected population was called into question. Indeed, the claimed cultural proximity to the Rohingya stood in stark contrast to many critical statements made in interviews and informal discussions during the field research in Cox's Bazar. While shared religion was often mentioned as a commonality, LNGOs or local staff of INGOs repeatedly expressed strong irritations with and disapproval of Rohingya religious and cultural practices. As Palmer (2011) notes, religion might not in fact override political, social, and cultural divisions.[19] In Cox's Bazar, where the local humanitarian actors represent simultaneously the host community, LNGOs were stakeholders in the conflicts that emerged due to the changing demographics in the region,[20] the environmental pressures because of the construction of the camps (UNDP Bangladesh and UN Women Bangladesh, Dhaka, 2018), and general problems associated with the drug trade and human trafficking (Ahmed and Mohiuddin, 2020, p. 210; see also Donovan, 2019). The conflict between the host community and the Rohingya was then also a central concern expressed by LNGOs and informed the distinct ways in which localisation was interpreted.

What was striking throughout my formal and informal discussions was that the inclusion of the Rohingya as local actors, and not only as 'beneficiaries', was not something that was considered much at all by LNGOs, or INGOs for that matter, but it is one of the core aspects of localisation, which seeks to put the affected population at the centre of the response (Wake and Bryant, 2018). This may be due to the specific context of forced migration, where local humanitarian entities do not overlap with the affected population, but also where refugee-led organisations (RLOs) are allowed

to register officially as NGOs and provide humanitarian assistance—as in the case of Uganda, where they are still routinely bypassed in the humanitarian response (Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, 2021). In Cox's Bazar, where Rohingya were not officially allowed to work, they were trained as volunteers by international and local organisations. Furthermore, UNHCR encouraged political representation of the Rohingya and supported elections in the camps (*The New Humanitarian*, 2019). Official activities of Rohingya people, however, remain rather limited, although grass-roots activism and self-organisation is growing among them (*The New Humanitarian*, 2018). Restrictive government policies, a general neglect of RLOs due to 'a top-down perspective on refugee governance' (Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria, 2021), and the competition with local humanitarian actors that exclusively represented the host community prevented the acknowledgement of Rohingya as local humanitarian actors in the spirit of the localisation agenda—as actors in their own right that should receive direct funding for their activities. Pincock, Betts, and Easton-Calabria (2021, p. 719) argue, therefore, that localisation requires 'much more attention to the role of power and interests at the local level if RLOs are to be engaged as meaningful actors in humanitarian assistance'. Yet, refugee-led humanitarianism (Sharif, 2018) was an aspect of localisation that was not mentioned by any of the interview partners during the field research, including the Rohingya themselves.

## Colliding worlds? Different perceptions and interpretations of localisation

In the interviews with LNGOs, most respondents themselves brought up the topic of localisation or mentioned the Charter for Change and the Grand Bargain—they had learned about them through workshops, internet resources, and word of mouth. LNGOs surely profited from some of their leaders having international exposure and networks; travel to Geneva, Switzerland, was mentioned several times. Some exceptionally active persons functioned as multipliers, attending international trainings and meetings, and reading the relevant documents and then sharing their knowledge of localisation with their peers. That most of the leaders of LNGOs, who were in many cases also the founders of the same organisations, had a high level of education, spoke English, and had experience of working with INGOs, might have helped in the dissemination of the information on localisation. When it came to interpretation of localisation, recurrent issues emerged, notably divergent understandings of the ways localisation was to be implemented and a major trust deficit between the different stakeholders that hampered a fruitful dialogue and a shared vision of localisation from evolving.

Representatives of LNGOs responded very similarly when discussing the details of the commitments and changes foreseen by localisation in the humanitarian sector: localisation was mainly understood as a way to channel funds and resources to Cox's Bazar's organisations and the host community. They stated that localisation was meant to bring funding to LNGOs and permit the procurement of items for the humanitarian

response locally and the hiring of local staff. It was generally understood that 25 per cent of donor funds were to be channelled directly to local and national organisations. Hence, localisation was also interpreted as giving priority to local over national organisations. This was justified on the basis that national NGOs were not really local and not hiring local staff, but rather bringing personnel from other parts of Bangladesh. The same accusation was levelled at UN agencies and INGOs.[21]

Although the CCNF pushed for localisation and sought dialogue with the government, UN agencies, and INGOs to discuss ways to implement it in the Rohingya response, little progress was attested by LNGO representatives. One reason mentioned was that the international actors themselves were not clear what localisation actually meant, or, as was supposed in several interviews, were even not aware of or familiar with the concept. This seems to be a general problem: a study on localisation reveals a 'persistent lack of awareness and confusion: beyond small circles in Europe and perhaps North America and Australia, key commitments in the 2016 "Grand Bargain" . . . and the Charter for Change, are generally little known among the full spectrum of actors in aid-recipient countries' (Van Brabant and Patel, 2018, p. 4). This was also criticised by LNGOs in the context of the first Joint Response Plan, in which references to localisation were missing completely.

LNGOs further criticised the lack of conflict sensitivity among INGOs and stressed the need to work on social cohesion in the Rohingya response. A whole-of-society approach was demanded (see also Post, Landry, and Huang, 2019). This reflected different priorities in the response and a major discrepancy in the interpretation of localisation. INGOs were blamed for applying a narrow understanding of localisation, reducing it to working through implementing partners. LNGOs, meanwhile, held the view that a localised response had to involve the host community with the aim of fostering social cohesion and countering potential conflicts. They demanded, therefore, a broader understanding of localisation, as the following statement by a representative of an LNGO illustrates:

> *This is actually not true. Localisation is a vast thing. We have to think about the local community, we have to think about the local government, we have to think about the local expertise involvement, in planning, designing and also implementing.*

This resonates with current discussions on localisation, especially in displacement settings, where a whole-of-society approach is promoted so as to include the host community as a key stakeholder in shaping the humanitarian response at the local level (HLA, 2019, p. 7). That increasing attention to social cohesion is now being given in the Rohingya response could be attributed to the ways in which LNGOs succeeded in challenging dominant discourses and practices. However, as the above statement shows, the Rohingya themselves were not included as local actors in the suggested broader understanding of localisation.

Localisation was also interpreted in terms of capacity development and local ownership by LNGOs. Although the Government of Bangladesh has clearly stressed the

temporary nature of the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar and engages in nego-
tiations with the Government of Myanmar regarding the return of Rohingya people
(Farzana, 2017; Lewis, 2019, p. 1886), LNGOs doubted that this would happen soon.
They openly expressed concern that international funding would decrease and inter-
national actors would leave, concentrating on other humanitarian hotspots. As one
local aid worker put it:

> when the international organisation will leave or they have no funds, who will bear the
> whole responsibility of Rohingya people? Obviously local government, local NGO and
> the host community. So we basically try to convey the message that the international
> organisations and UN agencies should support local NGOs for their capacity in terms of
> funding, their training and providing some system or technology that the international
> organisation have.

Capacity development was thus deemed necessary to make the response sustain-
able and a fundamental aspect of localisation. Here respondents highlighted a discrep-
ancy between their understanding of capacity and the ones used by INGOs. They
criticised INGOs for defining capacity in terms of resources and the number of
staff or vehicles, and for not valuing the capacity of LNGOs in terms of their in-depth
awareness of the setting, proximity to the affected population, and language skills
(see also Wake and Bryant, 2018). This is a dominant practice of the international aid
sector, which tends to value technocratic expertise and organisational capacity over
context-specific knowledge and associated capabilities (see also Autesserre, 2014;
Barbelet, 2019). Yet, despite local organisations highlighting their comparative advan-
tage, they generally acknowledged that international interveners had more capacity,
technical knowledge, and experience of managing refugee camps. As most of the
LNGOs were founded in the 1990s in response to the destruction caused by cyclones
in the region, they had not been working in the camps before 2017 and hence expressed
a strong willingness to learn from their international partners. Although capacity
development trainings were being offered, the primary format of in-house training
was considered ineffective by many LNGOs. It was argued that only through work-
ing jointly could capacity be developed. Staff poaching further undermined already
limited capacity, something that all respondents, including some INGO representatives,
cited as one of the major challenges to their organisation and capacity development.[22]

The issue of capacity development was mainly linked to adequate forms of part-
nership. Despite an envisioned complementarity, a number of INGOs seem to be
continuing in directly implementing their projects or entering into very hierarchical
partnerships.[23] Some respondents complained about INGOs directly implementing
their projects, sidelining LNGOs and thus not fostering capacity development or
harnessing local experience and knowledge. Where partnerships were in place, they
were characterised by a clear hierarchy. Strikingly, the term partner was frequently
used interchangeably with source of funding in formal and informal discussions with

LNGOs. LNGOs were acting as implementing partners of international organisa-tions—or as intermediaries that subcontracted the 'really local' organisations, which then implemented the projects in the camps. As a consequence, LNGOs called for 'partnerships with dignity', in which the organisations would meet on the same eye level and not as 'contractor and vendor'. This also extended to being involved in the design of projects. INGOs were accused of arriving with ready-made project designs without consulting the community or LNGOs. Interestingly, one representative of a LNGO was very critical of his organisation's approach, saying that projects were designed 'in AC [air-conditioned] rooms' and just implemented by them, without consulting the local community. Having little in the way of their own funds and capacities, they felt dependent on the decisions of UN agencies or INGOs. This seemed to lead to a mirroring of the practices of INGOs. As a result, the lack of ownership was a key concern of LNGOs. Another point raised was the absence of visibility of local partners in the annual reports of INGOs. This was perceived as proof of a lack of respect for local partners, which believed that they were assuming at least half of the responsibility for the successful implementation of projects.

Unquestionably, partnerships are considered to be a key element in building local capacities in humanitarian settings (Smillie, 2001). The importance of partnering with local organisations is widely recognised in the humanitarian sector, therefore, and already well established in the Principles of Partnership (2007),[24] and next to the issue of direct funding of local actors has taken centre-stage in the localisation dis-course (Barbelet, 2019). Yet, the very way partnership is understood and exercised in many intervention contexts is characterised by a dependence of local partners on their international counterparts in terms of funding, accountability, and manage-ment of projects (Smillie, 2001), something that was also criticised by LNGOs in Cox's Bazar.

## It is the trust, stupid!

While the lack of implementation of more equitable partnerships—or 'partnerships with dignity'—may be for a variety of reasons, the research found that a dearth of trust on all sides hampered effective communication between the different stake-holders and was at the core of the problem (Wake and Bryant, 2018). A recent study supports this finding, stating that '[m]any examples of partnership practices which are least conducive to localisation reflect a lack of trust and respect' (Christian Aid et al., 2019, p. 5). As partnerships are in essence about relationships (Houghton, 2011), the strong 'us' versus 'them' thinking, which also involved the othering of partners and stereotypical thinking regarding 'the local' and 'the international', emerged as an underlying theme in the research (Autessere, 2014; Roth, 2015).

Intriguingly, most of the issues that LNGOs raised are addressed in the international discourse on localisation and reflected in the key commitments of the localisation agenda, yet they seem to have not been successfully translated into humanitarian prac-tice in Cox's Bazar and elsewhere. The language and specific terms used by LNGOs

showed that most of them were well aware of these commitments and the ongoing debate on localisation. In light of the perceived lack of implementation in their daily work, international actors were thus accused of not living up to their promises and commitments. Furthermore, representatives of LNGOs criticised the lack of visibility of their contribution to the response, limited participation and inclusion in project design, no access to direct funding, and partnership relations that instead of fostering capacity development were at best hierarchical in nature. In short, the response in Bangladesh replicated to a large extent the entrenched practices of the humanitarian sector, with no major changes in the ways aid was delivered or local actors becoming involved. UN agencies and INGOs were accused, therefore, of only paying lip service to localisation, with little action following.

The question arises why localisation was only partially, if at all, implemented in Cox's Bazar. Apart from the reasons often mentioned, such as the lack of willingness to yield power or share resources, a deep-rooted trust deficit on all sides was arguably a main obstacle to the realisation of localisation. This indicates the importance of trust-building efforts between the various actors if localisation is to be achieved. Indeed, trust is a key factor affecting inter-organisational cooperation and the readiness of organisations to establish collaborative relationships (Stephenson, 2005, p. 343; van Gorp, 2014, p. 624), the provision of funding by donors, and the affected population accepting humanitarian aid (Slim, 2019). As Schneiker (2020, p. 26) asserts in reference to competitive environments, trust is not the only condition for cooperation, but it is an essential one. So, it is argued here that although 'going local' may be important in addressing the trust deficit prevalent in the humanitarian sector (see Mahmood, 2020), trust is a prerequisite for going local in the first place. It seems to be a chicken and egg situation.

Different definitions and attempts to categorise trust have been suggested for different kinds of networks (Newell and Swan, 2000; Stephenson, 2005, p. 344; Searle, Nienaber, and Sitkin, 2018; Awasthy et al., 2019; Schneiker, 2020). Studies on the issue of trust in humanitarian action have focused, therefore, principally on cooperation between INGOs, donor-recipient relations, or the affected population's perceptions of humanitarian assistance. These works offer important insights for understanding the issue of trust in the context of the localisation agenda. Schneiker (2020, p. 36), for instance, finds that sharing the same identity as humanitarian actors is an important element of trust-building in the large, unstable networks that humanitarian responses normally represent. Furthermore, actors cannot base their trust on experience of past interactions. Identity-based trust, however, may easily lead to the exclusion of actors that are perceived as different, as with LNGOs and INGOs in Cox's Bazar. These studies, though, commonly do not address more structural and systemic factors that clearly feed the trust-deficit and hamper localisation: the legacies of colonialism, racism, classism, and unequal power relations prevalent in the daily interactions of people in the humanitarian arena (Katwikirize, 2020; Rejali, 2020; Steinke and Hövelmann, 2021).

## Conclusion

It is in intervention contexts, such as the humanitarian response in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, that struggles over meanings and practices arise (Long and Jinlong, 2009). Interface analysis allows us to 'look more closely at the question of whose interpretations or models . . . prevail in given scenarios and how and why they do so' (Long, 1999, p. 19). It shows that the implementation of localisation is not simply a top-down process, 'since initiatives may come as much from below as from above' (Long, 1992, p. 19).

Although international actors had more power to shape the response, local actors used different strategies to challenge the ways in which it was carried out and localisation was implemented. The international norm of localisation thus found its way into the specific local setting: local actors are not passive recipients of a global discourse but rather, they construct their own discourse on localisation (Chiweshe and Bhatasara, 2016).

By looking at the intersecting lifeworlds of international aid workers and local humanitarian actors and applying an interface perspective, the research revealed how the Rohingya response in Cox's Bazar became a site of contestation, competition, and sometimes convergence among different actors vis-à-vis the meaning of localisation. LNGOs had developed their own vision of localisation, which did not always converge with that of international actors. The research exposed how divergent understandings of localisation and the best means of implementation prevalent in Cox's Bazar created conflict and hampered the joint efforts of international and local humanitarian actors (Mission Team, 2018; CCNF, 2019). Both sides tried to find common ground and engage in dialogue, but conflicting views, interests, and perceptions of 'self' and 'other' seemed to stand in the way of more constructive relationships.

Consequently, trust-building efforts and a respectful attitude should not only be central to the nurturing of good partnerships, but also to improving more generally the humanitarian response and making localisation a reality. This may entail, among many other things, consideration of material and spatial factors so as to foster positive relationships and social interactions with LNGOs and the host community (Autessere, 2014, p. 174; Smirl, 2015, p. 80). However, it also requires addressing more fundamental issues concerning power imbalance and the effects of (neo)colonialism, racism, and classism on the humanitarian sector and the need to decolonise humanitarian action. While the political economy and competition over funding and prestige clearly led to tensions between the different actors, the problematic relationships cannot be understood without taking into account the more systemic and structural factors that shape humanitarian action. Legacies of colonialism and experiences of racism, classism, and elitism cast shadows, not only on the practices of INGOs, but also on those of their local counterparts. Implementing localisation thus requires a more fundamental shift in current humanitarian practice, which will undoubtedly take some time to occur.

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## Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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## Endnotes

[1] Under the Grand Bargain, launched during the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, in May 2016, donors and humanitarian organisations committed themselves to making the humanitarian response as local as possible, notably by channelling up to 25 per cent of funds directly to local and national actors by 2020. For more information, see https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/grand-bargain (last accessed on 18 February 2022).

[2] The Charter for Change is an initiative of various humanitarian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that commit to pass 25 per cent of their own funds to national and local NGOs by 2020. It demands to involve local and national partners more systemically in the development and implementation of projects and to acknowledge the efforts of local actors through better public visibility. For more information, see https://charter4change.org/ (last accessed on 18 February 2022).

[3] The research also included informal discussions with Rohingya outside and inside the camps, visits to camp hospitals and schools, and meetings with three Majhis (appointed Rohingya leaders in the camps), as well as an observation of a training of Rohingya volunteers in combating gender-based violence. Insights were only incorporated in this analysis of local civil society organisation's perceptions of the international response if they were considered to provide additional information. This is a limitation of the study, however; Rohingya views on localisation and the response of international and local organisations would paint a more complete picture.

[4] In line with research ethics, all references have been anonymised to prevent actual or potential identification of research participants.

[5]  The exact number is not clear, but for some estimations see Amnesty International (2017), Alam (2019), and UNHCR (2019). See also Kolstad (2018).

[6]  The SEG coordinates activities with the government and the NTF.

[7]  For an overview chart, see https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarian response.info/files/documents/files/08_rohingya_refugee_response_coordination_mecha.pdf (last accessed on 21 February 2022).

[8]  Bangladesh is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, this view was also stated in an interview with a government representative in Cox's Bazar in February 2019.

[9]  Interviews with local and international aid workers, Cox's Bazar and Kutupalong Refugee Camp, March 2019. See also Human Rights Watch (2019).

[10]  This was a common trope in conversations with aid workers, and with taxi drivers or colleagues at the University of Dhaka.

[11]  During field research, I learned from a government representative that there were 220 NGOs listed at the beginning of the Rohingya response in August 2017. However, only a few remained active over time. Another interview partner referred to 200 INGOs operating in Cox's Bazar.

[12]  Long (1993, p. 217) defines an interface as 'the critical point at which structural discontinuity is most likely to occur between different social system, areas or levels of the social order due to variable normative values and social interests'.

[13]  The Rohingya response was internationally funded to the tune of USD 691,870,583 in 2019 (see UNOCHA, 2021).

[14]  The CCNF describes itself as 'a network of local CSO and NGOs', although text references to local and national NGOs are to be found throughout the website. See http://www.cxb-cso-ngo.org/origin/ (last accessed on 21 February 2022).

[15]  Religion also played an important role in legitimising and delegitimising certain actors, whether it was Hindu and Christian organisations accused of missionary activities in the camps, or Muslim organisations suspected of spreading extremism.

[16]  One interview partner conceded, however, that the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) was one of the first responders. A number of INGOs were already present in Cox's Bazar (Wake and Bryant, 2018, p. 7) and UNHCR acted as the leader of the international relief operation and facilitated repatriation back in 1978 (Farzana, 2017, p. 72).

[17]  According to Bangladesh's Foreign Donations (Voluntary Activities) Regulation Law 2016, NGOs have to register with the NGO Affairs Bureau. For projects, NGOs need to have either FD6 (development projects) or FD7 (relief work) approval. To work on the Rohingya response, FD7 approval is required. As a subcontractor (or sub-recipient, as they were called) of a registered NGO, smaller organisations evaded this limitation.

[18]  Among international actors, though, hierarchies were also observable, with UN agencies being named as the most powerful not only by LNGOs, but also by INGOs.

[19]  Moreover, while helping Muslim brothers and sisters surely informed everyday humanitarianism in Cox's Bazar, the Government of Bangladesh's attempt to curtail radicalisation in the country and in the camps led to three Islamic NGOs being banned from operating in the area in 2017 (Lewis, 2019).

[20]  The Rohingya make up one-third of the population in Teknaf and three-quarters of the population in Ukhiya (Wake and Bryant, 2018, p. 8).

[21]  The conflict between local and international organisations then revolved around one issue: the claim that international organisations were not hiring local staff. At the time of the research, a movement in Teknaf and Ukhiya demanded the hiring of more local staff, culminating in physical attacks on the infrastructure of international organisations and threats of violence against aid workers.

[22]  Skilled local staff joined UN agencies or INGOs because of the considerably higher salaries. Local organisations claimed that they felt under pressure to specify low salaries in budget proposals to

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donors in order to win a competitive bidding process. This view conflicted with the assessment of an international aid worker: 'it's up to them to then look after their staff cost . . . they give me like very tiny numbers and then they complain they cannot pay. I cannot identify for you what is your salary'.

[23] See Accelerating Localisation Through Partnerships and the Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute (2020).

[24] The Global Humanitarian Platform endorsed the Principles of Partnership in 2007, laying the foundation for a shared understanding of how food partnerships contribute to a more humanitarian action. The commitments revolve around the issues of equality, transparency, a results-oriented approach, responsibility, and complementarity. For more information, see https://www.icvanetwork. org/transforming-our-network-for-impact/principles-of-partnership/#:~:text=The%20Principles %20of%20Partnership%20(Equality,and%20national%20humanitarian%20response%20capacity (last accessed on 21 February 2022).

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## 5.2 A call for critical reflection on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action

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# A call for critical reflection on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action

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**ABSTRACT**

Calls for a greater inclusion of local actors have featured for some time in debates on how to make humanitarian action more efficient and address unequal power relations within the humanitarian system. Though the localisation agenda is at the core of current reform efforts in the humanitarian sector, the debate lacks a critical discussion of underlying assumptions – most strikingly, the very conceptualisation of the local itself. It is argued that the current discourse is dominated by a problematic conceptualisation of the local in binary opposition to the international, leading to blind spots in the analysis of exclusionary practices of the humanitarian sector. As such the localisation agenda risks perpetuating the very issues it wants to redress. A critical localism is thus proposed as a framework for much needed research on the localisation agenda.

## Introduction

When disasters hit or outbreaks of violence cause death and displacement it is the affected population that is the first to respond. Neighbours, ad hoc volunteer groups and civil society organisations are already on the scene before national or international actors arrive. Yet, these efforts gain little public attention and stand in stark contrast to the pictures and information that reaches the global public through the media. In the reports and fundraising appeals that emerge in the wake of humanitarian crises, most of the attention is paid to a set of well-known and established humanitarian actors. Apart from organisations of the UN, a small number of large international non-governmental organisations (INGOS) such as World Vision International, Doctors Without Borders (MSF), Save the Children or Oxfam make their appearance on the television screens. Not only are local efforts largely ignored in the media reporting, but they are also systematically marginalised within the humanitarian sector itself. This is particularly apparent in the disproportionate allocation of financial resources: the Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015 found that only 0.2% of humanitarian funds were allocated to local actors.

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Though the importance of local actors has already been acknowledged in UN Resolution 46/182 (1991), the Code of Conduct of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and NGOs in Disaster Relief (1994), as well as in the Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (2003) and the Principles of Partnership (2007),[1] evaluations have revealed a lack of implementation in practice. Calls for a greater inclusion of local actors have thus gained momentum in the wake of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) that was held in Istanbul in May 2016.[2] A general consensus was reached on the need to make humanitarian responses more efficient, effective, adequate, inclusive and emancipatory. With a number of organisations having subsequently signed agreements on how to better integrate local actors into the humanitarian response, localisation is now at the heart of the latest reform efforts within the humanitarian sector. While some divergence exists about the exact meaning of localisation,[3] in essence it can be described as 'a process of recognising, respecting and strengthening the leadership by local authorities and the capacity of local civil society in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations and to prepare national actors for future humanitarian responses'.[4] The main commitments that stem from the localisation agenda therefore revolve around issues such as financing, partnership, capacity strengthening, coordination,[5] recruitment and communication.[6] Humanitarian organisations have since set out to identify best practices and lessons learned from specific cases.[7] Though some progress has been made in defining new models of partnership, directly funding local and national actors, and in tracking financial flows to national and local NGOs,[8] the current debate remains strikingly undertheorised with a number of key conceptual questions still unaddressed. Most significantly, little has been said about the concept that forms the basis of the debate – namely, the notion of the local. Considering that funds and power will be channelled to these actors, the lack of critical reflection around the conceptualisation of the local is not only a scholarly endeavour, but has important implications for humanitarian practice.[9] Thereby, mere problem-solving theories, with their focus on questions of effectiveness, are 'unable to bring about substantive change to the structures that might underpin the very issues we are trying to redress'.[10] In order to avoid reproducing problematic exclusionary practices of humanitarian action through the localisation agenda, a more fundamental analysis and critical engagement with underlying assumptions and dominant practices is therefore needed.[11]

This paper wants to contribute to critical scholarship on humanitarian action[12] by offering a discussion of the conceptualisation of the local that informs the localisation agenda. To this end, the paper provides a brief overview of the localisation discourse in humanitarian action.[13] It finds that the local is constructed in binary opposition to the international. Such a conceptualisation of the local however fails to capture the complex dynamics of intervention processes and the translocal and transcultural entangled relationships of humanitarian actors within the humanitarian arena.[14] Moreover, it risks reproducing (colonial) thought patterns and results in blind spots in the analysis of exclusionary practices of humanitarian action. A 'critical localism' as proposed by Mac Ginty[15] is thus offered as a framework for future research on the localisation agenda in humanitarian action. Understanding the local as a concept that is both highly contextual and relational, a critical localism allows for an analysis of the very processes by which the local is constructed. It draws attention to the question of who claims to represent the local, who defines who the local is, and how this may lead to the marginalisation of certain actors in the humanitarian arena. As such, a critical localism also places the current localisation agenda within the broader framework of

humanitarian governance.[16] The paper concludes by identifying a future research trajectory, informed by critical localism, for studying localisation in humanitarian action. Empirical studies that offer a thick description of intervention contexts and the actors involved as well as a transdisciplinary research strategy that taps into already existing critical scholarship in peacebuilding and development, area studies and ethnographic research findings seem particularly promising for gaining a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges of localising humanitarian action.[17]

## Going local: the localisation discourse in humanitarian action

Localising humanitarian action is increasingly seen as a panacea to ill-fitted and inefficient humanitarian responses. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) dedicated its World Disasters Report 2015 to local actors, calling them the key to humanitarian effectiveness. Subsequently, calls for a greater inclusion of local actors as well as a better sensitivity to the local context in which humanitarian action takes place have gained momentum in the wake of the WHS. In the Grand Bargain, a number of donors and humanitarian organisations have thus committed themselves to making the humanitarian response as local as possible, notably by channelling up to 25% of the funds directly to local and national actors by 2020.[18] Similarly, the Charter4Change, an initiative of various humanitarian NGOs, intended to increase funding of local NGOs from the Global South by 20% until the year 2018.[19] Apart from re-channelling funds, local and national partners are also to be more systematically involved in the development and implementation of projects. Moreover, the efforts of local actors are to be acknowledged through better public visibility. Emphasising the comparative advantage of local actors and the complementarity of the various actors involved in the humanitarian response, the slogan 'as local as possible, as international as necessary' has become commonplace in the humanitarian sector.

Looking at the many reasons provided for acknowledging the importance of local actors, several lines of argument can be identified. Apart from concerns of how the current system is reproducing power imbalances between countries (and people) from the Global North and the Global South, localising humanitarian action has become *en vogue* on more pragmatic grounds, ranging from aid effectiveness, cost efficiency, an improved context-sensitive and speedy emergency response, increased humanitarian access to people in need[20] to less overtly stated and more contested enhanced security for (international) aid workers through remote management in conflict environments.[21]

### *Between power and pragmatism*

The humanitarian system as it materialised in the nineteenth century and as we know it today is often perceived as a neo-colonial, imperial and neoliberal enterprise where countries from the Global North unequally dominate and dictate the rules of the game.[22] With it, and justified on the basis of an ethics of care, humanitarian governance as the institutionalised and internationalised attempt to save lives and alleviate suffering emerged as a part of global governance.[23] However, critical scholarship on humanitarianism has pointed out the double aspect of care and control in humanitarian governance, which 'is driven by a humanitarian ethos of helping the most vulnerable, but in doing so involves practices

ruling the lives of the most vulnerable without providing them with a means of recourse to hold the humanitarians accountable for their actions'.[24] Thus, humanitarian governance includes the exercise of power, and poses the danger of justifying forms of domination and exclusion.[25] A number of scholars have worked out how this manifests itself in the humanitarian field, from the management of refugee camps to the very idea of humanitarianism.[26] This power imbalance is reflected in the dominant practices of the humanitarian sector that not only lead to the marginalisation of local actors, but also the ways in which people in need are constructed as helpless victims without agency.[27] Within these power structures that are exercised and reproduced through the modes of humanitarian governance it is important to note that many recipients of humanitarian aid have been colonised by the very same countries that now bring food, equipment and expertise in the wake of humanitarian situations. Resistance against what is being perceived as a continuation of a colonial agenda and civilisation mission finds its expression in suspicion and rejection of humanitarian action.[28] From within the humanitarian sector the dominating organisations of the Global North have also been criticised for their paternalistic, insensitive approach to humanitarian action that bypasses and marginalises local actors and the affected population.[29]

In contrast to persistent images of the external (white) saviour who saves lives and ends suffering it is now widely acknowledged that people in the areas affected are the first to respond, including neighbours and family members, volunteers, ad hoc groups, emergency responders and civil society organisations. Despite the fact that countries of the Global South increasingly engage in humanitarian action in their immediate neighbourhood and beyond,[30] the important and powerful institutions and organisations that dominate the humanitarian system originate in the Global North.[31] The localisation agenda hopes to redress these power imbalances by empowering local humanitarian actors and the affected population. However, to make humanitarian action more equitable and inclusive, the entire humanitarian system needs to be turned on its head.[32]

In addition to this fundamental critique of the humanitarian system, international humanitarian actors are criticised on more pragmatic grounds. They are accused of lacking knowledge of the contexts they are operating in, and by not listening to local voices, ignoring local needs and priorities, being unaware of political power plays, cultural sensitivities or specific vulnerabilities. Due to linguistic and cultural proximity, local actors, on the other hand, are believed to carry greater legitimacy and be more trusted by the affected population.[33] This allows them to carry out a more appropriate response in line with the needs of the affected population, being able to provide better protection and having greater access to people in need. Not tapping into already existing local resources, the humanitarian system is claimed to fail at building and strengthening local capacity, which is considered vital for disaster preparedness and community resilience.[34] Indeed, an evaluation of the international humanitarian effort in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami finds that a lack of engagement at an early stage with community-based and local NGOs, which played a major role in saving lives before international and national actors arrived, led to their marginalisation in the subsequent crisis response. Bypassing these actors caused their capacities to be weakened by the time cooperation was sought in the recovery phase, ultimately compromising the effectiveness and efficiency of the humanitarian response.[35]

Ignoring the local, it is argued, minimises aid effectiveness and sustainable capacity development. Strengthening local actors, on the other hand, is believed to address deficiencies

of current humanitarian responses and to provide answers to the challenges the humanitarian sector sees itself confronted with: a shrinking humanitarian space and limited access to people in need, an increasing fragmentation of the humanitarian system, a lack of coordination and coherence of humanitarian efforts and a gap between relief, reconstruction and development strategies against the background of a growing number of humanitarian emergencies caused by climate change, migration and protracted conflicts.[36]

### Continued marginalisation and critique of the critique

While the local is now widely and repetitively invoked rhetorically, evaluations of humanitarian activities reveal that the localisation agenda has been implemented in practice only to a limited extent.[37] A number of possible reasons for the continuing marginalisation of the affected population and local humanitarian actors are put forward Apart from institutional factors[38] and the existing and continuing power imbalances within the humanitarian system, in which only a few actors dominate and are not willing to yield power,[39] the identification and inclusion of adequate local partners in the midst of an emergency is felt to be difficult to implement in practice.[40] Additionally, the cooperation with local counterparts in the immediate response is often regarded as obstructive for the expeditious saving of lives.[41] Another reason for the continued marginalisation of local actors and the affected population in humanitarian responses is attributed to the upward accountability towards donors with their own priorities and understanding of needs – at the expense of downward accountability towards the affected population.[42]

Not everyone however perceives localisation as a panacea and some concerns in light of the localisation agenda have been expressed – providing further explanations for its weak implementation. As the debate has so far revolved mainly around local actors' engagement in the context of natural disasters, calls for a more nuanced understanding of the role of local actors in different humanitarian contexts have emerged.[43] Especially in the case of armed conflicts, one has to question perceived and actual neutrality and impartiality of local actors, and the implications thereof for humanitarian action. Though the adherence to humanitarian principles is a challenge for both international and local actors,[44] a major concern is the lack of adherence to the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence by local actors.[45] Moreover, corruption, religious and ethnic affiliation, as well as local power plays are feared to detrimentally impact the humanitarian response,[46] with the quality of local humanitarian action – especially its effectiveness, efficiency and transparency – being called into question.[47] Linked to this is the concern that the localisation agenda may undermine protection outcomes in both conflict-related emergencies and disaster contexts.[48] Finally, the increased engagement of local actors could lead to heightened competition within a system where funding is already scarce.[49] More appreciative of local actors, but still critical about the localisation agenda, others have warned of a risk transfer from international actors to their local counterparts. When pursuing a localisation agenda, international actors are accused of evading their responsibilities, leaving local actors alone in the midst of crisis situations. Especially in volatile conflict contexts, international actors provide much needed protection through their presence.[50] Moreover, the localisation agenda could play into the hands of regimes that want to restrict outside intervention – going as far as using it to hide war crimes.[51]

In spite of these concerns, the prevailing consensus is that humanitarian action needs to be localised in order to allow for a more efficient and emancipatory humanitarian response. However, a critical reflection of the underlying assumptions and ideologies that inform the localisation agenda is only taking place at the margins.[52] Apart from a lack of clarification around who exactly these local actors are, the way the local is constructed in the current discourse is based on a problematic dichotomy between the local and the international that leads to blind spots in the analysis of exclusionary humanitarian practices.

## International interventions and the local

The current discourse in the humanitarian sector is reminiscent of similar debates that have shaped the development[53] and peacebuilding[54] sector for some time. In what has been coined the 'local turn'[55] in peacebuilding, similar to earlier discussions in the development field and current debates within the humanitarian sector, local ownership, new modes of partnership and cooperation with local counterparts are believed to improve access and legitimacy. Inclusionary and participatory approaches promise sustainability, cost effectiveness, cultural sensitivity – and ultimately a 'swifter exit for international actors'.[56] Despite the different aims, norms and practices of these fields that arguably require different expertise and skills, and raise different sets of questions regarding the role of local actors,[57] the substantive debate of the notion of the local can be made fruitful for critical scholarship on humanitarian action.[58] Informed by poststructuralist and postcolonial thinking, this critical scholarship stresses the insufficient examination of the lengthy processes,[59] prevailing power relations, practices and narratives,[60] and weak conceptualisation of key concepts[61] as factors that lead to the marginalisation of the local in international aid interventions.[62] Thereby, the conceptualisation of the local as a binary opposite to the international and the related Eurocentric[63] worldview became the major point of criticism.

### *The key question: conceptualisation of the local*

In the various international aid intervention contexts, a wide range of actors is subsumed under the notion of the local, including national and local NGOs, local and national government representatives or local staff of foreign NGOs and agencies.[64] The term local is thereby often used to distinguish 'the sphere of the country in which the intervention occurs from the outside world'.[65] However, subnational actors and community-level civil society organisations may view themselves as local in comparison to both national and international actors, calling for a more nuanced conceptualisation of the local.[66] Likewise, the label international is used in reference to a broad set of actors, including foreign governments, international governmental organisations (IGOs), INGOs, academic institutions, think tanks and businesses. As this long list of actors suggests, the international – just like the local – is a vague and heterogeneous category. It has thus been suggested to abandon these terms altogether, favouring instead a distinction between insiders and outsiders.[67] Thereby, insiders may be defined as those actors that are 'vulnerable to the conflict, because they are from the area and living there, or people who in some other way must experience the conflict and live with its consequences personally' and outsiders are

those 'who choose to become involved in the conflict and have personally little to lose'.[68] However, it is far from clear who should be considered an insider or outsider in a given context. Rather, it seems to be a question of both subjective and objective ascriptions and perceptions.[69] Thus, these categories seem to be vague terms too, ambiguously used by scholars, practitioners and affected populations alike – and at times interchangeable with the labels local and international in the same document. Ultimately, the attempts to differentiate between the insider and the outsider seem as vain as the categorisation of the local and international.

While the World Disasters Report 2015 raises the question of the definition of the local, it concludes that there is no answer to it. The answer to the question is, however, crucial. Depending on the definition of the local, certain actors can end up being excluded from the localisation reform agenda. A look into various reports and documents reveals that while some organisations work with a comprehensive list of local actors,[70] others use restrictive definitions of the local. For instance, the Charter4Change, explicitly refers to NGOs from the Global South – local actors in the Global North that are active on Lampedusa and Lesbos, or respond to hurricanes in the US, would thus not profit from the localisation agenda.[71] A set of other questions arises: Does the localisation agenda include national governments, or only civil society actors at the community level? Are the national societies of international organisations, such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, to be considered local? Should we distinguish between local and national actors?[72] This central discussion continues at present and consensus is not in sight. Instead, a multiplicity of definitions of local humanitarian actors can be found in the debate (and in practice): while the Grand Bargain does not include internationally affiliated local organisations, national Red Cross and Red Crescent societies or local offices of INGOS such as Oxfam are considered local humanitarian actors by others.[73] Moreover, the private sector, volunteer groups, social movements and diaspora organisations may all be considered local humanitarian actors.[74] The difficulty to categorise these actors also stems from the fact that many organisations are hybrids of local, international and global networks of agency. And, as Barbelet notes, local staff often shift between working for international and national or local organisations within the same humanitarian response context, further blurring the lines between the local and the international.[75] These entanglements go further: faith-based humanitarian organisations often have a global religious ideology that finds its expression at the local level[76] and social solidarity movements act across national borders and specific localities, as particularly evident in the case of search and rescue NGOs in the Mediterranean[77] and collectives such as No Border Kitchen Lesvos.[78] Thus, as many other labels used in the social sciences, the distinction between the local and the international presents an oversimplification of the complex interactions in the context of international interventions. While this fluid character of the local is somewhat acknowledged in the localisation discourse,[79] there exists a tendency to build on the binary opposition of the local versus the international. Paffenholz[80] identifies the main problems and contradictions that result from understanding the local and international in such binary opposites, including 'a blindness to the dominant role of local elites … an excessive critical focus on the international … which … identified as a monolithic West, and as a continuation of neo-colonial policies of control'. This Eurocentric perspective, then, 'leads to a blind spot when it comes to non-Western international actors (such as China and other BRICS countries)'.

### Critical localism: reconceptualising the local

A dichotomous understanding is often coupled with a problematic essentialisation of the local and the international respectively. Thereby, certain attributes are ascribed on the basis of an underlying ontological distinction that juxtaposes the Global North as the international, universal, modern and technocratic and the Global South as the local, particular, traditional and parochial.[81] With this comes a tendency to either romanticise or vilify the local. The perception of the local – be it local government representatives, local communities, civil society or the affected population – is built on an imaginary concept of 'a non-state and traditional local that is inherently authentic and legitimate, thus circumventing the need to critically assess who the local represents'.[82] On the other hand, a less sympathetic view of the local persists that construes it as something static, rural, traditional, incapable and waiting to be 'civilised, developed, monetized and "properly" governed'.[83]

A critical reading of the local that challenges these paradigms moves its analytical focus away from statist and fixed categories toward the agency of actors. The local, instead of being conceived as a fixed spatial and temporal category, is then better understood as a highly contextual and relational concept that is a site of ongoing construction and recon- struction, 'much of it perceptual'.[84] Such a re-conceptualisation of the local also allows cap- turing the ways in which, in today's highly interconnected world, people find themselves tied into social, scientific and technical networks that extend far beyond their locality. The local, then, points towards dynamic and multiple transnational, transcultural and translocal entanglements.[85] This does not mean that the idea of having a local or international in humanitarian action has to be rejected altogether. Rather, as Richmond suggests, what is needed is a re-conceptualisation of it as a complex concept of the 'everyday' and space of action.[86] Such a critical localism calls for an analysis of the processes of ordering, regulating and contesting social values, relations, resource utilisation, authority and power that are framed by local contexts, but which are shaped by interactions exceeding geographical boundaries.[87] This also allows the analysis of heterogeneous interests and complex relation- ships between the various actors in the humanitarian arena, in which 'being local' becomes a resource and actors that claim to represent the local function as gatekeepers of the access to people in need and in the distribution of aid.[88] Moreover, it enables us to look at the social interfaces[89] in which actors employ the notion of the local as a discursive strategy to legiti- mise their actions, gain access to people in need and generate social practices of inclusion and exclusion within particular intervention contexts. Humanitarian actors should be aware of these dynamics and processes – especially when a situational approach to defining the local is applied and it is argued that 'it is not the place of those outside a context to decide if an organisation is local or not. Rather, this should be contextually determined on a case- by-case basis by those engaged in, and more importantly affected by, a crisis response'.[90]

For scholarship on the localisation agenda this means that there should be a critical rethink- ing of the local, not as opposed to the international, but as an activity that occurs within webs of power and politics in which different people operate and interact.[91] This kind of critical engagement allows us to move beyond the current debate with its strong focus on effective- ness (problem-solving theories) to more fundamental analyses of existing power imbalances and exclusionary practices of humanitarian action that underpin the very issues the locali- sation agenda tries to redress.[92] More fundamental questions thus need to be addressed if the call for structural change is to be taken seriously. For example, in the context of capacity

strengthening the question arises: whose knowledge counts and who decides what kind of, and whose, capacity needs to be strengthened in which ways. When it comes to more equitable partnerships, the current practices of subcontracting need to be rethought and new modes of inclusive project design developed. Another question that arises is to what extent local humanitarian actors represent a (national) elite rather than the affected people. Or, even more fundamentally: in the light of (vernacular) humanitarianisms, whose understanding of humanitarianism should guide humanitarian action? These are a just a few of many issues that arise in the context of the localisation agenda, calling for a critical engagement with current practices that are embedded within, and therefore may perpetuate problematic aspects of, humanitarian governance.[93] Otherwise, and in contrast to its emancipatory claims, the localisation agenda runs the risk of becoming another method of domination and control, reproducing current power asymmetries and the marginalisation of actors at the periphery.

## Conclusion and outlook: a research agenda

The call for localisation has stipulated a debate on how to track and channel funding more directly to local humanitarian actors, strengthen local capacity, improve partnership models, and better integrate local voices and the needs and views of the affected population into humanitarian responses. Despite the popularity of 'going local' and the emergence of a growing number of reports on best practices, the very concept of the local remains contested and significantly undertheorised – with important implications for the theory and practice of humanitarian action. A re-conceptualising of the local, in line with a critical localism, challenges existing underlying paradigms and the juxtaposition of the local and the international. Constructing them as binary opposites is problematic as it risks reproducing stereotypes and current power asymmetries within the humanitarian system through a focus on Western international actors and a blindness towards dominant local or non-Western international elites. In contrast, a critical reading of the local allows capturing the complex dynamics of intervention processes and the translocal and transcultural entangled relationships of humanitarian actors within particular humanitarian contexts. Thus, in order to render the localisation agenda meaningful, a more nuanced understanding of the local is required to address questions of aid efficiency and issues of power. For researchers, this calls for an epistemological practice that moves beyond the narrow confines of the international and local dichotomy and escapes Eurocentric tendencies in which the Global North becomes the vantage point against which everything else is to be measured.[94] Practitioners, on the other hand, should reflect on the ideologies, paradigms and assumptions that inform their localisation practices. Instead of developing one-size-fits-all solutions, tools and processes should be identified to assess the complementarity of the multiple actors involved in specific contexts.

Further research is needed to gain a better understanding of the opportunities and challenges of localising humanitarian action. Researchers should examine how the localisation agenda is embedded within structures of humanitarian governance in order to shed light on how power and domination is exercised through existing and emerging practices of aid localisation. Also, linking the localisation agenda to discussions of multiple humanitarianisms and vernacular understandings of humanitarian action will contribute to the debate. Apart from this more conceptual line of research, understanding the conditions

under which actors that have been defined as local adhere to, adapt to or challenge the humanitarian principles in their everyday work will be of utmost importance for humanitarian scholarship and practice.[95] Another area of research that deserves further attention is the interface between localisation and the shrinking space for civil society action: how does the shrinking space for civil society engagement by way of restrictive policies and the criminalisation of aid around the world affect the localisation agenda and how do actors cope with it?[96] To address these and other question, empirical studies that offer 'thick descriptions' of specific intervention contexts and the actors involved are needed. Researchers could thereby tap into already existing research findings from area studies, anthropology, and critical development and peacebuilding scholarship.

## Disclosure statement

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## Notes on contributor

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## Notes

1. Wall and Hedlund, *Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response*, 9.
2. In preparation for the WHS, which was initiated by the then General Secretary of the UN, Ban Ki-moon, more than 23,000 people in 153 countries were consulted on how to reform the humanitarian system.
3. IFRC, *Localization*, 1; ICVA, *Localization Examined*, 4.
4. Fabre, *Localising the Response*, 1.
5. Els, *On the Road to 2020*.
6. C4C, *Charter for Change*.
7. Svoboda and Pantuliano, *International and Local/Diaspora Actors*; Kenney and Phibbs, "A Māori Love Story"; Corbett, *South Kordofan*; de Geoffrey and Grunewald, *More than the Money*; Antequista and Corbett, *Learning from Survivor and Community-Led Crisis*; Abdulkadir, *Improving Aid Delivery through Localization in Somalia*; Lehoux, *Localisation in Practice*; Ayobi et al., *Going Local*; Featherstone, *Missed Again*; Humanitarian Leadership Academy, *Local Humanitarian Action in Practice*.

8. The Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2018 finds that there was a slight increase in direct funding to national and local NGOs, rising from 1.7% in 2016 to 2.7% in 2017. However, only 0.4% was directly funded to them. In the case of Somalia, on the other hand, the direct channelling of funds through local NGOs has exceeded the 25% target (OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2019*, 10). One mechanism that is considered to support localisation is the channelling of monies through pooled funds that are accessible to local actors. CBPFs, that disburse funds at country level, have grown from US$486 million in 2014 to US$833 million in 2017 (Ibid., 71). On these and progress in other domains see also C4C, *Charter for Change*.

9. Wall and Hedlund, *Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response*, 14.

10. Christie, "Critical Readings"; see also Barnett, "Humanitarian Governance," 382.

11. While this lack of conceptualisation of the local is acknowledged in the humanitarian sector and several publications highlight this, the discussion so far does not go beyond a mere problem description. See IFRC, *World Disasters Report 2015*; Wall and Hedlund, *Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response*; Barbelet, *As Local as Possible*; Pouligny, *Supporting Local Ownership*.

12. Christie, "Critical Readings," 43.

13. The paper builds and elaborates on findings presented in Roepstorff, "Chance Für den Frieden?"

14. Hilhorst and Jansen, "Humanitarian Space as Arena."

15. Mac Ginty, "Where is the Local?"

16. Feldman and Ticktin, *In the Name of Humanity*; Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*.

17. Paffenholz, "Unpacking the Local Turn," 868; Hunt, *Beyond the Binaries*; Bräuchler, "Cultural Turn in Peace Research"; Bräuchler and Nucke, "Peacebuilding and Conceptualisations."

18. Accessed August 29, 2018. https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2018/Jan/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_FINAL-2.pdf

19. Accessed August 26, 2018. https://charter4change.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/charter-for-change-july-20152.pdf

20. StP, *Localisation of Aid*; Zyck and Krebs, *Localising Humanitarianism*; Wall and Hedlund, *Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response*, 3; ICVA, *Localization Examined*, 3–4; Svoboda et al., *Holding the Keys*.

21. This is a contentious issue: while the importance of local knowledge for security risk management has been highlighted, the unethical aspects of risk transfer to local actors through the localisation agenda and the need for better protection mechanisms for local humanitarian actors have been stressed. Indeed, according to the Aid Worker Security Database, national and local actors are more likely to be involved in incidents than internationals. For figures see https://aidworkersecurity.org; on the security of aid workers, remote management and risk transfer see Egeland and Stoddard, *To Stay and Deliver*; Wall and Hedlund, *Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response*, 33; Donini and Maxwell, "From Face-to-Face to Face-to-Screen"; de Geoffrey and Grundewald, *More than the Money*, 25.

22. Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*; Davey et al., *History of the Humanitarian System*; Daley, "Rescuing African Bodies"; Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator*; Mostafanezhad, *Volunteer Tourism*.

23. Barnett, "Humanitarian Governance," 379.

24. Garnier, Jubilut, and Sandvik, *Refugee Resettlement as Humanitarian Governance*, 2.

25. Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, 12.

26. Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*; Agier, *Managing the Undesirables*; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*; Barnett, "Humanitarian Governance"; Feldman and Ticktin, *In the Name of Humanity*.

27. Johnson, "Click to Donate"; Malkki, "Speechless Emissaries"; Rajaram, "Humanitarianism and the Representations of the Refugee."

28. Slim, "Dithering over Darfur?," 5; Donini, "Humanitarianism, Perceptions, Power."

29. I'Anson and Pfeifer, "A Critique of Humanitarian Reason"; Donini, "Humanitarianism, Perceptions, Power"; de Wall, *Famine Crimes*.

30. Roepstorff, "India as Humanitarian Actor"; Binder and Meier, "Opportunity Knocks."

31. Bornstein and Redfield, *Forces of Compassion*, 13; Khakee, "Humanitarian Action in International Relations," 23; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*.

32. Gingerich and Cohen, "Turning the Humanitarian System on its Head."
33. Stoddard and Harmer, "Little Room to Maneuver," 31.
34. IFRC, *World Disasters Report 2015*, 11; Obrecht, *'De-Internationalising' Humanitarian Action*; de Torrenté, "Relevance and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid."
35. Scheper et al., *Impact of the Tsunami Response*, 10.
36. IFRC, *World Disasters Report 2015*, 11.
37. C4C, *Charter for Change*; Ahmed, "Local Aid Groups."
38. Bennett, *Time to Let Go*.
39. Barnett, "Humanitarian Governance"; Donini, "Humanitarianism, Perceptions, Power"; Khakee, "Humanitarian Action in International Relations"; Duffield, "Governing the Borderlands"; Duffield, *Development, Security and Unending War*; El Taraboulsi et al., *Localisation in Humanitarian Practice*.
40. IFRC, *World Disasters Report 2015*, 17.
41. Ramalingam et al., "Missed Opportunities."
42. de Torrenté, "Relevance and Effectiveness of Humanitarian Aid."
43. Schenkenberg, *The Challenges of Localised Humanitarian Aid*.
44. NRC and HI, *Challenges to Principled Humanitarian Action*; Labbé and Daudin, "Applying the Humanitarian Principles"; Zyck and Krebs, *Localising Humanitarianism*, 6.
45. Wall and Hedlund, *Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response*, 2; Schenkenberg, *The Challenges of Localised Humanitarian Aid*; Svoboda et al., *Holding the Keys*, 14.
46. Churruca-Muguruza, "Changing Context of Humanitarian Action," 4.
47. IFRC, *World Disasters Report 2015*, 17.
48. Fast and Sutton, *Localisation. Opportunities and Challenges*, 3.
49. Churruca-Muguruza, "Changing Context of Humanitarian Action," 4.
50. Gingerich and Cohen, "Turning the Humanitarian System on its Head."
51. Churruca-Muguruza, "Changing Context of Humanitarian Action," 4.
52. Schenkenberg, *The Challenges of Localised Humanitarian Aid*.
53. Hellmüller, "Owners or Partners?"; Wilén, "Capacity-Building or Capacity-Taking?"; Pouligny, *Supporting Local Ownership*.
54. There the realisation that the liberal peace and the related dominant approach to peacebuilding did not deliver the anticipated results spurred a debate on the shortcomings of internationally-led interventions – especially in light of the challenges peacebuilders faced in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan. Paris, *At War's End*; Campbell et al., *A Liberal Peace?*; Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace*.
55. This expression is borrowed from the peacebuilding literature where it gained currency over the last couple of years. For a literature review of the local turn in peacebuilding see for example Mac Ginty and Richmond, "The Local Turn" and Leonardsson and Rudd, "The 'Local-Turn' in Peacebuilding."
56. Mac Ginty, "Where is the Local?," 846.
57. Bornstein and Redfield, *Forces of Compassion*, 5–6; Hilhorst and Pereboom, "Multi-Mandate Organizations."
58. While the first 'local turn' in peacebuilding scholarship of the 1990s stood for transformative and emancipatory approaches and focused on questions of how local actors and their capacities could be strengthened by outside support, the current second 'local turn' is, in contrast, inspired by postcolonial and poststructuralist thinking and turns its attention to more fundamental and conceptual questions regarding the notion of the local. Moreover, it contributed to the debate by producing a wealth of empirical case studies, which scrutinised the interaction of local and international actors, the hybridity of peace regimes, resistance to prevailing discourses and practices and the search for a post-liberal peace order. See Paffenholz, "Unpacking the Local Turn," 859–61.
59. Mac Ginty, "Where is the Local?"
60. Autesserre, *Peaceland*.
61. Paffenholz, "Unpacking the Local Turn."

62. For example, Mac Ginty sees the cause of the marginalisation of the local in a combination of long-term processes associated with modernity. Mac Ginty, "Where is the Local?", 842ff. Similarly, Autesserre in her analysis of international peace interventions describes the various narratives and practices that led to an exclusion of the local. She identifies one of the main obstacles to local participation in the politics of knowledge. This is closely linked to a continued professionalisation of the aid sector and the prioritisation of thematic knowledge over local expertise. Based on Bourdieu she shows how dominant practices have emerged and sustain in 'peaceland'. These practices include the hiring of staff that is not familiar with the local context; basing interventions on universal templates and lessons learned from other intervention contexts, whereby the input of the affected population is not included in project planning. Autesserre, *Peaceland*, 68ff. Similar arguments have been made in the development field, see for example Chambers, *Can We Know Better?*

63. Eurocentrism is here understood as 'a conceptual and philosophical that informs the construction of knowledge about the social world – a foundational epistemology of Western distinctiveness. In this sensibility, "Europe" is a cultural-geographic sphere which can be understood as the genealogical foundation of "the West"'; Sabaratnam, "Avatars of Eurocentrism," 261.

64. Anderson and Olson, *Confronting War*, 36.

65. Pouligny, *Supporting Local Ownership*, 12.

66. Findings from field research conducted in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, in March and April 2019. See also Wilder and Morris, "Locals within Locals"; Pouligny, *Supporting Local Ownership*, 12.

67. Roepstorff and Bernhard, "Insider Mediation in Peace Processes," 164–5.

68. Anderson and Olson, *Confronting War*.

69. As has been argued elsewhere: 'the insiderness and outsiderness are ascribed both on the basis of how actors are perceived by others and how they perceive themselves. This happens at different levels. First, an actor might subjectively perceive himself or herself as insider, while being perceived as an outsider by the (affected population) ... To further complicate matters, perceptions can change over time, depending on the context, position and perspective. Moreover, some actors can simultaneously hold insider and outsider positions'; Roepstorff and Bernhard, "Insider Mediation in Peace Processes," 165.

70. Fabre, *Localising the Response*, 2–3.

71. While this might be justified on the basis of a perceived greater marginalisation of local humanitarian actors in the Global South, first findings from field research on Lampedusa and Sicily in 2018 by the author portray a different picture, suggesting a similar side-lining and marginalisation of local humanitarian actors in the European context.

72. In Cox's Bazar, where localisation has become a contentious issue in the Rohingya response, organisations that consider themselves as local have urged INGOs and UN bodies to distinguish between local and national NGOs. Local organisations are defined as having their headquarter in the District of Cox's Bazar and working in only a limited number of the country's other districts. Interestingly, interview partners from INGOs considered this distinction as unimportant; Findings from field research in Cox's Bazar in March and April 2019.

73. Barbelet, *As Local as Possible*, 6.

74. Wall and Hedlund, *Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response*.

75. Barbelet, *As Local as Possible*, 6.

76. I owe this and the previous point to the reviewer of an earlier version of the article.

77. Roepstorff, "Local Actors in the Maritime Humanitarian Arena."

78. Accessed February 20, 2019. https://noborderkitchenlesvos.noblogs.org/manifesto/; Lauble, *Motive für humanitäre Akteure*.

79. ICVA, *Localisation Examined*, 8; IFRC, *World Disasters Report 2015*, 9; Barbelet, *As Local as Possible*, 6; Wall and Hedlund, *Localisation and Locally-Led Crisis Response*, 15.

80. Mac Ginty, "Where is the Local?," 862.

81. This has been problematized by a number of postcolonial scholars. See Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*; Bhambra, *Rethinking Modernity*; Mignolo, *Local Histories/Global Designs*.

82. Leonardsson and Rudd, "The 'Local-Turn' in Peacebuilding."

83. Ibid.; see also Hunt, *Beyond the Binaries*, 219.
84. Canagarajah, "Reconstructing Local Knowledge," 248; Mac Ginty, "Where is the Local?," 850.
85. Leonardsson and Rudd, "The 'Local-Turn' in Peacebuilding"; Appudarai, *Modernity at Large*; Hannerz, *Cultural Complexity*; Lambek, "Catching the Local," 216; Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places"; Bräuchler and Nucke, "Peacebuilding and Conceptualisations."
86. Richmond, *A Post-Liberal Peace,* 13.
87. Escobar, "Culture Sits in Places"; Bräuchler and Nucke, "Peacebuilding and Conceptualisations," 426.
88. Hilhorst and Jansen, "Humanitarian Space as Arena"; Bräuchler, "Cultural Turn in Peace Research," 21.
89. Long, *Development Sociology.*
90. ICVA, *Localisation Examined,* 8.
91. Obradovic-Wochnik, "Hidden Politics of Power and Governmentality"; Mac Ginty, "Where is the Local?"; Lambek, "Catching the Local," 1999; Sabaratnam, "Avatars of Eurocentrism," 272.
92. Christie, "Critical Readings."
93. Feldman and Ticktin, *In the Name of Humanity*; Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason*; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity.*
94. Canagarajah, "Reconstructing Local Knowledge," 253; Mac Ginty, "Where is the Local?," 84; Sabaratnam, "Avatars of Eurocentrism," 267.
95. From a scholarly perspective, this line of inquiry could speak to research on norm diffusion in international relations and research on new and emerging actors in a fragmented humanitarian landscape, see Anderl, "The Myth of the Local"; Sezgin and Dijkzeul, *The New Humanitarians in International Practice.*
96. ICVA, *Localisation Examined,* 11.

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*5.3 Decentering Peace and Conflict Studies: Conceptualisations of Peace in India*

LITERATURBERICHT

# Decentering Peace and Conflict Studies: Conceptualisations of Peace in India

Siddharth Tripathi · Kristina Roepstorff

**Abstract** Peace and Conflicts Studies (PCS) seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the causes of violence and war and ways to resolve conflicts around the world. Despite its global reach, key concepts and theories dominating the discipline's discourse originate primarily in European intellectual history and Northern experiences of violence and war, even though the "objects of study" are today predominantly located in the Global South. PCS needs to be decentered to live up to its cosmopolitan aspirations, and voices of different regions affected by conflict have to be incorporated to co-author the idea of peace. Examining the specific case of India, the article illustrates how the historical, religious and spiritual traditions and the politics of the subcontinent have informed Indian discourses on peace with the potential to fertilise global dialogues on peace and peacebuilding.

**Keywords** Peace and Conflict Studies · Eurocentrism · Global South · Peace · India

**Prologue** The paper is a result of a dialogic encounter between two scholars working in the field of Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS). One could categorise them as follows: Scholar A was born and raised in India. He received his entire academic training in the Global South in English and is now based in the Global North. Scholar B was born in the Global North and received her education in academic centres of the Global North. Her research has brought her to countries in the Global

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South, leading to a keen interest in South Asia. Meeting at a conference on *Peace and Conflict Studies: Perspectives from the Global South* that took place in Erfurt, Germany, on 3rd and 4th May 2018, they shared their concern about the container thinking in PCS. Yet, and despite their discomfort with cultural essentialisms and the ideas of an authentic and exotic other, both scholars felt that some perspectives are overlooked in the global academic discourse on peace. However, are the two scholars entitled to speak for the subaltern? Could scholar A be considered as a representative of the heterogeneous 'Southern' perspective on PCS? How to delineate between the Global North and the Global South in light of entangled biographies and academic discourses? These issues and tensions informed the conversations that led to the article, which may itself be considered a cross-fruition beyond the Global North and Global South divide.

## 1 Introduction

Peace and Conflict Studies (PCS) is a relatively young and evolving discipline but quite popular on account of the many conflicts around the world. The increasing interest in the discipline is reflected in the rapid growth of specialised centres and programmes in various countries (Barash and Webel 2018, p. 24). PCS serves as an umbrella term for a diverse range of topics and approaches with a shared focus on peace and conflict issues, with the aim to understand the causes and dynamics of conflicts and to develop strategies for the prevention and resolution of the same (Cooper and Finley 2014). Apart from its normative and interdisciplinary leaning, PCS also aspire to be multicultural and cosmopolitan (Barash and Webel 2018, p. 27; Ramsbotham et al. 2016, p. 313–347). However, so far, the discipline has not fulfilled this aspiration since most of the voices and narratives emanating from the Global South continue being marginalised and are considered auxiliary. [1] The discipline's origins in the Global North manifests itself in dominant discourses in which concepts and theories build on a canon of scholars from the Global North and inform international (peacebuilding) intervention practices (Wallerstein 2006). Thus, many of the concepts (positive versus negative peace, liberal peace, fragile states) and approaches (scientific methods, ways of knowledge production) "have tended to reproduce rather than challenge the intellectual Eurocentrism[2]" (Sabaratnam 2013, p. 259) in peace research. This has consequences on different levels: First, the dominant discourse overlooks decisive events that have shaped the history of countries

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[1] Though the usefulness of the Global North and Global South dichotomy can be questioned (Hollington et al. 2016), these notions are used here to point towards the "long-lasting pattern of inequality in power, wealth and cultural influence that grew historically out of European and North American imperialism" (Connell 2007, p. 212). As such, and though not being perfect, in comparison to the predecessors 'Third World' or 'Developing World', the notion of the Global South has an empowering connotation with the potential to resist "hegemonic forces" (Hollington et al. 2016; citing Duck).

[2] Eurocentrism is here understood as "a conceptual and philosophical framework that informs the construction of knowledge about the social world—a foundational epistemology of Western distinctiveness. In this sensibility, 'Europe' is a cultural-geographic sphere which can be understood as the genealogical foundation of 'the West'" (Sabaratnam 2013, p. 261).

in the Global South.[3] Second, concepts and theories in PCS tend to generalise on the basis of particular experiences and perspectives of countries and people in the Global North. This also applies to the concept of peace which is at the heart of PCS. This is not to say that the dominant discourse and mainstream curricular contents do not have noteworthy exceptions. However, the dominant ways of knowledge production as well as epistemic and gate-keeping practices in the scientific community leads to the further invisibilisation of other voices (Brunner 2018; Spivak 1988; Mignolo 2002).

This article thus argues that the field of PCS needs to be decentered[4] to avoid Eurocentrism and allow for a cosmopolitan and inclusive scholarship by incorporating critical historical as well as contemporary narratives from the Global South. Looking at the specific case of India as one of the voices from the Global South, the article examines the rich historical and contemporary conceptualisations of peace and how their interlinkages with the current realities of violence and underdevelopment have impacted the peace discourse in India. The interpretations and reinterpretations of ideas given contextual realities may enrich the discourse on peace. The argument is presented in three steps. First, a case is made for the need to decenter peace research by incorporating peripheral voices and discourses. Then, central themes across different periods guiding Indian peace discourse are identified. Finally, an examination of the current academic peace discourse in India, informed by the postcolonial material and contextual realities of development, inequality and justice but also the border conflicts, is done. It further discusses the impact of the weak institutionalisation of PCS on the peace discourse in India.

## 2 Peace and Conflict Studies and dominant discourses on peace

Throughout the history of mankind, thinkers have reflected on the causes of violence and war and the preconditions for peace. Conceptualisations of peace are to be found in most, if not all, religions and cultures. However, it was only in the second half of the 20th century that PCS emerged as an academic discipline and was taught at undergraduate and postgraduate level at universities. Today, PCS is a well-established field of research and specialised programmes are taught around the world. Despite its global reach, PCS remains a largely Northern-dominated discipline, with concepts and theories originating in European intellectual history and issues of concern being mainly identified by the scholars working at research institutions in the Global North.

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[3] For example, the partition of India in 1947 is not part of any major discourse emerging from the Global North even though it had been a significant event shaping South Asian history as well as its present realities. Having said this, the effects of militarisation during the Cold War, the competition between the two superpowers and the proxy wars that were fought in the so-called Third World provoked a number of insightful studies on the Global South (see for instance McMahon 2013; or Westad 2007).

[4] To decentre means to overcome cognitive and conceptual eurocentrisms (Müller 2016, p. 242) and to "challenge the politics, concepts, and practices that enable certain narratives [...] to be central; decentering is also a way to put forth and participate in other kinds of narratives and politics that have different 'starting points'" (Nayak and Selbin 2010, p. 4). See also Agathanelou and Ling (2004) and Acharya (2011).

## 2.1 Emergence of Peace and Conflict Studies as academic discipline

The Eurocentrism in PCS is reflected in the narrated history of the origin and insti-
tutionalisation of the discipline found in the key textbooks used worldwide (Barash
and Webel 2018; Boulding 1978; Imbusch and Zoll 2010). Its origin is generally
associated with the experience of war and peace in Europe and North America.
As Ramsbotham et al. (2016, p. 36) note: "The failure of the variety of peace, so-
cialist and liberal internationalist movements to prevent the outbreak of the First
World War motivated many people in the years that followed to develop a 'science'
of peace which would provide a firmer basis for preventing wars". However, the
proper institutionalisation of PCS happened only after the Second World War being
intimately linked to the emergence of the discipline of International Relations (IR)
and creation of the first Chair in IR at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth,
in 1919 (Ramsbotham et al. 2016, p. 37; Jaberg 2011, p. 54). In response to the ex-
periences of the First World War, the aim was to establish research that furthered
the cause of peace and analysed the causes of conflict. In the United States, student
activism against the Vietnam War prompted universities to offer ever more peace
study courses and programmes in the 1960s (Barash and Webel 2018, p. 28). At the
same time, new centres were founded in Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.
Two scholars are usually considered as founding figures of PCS as an academic dis-
cipline: Johan Galtung in Norway and John Burton in the United Kingdom (Barash
and Webel 2018, p. 31). Until this date, their concepts and theories continue to be
taught in programmes across the world and shape the discourse in peace research.
The emerging debates in this new field soon found a home in academic journals, such
as the *Journal of Conflict Resolution* and the *Journal of Peace Research*. Moreover,
in 1964 the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) was founded during
a conference in Switzerland. Holding regular conferences, IPRA is until today the
most significant and largest association of the discipline (Barash and Webel 2018,
p. 31).

Dominant themes in PCS always reflected the contemporary political environ-
ment. With the discipline being born after the Second World War (Jaberg 2011,
p. 54), research was shaped by the experience of the atrocities of the Nazi Regime
and the birth of the United Nations system. During the Cold War and well into the
1980s a major concern was the threat of nuclear war, while the post-Cold War period
saw a shift of research on interstate to intrastate conflicts and non-state actors as
agents of war and peace. This was accompanied by a proliferation of specialised
agencies, (international) non-governmental organisations and think tanks. The quest
for positive peace led to broadening of research and human security, democratisation
and sustainable peace became buzzwords in academic and policy circles. Moreover,
scholars increasingly looked at unequal North-South relations, the global economic
system, and the consequences of resource scarcity and climate change as drivers of
conflict (Barash and Webel 2018, p. 29). Topics and concepts that gained currency
after 9/11 were linked to the "War on Terror" and the interventions in Afghanistan
and Iraq and their state- and peacebuilding agendas (Buckley and Fawn 2003; Paris
2004; Doyle and Sambanis 2006; Sisk and Paris 2009).

Today PCS not only encompasses a wide range of issues but sees a growing body of critical scholarship inspired by postmodern, poststructuralist, postcolonial and feminist thinking, especially in relation to international peacebuilding interventions with its underlying liberal peace paradigm (Jabri 2016; Pankhurst 2003; Duncanson 2016; Richmond 2011; Mac Ginty 2016). These critiques have called into question many of the premises on which dominant discourses were founded. Though from the beginning PCS aspired to be multicultural and cosmopolitan "in part citing the lives and works of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. as its paragons [...] true multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism remain more an aspiration than a reality for the field, since most PCS programs and centres are located in the West" (Barash and Webel 2018, p. 27). Some notable scholars (Dietrich 2012; Galtung 1981) have taken different perspectives and studied the plurality of concepts of peace or contributed to peace scholarship by engaging with the experiences of violence and war in Southern contexts. However, there is a need to "provincialize Europe" (Chakrabarty 2000) in PCS, which takes Western (intellectual) history and experiences as a vantage point while concepts and approaches reproduce Eurocentric tendencies (Sabaratnam 2013; Nayak and Selbin 2010). Reasons for the continuing hegemony of Northern concepts and theories stem from the ontological and epistemological foundations of the discipline and the gatekeeping practices that marginalise voices from the Global South (Behera 2008).

### 2.2 Northern hegemony, southern dependency in Peace and Conflict Studies and conceptualisations of peace

At many universities, peace (and conflict) studies is subsumed under IR and considered part of political science (Engels 2016, p. 257). Many of the concepts and theories that are part of the toolkit in PCS are grounded in the social sciences in general, and international relations in particular. Theory-building and the history of ideas in IR scholarship, despite its many critical 'turns', are built on the legacies of a Eurocentric worldview (Müller 2016, p. 237; Hobson 2012). The discipline's standard approaches and theories have acquired "a Gramscian hegemony" (Behera 2008) over the epistemological foundations of scholarship in other parts of the world with similar effects in India too. Identifying disciplinary gate-keeping practices, Behera (2004) for example shows how IR discourse in India is not produced by scholars from the Global South but is "borrowed" or "adapted" from the West. This is as much due to the predominance of the structures of Western philosophy backed by powerful institutions as it is due to the "intellectual dependency" of the Global South on the Global North (Behera 2004; Alatas 2006). While the dominance of Northern concepts, theories and academic centres is noticeable throughout the social sciences, it is equally important to note the ways Southern concepts and theories successfully made their way into an international scholarship. Apart from the important role of Latin American scholars introducing the dependency theory in the 1970s (for instance Cardoso and Faletto 1969; Frank 1967) which was also taken up by the German peace researcher Dieter Senghaas (1974), the concept of human security—today a key term in PCS—has been shaped by Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul-Haq. These examples show the cross-fruition beyond the Global North

and Global South divide. Yet, the centres of knowledge production, gate-keeping institutions and funding opportunities continue being located in the Global North mainly (Nayak and Selbin 2010) and "social scientists working in the periphery have a strong orientation to the world centres of their disciplines in the metropole" (Connell 2007, p. 218).[5]

The invisibilisation of different voices is also reflected in the very concept of peace at the heart of the discipline (Exo 2015). As Dietrich and Sützl argue "the search for the 'one peace' is identified as part of a larger universalist mode of thinking which in its totality rests upon disrespectful and therefore unpeaceful basic assumptions, so that the guidelines for action and the real politics that derive from it do at least have the potential for a continuous renewal of violence" (Dietrich and Stützl 1997, p. 10). Though the meaning of peace is also contested in Northern scholarship (Czempiel 2006), the dominant conceptualisations found in the research and teaching in PCS studies can be traced back to religious and philosophical traditions in Europe (Galtung 1981).[6] The very term 'peace' has its origin in Europe, derived from the Latin word *pax*. In peace research, apart from its religious, spiritual and philosophical underpinnings, the concept of peace is closely tied to the Westphalian Peace of 1648, humanitarian law and the founding of the United Nations (Bonacker and Imbusch 2010, p. 126). Thus, Bonacker and Imbusch (2010, p. 127) identify three different understandings of peace in the concept's history that are informed by the eschatological[7], statist[8] and natural law tradition[9]. The most influential conceptualisation of peace, however, was introduced by Galtung, who distinguishes between negative and positive peace. While negative peace is conceptualised as the absence of war, positive peace is linked to ideas of social justice and the absence of structural violence (Galtung 1969; Barash and Webel 2018, p. 2). Looking at the ways in which IR grand theories such as realism, liberalism, Marxism and constructivism have informed different conceptualisations of peace, Richmond distinguishes between a liberal peace tradition, a realist version and Marxist conceptualisations of

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[5] This is not to say that there are no centres in the "periphery that attract a workforce and develop prestige" (Connell 2007, p. 218). However, these are but a few in comparison.

[6] In the Judeo-Christian tradition—and especially in the New Testament—peace, love and non-violence are key ideas that shape religious thinking until this date. For an overview of the philosophy of peace see Rengger (2016).

[7] The eschatological meaning of peace is most prominently associated with the writings of Augustinus in which he conceptualised peace as an eternal and final state in the afterlife (Bonacker and Imbusch 2010, p. 127). This also finds parallels in the religious traditions of ancient and medieval texts in India, as the next section will show.

[8] Another prominent figure whose reflections on peace are among the most influential until today is the German philosopher Immanuel Kant. For him, peace is to be achieved in this world as a product of human reason. His principles of popular sovereignty, the rule of law and republican world order as requirements for peace have informed the theory of democratic peace and reverberate in peacebuilding discourses (Richmond 2006, p. 295). Not only in Kant's "Perpetual Peace", but also in Hobbes' social contract theory, the state is considered the guarantor for peace (Bonacker and Imbusch 2010, p. 128).

[9] A contrasting conceptualisation of peace is developed in the natural law tradition, which sees peace as the natural state from which war is a deviation. In this tradition—and in opposition to Hobbes—human nature is peaceful and cooperative. This conceptualisation of peace is often linked to so-called pacifist traditions and the figure of Gandhi (Bonacker and Imbusch 2010, p. 129).

peace in IR orthodoxy (Richmond 2003; Kahl and Rinke 2011). In IR, the liberal peace has become the dominant conceptualisation of peace and informs international interventions in conflicts around the globe (Richmond et al. 2016, p. 57). It is within the very rich scholarship on the liberal peace and peacebuilding that a body of critical scholarship emerged that triggered a new interest in different disciplinary and regional perspectives on peace. As Richmond et al. (2016, p. 62) notes:

> [C]ritical contributions to IR theory offer a more sophisticated conceptualisation of peace as well as a powerful critique of the liberal orthodoxy and the neoliberal overtones that it has increasingly adopted [...] [I]t points towards a postcolonial understanding of peace as hybrid peace in negative terms, representing an encounter between claims of the subaltern and existing power structures relative to state and global governance.

Such a concept of peace is not only post-liberal but also post-Westphalian, offering alternative readings of the meaning of peace through critical scholarship (Richmond et al. 2016, p. 62) and postcolonial perspectives (Engels 2016). Though the critical scholarship on the liberal peace – mainly reflected in the second local turn in peacebuilding (Paffenholz 2015) – has taken a postcolonial perspective and invoked the subaltern, Sabaratnam (2013, p. 260) convincingly reveals the "Eurocentric limits in the critical liberal peace literature" (Sabaratnam 2013, p. 260) and argues for further decolonisation of the analytics in peace research. This need for decolonial and postcolonial scholarship in PCS is gaining currency (Fontan 2012; Amar 2013; Weerwardhana 2018). A Special Issue of the Zeitschrift für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung (ZeFKo Studies in Peace & Conflict 2018) contains important contributions to what postcolonial and decolonial perspectives in PCS may offer for the further development of the discipline (Dittmer 2018). Covering a broad range of topics, the different contributions do not, however, deal with the very concept of peace itself.

The next section wishes to contribute to this debate by scrutinizing the conceptualisation of peace in traditional as well as modern discourses in Indian PCS. While most widely associated with Gandhi, perspectives on peace in India are an agglomeration of various religious and spiritual traditions and indigenous concepts of peace[10] but also borrowed and adapted Northern concepts and discourses shaped by the material context in the region. Peace discourses in India are informed by the particular history and experience of war, violence, poverty and pluralism in South Asia that shape the emerging field of PCS in India. However, the "epistemic violence" (Brunner 2018) leads to the marginalisation of these different experiences and voices emanating from the Global South. Indeed, in the words of Rita Manchanda[11]:

> [T]he Global North discourse has been held hostage to the political dynamics in the developed countries and it has nothing to do with the realities of Global

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[10] Indigenous conceptualisations and methodologies are here understood as self-determined knowledge production of the subaltern, not as essentialising categories that contrast local/indigenous authentic knowledge with Western/universal and technocratic knowledge (Exo 2015).

[11] Telephonic Interview with Rita Manchanda, Programme Director, South Asia Forum for Human Rights, 12 December 2018.

South in respect of peace, security, livelihood priorities and voices leading to decontextualisation of peace. Peace architecture has to be shaped by the local context and processes which includes social movements, developmental challenges and agency of the local actors.

To live up to its multicultural and cosmopolitan aspirations, PCS thus need to include different conceptualisations of peace in order to enrich the existing body of knowledge. The following sections present a broad outline of Indian perspectives on peace and the nascent institutionalisation of PCS is an attempt to widen the discourse and with the hope that perspectives from other locations would follow too.

## 3 Indian perspectives on peace[12]

An Indian perspective on peace could at best be visualised as "a mosaic with no singular vision claiming the centrepiece" (Upadhyay 2009, p. 71). This quote by Professor Priyankar Upadhyay, who holds the UNESCO Chair for Peace and Intercultural Understanding at the Malaviya Centre for Peace, Banaras Hindu University, demonstrates the rich trajectory of different meanings of peace in India and how it evolved. This conception of peace challenges the dominant discourse of 'one universal peace'. It is, therefore, necessary to map the intellectual history of PCS in India across different time periods (ancient, medieval and modern) to be able to grasp the multiple voices and visions on peace. The following section will adumbrate the evolution of the various conceptualisations of peace not only guided by the various religious and spiritual underpinnings but also in modern times.

### 3.1 Religion, spirituality and different conceptualisations of peace in India

An excavation of some of the leading religious texts such as the Upanishads[13] and Bhagavad Gita[14] reflect the enduring contestations about the concept of peace in India. These formative ideas on peace do not separate internal and external peace and call for harmony between the outer world and inner world. They bring a multi-dimensional view on peace or "Shanti", incorporating peace with oneself, peace with others and peace with nature. All the Upanishads start with *Shanti path,* i.e. the invocation of the multidimensional idea of peace (Pande 2016). Other ideas derived from Hinduism link the notion of peace with the idea of global citizenship and include the Vedic philosophy of Kshama (forbearance), Sarva Dharma Sambhava (impulse of

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[12] It is important to highlight the fact that even though this perspective shall be taken into account, it is also necessary to guard against any nativistic or reverse ethnocentric ideas (Spivak 1988). The sole purpose is to make the discipline inclusive by incorporating unheard voices and narratives emerging out of the periphery.

[13] Upanishads (also termed as vedanta) are the concluding sections of the Vedas, highlighting the ontological connection between humanity and the cosmos. They have significantly impacted the theological discourses of many Hindu traditions also called Vedanta (Olivelle 2017).

[14] Bhagavad Gita (often interpreted as the song of the Lord) is a 700-verse Hindu religious scripture in Sanskrit and is part of the Hindu epic "Mahabharata" or the righteous war between two clans—the Pandavas and the Kauravas.

peaceful coexistence which also inspired Gandhi) or the concept of Vasudhaiv Ku-tumbakam (the world is but one family)[15] (Upadhyay 2009, p. 74). It was, however, the two other religions—Jainism and Buddhism—which had unadulterated commit-ment to peace and non-violence. While Mahavir, the founder of Jainism, included Ahimsa (non-violence) as one of the five intrinsic virtues to attain inner peace and happiness (Bary 1958, p. 62–63), Gautam Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, sought conquest through and by the power of true faith, compassion and love. Both streams decried violence as a sin and emphasized non-violence as an article of faith in their respective system (Upadhyay 2009, p. 74). Some Buddhist texts do sanction taking human lives in exceptional cases to protect the sangha or defend the innocent. How-ever, most Theravada and Mahayana Buddhists today reject even these exceptional justifications of killing and stress on *Metta* (loving kindness towards all beings), *Muditha* (gladness at others' success), and *Karuna* (compassion towards all living beings) (Colombo Telegraph 2013). These ideas of peace not only existed in ancient religious texts but also find resonance in medieval India which is characterised by the rise of Sufism, the Bhakti movement[16] and Sikhism.

Sufism was the mainstay of the social order for Islamic civilization since the 12th century. It has been an amorphous movement but came to be identified with love, peace and tolerance and promoted inclusiveness, openness and pluralism. Res-onating with its spiritual tradition, it evolved its own Indian ethos and shaped a dis-tinct Islamic heritage of India. The Sufis in India who lived in the midst of the lower strata of society identified themselves with the problems and perplexities of the people. Shah Waliullah, a prominent Sufi scholar in the 18th century in Delhi, in his Hujjat Allah al-Baligha, advocates the peaceful integration of all the com-ponents of society and their harmonious functioning to achieve human well-being (Nizami 2014). This idea is reflected in a popular Sufi story: A visitor presented a knife to Shaikh Farid Ganj-i Shakar, a Sufi mystic in the 12th century, but he refused to accept it, saying: "Do not give me a knife, give me a needle. The knife is an instrument for cutting and the needle for sewing together" (Aquil 2010). Like sufis, the songs of the Bhakti saints also reverberated with ideas echoing feelings of universal peace and brotherhood. Chaitanya (a 15th century Bhakti saint), Kabir (15th century mystic poet and saint), Guru Nanak (founder of Sikhism in the late 14th and early 15th century), Namadev (13th century Bhakti saint in Maharashtra), Pipa (15th century mystic poet in Rajasthan) and women saints, including Lallesh-wari or Lal Ded (14th century Kashmiri mystic) familiarised themselves with the cosmopolitan ideas of Sufism and broadcast them in their respective regions. Sikhism was another religion which informed Indian understandings of peace. Closely as-sociated with Sufism, Sikhism dates back to the time of Guru Nanak (1469–1539), who led a modest life of profound, spiritual devotion, focused on building bridges

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[15] This is not to deflect the caveat that a few stray passages from one or two ancient Hindu authors cannot be taken as the watchword of all Hindu thought as there are texts like Mahabharata and Arthashastra which discuss war and strategies to win. This dualism is beyond the scope of this paper, however the later half of the article (section 4.0) explains this briefly.

[16] The Bhakti Movement started in the 8th century in south India and spread to other parts of the country against the orthodoxy of the Hindu religion.

of love, co-existence, tolerance and harmony among peoples from diverse socio-economic status and faiths. A historical analysis of Sikhism demonstrates a unique contribution of the religion to the conceptualisation of peace, found in the concept of 'Sikh Peace management'. Its foundation is the idea that working for the common good acts as a spiritual experience and that it interacts with and reinforces a peaceful environment (Vylder 2015).

These are but few of the references to Indian spiritual and religious thinking that feed into the conceptualisations of peace. Their essential contribution lies in their sincere and dedicated struggle to find unity for India's heterogeneous, multi-religious and multilingual society and, to use Tagore's words, "set at naught all differences of men, by the overflow of their consciousness of God" (Tagore 1916, p. 4). Their efforts were, therefore, directed towards the creation of a healthy social order free from dissensions, discords and conflicts in the search for social harmony (Nizami 2014). Thereby, notions of inner and outer peace, global brotherhood, social harmony and the practice of non-violence are essential ideas that reverberate in modern Indian discourses on peace and have shaped the notions of Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru.

### 3.2 Modern perspectives on peace: Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru

The above-mentioned conceptions have had a profound impact on the visions of Tagore, Gandhi and Nehru who laid the cornerstone of peace thought in modern India in the early parts of the 20th century. Just as in the case of Europe, political events and the particular experience of conflicts and war shaped these modern discourses on peace. Tagore promulgated a vision of peace through the ideologies of Ahimsa (non-violence), which he derived from the Bhagavad Gita and Advaita (non-dualism)[17] (an Indian philosophical tradition promulgating one-identity and non-distinctness of the individual and the universe). He elaborated on this vision of peace against a backdrop of the 'war-madness' of the twentieth century and as an antidote to the reckless 'jihadism' (both religious and secular) and on-going violence in different forms (Quayum 2017, p. 1). He attributed this destruction to three intersecting forces: the unmediated materialism of modern society; belligerent nationalism which often led to nationalist selfishness, chauvinism and self-aggrandisement; and the machinery of organised religion which, he said, "obstructs the free flow of inner life of the people and waylays and exploits it for the augmentation of its power" (Tagore 1924, p. 31). The essential ingredients of peace for Tagore were, therefore, the spirit of inclusivity, empathy, mutual sympathy, cultural cooperation, cultivation of an international mind and goodwill and a sense of "the spiritual bond of unity" (Quayum 2017, p. 3). Tagore always believed, like Noam Chomsky, that "another world is possible [by] seeking to create constructive alternatives of thought, actions and institutions" and by bringing "a measure of peace and justice and hope to the world" (Chomsky 2003, p. 236–237). The creation of such a world would only be

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[17] Advaita Philosophy is often compared with Dvaita (dualism) which means the material world is real and that there is a difference between the ultimate reality (God) and the individuals. For more details see "A Critical Survey of Indian Philosophy" (Sharma 1960).

possible through the symbiosis of the East and the West, along with a sympathetic understanding of the differences of people. This would allow overcoming suspicions of each other as aliens/foreigners, or the 'other,' and appreciate that at core humans are all the same and that in spite of outer differences an invisible bond of love ties them all together.

Notwithstanding Tagore's importance for India's intellectual history, no dialogue on peace and conflict resolution can be carried out without reference to Gandhi's ideas of Satyagraha (non-violent resistance or fighting with peace), Sarvodaya (progress of all), Swaraj (self-rule or self restraint), Swadeshi[18], Buniyadi Talim[19], decentralisation of power and wealth, trusteeship, social harmony and communal unity, economic equality, and Sarva Dharma Sambhava. His works have influenced non-violence theorists like Gene Sharp[20] (through the rise of large scale non-violent activism) and Johan Galtung (through his concepts such as structural violence and positive peace) (Weber 2012, p. 435). Drawing from various Hindu perspectives, as also from other religions, Gandhi envisaged a holistic and sustainable vision of sustainable peace and believed that it is only individuals who can bring peace in the world (Gandhi 1946). The most fundamental principle of his philosophy of peace is 'Ahimsa', or non-violence, which is the law of love and inner realisation of the equality of all, as opposed to violence or Himsa, the cause of hatred. According to Gandhi, Ahimsa has to be cultivated not only at a personal level but also at the social, national and international level to avoid personal, social, national and international conflicts. It is a peaceful technique to resist injustice and results in self-suffering and sacrifice. Gandhi's approach to Ahimsa is often considered ethical, as he believes that moral degeneration is the root cause of all evils including conflicts. So he recommends acquisition of moral values such as truthfulness, non-violence and love, self-control, forgiveness, non-enmity or friendliness, compassion, mercy etc. This focus on values does not mean that Gandhi was oblivious of practical realities. He chose non-violence as a realistic option also as he knew that India would be no match to the military might of the British and would never gain independence by violent means. However, on several occasions, he accepted violence over the non-violence of the cowardly[21]. It can be asserted that the essential contribution of Gandhi lies in the fact that he "dispelled the commonplace notions that lead to

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[18] According to Gandhi, swadeshi in its ultimate and spiritual sense means the final emancipation of the soul from her earthly bondage. Therefore, a votary of swadeshi has to identify oneself with the entire creation (or the world) in the ultimate quest to emancipate the soul from the physical body, as it stands in the way of realising oneness with all life. For more details see https://www.mkgandhi.org/articles/understanding-gandhis-vision-of-swadeshi.html. Accessed 13 December 2018.

[19] Buniyadi Talim or Basic Education in Gandhian terminology means education/training leading to knowledge that is useful for the service of mankind and liberating individuals from servitude of two kinds: Slavery to domination from outside and to one's own artificial needs. More details can be found at http://www.gandhi-manibhavan.org/gandhiphilosophy/philosophy_education_%20buniyadishiksha.htm. Accessed 13 December 2018.

[20] Even though Sharp was influenced by Gandhi, his 'technique approach' calls for non-violent action for pragmatic reasons, i.e. it works, rather than religious or ethical ones, i.e. it is the right thing to do (Weber 2012, p. 446).

[21] Gandhi's preference for a violent defence of loved ones over cowardly flight is often construed as his "qualified commitment to non-violence" (Holmes 1990, p. 2).

a belief in the unavoidability of war" (Kumar 1975, p. 73). His concepts on peace contest the Hobbesian social contract theory considering the state as a guarantor for peace. Gandhi was a staunch supporter of local actors and decentralisation of power, which was manifested in his movements against the British Raj. Even after India's independence, he believed that the centralisation of power in the State negates the very conception of democracy. Gandhi's initiative like the creation of a non-violent brigade (Shanti Sena) goes beyond the state structure and constructs the individual and community as key agents for peace. He enunciated the concept of "Shanti Sena", or unarmed peace brigades[22], which would eventually substitute police and military. The manifestation of this idea of Gandhi can also be seen in Abdul Ghaffar Khan's[23] "Khudai Kidmatgar" (Servants of God) formed in November 1929. It was the first professional non-violent army, comprising of around 100,000 Pathans, which would be disciplined, wear a red uniform (hence called as Red Shirts), have a flag and officers appointed by a commander-in-chief. Initially, they started to organise village projects and opening schools, but soon they became part of the broader Indian Independence movement dedicating their lives to resist British oppression. It was based on principles of universal brotherhood, submission to God's will and service to God, with the underlying philosophy rooted in Gandhi's concept of satyagraha—active non-violence (Shah 2008).

The preceding section shows that Gandhi's comprehensible philosophy of peace is based on the psychology of human nature, awareness of social realities, challenges of the pernicious modern civilisation, knowledge of economic and political systems and situations. This has guided the various discourses in PCS in not only India but the overall discipline as well. Although Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of India, followed the Gandhian precept of non-violence through the freedom struggle, "when on his own, [he] soon insisted upon, and deployed, the instruments of violence as a practical necessity once India achieved its independence" (Falk 1980). To meet the material imperatives of security and order especially in the post-independence era of territorial states, he also adopted the apparatus of the modern nation-state, faced with the realities of the Westphalian world. However, Nehru did focus on international peace and security and was keen to evolve an alternative framework to replace the realpolitik-based paradigm. The policy of non-alignment enunciated along with other leaders of the newly independent nascent Afro-Asian nations was directed against colonialism and to deal with its aftermath. His strong identification with the Asian solidarity led him to sign a peace agreement with China also known

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[22] Some trusted Gandhians like Vinoba Bhave, Jayaprakash Narayan, and Narayan Desai carried forward the idea of a non-violent brigade but the war with China in 1962 gave a severe blow to the concept and could not materialise (Upadhyay 2009, p. 75).

[23] Abdul Ghaffar Khan, also known as 'Frontier Gandhi' in India, was a Pashtun leader who fought for India's independence and became a follower of Mahatma Gandhi (Shah 2008).

as "Panchsheel"[24]. This agreement is often viewed as Nehru's formative contribution to the peace discourse as it "[...] offered a new set of principles for the conduct of international relations that would reflect the aspirations of all nations to co-exist and prosper together in peace and harmony" (Upadhyay 2009, p. 76).

## 4 Current discourses on peace in India: philosophical conceptualisations and material realities

Despite a rich trajectory of philosophical conceptualisations of peace in India, the above mentioned ideas lost sheen and were never really pursued by subsequent leaders due to Sino-Indian conflict and wars with Pakistan at the regional level and Cold War politics at the international level. They also did not find their way into the nascent peace study programmes in India. Most of the current discourse on peace has thus been hovering around the border conflict with Pakistan and has not really taken off at a broader philosophical level with the notable exception of J. Krishnamurthi[25] who believed that "peace in the world requires great intelligence—not sentimentality, not some emotional demonstrations against a particular usage of instruments of war—to understand the very complex situation of the society in which we live" (Krishnamurthi 1983, p. 2). It is, therefore, pertinent to examine how historical and modern conceptualisations of peace have informed the contemporary discourse on peace in India.

### 4.1 Contemporary discourses on peace in India: continuity or change?

The quest for achieving a balance or a middle path between idealism as enunciated in the ideas discussed above and realism of the world, between war and peace, has generally been the guiding factor even in the current discourses on peace. However, India has been criticised for dualism stemming from the invocation to the spiritual heritage on one side and pragmatism on the other. This duality is further elaborated in

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[24] Panchsheel, or the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, were first formally enunciated in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India, signed on 29 April 1954. The agreement stated, in its preamble, that the two governments have resorted to the agreement based on (a) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty, (b) Mutual non-aggression, (c) Mutual non-interference, (d) Equality and mutual benefit, and (e) Peaceful co-existence (Ministry of External Affairs, India 2004).

[25] Krishnamurthi emphasised on understanding the real meaning of cooperation, right relationship, and compassion for all. He provides a holistic understanding of peace which is not limited to merely freedom from something, peace of mind and physical peace, but the ending of all conflict. He critiqued individualism and accorded that real peace is not only in ourselves but with our neighbours and with the world, peace with the environment and the ecology. He believed that peace can only exist if we have complete security, both outwardly and inwardly, psychologically and environmentally (Krishnamurthi 1983).

[26] Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP) is a pioneering peacebuilding initiative in South Asia which was established in 1999. It foregrounds women's leadership in the areas of peace and security and promotes cultures of pluralism and coexistence in the South Asian region. For more details see http://wiscomp.org/. Accessed 11 December 2018.

the words of Meenakshi Gopinath, director of WISCOMP[26], and one of the pioneers in the field of conflict transformation and peacebuilding in India:

> [T]he oldest and most sustained and systematic reflections on non-violence have come from Jainism, Buddhism and Gandhism—resources that the region claims as its own. Yet violence figures as an almost everyday phenomenon. This reflects the extraordinary conundrum of how we live and what we claim to idolise—the gap between an almost continuous practice of violence, and the most sustained theorisation of non-violence. (WISCOMP 2005, p. 10)

This ambivalence or duality can also be located in the ancient texts. While Bhagavad-Gita centred around the jostle between Krishna and Arjun[27] who took mutually opposite stands on war, the realist discourse of Arthashastra[28] was matched by the idealist and peace teachings of Buddha. While on the one hand, Mahabharata and Arthashastra diluted the binary of war and peace, on the other hand Hindu, Jain and Buddhist texts insisted on developing techniques of non-enmity for sustaining peace and security (Upadhyay 2009, p. 78). Thus, the current discourse is but a continuous manifestation of various periods in the history of India in the way questions of war and peace have been articulated. Therefore, it is not uncommon in Indian heritage to find great episodes of violence being juxtaposed with supreme acts of non-violence, and vice versa (Gandhi 1995, p. 3), manifesting itself in the contemporary discourses too—which are shaped by the particular experiences of violence and war and the societal set-up of the country.

The philosophical ideas of peace in India, outlined by the historical and contemporary discourses (often considered idealist or pacifist) have been eclipsed by the Westphalian material realities and realpolitik focusing on security aspects. The region is mired by boundary issues between countries (India and Pakistan, India and China), ethnic and religious conflicts, terrorism, conflicts related to caste, class and gender, and deals with structural challenges of poverty, underdevelopment and lack of basic necessities. In most of the human development indices such as life expectancy, child education and literacy, and per capita income, India's position is quite low. Any discussion on peace will thus be incomplete without taking into account the issues of development and its relation with peace. Therefore, contributions of peace researchers like Johan Galtung and John Paul Lederach with their emphasis on the society and individuals and bottom-up or communitarian approaches to achieve and maintain peace resonates in the contemporary discourses on peace in South Asia (Krampe and Swain 2016, p. 364), leading to a hybridisation of the concept of peace. Samaddar confirms this hybridisation through borrowing and adaptation of concepts and discourses from the Global North, while focusing on the particular

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[27] Bhagavad-Gita elaborates several reasons why killing in warfare is permissible since there is no greater good for a warrior than to fight in a just war. However, it also exemplifies the negative consequences of violence elaborated in the dialogue between Arjuna (warrior) and Krishna (the divine). Krishna is willing to go an extra mile for negotiating peace but if negotiations fail, Krishna exhorts the Pandavas (especially Arjun) to wage the righteous war which was called the Mahabharata (Upadhyay 2009, p. 72).

[28] The Arthashastra is an ancient Sanskrit treatise which highlights statecraft, economic policy and military strategy and was written by Kautilya or Chanakya (4th century BC), who was a political advisor to Chandragupta Maurya, one of the rulers who set up the Maurya dynasty in India.

South Asian context and the experience of postcolonial border disputes, ethnicised conflicts and the regional security complex. Das notes in the same volume, that authentic Indian peace traditions does not account to the fact that these no longer form part of the 'living' traditions of the subcontinent and that they have already undergone a process of hybridisation (Das 2004, pp. 19, 24 ff.).

## 4.2 Development, emancipation and the Peace Paradox in India

Despite the process of hybridisation, as Krampe and Swain argue, the dominant discourse in South Asia still differs from the liberal peace agenda in its emphasis on development and emancipation and their interlinkages (2016, p. 365). The focus on emancipation and the linkage of peace to development in India has led to the critical peace discourses currently existing on various themes like gender and peace, social movements, human security and human development. Scholars like Chenoy (2002), Manchanda (2017) and Singh (2017) have emphasised on the linkage of peace with gender by bringing forth the feminist narratives and women's variegated negotiations with conflict and their capacity to emerge as agents of peaceful social change in different regions of India. This would mean focusing on human security and not on the 'over-used' concept of national security. Women's peace movements like the Naga Mothers and Meira Paibis[29] have been a significant influence on current trends towards redefinition of security within the country itself. Similarly, scholars like Oommen (1990) and Ray (2000) have discussed how social movements against caste, class, gender and ethnicity have led to societal transformations. Samaddar, in his text "Government of Peace: Social Governance, Security and the Problematic of Peace", shows how schisms in society can become occasions for societal development by incorporating subaltern views (2016, p. 20). He argues that "dialogues from below challenge the official versions of peacebuilding [...] [N]ew subjectivities emerge from new movements for social justice powered by women, migrants, farmers, Dalits, minorities, low-caste, and other subaltern groups" (Samaddar 2016, p. 3). Arguing for 'peace with justice' and social governance, he stresses the importance of change in the existing frameworks of conflict management to peace, state security to human security, revenge to reconciliation, and from rights to justice. Samaddar reflects that a government of peace sits at the core of the interlinked issues of social governance, peacebuilding, security and development (2016, p. 4).

Thus, the domestic academic discourse of peace in India is more closely linked to questions of development, inequality and justice. India has been largely able to deal with the developmental challenges by keeping diverse groups together and maintain general peace and harmony between different religious and ethnic groups. However, it has also resorted to use of force while dealing with border conflicts and social movements like Maoism and Naxalism which emerged out of dissatisfaction with

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[29] Meira Paibi also referred to as Meira Paibis or "Women torch bearers" is a women's social movement in Manipur, a state in North East India. It derives its name from the flaming torches carried by women in the city as a patrol, protesting the human rights violations committed by paramilitary and armed forces units against civilians. According to The Times of India, Meira Paibi is the "largest grassroots, civilian movement fighting state atrocities and human rights violations in Manipur" (Sunil 2013).

state policies to curb underdevelopment and turned violent (Krampe and Swaine 2016, p. 366). This has led to a shift in the discourse from peace to security, which is enhanced by the weak institutionalisation and sidelining of conversations on development and peace.

How the security discourse has overtaken and neglected the peace discourse is reflected in the weak institutionalisation of PCS in India, leading to what can be termed as the 'Peace Paradox' in India. The rich trajectory of the diverse ideas on peace with its focus on social harmony, cultural cooperation, non-violence, compassion, forgiveness, peaceful coexistence following Gandhi's legacy and traditions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Sufism along with the contemporary linkages of development and peace should have led to a dynamic peace discourse emanating from India. The work of individuals like Jyotirao Phule, Bhimrao Ambedkar (anti-caste reformers), Sarojini Naidu (freedom fighter and poet), Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit (freedom fighter and diplomat), Vandana Shiva (environmental activist), Kailash Satyarthi (child rights activist) who discussed structural challenges in diverse ways could have enriched that discourse. However, that has not happened in a coherent way. No serious and sustained consideration is given to the above mentioned ideas of peace in academic institutions and syllabi in India barring few exceptions. The institutions which exist also contribute to the overall discipline only tangentially and are broadly located within the umbrella of political science, international relations or even security studies barring few exceptions. The universities which offer a postgraduate course in PCS consist of the Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution at Jamia Milia Islamia, New Delhi, the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research at Banaras Hindu University in Uttar Pradesh, Mysore University in Karnataka, Sikkim University and the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Guwahati Campus, Assam, to name the few. The premiere social science institute in the country, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, does not have any centre dedicated to PCS, but offers only a few relevant courses at the postgraduate level as part of the masters programme at the School of International Studies. Suba Chandran, former director at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS), sums up the state of peace discourse in India:

> In India, peace is under-researched. It is taught on absolute terms and primarily from a Gandhian perspective, as if that is the only aspect. Ideologically, and as a discipline of inquiry, the process has to be grounded in contemporary issues. There are more peace processes in South Asia than conflicts. In most societies such as Sri Lanka, Nepal and J&K, conflict may have come to an end but that does not mean peace has been achieved. The State assumes that once violence declines, peace has automatically come in. (Chandran cited in Matthew 2015)

Consequently, the major discourses on peace are dominated by the media and retired bureaucrats who reiterate and circulate common wisdom [30]. Most of the existing think tanks that discuss security issues in India are staffed with former military officials who sometimes also deliberate peace and conflict issues under non-traditional security. The main focus is often on topics of disarmament, and

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[30] Telephonic interview with Rita Manchanda, 12 December 2018.

international conflict with strong political, military and strategic dimensions, while less importance is assigned to the intersectionality and linkages of interpersonal, inter-group and international phenomena (Tint and Prasad 2007, p. 26). This is also reflected in the dominant game-theoretical and interest-based approaches to conflict resolution (Samaddar 2004, p. 11). The discourse, therefore, is held hostage to the security think tanks or army personnel who shape the agenda moving away from peace to security in the traditional sense – a reflection of the peace discourse at the global level. As a result, the existing critical thinking comes mostly from non-academic and non-university settings. Subsequently, voices of peace emerging from the Global South are not only bypassed at the global level but also within the Global South itself.

## 5  Conclusion: peace—beyond the north-south divide

PCS seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the causes of violence and war and ways to resolve conflicts around the world. Despite its global reach and cosmopolitan aspiration, key concepts and theories are deeply entrenched in European intellectual history and Northern experiences of violence and war. The growing number of PCS programmes and research centres around the world bear the chance to include different voices and perspectives into a cosmopolitan peace scholarship. However, the hegemony of Northern theories and concepts and the entrenched 'epistemic violence' leads to the marginalisation of different experiences and voices in PCS. There is a need to decentralise PCS and to avoid Eurocentrism in its various forms by incorporating different discourses on peace as the first stepping stone. It does not mean rejecting established (Northern) concepts and theories, but to challenge and enrich them by broadening their scope, yet avoiding reproduction of cultural essentialism. Taking a decolonial perspective that seeks to augment the Western body of knowledge with subaltern perspectives (Müller 2016; Alatas 2006; Mignolo 2000), the cosmopolitan aspiration then becomes one of "connecting (rather than uniting) many projects and trajectories in a global process of de-colonial cosmopolitanism, toward the horizon of pluri-versality as a universal project" (Mignolo 2010, p. 125).

The discussion of Indian conceptualisations of peace rooted in religious scripts and modern discourses that are informed by the country's history, social fabric and experiences of violence and war have shown that there is a multiplicity of ideas of peace. It is a herculean task to bring convergences between the discourses existing in the Global North and the Global South since peace has evolved differently in terms of epistemological as well as ontological underpinnings. Moreover, PCS is still at a very nascent stage in terms of institutionalisation in such contexts. It does not imply a lack of discourse, but the existence of multiple discourses shaped by the current realities of violence, underdevelopment, human insecurity and livelihood issues within these countries. Thereby the contemporary discourse on peace in India suggests that despite similarities, there is a disconnect or divide between a domestic conception of peace, based mostly on progressive notions of human security and

the link between development and security, and a vision of the international system dominated by the realist paradigm (Kenkel 2016, p. 379).

How then can a convergence be achieved between varying understandings of peace to make the discipline more inclusive? India as an 'emerging power' can be a case to start with, to challenge the dominant notions of peace and associated peace intervention practices leading to "a crucial normative aspect of the current contestation of the global order" (Kenkel 2016, p. 377). In India, it can be done by moving beyond Gandhi to incorporate ideas of Phule, Ambedkar, Naidu, Pandit, Krishnamurthi and many others. Their ideas, which are examined as part of political science, history, economics or sociology, can be brought in the domain of PCS, converging the historical underpinnings of peace with the current social and economic realities of underdevelopment and livelihood challenges. Our understanding of peace and peacebuilding would be enriched by connecting the evolving scholarly discourse on peace and PCS in South Asia to the ongoing discourses in other world regions. The already existing peace philosophies and social reforms in India can fertilise the global debate and make India one of the attractive hotspots of PCS. This can be taken up in further research. What it means for the discourse on peace is that it has to draw upon narratives from other disciplines like sociology, history and anthropology, and needs to take into account various linkages existing between peace and development, peace and emancipation, gendered dimensions of peace, and peace and social movements in India. To live up to its cosmopolitan aspirations, PCS needs to incorporate these multiple discourses of different regions affected by conflict—not solely as an object of study. There has to be this realisation that "[t]he explorer is not different from that which she or he is exploring" (Krishnamurthi 1983, p. 16). This gap can only be bridged by co-producing and co-authoring the new contextualised discourse on peace.

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## 5.4 Chance für den Frieden? Die Lokalisierungsagenda im Humanitären System im Nexus von Humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung

# Chance für den Frieden? Die Lokalisierungsagenda im Humanitären System im Nexus von Humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung

KRISTINA ROEPSTORFF

**Abstract** Forderungen nach einer stärkeren Einbeziehung lokaler Akteure in die humanitäre Hilfe sind nicht neu, haben aber im Zuge des Humanitären Weltgipfels 2016 Aufwind erhalten. Die stärkere Einbeziehung lokaler Akteure wirft jedoch sowohl konzeptionell als auch für die Umsetzung eine Reihe von Fragen auf. Dies gilt insbesondere für das Zusammenspiel von humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung. Dieser Beitrag möchte mit ersten Überlegungen zu der Debatte um die Lokalisierungsagenda im Nexus von humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung beitragen. Es wird argumentiert, dass es für weiterführende Forschung im Sinne eines kritischen Lokalismus (Mac Ginty 2015) dabei eine simple binäre Gegenüberstellung des Lokalen und Internationalen zu überwinden und eine machtkritische Perspektive einzunehmen gilt.

**Keywords** Humanitäre Hilfe, Lokalisierung, Nexus, Friedensförderung

### A Chance for Peace? The Humanitarian System's Localisation Agenda and the Humanitarian -Peacebuilding Nexus

**Abstract** Calls for a greater inclusion of local actors into humanitarian action are far from new, but have gained momentum in the wake of the World Humanitarian Summit 2016. However, the inclusion of local actors raises a range of questions, both conceptually and regarding its implementation. This is particularly the case in the interplay of humanitarian action and peacebuilding. This paper seeks to contribute to the debate on the humanitarian system's localisation agenda within the context of the humanitarian-peacebuilding nexus. It argues that further research should be guided by a critical localism (Mac Ginty 2015) that overcomes a simple binary opposition of the local and the international and looks at power asymmetries in the humanitarian system.

**Keywords** Humanitarian Action, Localisation, Nexus, Peacebuilding

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## 1. Einleitung

Wenn Naturkatastrophen oder bewaffnete Konflikte zu Tod, Zerstörung, Not und Vertreibung führen, sind es zunächst die Menschen vor Ort, die unmittelbare Hilfe leisten. Familienmitglieder und Nachbarn, freiwillige Helfer und zivilgesellschaftliche Akteure – sie alle sind bereits tätig, wenn nationale und internationale Akteure eintreffen. Der wichtige Beitrag, den Akteure vor Ort leisten, steht im starken Kontrast zu den Informationen und Bildern, die die Weltöffentlichkeit medial erreichen. In den Reportagen und Spendenaufrufen, die im Zuge einer humanitären Notlage in die Welt transportiert werden, wird vor allem den bekannten und etablierten humanitären Akteuren ein Großteil der Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet. Neben diversen Organisationen der Vereinten Nationen tritt hierbei gewöhnlich ein Kanon großer internationaler Nichtregierungsorganisationen (NGOs) in Erscheinung, zu denen Organisationen wie World Vision International, Ärzte ohne Grenzen (MSF), Save the Children und Oxfam zählen. Aber auch im humanitären Sektor selbst werden Akteure vor Ort weitestgehend und regelmäßig marginalisiert. Dies schlägt sich auch in der unverhältnismäßigen Verteilung der zur Verfügung stehenden Gelder nieder. So stellt der Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2015 fest, dass trotz des wichtigen Beitrags lokaler Akteure diese lediglich 0,2 Prozent der Gelder erhalten (GHA 2015, S. 11). In der Folge wurden Stimmen laut, die eine stärkere Einbeziehung lokaler Akteure in humanitären Hilfseinsätzen forderten.[1] Damit schließt sich nun auch die humanitäre Hilfe einem Trend an, der in der Fachliteratur zur Friedensförderung unter dem Begriff des Local Turn seit einigen Jahren besteht, und selbst wiederum an Debatten in der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit anschließt (Bräuchler 2017, S. 429, Paffenholz 2015; Leonardsson und Rudd 2015). Gleichzeitig wird neben der Lokalisierung auch eine engere Verzahnung von humanitärer Hilfe, Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und Friedensförderung gefordert, um bessere und nachhaltigere Ergebnisse zu erzielen (OCHA 2017). Vor dem Hintergrund der angestrebten Lokalisierung stellt sich damit auch die Frage, wie sich lokale Akteure im Nexus von humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung verorten lassen – oder anders gefragt, inwieweit eine lokalisierte humanitäre Hilfe eine Friedenskomponente besitzt.

So vielversprechend und naheliegend eine stärkere Einbeziehung lokaler Akteure erscheint, um eine bedürfnisorientierte, kontext- und konfliktsensible humanitäre Hilfe zu ermöglichen, ist unklar, was lokal bzw. Lokalisierung im Kontext der humanitären Hilfe überhaupt bedeutet – oder, wie Mac Ginty dies in Bezug auf die Friedensförderung (2016) fragt: wo ist das Lokale? Während vor allem von Think Tanks und humanitären Organisationen *lessons learned* sowie *best practices* anhand bestimmter Fallstudien erörtert werden (Svobo-

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Kristina Roepstorff, Dr. rer. pol. (Universität Bremen) geb. 1978, erlangte ihren Magistergrad der Philosophie, Ethnologie und Vergleichenden Religionswissenschaft 2003 an der Ludwigs-Maximilians-Universität München und 2004 ihren Master of Arts in International and Comparative Legal Studies an der SOAS, University of London. Seit 2007 lehrt sie im europäischen NOHA Master in International Humanitarian Action und seit 2015 ist sie Associate Faculty an der School for Humanitarian Studies, Royal Roads University (Canada). Als wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin am Lehrstuhl für Internationale Beziehungen der Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg forscht sie schwerpunktmäßig zu der Interaktion verschiedener Akteure in der Friedensförderung und humanitären Hilfe. Ihr regionaler Schwerpunkt liegt auf Süd- und Südostasien (insbesondere Indien, Nepal und Myanmar).

[1] Diese Forderung ist im humanitären Sektor nicht neu und findet sich bereits in der UN Resolution 46/182 von 1991, dem Code of Conduct des Roten Kreuzes und den Principles of Good Humanitarian Donorship (Wall und Hedlund 2016, S. 9).

da und Pantuliano 2015; Kenney *et al.* 2015; Corbett 2015), findet eine tiefergehende Auseinandersetzung mit diesen grundsätzlichen Fragen und den der Debatte zugrundeliegenden theoretischen Annahmen bislang allerdings kaum statt. Auch mangelt es an wissenschaftlichen empirischen Untersuchungen, die einen Aufschluss über die Rolle einer lokalisierten humanitären Hilfe für den Frieden geben könnten. Dabei ist auffällig, dass wenig Rückgriff auf die bereits bestehenden Debatten zur Lokalisierung in der Friedensförderung genommen wird, was auf die traditionelle Abgrenzung der Politikfelder der humanitären Hilfe einerseits und der Friedensförderung andererseits zurückzuführen sein könnte und sich auch in der wissenschaftlichen Forschungspraxis niederschlägt.

Dieser Beitrag, der auf einer Auswertung sekundärer Literatur, sowie qualitativer Interviews mit humanitären Akteuren in Indien, Myanmar, Thailand, Nepal und Italien im Zeitraum 2012 bis 2018 basiert,[2] möchte vor dem Hintergrund der derzeitigen Reformbestrebungen die Lokalisierungsagenda im Nexus von Humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung kritisch beleuchten. Hierzu wird in einem ersten Schritt der aktuelle Diskurs zur Lokalisierung der humanitären Hilfe nachgezeichnet. Anschließend wird der Nexus von humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung erörtert, um dann der Frage nachzugehen, inwiefern die Lokalisierungsagenda des humanitären Sektors eine Chance für den Frieden birgt. Hierzu wird Rekurs auf die Erkenntnisse aus der Debatte um den Local Turn in der Friedensförderung genommen und argumentiert, dass ein „kritischer Lokalismus (Mac Ginty 2015) den Ausgangspunkt für notwendige kritische Überlegungen zur Lokalisierungsagenda in der humanitären Hilfe bilden und Impulse für weiterführende Forschung geben kann. Dabei wird humanitäre Hilfe als Arena verstanden „where actors negotiate the outcomes of aid" (Hilhorst and Jansen 2010, S. 1120) und verschiedene Strategien nutzen, um sich und ihre Handlungen zu legitimieren. Wie die humanitäre Hilfe dabei durch die sozialen Interaktionsprozesse gestaltet wird, hängt auch damit zusammen, wie die beteiligten Akteure den Kontext, die bestehenden Bedürfnisse sowie ihre eigene Rolle und die anderer interpretieren (ibid, S. 1120–1123). In den Blick kommt dann nicht nur die Frage, wo das Lokale ist, sondern auch von wem dies festlegt wird, wer beansprucht, das Lokale zu repräsentieren und wie dadurch neue Machtverhältnisse geschaffen bzw. bestehende zementiert oder in Frage gestellt werden. Aufgrund der bisherigen spärlichen empirischen Datenlage über lokale humanitäre Hilfe und der Umsetzung des Lokalisierungsansatzes im humanitären Sektor schließt der Beitrag mit ersten Überlegungen auf deren Grundlage eine Forschungsagenda zur Lokalisierung und deren Bedeutung für die Friedensförderung entwickelt wird.

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2    Insgesamt wurden von der Autorin zwölf qualitative Einzelinterviews und ein Fokusgruppen-Interview mit zivilgesellschaftlichen Akteuren im Juni 2012 in Nordostindien im Rahmen eines von der kanadischen Regierung geförderten Postdoc-Projekts zur konfliktbedingten Vertreibung in den Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) durchgeführt; acht explorative Experteninterviews zur humanitären Hilfe im Kontext des Konflikts im Rakhine Staat in Myanmar in Yangon und Sittwe im März 2015 und in Bangkok 2017 wurden im Rahmen eines Habilitationsprojekts zu lokaler humanitärer Hilfe durchgeführt; weitere 14 qualitative Interviews sowie teilnehmende Beobachtung erfolgten im Mai 2018 auf Lampedusa und Sizilien. Daten wurden zudem aus 28 qualitativen Interviews generiert, die von Studierenden der Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg und der Universität Kathmandu im Februar 2018 im Rahmen einer Lehrforschung zum Disaster-Conflict-Interface durchgeführt wurden. Alle Interviews wurden mittels qualitativer Inhaltsanalyse ausgewertet.

## 2. Die Lokalisierungsagenda in der humanitären Hilfe

Im Nachgang zum Humanitären Weltgipfel 2016 wird die Lokalisierung der humanitären Hilfe als Antwort auf verschiedene Herausforderungen, denen sich der humanitäre Sektor gegenübersieht, gehandelt. Ausgelöst durch Klimawandel, Migration und bewaffnete Konflikte sei den (neuen) Herausforderungen des eingeschränkten Zugangs zu Menschen in Not, einer zunehmenden Fragmentierung des humanitären Systems, der mangelnden Koordination und Kohärenz der Hilfseinsätze sowie der Kluft zwischen Ersthilfe, Wiederaufbau und Entwicklung nur mittels einer lokalen, inklusiven und kontextspezifischen und konfliktsensiblen humanitären Hilfe zu begegnen. Eine Reihe von Gebern und humanitären Hilfsorganisationen haben sich deshalb im Grand Bargain[3] dazu verpflichtet, die humanitäre Hilfe so lokal wie möglich und so international wie nötig zu gestalten. Hierzu soll unter anderem die bisherige dürftige Finanzierung lokaler Akteure bis zum Jahr 2020 auf 25 Prozent angehoben werden. Auch die Charter4Change[4], eine Initiative einer Vielzahl von humanitären Akteuren, die sich explizit dem Thema Lokalisierung verschrieben hat, sieht eine Anhebung der Finanzierung von NGOs aus dem Globalen Süden auf 20 Prozent bis 2018 vor. Neben der Umverteilung der Gelder ist auch eine stärkere Einbeziehung lokaler und nationaler Partner in der Projektentwicklung und -umsetzung angestrebt. Durch eine medienwirksame Öffentlichkeitsarbeit soll zudem der zentrale Beitrag lokaler Akteure in der humanitären Hilfe publik gemacht werden.

In der Debatte um die stärkere Einbeziehung lokaler Akteure und die Anerkennung ihres Beitrags in der humanitären Hilfe, die sowohl im wissenschaftlichen Diskurs sowie in Policy-Papieren unter dem Stichwort Lokalisierung geführt wird, sind dabei zwei Hauptargumentationslinien auszumachen: Neben einer Kritik an den bestehenden Machtstrukturen im humanitären System, die als Reproduktion der Machtungleichheiten zwischen den Ländern und der Bevölkerung im Globalen Norden und dem Globalen Süden angesehen wird, ist die Lokalisierung auch aufgrund pragmatischer, effizienzorientierter Überlegungen *en vogue* geworden.

## 2.1. Lokalisierung zwischen Machtkritik und Pragmatismus

Humanitäre Hilfe wird als paternalistisch, unsensibel, ausgrenzend und sogar neokolonial wahrgenommen (I'Anson und Pfeifer 2013; Donini, 2012; de Waal 1997). Obgleich humanitäre Hilfe von einer Vielzahl unterschiedlicher Akteure geleistet wird und sich Länder des Globalen Südens zunehmend in das humanitäre System einbringen (Roepstorff 2016; Binder und Meier 2011), haben dessen gewichtige Institutionen und Organisationen ihre Ursprünge im Globalen Norden (Bornstein und Redfield 2010, S. 13; Khakee 2018, S. 23). Das humanitäre System, wie es im 19. Jahrhundert entstanden ist und sich zur heutigen Form entwickelt hat, wird von einigen Kritikern daher als ein Unterfangen der Länder des Globalen Nordens gesehen, ihre Dominanz auszubauen und die Spielregeln zu diktieren (Fassin 2012; Barnett 2011; Davey *et al.* 2013). Gleichzeitig machen Länder des Globalen Südens die

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3   https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/sites/default/files/resources/2018/Jan/Grand_Bargain_final_22_May_ FINAL-2.pdf, (abgerufen am 29.8.2018).

4   https://charter4change.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/charter-for-change-july-20152.pdf, (abgerufen am 26.8.2018).

Mehrheit der Empfänger humanitärer Hilfe aus, und oftmals sind es die einstigen Kolonial-
herrscher, die heute Nahrungsmittel, technische Ausstattung und Expertise in die ehemalige
Kolonie bringen. Widerstand gegen eine wahrgenommene Fortsetzung der kolonialen Agen-
da und Zivilisierungsmission kann ihren Ausdruck in Argwohn und Ablehnung humanitärer
Hilfe und einem Misstrauen gegenüber den Motiven humanitärer Helfer finden und zu einer
Behinderung der Hilfeleistung führen (Slim 2004, S. 5; Donini 2012). Diese ungleichen
Machtverhältnisse schlagen sich auch in der Marginalisierung lokaler Akteure nieder. Um
lokale Akteure zu stärken, müsse daher das gesamte humanitäre System auf den Kopf ge-
stellt werden (Gingerich 2016).

In einer zweiten – und damit verbundenen – Argumentationslinie wird die Position ver-
Neben dieser grundsätzlichen Kritik am humanitären System wird internationalen Ak-
teuren zudem eine Unkenntnis des lokalen Kontexts nachgesagt. Sie seien nicht mit loka-
len Gepflogenheiten, Machtstrukturen, spezifischen Vulnerabilitäten oder diskriminierenden
und exkludierenden Praktiken vertraut, und ihre Hilfe sei somit weder kontext- noch kon-
fliktsensibel. Auch würden lokale Akteure und Stimmen bei Hilfseinsätzen nicht berücksich-
tigt. Lokale Akteure hätten dem hingegen aufgrund der sprachlichen und kulturellen Nähe
einen besseren Zugang zu den betroffenen Bevölkerungsgruppen sowie eine höhere Legiti-
mität und würden damit ein größeres Vertrauen unter der Bevölkerung genießen (Stoddard
und Harmer 2006, S. 31). Dieser *comparative advantage,* also der relative Vorteil lokaler
Akteure gegenüber internationalen Helfern, wird in einer Reihe von Publikationen zum The-
ma herausgestellt (WDS 2015, S. 13; Zyck und Krebs 2015; Tanner und Moro 2016; de
Geoffroy und Grunewald 2017).

In einer zweiten – und damit verbundenen – Argumentationslinie wird die Position ver-
treten, dass eine Nichtbeachtung lokaler Gegebenheiten und Ressourcen die Effektivität hu-
manitärer Hilfseinsätze minimiere und auch einer langfristigen Kapazitätsentwicklung der
betroffenen Gesellschaft im Wege stehe (Obrecht 2014, S. 1). So hat die Evaluierung der
humanitären Hilfe im Zuge des Tsunamis im indischen Ozean 2004 aufgezeigt, dass obwohl
lokale Akteure eine bedeutende Rolle in der Rettung Überlebender spielten bevor nationale
und internationale Hilfe eintraf, sie in der Krisenbewältigung weitestgehend marginalisiert
wurden (Scheper *et al.* 2006, S. 10). Dies sei bezeichnend für die generelle strukturelle Aus-
grenzung und Verkennung lokaler Kapazitäten, was sich auch negativ auf eine mögliche
Resilienz[5] und nachhaltige Katastrophenvorsorge auswirke (Klose 2013, S. 195). In der
Stärkung lokaler Akteure wird nun eine Chance gesehen, zentrale Schwächen gegenwärtiger
humanitärer Hilfseinsätze zu beheben und die Widerstandsfähigkeit betroffener Gesellschaf-
ten zu stärken. Dabei wird allerdings den lokalen Akteuren je nach Phase eine mehr oder we-
niger bedeutsame Rolle zugeschrieben: gerade in der zu Beginn einer humanitären Notsitu-
ation stattfindenden Soforthilfe wird die Einbeziehung lokaler Akteure als nachrangig, sogar
als hinderlich für eine schnelle und effektive Hilfe gesehen. In der Wiederaufbauphase – die
auch mit einem allmählichen Rückzug der internationalen Akteure einhergeht – wird den
lokalen Akteuren dem hingegen eine zentrale Rolle zuerkannt (Ramalingam *et al.* 2013).

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5   Bei Resilienz handelt es sich um einen umstrittenen Begriff, dessen Bedeutung und praktische Umsetzung im
    Rahmen des Katastrophenmanagements kontrovers diskutiert wird. Für weiterführende Literatur siehe u. a. Pa-
    ton und Johnston 2017; Duffield 2015; Turnbull *et al.* 2013 und Wisner *et al.* 2003.

## 2.2. Mangelnde Umsetzung und die Kritik an der Kritik

Bislang findet die Lokalisierung allerdings eher in der Theorie als in der Praxis statt (Barnett und Weiss 2011, S. 121; Wall und Hedlund 2016, S. 9). Dies wird auf verschiedene Gründe zurückgeführt. Neben den fortbestehenden ungleichen Machtverhältnissen im humanitären System, in dem einige wenige Akteure dominieren und diese Macht auch nicht abgeben wollen (Kakhee 2018), und institutionellen Faktoren (Bennett 2016), wird die Identifizierung und Einbeziehung von adäquaten lokalen Partnern inmitten einer Krise von humanitären Organisationen als in der Praxis schwer umsetzbar erlebt (WDS 2015, S. 17). Auch werden die Qualität lokaler Hilfsmaßnahmen und eine angemessene Transparenz über Aktivtäten in Frage gestellt (ibid.). So wird das Lokale nicht von allen als Allheilmittel gesehen und kritische Stimmen führen eine Vielzahl von Bedenken gegenüber der Lokalisierungsagenda ins Feld: Veruntreuung, Korruption und lokale Machtgefüge könnten einer effizienten und effektiven Hilfe im Wege stehen (Churruca-Muguruza 2018, S. 4). Zudem könne eine Bedeutungszunahme lokaler Akteure zu einem erhöhten Wettbewerb um die wenigen verfügbaren Gelder im humanitären Sektor führen (ibid.). Darüber hinaus wird hinter der Lokalisierungsagenda ein Risikotransfer von internationalen hin zu lokalen Akteuren vermutet. Internationale Akteure würden sich damit ihrer Verantwortung entziehen und ihre lokalen Partner in gefährlichen Kontexten alleine lassen (Gingerich 2016). Außerdem würde man Regierungen in die Hände spielen, die mit dem Lokalisierungsargument eine Einmischung von außen unterbinden könnten – auch um Kriegsverbrechen zu vertuschen (ibid., S. 5; Churruca-Muguruza 2018, S. 4).

Trotz der angeführten Bedenken wird die mangelnde Nutzbarmachung und Unterstützung bereits bestehender lokaler Ressourcen, Kapazitäten, Initiativen und Fähigkeiten als Hindernis für den Aufbau und die Stärkung nationaler und lokaler Kapazitäten – und somit für die nachhaltige Bewältigung humanitärer Notlagen – gesehen. Eine Starkmachung für die Lokalisierung gilt daher generell als politisch korrekt und eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der (ideologisch) geprägten Lokalisierungsdebatte wird bislang nur am Rande geführt (Schenkenberg 2016). Welche Akteure als lokal und damit als legitime Empfänger von Geldern und als Zielgruppe einer Lokalisierungsagenda gelten, ist jedoch nicht geklärt – eine Frage, die aufgrund der Ressourcenverteilung auch einiges an Konfliktpotenzial birgt. Da die aktuelle Debatte kaum zwischen verschiedenen humanitären Kontexten differenziert, wird zudem ein vereinheitlichendes Bild der Rolle lokaler Akteure gezeichnet. Dabei bringt die Lokalisierung der humanitären Hilfe im spezifischen Kontext bewaffneter Konflikte besondere Herausforderungen mit sich. Über 80 % der humanitären Hilfe wird in Kontexten von Kriegen und bewaffneten Konflikten geleistet und somit muss auch die tatsächliche oder wahrgenommene Neutralität und Unparteilichkeit lokaler Akteure und die daraus resultierenden Konsequenzen für die humanitäre Hilfe und den Konfliktkontext problematisiert werden (ibid.). Aber auch in Kontexten von Naturkatastrophen kann humanitäre Hilfe konfliktverschärfend wirken. Eine wichtige Frage, die sich daher stellt, ist, wie sich die Lokalisierung der humanitären Hilfe im Nexus von humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung verorten lässt.

### 3.    Die Lokalisierungsagenda der humanitären Hilfe: Chance für den Frieden?

Dass die Friedensförderung und die humanitäre Hilfe als zwei voneinander getrennte Felder behandelt werden, ist nicht nur im akademischen Diskurs der Fall. Auch in der Praxis internationaler Interventionen werden beide Tätigkeitsfelder hinsichtlich ihrer Zielsetzungen, ihrer zeitlichen Dimensionen und spezifischen Werkzeugkästen voneinander abgegrenzt. Ziel der humanitären Hilfe ist es, in Kontexten von Katastrophen und bewaffneten Konflikten Nothilfe zu leisten und Leben zu retten. Sie ist kurzfristig und bedürfnisorientiert angelegt. Vor allem durch die Prinzipien der Neutralität und Unparteilichkeit soll dabei eine Politisierung der humanitären Hilfe vermieden werden (Barnett und Weiss 2011, S. 9; Lieser 2013, S. 10). Dem hingegen ist die Friedensförderung darauf ausgerichtet, nachhaltigen (positiven) Frieden zu stiften, Konfliktursachen zu beheben und Versöhnungsprozesse sowie eine politische Stabilisierung zu unterstützen (Barnett *et al.* 2007; Ramsbotham *et al.* 2016, S. 266). Sie ist langfristig angelegt und *per se* politisch (OCHA 2011, S. 4). Mit ihren verschiedenen Aufgaben, Zielsetzungen und Strategien erfordern die verschiedenen Tätigkeitsfelder daher unterschiedliche Expertise und Fähigkeiten (Hilhorst und Pereboom 2016). Auch das Finanzierungssystem für internationale Interventionen ist entsprechend aufgebaut und Gelder werden von Gebern für jeweils bestimmte Bereiche und Aktivitäten zur Verfügung gestellt.

Diese starke Abgrenzung der Politikfelder wird allerdings bereits seit den 1990iger Jahren in Frage gestellt. Mit den Erfahrungen in Ruanda, Somalia oder Bosnien wurden die unbeabsichtigten negativen Effekte der humanitären Hilfe zunehmend in den Blick genommen (Narang 2015; Fox 2011; Anderson 1999; Rieff 2002). Es entspann sich eine Debatte zwischen den Vertretern eines dunantistischen, traditionellen Ansatzes der humanitären Hilfe und den Vertretern des *New Humanitarianism,* die eine politische Neutralität der humanitären Hilfe als weder realistisch noch wünschenswert erachten und diese auch an die Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, Menschenrechts- und Friedensarbeit gekoppelt sehen (Walker und Maxwell 2009, S. 138–9). Auch wenn bis heute kein Konsens zwischen den beiden Lagern herrscht, so ist allgemein anerkannt, dass humanitäre Hilfe immer Teil des Konfliktkontextes ist. Doch kann eine lokalisierte humanitäre Hilfe zur Konflikttransformation und damit zur Friedensförderung beitragen, oder wirkt sie vielmehr konfliktverschärfend?

### 3.1.    Do-No-Harm und Konfliktsensibilität in der Humanitären Hilfe

Der von Mary B. Anderson im Rahmen des Projekts „Local Capacities for Peace" entwickelte „Do no harm"-Ansatz geht davon aus, dass humanitäre Hilfe immer auf den Konfliktkontext wirkt und es einer fundierten Kontext- und Konfliktanalyse bedarf, um konfliktverschärfende Hilfe zu vermeiden (Jamann 2013). Werden etwa im Zuge von Hilfsmaßnahmen bestimmte Gruppen als besonders bedürftig identifiziert, kann dies bestehende Intergruppenkonflikte verschärfen. Insbesondere in asymmetrischen, innerstaatlichen oder ethnisierten Konflikten kann die humanitäre Hilfe damit zwischen die Fronten geraten und als wirtschaftliche sowie politische Ressource den Konflikt verschärfen bzw. verlängern (Anderson 1999, S. 39). Ein aktuelles Beispiel derartiger Dynamiken findet sich im Rakhine-Staat in Myanmar, wo die Hilfeleistung internationaler humanitärer Organisationen in den vergangenen Jahren als einseitig und parteiisch wahrgenommen wurde, was nicht nur zu einem Res-

sentiment gegenüber den humanitären Akteuren führte, sondern sich auch auf den Konflikt auswirkte (Lone und Marshall 2017; Roepstorff 2018).[6]

Die humanitäre Hilfe kann aber auch zu einer Überbrückung von Konfliktlinien führen und positive Effekte auf den Konfliktkontext haben (Paffenholz 2010, S. 25). Als besonders vielversprechend wird hier die Unterstützung und Einbindung gewaltfreier Akteure auf lokaler Ebene angesehen, die zu Verständigung und Versöhnung beitragen können (Jamann 2013, S. 355). Um das Potenzial lokaler Akteure zu stärken, schlagen Lange und Quinn (2003) unter anderem vor, diese in entsprechenden Analysetechniken auszubilden und bei der Rekrutierung auf eine Repräsentation aller Konfliktparteien zu achten (s. auch International Alert 2016). Die Rekrutierung über Konfliktlinien hinweg scheitert allerdings oftmals in der Umsetzung. Im Rakhine-Staat wurden beispielsweise moderate Angehörige der buddhistischen Bevölkerung wegen ihrer Tätigkeit bei humanitären Organisationen angegriffen und ihre Häuser angezündet.[7]

In einer Weiterführung der Debatte wird in der Literatur zum sogenannten Disaster-Conflict Interface – also dem Zusammenspiel von Naturkatastrophen wie Erdbeben, Tsunamis, Überschwemmungen oder Dürren und Konflikten – der Frage nachgegangen, inwiefern die humanitäre Hilfe auch in diesen Kontexten eine konfliktverschärfende oder friedensstiftende Wirkung hat (UNDP 2011). In vielen Regionen, in denen bewaffnete Konflikte humanitäre Notsituationen auslösen, werden diese durch Naturkatastrophen noch verschlimmert. So herrschte sowohl in Sri Lanka als auch in der indonesischen Provinz Aceh ein bewaffneter Konflikt als der Tsunami 2004 weitere Menschenleben kostete, die Infrastruktur und Lebensgrundlagen vieler Menschen zerstörte. Als 2015 das Erdbeben Nepal erschütterte, war das Land von einer Vielzahl von sozialen Konfliktlinien und den Nachwirkungen des zehnjährigen Bürgerkrieges gekennzeichnet (Sisk und Bogati 2015; von Einsiedel 2012). Dies ist kein Randphänomen: auch der bereits konfliktgebeutelte Rakhine-Staat in Myanmar war 2017 von Überschwemmungen betroffen; Regionen in Subsahara Afrika oder der Sahel-Zone leiden unter dem doppelten Effekt von Naturkatastrophen und Konflikten. Ebenso wie in Kontexten bewaffneter Konflikte ist auch hier der Befund der konfliktverschärfenden und -mindernden Effekte von lokaler humanitärer Hilfe ambivalent (UNDP 2011; Renner und Chafe 2007; Kelman 2011; Egorova und Cullen 2014). So wird einerseits festgestellt, dass bereits bestehende Konfliktlinien zu einer ungleichen Verteilung von Vulnerabilitäten, aber auch der Hilfsgüter führen. Die Konkurrenz um Ressourcen, fortbestehende Diskriminierungen und Ausgrenzungen können dabei Konflikte weiter anheizen. Andererseits gibt es auch Beispiele dafür, dass Naturkatastrophen eine Chance für Konflikttransformation bieten und sich positiv auf Friedensprozesse auswirken (UNDP 2011). Ein oft zitiertes Beispiel ist hier der Friedensprozess in Aceh. In dieser Region Indonesiens, wo zum Zeitpunkt des Tsunamis 2004 ein separatistischer Konflikt herrschte, wurde im Zuge der Naturkatastrophe ein Friedensabkommen geschlossen, wobei der geleisteten humanitären Hilfe ein wichtiger Anteil in der Annäherung zwischen den Konfliktparteien zugeschrieben wird (Gaillard *et al.* 2008). Gleichzeitig hat derselbe Tsunami in Sri Lanka nur eine temporäre konfliktmindernde Wirkung entfaltet (Hyndman 2009). Neben der sogenannten *Disaster Diplomacy* auf politischer

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6   Qualitative Interviews in Sittwe im März 2015 und in Bangkok 2017 zur humanitären Hilfe im Rakhine Staat.
7   Interviews mit Mitarbeitern internationaler und nationaler humanitärer Organisationen im März 2015 in Sittwe und Yagon.

Ebene (Kelman, 2011) kann auf kommunaler Ebene das Engagement freiwilliger, lokaler Helfer und Ad-hoc Gruppen – zumindest kurzfristig – zu einem sozialen Zusammenhalt führen, wenn die Hilfe über Konfliktlinien hinweg geleistet wird. Beispielsweise wurde beim Erdbeben in Nepal über kastenübergreifende Hilfe berichtet.[8] Dies ist nicht immer der Fall, wie ältere Studien zu Indien darlegen (Henry 2005, S. 3). Und so ist auch der Befund in Nepal ambivalent, denn auch hier gab es Ausgrenzungen von Personen von Hilfsmaßnahmen entlang bereits bestehender Konfliktlinien.[9]

### 3.2. Der Humanitarian – Peace Nexus: von Konfliktvermeidung zur Friedensförderung?

Dass internationale Organisationen dennoch zunehmend auf eine Verbindung der Humanitären Hilfe und der Friedensförderung setzen, zeigt sich auch in der Humanitarian-Development-Peace Initiative (HDPI), die unter enger Zusammenarbeit der UN und der Weltbank seit 2017 erste Pilotprojekte durchführt.[10] Dass hierbei lokalen Akteuren eine zentrale Rolle zugeschrieben wird, ist einer Vielzahl von Dokumenten zu entnehmen. Was diesen Nexus-Ansatz unterstützen könnte, ist, dass gerade auf kommunaler Ebene und bei Graswurzelorganisationen die Akteure meist nicht spezialisiert sind und keine scharfe Trennung zwischen entwicklungspolitischem Engagement, friedensstiftenden Aktivitäten und humanitärer Hilfe vornehmen. Zum Beispiel entschieden sich Akteure auf Lampedusa bewusst dafür, nicht nur humanitäre Hilfe für Migranten zu leisten, sondern die Bedürftigen der gesamten Inselbevölkerung zu unterstützen.[11] Mitglieder eines lokalen Friedenskomitees in Nepal sahen es als ihre Aufgabe an, bei einer Überschwemmung im Distrikt zu helfen – obwohl dies laut internationaler Geldgebern nicht zu ihren Aufgaben zählte.[12] Eine solche Verbindung der verschiedenen Politikfelder findet sich bereits in den Konzepten der Katastrophenvorsorge, Resilienz, DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction) oder dem LRRD (Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development)[13]. Eine Vielzahl von Organisationen sehen in diesen auf Nachhaltigkeit setzenden Ansätzen auch einen möglichen Beitrag der humanitären Hilfe für die Friedensförderung – und betonen dabei die Rolle lokaler Akteure. Denn diesen Ansätzen ist gemein, dass sie auf die Förderung lokaler Selbsthilfekapazitäten abzielen (Lange 2006, S. 155; OCHA 2011).

In Hinblick auf die Verzahnung von humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung sind bislang vor allem die oben genannten Ansätze des "Do no harm" und der damit verbundenen konfliktsensiblen Programmplanung und -umsetzung geläufig, die lokalen Akteuren und dem Ausbau lokaler Kapazitäten eine zentrale Rolle zuschreibt. Während die Annahme, dass humanitäre Akteure durch eine konfliktsensible Programmplanung zumindest passiv zur Friedensförderung beitragen können, auf breite Zustimmung stößt, wird eine darüber-

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8   Qualitative Interviews mit Betroffenen und humanitären Helfern durchgeführt von Studierenden der Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg und der Universität Kathmandu im Februar 2018.

9   ibid.

10  http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence/brief/the-humanitarian-development-peace-initiative, letzter Zugriff am 10.6.2018.

11  Interviews mit Aktivisten und NGO Vertretern auf Lampedusa, Mai 2018.

12  Persönliches Gespräch mit einem Mitglied in Nepal, 13.9.2014.

13  Wie bei der Resilienz handelt es sich hierbei um umstrittene Konzepte, deren Bedeutung und Implementierung kontrovers diskutiert wird. Siehe Schmitz 2014; Wisner *et al.* 2003; Horstmann 2018.

hinausgehende aktivere Rolle der humanitären Hilfe für die Friedensförderung allerdings kontrovers diskutiert (Pederson 2016; Paulke 2017). Auffällig ist in der gesamten Debatte die mangelnde kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Konzeptualisierung des Lokalen und die damit einhergehenden Implikationen für die Umsetzung der Lokalisierungsagenda im Nexus von humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung. Dabei ist dies eine zentrale Frage, sollen doch beispielsweise 20 Prozent der Gelder in der humanitären Hilfe an diese Akteure gehen, um sie in ihren Aktivitäten zu stärken.

## 4. Wer, was und wo ist das Lokale?

Die derzeitige Debatte im humanitären Sektor erinnert dabei an Diskussionen in der Friedensförderung, die über den Begriff des Local Turn geführt wird (Mac Ginty und Richmond 2013; Leonardsson and Rudd 2015; Paffenholz 2015). Diese hat zu einer intensiven Auseinandersetzung mit konzeptionellen und praxisrelevanten Fragen geführt, die auch für die humanitäre Hilfe von Bedeutung sind. Eine Hinwendung zum Lokalen in der Friedensförderung sollte dabei nicht nur einen besseren Zugang und erhöhte Legitimität, sondern auch eine gesteigerte Kosteneffizienz und kulturelle Sensibilität mit sich bringen (Mac Ginty, 2015, S. 846). Der Local Turn versprach auch Machtungleichgewichte zwischen dem Globalen Norden und dem Globalen Süden entgegenzuwirken und die Nachhaltigkeit von Friedensmaßnahmen zu befördern.

Eine kritische Reflexion des Lokalen, wie sie insbesondere im zweiten Local Turn geführt wird, ermöglicht daher nicht nur ein Verständnis der komplexen Dynamiken von Interventionsprozessen, in denen sich eine lokalisierte humanitäre Hilfe verortet und ihr friedensstiftendes Potenzial entwickeln soll. Sie ermöglicht auch, Machtkämpfe verschiedener lokaler Akteure untereinander und die ambivalente Rolle lokaler Eliten, die von der Lokalisierungsagenda und den damit verbundenen Finanzströmen profitieren und nun ihrerseits über die Verteilung der Hilfsgüter oder Prioritäten in der Programmplanung entscheiden (Obradovic-Wochnik 2018), in den Blick zu nehmen.

### 4.1. Die Local Turns der Friedensförderung

Obgleich die Bedeutung lokaler zivilgesellschaftlicher Akteure und eines *Bottom-Up*-Ansatzes für eine gelungene und nachhaltige Friedensförderung in einem ersten Local Turn von prominenten Friedensforschern wie Jean Paul Lederach seit langem betont wurde, sah erst eine zweite Welle kritischer Studien im Lokalen die Antwort auf das Versagen bisheriger Friedensinterventionen (Mac Ginty 2015, S. 845). Als Reaktion auf Friedenseinsätze wie in Afghanistan und Irak wurden nun die konzeptionellen Grundannahmen dieser Interventionen in Frage gestellt und Kritik an dem den Einsätzen zugrundeliegenden Paradigma des liberalen Friedens geübt (Paffenholz 2015, S. 859; Campbell *et al.* 2011; Richmond 2011).

Stand der erste Local Turn der 1990er Jahre noch für konflikttransformative Ansätze und die Ermächtigung lokaler Akteure, um eine nachhaltige Friedensförderung und Versöhnung der Gesellschaft von innen durch Unterstützung von außen zu ermöglichen, ist der gegenwärtige zweite Local Turn von poststrukturalistischen und postkolonialen Ansätzen inspiriert und stellt machtkritische Fragen in den Vordergrund. Diese neue Strömung kritischer Friedensforschung hat auch zu einer Fülle an empirischen Fallstudien geführt, in denen die Interaktion internationaler Akteure mit lokalen Gegenparts, die Hybridität von Friedensregi-

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men, sowie der Widerstand gegen herrschende Diskurse und Praktiken und die Suche nach einer post-liberalen Friedensordnung den Ausgangspunkt wissenschaftlicher Forschung bilden (Paffenholz 2015, S. 859–861). Vertreter dieser kritischen Schule der Friedensforschung sehen in der früheren Debatte eine ungenügende Auseinandersetzung mit den langwierigen Prozessen (Mac Ginty 2015), herrschenden Machtverhältnissen, Narrativen und Praktiken (Autesserre 2014), die zu einer Marginalisierung des Lokalen führten (Paffenholz 2015). Im zweiten Local Turn stehen damit auch die unzulängliche Auseinandersetzung mit der Konzeptualisierung des Lokalen, die zugrundeliegende binäre Gegenüberstellung des Internationalen und Lokalen, sowie eine eurozentrische Sichtweise in der Kritik (Mac Ginty 2016).

## 4.  Konzeptualisierung des Lokalen

Unter dem Begriff des Lokalen werden nicht nur in der humanitären Hilfe, sondern auch in anderen Bereichen internationaler Interventionen eine Vielzahl unterschiedlicher Akteure subsumiert, von nationalen und gemeindebasierten NGOs, über lokale und nationale Regierungsvertreter bis hin zu lokalen Angestellten internationaler NGOs und Organisationen (Anderson und Olson 2013, S. 36). Aber auch das Label international dient zur Beschreibung unterschiedlichster Akteure wie die Regierungen anderer Länder, internationale Regierungsorganisationen, internationale NGOs, aber auch Think Tanks, oder wissenschaftliche Einrichtungen (Roepstorff und Bernhard 2013, S. 164–165).

Wie diese lange und vielseitige Liste der Akteure, die als international oder lokal verstanden werden, zeigt, handelt es sich um vage, heterogene, wahrnehmungsbasierte und relationale Kategorien. Dabei können gemeindebasierte NGOs als lokaler gelten als NGOs aus der Hauptstadt oder nationale Regierungsvertreter wiederum als lokaler in Relation zu internationalen Akteuren (Wilder und Morris 2008; Pouligny 2009, S. 12). Es ist daher auch nicht überraschend, dass die Brauchbarkeit dieser Begriffe immer wieder in Frage gestellt wird. Eine alternative Unterscheidung von Insidern und Outsidern – also internen Akteuren, die selbst vom Konflikt (oder einer humanitären Notlage) betroffen sind, und externen, die zwar involviert, aber nicht unmittelbar betroffen sind und persönlich wenig zu verlieren haben – ist ebenso schwammig. Denn bei all diesen Kategorisierungsversuchen spielen sowohl subjektive als auch objektive Zuschreibungen als auch Fremd- und Selbstwahrnehmungen eine Rolle, die sich über Zeit ändern können (Roepstorff und Bernhard 2013, S. 165). So stellt auch der World Disaster Report 2015 die Frage nach der Definition des Lokalen und kommt zu dem Ergebnis, dass es keine eindeutige Antwort auf diese Frage gibt. Gehören hierzu auch nationale Regierungen, oder nur zivilgesellschaftliche Akteure auf kommunaler Ebene? Sind die nationalen Gesellschaften internationaler Organisationen, wie die der Rotkreuz- und Rothalbmond-Bewegung als lokal anzusehen? Je nach Definition kann die Kategorisierung zu neuen Ausgrenzungen führen. In einigen Dokumenten werden alle diese Akteure auf die Liste lokaler Akteure gesetzt, andere ausgeschlossen. Die Charter4Change, beispielsweise, bezieht sich explizit auf NGOs aus dem Globalen Süden – lokale Akteure im Globalen Norden, wie sie beispielsweise auf Lampedusa oder Lesbos aktiv sind oder aber beim Hurrikan Katrina geholfen haben, würden dann nicht von der Lokalisierungsagenda profitieren.

## 5. Kritischer Lokalismus in der Friedensförderung: Wegweiser für die Humanitäre Hilfe? Skizzierung einer Forschungsagenda

Paffenholz (2015) sieht gerade in dieser binären Gegenüberstellung des Lokalen und Internationalen das Kernproblem des gegenwärtigen dominanten Diskurses internationaler Interventionen mit weiteren Konsequenzen: die schwache Konzeptualisierung der zentralen Akteure, eine zu starke Fokussierung auf westliche internationale Akteure und eine Blindheit gegenüber dominanten lokalen Eliten. Eine Rekonzeptualisierung des Lokalen, wie sie ein kritischer Lokalismus (Mac Ginty 2015) vorsieht, versteht das Lokale nicht als eine festgelegte räumliche oder zeitliche Kategorie, sondern als ein sich stets im Wandel befindendes Konzept, das im hohen Grade kontextabhängig und relational ist, und das immer wieder neu konstruiert und rekonstruiert wird (ibid., S. 850). Verstanden als ein Handlungsraum im Sinne der humanitären Arena, der immer wieder durch das alltägliche Handeln verschiedener Akteure neu geschaffen, reproduziert und ausgehandelt wird, entzieht sich das Lokale damit einer vorab festgelegten Kategorisierung und Schematisierung (Richmond 2011, S. 13; Leonardsson und Rudd 2015, S. 833). Das Lokale beschreibt dann als Analyseeinheit einen konkreten Kontext praktischer Aneignungsprozesse, Interpretationen und Transformationen von Diskursen, Ideen und Praktiken, die ihre Ursprünge in globalen, regionalen und lokalen Interessen, Traditionen und Akteuren haben (Escobar 2001; Bräuchler und Nucke 2017, S. 426). Eine derartige Sichtweise soll auch eurozentrischen Tendenzen entgegenwirken, in denen der Globale Norden als Vertreter des Internationalen als Bezugsrahmen der Analyse dient und alles andere dazu nur in Relation setzt (Mac Ginty 2015, S. 848) – und damit letztendlich eine umstrittene Binarität des Globalen Norden als international, universell, modern und technokratisch und des Globalen Südens als lokal, partikular, traditionell und provinziell reproduziert (Hunt 2017, S. 219; Sabaratnam 2013, S. 267). Denn genau diese Essentialisierungen verhindert ein tieferes Verständnis komplexer Interventionskontexte und der *comparative advantages* unterschiedlicher Akteure in spezifischen Arenen (ibid. 2013, S. 273).[14]

Was bedeutet dies nun für die humanitäre Hilfe? Wenn in der humanitären Hilfe die Hinwendung zum Lokalen gefordert wird, sollte berücksichtig werden, dass es sich bei dem Lokalen um keine festgelegte, sondern um eine relationale Kategorie handelt (WDS 2015; Canagarajah 2002, S. 248). Daraus resultierend kann das Lokale neu gedacht werden – nicht als Ort oder Raum, das dem Internationalen gegenübersteht, sondern als Tätigkeit, die innerhalb eines Netzes von Macht und Politik, in dem verschiedene Akteure interagieren, stattfindet. Schlussendlich liegt im Kern der Thematik die Machtfrage: die Macht, mit der einige Akteure das Lokale definieren können und bestimmen, wie dieses genutzt wird (Obradovic-Wochnik 2018; Mac Ginty 2015; Lambek 2011, S. 199; Sabaratnam 2013, S. 272). Eine Reihe von Faktoren, die den Handlungsspielraum von Akteuren dabei beeinflussen können, wurde von Paffenholz (2010, S. 22) identifiziert: das Gewaltniveau, das Verhalten des Staates, die Medien und die Zusammensetzung der Zivilgesellschaft sowie der Einfluss politischer Akteure und Geber. Dass dies keineswegs auf Kontexte im Globalen Süden zu beschränken ist, haben Forschungen der Autorin auf Lampedusa ergeben. Der Kampf um die Deutungshoheit über das Geschehen, der Zugang zu den Betroffenen und die Konfliktlinien

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14  Nicht zuletzt stellt auch die gegenwärtige Diversifizierung des humanitären Systems alte Annahmen über den ‚Globalen Norden‘ und dem ‚Globalen Süden‘ durch neu auftretende Akteure und Geber aus dem Globalen Süden in Frage (WDS 2015, S. 20; Srodecki 2015).

zwischen den Akteuren auf der Insel – von lokalen Eliten, lokalen Aktivisten, nationalen Regierungsvertretern, nationalen zivilgesellschaftlichen Akteuren und Vertretern regionaler wie internationaler Organisationen – sind nur unter Berücksichtigung translokaler Netzwerke, Verflechtungen und Diskurse zu begreifen.[15] Vor dem Hintergrund erster ähnlicher Forschungsbefunde in Nepal, Myanmar und Indien erscheint eine Analyse der heterogenen Interessen und komplexen Beziehungen der verschiedenen Akteure in der humanitären Arena (Hilhorst und Jansen 2010) angezeigt, in der *being local* zu einer politischen Ressource wird, und Akteure, die für sich beanspruchen das Lokale zu repräsentieren, als Gatekeeper fungieren und damit sowohl über den Zugang zu den Betroffenen entscheiden, als auch über die Weitergabe von Ressourcen bestimmen (Obradovic-Wochnik 2018; Kappler 2015, S. 882). So haben beispielsweise in Nepal die (zum damaligen Zeitpunkt ungewählten) lokalen politischen Komitees *(All-Party-Mechanisms)* die besonders vulnerablen Gruppen identifiziert – und dabei bestehende gesellschaftliche Ausgrenzungen reproduziert.[16] Derartige Praktiken können nicht nur in Kontexten bewaffneter Konflikte bestehende (soziale) Konflikte befeuern oder neue schüren. Insbesondere vor dem Hintergrund einer zunehmenden Verzahnung von humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung ist es daher wichtig, die kontextspezifischen Machtgefüge und die Dynamiken vor Ort zu verstehen. Dabei gilt es, nicht nur dominante lokale Akteure in den Blick zu nehmen (Paffenholz 2015), sondern auch die transnationalen, translokalen und transkulturellen Beziehungsverflechtungen zu berücksichtigen (Appudarai 1996).

Die humanitäre Arena stellt damit ein Feld dar, in welchem diverse Macht- und Herrschaftsansprüche gestellt werden und um Legitimität und Deutungshoheit gekämpft wird. Für Forscher, aber auch Praktiker, bedeutet dies eine stärkere Auseinandersetzung mit den spezifischen politischen Situationsbedingungen und der Art wie verschiedene Akteure "politicize various aspects of their experiences, narrate the terms of their situations and critically interpret the world around them" (Sabaratnam 2013, S. 272). Hierzu bedarf es weiterführender empirischer Forschung, z.B. in Anlehnung an die „Do No Harm assessment method", die unter anderem Machtkämpfe zwischen Akteuren, die für sich die Repräsentation des Lokalen beanspruchen, in den Blick nimmt. Aber auch die Frage danach wer wann und wie die Kategorie lokal benutzt, um Legitimität zu erlangen und bestimmte Praktiken zu begründen, sollte gestellt werden. Dies wiederum ermöglicht ein besseres Verständnis der konfliktmindernden oder -verschärfenden Wirkung lokalisierter humanitärer Hilfe in spezifischen Kontexten. Inwieweit eine Lokalisierung der humanitären Hilfe darüber hinaus eine friedensstiftende Komponente aufweisen kann, wurde bislang nicht hinreichend erforscht. Besonders vielversprechend erscheinen hierfür empirische Studien, die eine dichte Beschreibung des Zusammenspiels von humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung in der humanitären Arena ermöglichen. Diese könnten untersuchen, inwiefern verschiedene humanitäre Akteure einen „Do no harm"-Ansatz verfolgen, bzw. einen konfliktsensiblen Ansatz vertreten. Dies könnte auch Erkenntnisse darüber liefern unter welchen Umständen eine lokale Hilfe auf Freiwilligenbasis, Graswurzelbewegungen oder Ad-hoc-Maßnahmen, die im ersten Moment über Konfliktlinien hinweg vereinen, zu einer nachhaltigen Konflikttransformation und

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15   Während der Feldforschung im Mai 2018 wurde die Interaktion verschiedener Akteure in der humanitären Hilfe auf dem Meer (SAR), bei der Ausschiffung (‚sbarchi') und den Hotspots beobachtet.

16   Interview in Kathmandu, humanitärer Helfer, 18.2.2018.

Friedensförderung beitragen kann. Weiterführende Forschung zu den Bedingungen, unter denen lokale Akteure in der humanitären Arena eine friedensstiftende Rolle einnehmen oder ein konflikttransformatives Potenzial entfalten, sollte dabei auf der Basis eines kritischen Lokalismus erfolgen. Inwieweit als lokal geltende Akteure dabei Normen der humanitären Hilfe nicht nur rhetorisch, sondern auch in der alltäglichen Praxis als lokal etablieren ist ein weiterer angrenzender Forschungsbereich, der an Debatten in der Normenforschung in den internationalen Beziehungen anschließt (Anderl 2016). Erkenntnisse der Forschung zu diesen Themen können dazu beitragen, grundlegende Fragen nach der Verteilung von Macht im humanitären System sowie Chancen und Hindernisse für eine effektive humanitäre Hilfe zu identifizieren.

## 6.    Fazit

Die Marginalisierung lokaler Akteure in der humanitären Hilfe ist zunehmend in Kritik geraten. Forderungen nach einer stärkeren Einbeziehung lokaler Akteure in die humanitäre Hilfe sind nicht neu, haben aber im Zuge des Humanitären Weltgipfels 2016 Aufwind erhalten – ebenso wie eine stärkere Verzahnung mit der Friedensförderung. Eine Vielzahl von Akteuren hat sich inzwischen der Lokalisierungsagenda verpflichtet und Lokalisierung ist zu einem Schlagwort der humanitären Hilfe geworden. Auch im Nexus von Humanitärer Hilfe und Friedensförderung wird lokalen Akteuren eine zentrale Rolle zugeschrieben. Dabei bleibt der zentrale Begriff des Lokalen in der bisherigen Debatte untertheorisiert. Ein Blick in den bestehenden Korpus friedenswissenschaftlicher Forschung, vor allem zum Local Turn, zeigt ein differenzierteres und kritischeres Verständnis des Lokalen, als es derzeit in der humanitären Hilfe vorhanden ist. Insbesondere in der Literatur zum zweiten Local Turn stellen kritische poststrukturelle und postkoloniale Ansätze einen Ausgangspunkt für notwendige konzeptionelle Überlegungen zur Konstruktion des Lokalen und der damit einhergehenden Implikationen für Interventionspraktiken dar.

Eine Rekonzeptualisierung des Lokalen im Sinne eines kritischen Lokalismus fordert dabei eine Überwindung der problematischen Dichotomie des Lokalen und des Internationalen und den damit einhergehenden (kolonialen) Denkmustern, welche Stereotypen reproduzieren und zu blinden Flecken in der Analyse humanitärer Hilfe führen. So wird das Internationale oftmals mit westlich oder dem Globalen Norden gleichgesetzt; Akteure aus dem Globalen Süden werden als machtvolle Interventionsakteure nicht wahrgenommen. Auch werden lokale Akteure vor allem im Globalen Süden verortet – doch auch in Ländern des Globalen Nordens werden Akteure in den Hilfseinsätzen marginalisiert. Schlussendlich liegt im Kern der Thematik die Machtfrage: die Macht, mit der einige Akteure das Lokale definieren können und bestimmen, wie dieses genutzt wird (Mac Ginty 2015; Lambek 2011, S. 199; Sabaratnam 2013, S. 272). Daraus resultierend wird das Lokale neu gedacht – nicht als Ort oder Raum, das dem Internationalen gegenübersteht, sondern als Tätigkeit, die innerhalb eines Netzes von Macht und Politik, in welchem verschiedene Akteure interagieren, stattfindet. Dies verweist auf eine Analyse der heterogenen Interessen und komplexen Beziehungen der verschiedenen Akteure in der humanitären Arena (Hilhorst und Jansen 2010), in der *being local* zu einer politischen Ressource wird. Um diese komplexen Dynamiken zu verstehen und Handlungsmöglichkeiten für die humanitäre Praxis entwickeln zu können, bedarf es weiterführender Forschung, die grundlegende Annahmen und Konzeptualisierungen hinter-

fragt und machkritische Fragen in den Mittelpunkt rückt. Dies ermöglicht auch ein besseres Verständnis der Bedingungen, unter denen Akteure in der humanitären Arena eine friedensstiftende Rolle einnehmen oder ein konflikttransformatives Potenzial entfalten können. Eine transdisziplinäre Forschungsausrichtung – und insbesondere eine Erschließung bereits bestehender regionalwissenschaftlicher und ethnographischer Erkenntnisse – erscheinen hierfür besonders sinnvoll (Paffenholz 2015, S. 868; Hunt 2017; Bräuchler 2018; Bräuchler und Naucke 2017).

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**5.5 Armed Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises: Insights from the Anthropology of War**

# Armed Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises: Insights from the Anthropology of War

Kristina Roepstorff

## 1 Introduction

Interstate and intrastate armed conflicts have declined in number since the 1990s. According to the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), the year 2013 saw 33 ongoing armed conflicts in 25 locations worldwide—a decrease of almost 37% in comparison to the peak in the immediate post-Cold War period. Of these armed conflicts, seven were categorised as wars, namely conflicts with at least 1000 battle-related deaths in a year.[1] This is the good news. The bad news is that despite a general decrease in armed conflicts, people around the world continue to suffer from their effects. News of ongoing and new armed conflicts accompanied by shocking pictures of people in plight make it into our living rooms on a daily basis. As of 2016, 65.6 million people where forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations, and in February 2015, 12.2 million people—nearly half of the population—were in need of human-itarian assistance in war-torn Syria alone.

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[1]Organisations and research projects use different thresholds to define armed conflict and war and therefore produce divergent assessments of global trends. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP), which is linked to the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University, provides one of the most used data sources on armed conflicts. It defines armed conflicts as 'contested incompatibility, which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 25 battle-related deaths'. Wars, accordingly, are high-intensity armed conflicts with more than 1000 battle-related deaths.

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Yet numbers tell us little about the experience of people who live in the midst of armed conflicts and the impacts of humanitarian crises on virtually all aspects of society. In such contexts, the political and violent nature of these complex humanitarian emergencies poses significant challenges for humanitarian action. Experiences from humanitarian crises such as in Bosnia, Rwanda, Afghanistan and Syria have sparked debates among scholars and practitioners about the extent to which humanitarian principles can be upheld in situations of armed conflict. These debates were accompanied by the realisation that humanitarian action, despite good intentions, might have negative impacts on the conflict context itself. With humanitarian aid workers increasingly becoming targets of violence, the provision of humanitarian assistance in armed conflicts requires a deep understanding of the very context in which this intervention takes place in order to avoid causing harm and to ensure the protection of both humanitarian workers and the affected population.

The anthropology of war covers a broad range of topics of high relevance to understand contemporary armed conflicts and humanitarian crises. Looking beyond the immediate facts of the situation and highlighting the social dimension of armed conflicts, it allows grasping the broader context in which humanitarian crises occur. With the discipline's comparative and holistic outlook, anthropology thus offers important insights into causes, dynamics and effects of armed conflicts. Over the last 150 years, anthropologists have produced a growing ethnographic database on how material, institutional and cultural factors explain war and its effects, resulting in a rich body of empirically substantiated theories. Thereby, anthropological scholarship on war is far from systematic and homogenous. Covering the many aspects of the interrelationships between war, violence and society, anthropological scholarship in this field is vast, diverse and ever evolving.

This chapter only provides a glimpse of some of the many debates and themes in the anthropology of war. It presents several important anthropological approaches to explaining the causes and effects of war, introduces themes that emerged in anthropological scholarship on contemporary armed conflicts and links the anthropology of war to an anthropology of peace. In a final section, the chapter addresses the controversy regarding the role of anthropologists in armed conflicts and the challenges of conducting field research in war zones.

## 2   Anthropological Perspectives on Armed Conflict

The anthropological study of armed conflict differs from the perspectives of other disciplines, such as political science or law, in that it examines war as a social practice that is deeply embedded within the broader cultural context in which it occurs. In studying war, anthropologists are mainly concerned with its social dimensions. They ask questions, such as: how do cultural beliefs relate to the practice and experience of armed conflict? What are the norms and rules that govern warfare in different societies? How does armed conflict relate to other factors, including ecology, economy, kinship, gender, values and politics?

Although early anthropologists of the nineteenth century did not study war as such, their ethnographic accounts of small-scale societies include informative descriptions of feuding, raiding and warfare practices, offering important findings of cross-cultural variations in conflict resolution, the use of violence and the waging of war. With later anthropologists studying the phenomenon of war more explicitly, a lively debate has produced new valuable insights into the social dimensions of conflicts, violence and war. Dominant themes that emerged are questions concerning the universality and inevitability of war, evolutionary accounts of primitive/tribal versus modern warfare, the causes and practices of warfare and the effects of armed conflict on sociocultural systems.[2] More recently, new conflicts in the aftermath of the Cold War, the attacks on 11 September 2001, the so-called 'global war on terror' and the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria have provoked new debates and research in anthropology and related disciplines.

## 2.1 Violence and War as Social Institution

Conflicts, which form an inevitable part of daily life, may be settled peacefully or violently. The anthropology of law deals with comparative research on the different norms and institutions that exist in societies for settling conflicts among its members to maintain or restore order. Research in this field shows how norms, institutions and taboos by which the use of violence is controlled differ from society to society. What is regarded as legitimate and appropriate use of violence by one society may well be regarded as excessive and brutal by another. This insight of anthropology is also important for humanitarian workers who may have to get to terms with practices they find appalling. This does not mean that one has to accept violent behaviour, but that one needs to understand how norms governing violence are embedded within broader sociocultural contexts.

Ethnographic studies of different societies have analysed the practices of homicide, capital punishment, raiding, feuding and warfare and how they are embedded within and shaped by particular societies' belief systems, norms and institutions. The anthropology of war specifically deals with highly escalated conflicts that elude the normal mechanisms of control and order and where armed violence becomes a means of conflict resolution within a society or between societies. Bronislaw Malinowski, one of the most influential anthropologists of the twentieth century, has provided a prominent definition of war as 'the use of organized force between two politically independent units, in pursuit of [each unit's] policy'.[3] War can thus be understood as a long-term struggle for political ends within particular social contexts in which groups use, or threaten to use, lethal force against each other in pursuit of their aims. This implicates that warfare—in contrast to other forms of violent behaviour—is a form of collective (armed) violence used for collective

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[2]For an overview of the development of the anthropology of war, see: Otterbein (1999), pp. 794–805; Gusterson (2007), pp. 155–175.

[3]Malinowski (1941), pp. 521–550.

rather than merely individual ends. Thereby war is generally associated with the breakdown of order, viewed as an abnormality occurring outside of the social realm and lacking rules of its own.

One of the most important contributions of anthropologists has been to challenge this common understanding of violence and warfare as something exceptional that does not form part of ordinary social reality. They have argued that perceiving violence war as something inherently bad or abnormal detaches it from its social context—the very context we need to place it in, if we want to understand its causes, practices, experiences and effects. Rather, violence and war needs to be understood in relation to existing patterns of violence within a given society.[4]

Indeed, violence and war are intimately linked concepts, whereby violence is a broader phenomenon of which warfare presents a particularly severe form. Just like culture in general, patterns and practices of violence and warfare are not static but may change over time and may adapt to changing conditions at the local, regional, national or international level. Anthropologists have thus been particularly interested in finding explanations for the varying frequency, intensity, forms and meanings of violence and war across time and space.

## 2.2   Primitive Versus Modern Warfare

Due to the discipline's long-standing primary focus on indigenous and exotic peoples outside of Europe, early anthropological studies of war have frequently focused on primitive, stateless or acephalous (headless) societies. Assuming that primitive man was man in his natural state, anthropologists deliberated the causes of war in primitive societies and debated the evolution of war from simple to state societies.

Contrasting primitive or tribal warfare with modern warfare practised by large-scale societies, many early—but also later—anthropological studies analysed and explained the phenomenon of war within an evolutionary theoretical framework. For instance, in 1915, Hobhouse et al. published a study that placed its cross-cultural comparison of war and the treatment of captured soldiers within an evolutionary theoretical framework, arguing that the killing of prisoners taken in war decreased with higher levels of subsistence technology.[5] Malinowski, on the other hand, held that warfare evolved as a means to pursue national policies and differentiated six 'cultural phases in the development of organized fighting'.[6] In the same vein, linking warfare to a high level of sociopolitical complexity, numerous anthropologists have argued that war as collective violent action only emerged with increasing social stratification and organisation. Warfare was associated with chiefdoms and states, whereas more egalitarian band and tribal societies were believed to settle their

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[4]To gain a deeper understanding of this, see Richards (2005).

[5]Hobhouse et al. (1915).

[6]See Malinowski (1941), pp. 521–550.

(smaller) disputes by way of self-redress, homicide and feuds. If warfare played any role, it was considered to be more sportive and ritualistic in nature. Consequently, non-lethal tribal warfare was commonly contrasted with lethal warfare waged by modern nation states.[7] Thus, a dominant theme in the anthropology of war is the differentiation between primitive and modern warfare and the ways in which the modern state system and the emergence of military specialists and technological innovation have changed not only the motives and rules but also the magnitude of wars. In fact, witnessing the destructive forces of World War I and World War II, many anthropologists regarded large-scale wars and genocides as modern phenomena and claimed that traditional primitive societies were more peaceful.

## 2.3    The 'Myth of the Peaceful Savage'

Although from the 1920s on anthropological research on war was increasingly influenced by the anti-evolutionism of Franz Boas—often referred to as the father of modern anthropology who introduced culture as its primary analytical concept—and cultural relativist approaches, evolutionary accounts dominated well into the 1950s. Out of these evolutionary explanations of the origins of war emerged the myth of the peaceful savage and a romanticisation of hunter-gatherer societies.

   Hence, another dominant theme in the anthropology of war is the debate revolving around the claimed 'warlike' or 'peaceful' nature of humans and societies. In what can be seen as a clear extension of the Hobbes-Rousseau controversy of the Enlightenment period, beliefs about human nature and war are implicitly reflected in the interpretation of ethnographic data. A tendency among ethnographers to ignore evidence of violence and warfare, presenting the people they studied as essentially peaceful—or essentially inclined to engage in warfare—resulted in contradictory research findings.

   While some scholars produced ethnographies to prove the human predisposition to violence and war, others saw human nature as essentially peaceful and wars as a social construction. These two opposing positions defined the discipline's discourse on war and violence for a long time, resulting in a number of ethnographies on warlike and peaceful societies and still fuel controversy to this date.[8] Understanding war as a social construction and cultural institution, as famously described by Margaret Mead—a student of Boas—has, however, become the dominant view in the anthropology of war.

   Despite the long-standing debate on the subject, no single explanation for the variance in violence and warfare has been found. In fact, there is no consensus among scholars on what exactly constitutes violence and war. Some have even argued that the constitutive and dynamic nature of violence and war renders any attempt to define the phenomenon futile and that studying violence requires a

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[7]For more information on this debate, see: Reyna and Downs (1994).

[8]Instructive to gain an understanding of this controversy: Kelly (2000) and Keeley (1996).

dynamic approach to grasp its procedural nature, the way it shapes people and their perceptions, the way it finds its expression in everyday life, as well as its underlying functions and dynamics.[9] More recently, scholars have shifted their attention to studying the conditions under which wars occur and the impact they have on society.

Anthropologists have shown how wars are not only products of social reality but also producers of the same by altering notions of solidarity, identity and social hierarchy.[10] This insight from the anthropology of war is significant for humanitarian action as it draws attention to the dynamic nature of violence and warfare, the way it is embedded in a specific sociocultural system and how the sociocultural system itself may change as a consequence. Pre-assumptions and perceptions of the context in which humanitarian actors intervene may thus have to be altered and adapted on an ongoing basis in order to understand the complex interrelation of culture, society and armed conflict. It also helps humanitarian aid workers to reflect on what they see and experience when deployed in the field.

## 2.4   Causes and Effects of Armed Conflict

Anthropology, like other disciplines, seeks to explain why societies wage wars. Particularly prominent are materialist explanations that see competition over scarce resources such as land or food as the fundamental causes of war.[11] One of the shortcomings of these accounts is that they explain the variations in the incidence of wars on the basis of the rational-choice paradigm. This, however, fails to explain the importance of other factors such as identity, culture and socio-psychological motivations. The 'greed versus grievance' debate in the explanation of ethnic conflicts is linked to this: 'greed' refers to the argument that people engage in armed conflicts because of economic rewards based on rational cost-benefit calculations; 'grievance' stands for the view that people fight over issues of identity (ethnicity, religion, social class, etc.). Today, most scholars agree that both factors contribute to armed conflicts and wars.

Approaches within the social-structural tradition understand warfare mainly as an ordering principle of social relations and social structures. As anthropologist Max Gluckman concluded from his research on political systems among African tribes, social relations that are formed through marriage alliances, trade networks, gift exchange and so forth play an important role in limiting the frequency and intensity of warfare.[12] Moreover, anthropologists have argued that war may

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[9]Robben and Nordstrom (1995).

[10]Rao et al. (2011) offers a collection of interesting case studies that examine the ways in which wars are not only products of specific sociocultural contexts, but produce cultural practices.

[11]See for instance Ferguson (1984).

[12]Gluckman (1956).

enhance social stability by maintaining intra-group solidarity vis-à-vis a common enemy. Correspondingly, societies with relatively fragile social ties between groups have been found to be especially prone to higher levels of violence and warfare.

Another, phenomenological, line of research in the anthropology of war is primarily concerned with the interpretation and translation of systems of meaning. Research that falls within this category attributes the variations in the nature and frequency of war to cultural differences in values and beliefs and studies the meanings and memories attached to war in particular societies. Ethnographic studies in this line of research have shown how memories about past injuries preserved by refugee communities or in institutionalised form as museums or war memorials are often selective and function as a mobilising force for collective violent action.[13] Anthropologists have further examined how living in a chronic state of fear affects the social fabric of societies and daily lives of people: neighbours and friends turn into enemies, families are separated by flight or forced conscription, with a general sense of hopelessness and trauma as effects of war on society.[14] Other topics in this line of research include the gendered dimensions of the practice and representation of violence and war, the body and symbolic performances of war and violence, as well as the adequacy of applying Western notions—such as childhood or trauma—to non-Western contexts. As such, anthropology poses critical questions regarding conventional approaches in international humanitarian action.

Moreover, the 1990s saw an increasing recognition that primitive wars could not be understood separately from the colonial encounter. In what has been termed the 'tribal zone', anthropologists have argued that the contact between state and non-state societies has exacerbated warfare within and between them.[15] Similarly, studies on contemporary ethnic and religious conflicts in Europe, Asia and Africa examined the legacies of colonial domination and the role of nationalism in these conflicts.

## 2.5   Anthropology and Contemporary Armed Conflicts

The end of the Cold War saw an increase in intrastate conflicts that were no longer dominated by the geopolitical and ideological battles between the East and the West. A controversy emerged as to whether they presented a qualitatively new sort of war. According to the new war thesis, post-Cold War intrastate conflicts are seen as being characterised by a change of actors, a massive increase of civilian casualties and development of new war economies. Where weak or failed states have lost their monopoly to conduct legitimate violence, various non-state actors that

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[13]See for example Malkki (1995).

[14]See Green (1994), pp. 227–256; Robben and Suarez-Orozco (2000).

[15]Ferguson and Whitehead (2000).

mobilise around ethnic, racial or religious identities challenge its authority and claim state power. Though regular armies still participate in these contemporary conflicts, a multitude of other actors, such as insurgents, paramilitary groups, local warlords, criminal gangs and mercenary groups, are also involved, making such conflicts more complex and uncertain to predict. War economies are mostly based on illegal trade in arms, drugs, natural resources and human trafficking.[16] Whereas the distinction between old and new wars remains disputed, conflicts in the Balkans, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Darfur or Afghanistan and a growing concern about international terrorism have informed research that addresses the complexities of the contexts in which contemporary armed conflicts and humanitarian crises unfold and in which humanitarian actors operate.

Moving away from the distinction between the primitive and the modern, anthropologists too turned towards studying contemporary armed conflicts. The debate revolving around new wars during the 1990s generated research on ethno-political conflicts, genocide and terrorism, among other things. Anthropological studies of ethno-political conflicts and genocide critiqued essentialist notions of identity, challenging common perceptions of these conflicts as originating in ancient tribal hatreds and linking them to the experience of colonialism, the emergence of nationalism and the dynamics of globalisation.[17] In their research on terrorism, anthropologists have focused not only on the victims of terrorist attacks but also on the experience of perpetrators and the transnational linkages of cultures of violence and terror.

Thus, over the last decades, a rich body of in-depth ethnographic studies on contemporary armed conflicts has emerged, addressing questions of the organisation of war, ritual aspects of warfare, its socio-economic consequences and the causes and experiences of organised and collective violence. Generally, anthropologists agree that mono-causal explanations fail to provide an accurate account of a phenomenon as complex as armed conflicts and humanitarian crises. While, at first sight, practices and experiences of violence may appear similar across the world, the everyday experience of war, its causes, expressions and effects are always situated within a particular sociocultural context. Hence, there is broad consensus within the discipline that war has to be understood as a historically and locally situated practice that is not only a destructive but also a productive part of social reality.

How are these findings relevant for humanitarian action? This field of inquiry is only emerging, and further debate and research is needed. However, we can maintain that only by understanding the everyday practice of war can we also develop meaningful efforts for peacebuilding and conflict transformation, breaking spirals of violence and addressing root causes of armed conflicts and humanitarian crises.

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[16]Kaldor (1999).

[17]Recommended readings on these topics include: Eller (1999) and Hinton (2002).

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## 2.6  Anthropology of Peace

As noted above, anthropologists argue that conflicts form an inevitable part of daily life and may be settled peacefully or violently. So far, we have dealt with the sociocultural reality of violence and war. However, getting along, reconciling and peacemaking are very common and important aspects of social behaviour. If only a few anthropologists have studied the phenomena of war and violence, even less attention has been paid to the phenomenon of peace. Yet anthropology has a track record of investigating conflict resolution practices in different societies. Ethnographic studies of societies in various parts of the world show a wealth of peaceful means by which conflicts are settled, including self-redress, avoidance, toleration, negotiation and third-party intervention.[18] Anthropology's insights into the relationship between culture and conflict resolution has thereby informed theoretical models of mediation and reconciliation and has been put into practice by people working on conflict transformation and peacebuilding.[19]

One of the dominant approaches in the anthropology of war (and peace) that has been already addressed is the classification of societies according to their perceived peaceful and violent natures. Thus, anthropologists have asked why some societies oppose aggressiveness, violence and warfare while others tolerate it. Focusing on peaceful societies, they have examined how their particular belief systems and world views foster non-violent attitudes and behaviour. Moreover, they have studied the various structures and societal organisation that promote peacefulness and harmony among their members, for example by discouraging competition and self-focus.[20]

More recently, ethnographic studies focusing on everyday experiences of violence have exposed the simultaneous existence of suffering and laughter, fear and hope. By doing so, they have challenged a narrow conceptualisation of war as being apart from the ordinary and have placed it in the daily lived experience of people. War and peace are then not exclusive but coexisting social realities. Thinking of war and peace as a continuum instead of as a sharp dichotomy allows a shift from explaining the causes of war to analysing processual aspects of the practices of war and peace.[21] Anthropology may thus not only provide unique insights into the causes, dynamics and effects of war but also shine light on the potential for peace. For this reason, anthropologists are often sceptical of internationally driven peacebuilding interventions. Emphasising the local potential for peace, anthropologists have focused on peacebuilding activities at the grass-roots level, including studies on the role of ritual for peacebuilding and reconciliation.[22] As anthropologists have shown, if war is a social construct, so is peace.

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[18]See Fry (2006).

[19]Important works in this field include: Avruch (1998) and Lederach (1997).

[20]See Sponsel (1996), pp. 95–125.

[21]Richards (2005). Instead of advancing a sharp dichotomy between war and peace, this edited volume advances the argument that we should think of war and peace as a continuum.

[22]See Schirch (2005) and Ross (2002).

# 3 Anthropologists in Armed Conflicts and Humanitarian Crises

This chapter has so far focused on anthropological research on violence and war. Another related topic of high relevance is how anthropologists work in contexts of armed conflict and humanitarian crises and the ethical implications this has on their actions. Anthropologists may work in these contexts in several ways, all of which give rise to particular questions and concerns. They may act as staff of humanitarian organisations or be embedded in counter-insurgency operations, conduct research in conflict zones and provide recommendations for policymakers.

Two themes that have provoked debate within the discipline will be addressed in this part of the chapter: the role of anthropologists within the military—or military anthropology—and the role of anthropologists as researchers in and on war.

## 3.1 Anthropologists and Counter-Insurgency

In the aftermath of 9/11, and with the US military recruitment of anthropologists for their operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, a renewed debate on the role of anthropologists in counter-insurgency operations emerged. Believing that the war on terror would benefit from anthropologists' language skills and familiarity with the sociocultural context of certain areas of operation, the CIA and military institutions sought to contract a number of them. The rise of what has been termed 'military anthropology'—referring to the increasing recruitment and use of services of anthropologists for military goals—has prompted a heated debate on the academic and professional ethics of anthropologists. While some anthropologists responded enthusiastically, other anthropologists cautioned against the harm that such initiatives would do to the credibility and neutrality of the discipline.[23] Especially the practice of the United States military of embedding anthropologists within the controversial Human Terrain System (HTS) in Iraq and Afghanistan has come under critique. The HTS is designed to provide military commanders and personnel with an understanding of the local population in the regions in which they are deployed.

Anthropologists' collaboration with the military and intelligence is, however, nothing new. As early as 1919, Franz Boas criticised anthropologists who acted as spies during World War I. The role of anthropologists in counter-insurgency in Latin America and Southeast Asia in the 1960s also provoked a debate on the discipline's ethics and professionalism.[24] In 1971, the American Anthropological Association took a clear stand against these kinds of covert services from

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[23]For details on this controversy, see: Lucas (2009).
[24]Wakin (1992).

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anthropologists by adopting the Principles of Professional Responsibility, which have been further developed in 2009 and 2012.

But if anthropologists with their contextual knowledge may help counter terrorism, war and suffering, why shouldn't they lend their services to the national security apparatus? Or are there alternative strategies to use anthropological knowledge to mitigate the suffering imposed on civilian populations without jeopardising the integrity of the individual anthropologists and the discipline in general? The relationship between anthropology and the military is complex and multifaceted, as personal accounts of anthropologists working in this field reveal.[25] The issue remains highly controversial and raises a whole set of ethical questions, not least about the responsibility and credibility of anthropology as an academic discipline that produces important insights of practical relevance. Could similar ethical questions arise in the context of humanitarian action?

### 3.2  Fieldwork in Conflict Zones

Conducting field research in conflict zones and during humanitarian crises raises a whole set of ethical and security issues. Participant observation and collecting information in volatile contexts do not only endanger anthropologists but also increase the vulnerability of their informants and the local population.

Prolonged field research in local communities affected by war is difficult and dangerous. In 1995, Robben and Nordstrom published an edited volume entitled Fieldwork under Fire: Contemporary Studies of Violence and Survival. The collection of essays covers various aspects of conducting fieldwork in zones of violence and war. Focusing on everyday experiences, the authors give voice to those affected by violence and war, including perpetrators, victims, profiteers and the researchers themselves. Apart from the obvious questions of security—of the researcher, the informants and the local people—it raises a number of theoretical, ethical and methodological questions. One of the most fundamental questions in this regard is how anthropologists in such contexts cope with witnessing violence and suffering first-hand. They may even become targets of aggression and violence themselves. With an increasing number of anthropologists conducting research on armed conflicts and humanitarian crises, questions of protection and dealing with trauma need to be addressed within the discipline.

Methodologically, the issue arises how fear and silencing—both common features of conflict environments—may affect the research process and research outcomes. Field researchers in situations of armed conflict need to constantly separate facts from rumours. While questions concerning data reliability and the subjectivity of perceptions and interpretations are not unique to this field of research, in contexts of armed violence that are characterised by a heightened degree of uncertainty and

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[25]Rubinstein et al. (2012).

fear, rumours spread easily, and it is often difficult to differentiate between truth and falsehood. Anthropologists should be sensitive to this and reflect this in their evaluation of data.

Another central issue in conducting research in contexts of armed conflict concerns the presentation of research findings: how does an ethnographer write about armed conflict without producing a pornography of violence?[26] Should anthropologists bear witness to the terror and violence they encounter during field research, even if it compromises their safety? Anthropologists have done so in the past and continue to do so, but the question is not easily answered. Apart from security concerns, anthropologists from the Global North speaking or writing on behalf of people affected by armed conflicts and humanitarian crises in the Global South may unwittingly reinforce existing power relations and postcolonial discourse. On the other hand, it may be argued that, precisely because of their privileged status, anthropologists who witness injustices have the responsibility to bear witness.[27] Ultimately, each person has to decide for himself.

## 4   Conclusion

War, international terrorism, ethno-political conflict and insurgency not just happen out of the blue but are highly organised events and have to be understood in the social contexts in which they occur. Mono-causal explanations fail to provide an accurate account of a phenomenon as complex as armed conflicts and humanitarian crises. A contextual approach to understanding the occurrence and dynamics of armed conflicts and wars in specific situations is needed to allow for conflict-sensitive humanitarian action. Understanding war as part of the social reality of human beings and lived experiences, anthropology can offer humanitarian actors important insights into the social dimensions of war. Anthropological research on war shows how it is not only a social construct but also constitutive of social reality. If war is a social construct, so is peace. War and peace are not exclusive but coexist in the shared experience of people. The best analytical approach to understanding armed conflicts and humanitarian crises is through an examination of actual practices of war and peace in particular localities. Only by understanding the everyday practice of war can meaningful efforts for peacebuilding and conflict transformation be developed. For anthropologists working in contexts of armed conflicts and humanitarian crises, a number of ethical and methodological questions arise that need to be addressed both on an individual level as well as within the discipline at large.

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[26]For a though-provoking reflection on this and related issues, see Daniel (1996) and Waterston (2008).

[27]See for instance Scheper-Hughes (1992).

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*5.6 India as Humanitarian Actor: Convergences and Divergences with DAC Donor Principles and Practices*

## 2 India as Humanitarian Actor

### Convergences and Divergences with DAC Donor Principles and Practices

*Kristina Roepstorff*

### Introduction

For decades, the discourse and practice of foreign aid has been dominated by a small group of industrialised states that have come together in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC). These states have established a set of principles, norms and best practices for delivering Official Development Assistance (ODA). Within the DAC aid regime, ODA entails both long-term development cooperation and short-term humanitarian action, channelled either bilaterally or multilaterally. The aim of such humanitarian action is to 'save lives, alleviate suffering and maintain and protect human dignity during and in the aftermath of emergencies' (OECD no date a). Accordingly, humanitarian action includes disaster prevention and preparedness, reconstruction, relief coordination, protection and support services, emergency food aid and other emergency relief activities. At the heart of DAC humanitarian action are the well-established and widely recognised principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality and independence.

Recent years have seen a growing importance of and interest in so-called 'emerging donors' or 'new donors' who, to a large extent, operate outside the framework of the DAC. However, the labelling of these donors as 'new' or 'emerging' is problematic in several ways; using the term 'emerging' places these donors within the broader debate on 'emerging powers' and 'emerging economies', which comes with its own sets of underlying assumptions and controversy (Cohen 2001: 31; Mawdsley 2012: 4).[1] Furthermore, the label 'new donor' is also problematic in its implication that these donors have only recently engaged in providing foreign aid. This view is reinforced by the fact that many of these donors have been, and as in the case of India, continue to be, principal recipients of foreign aid.

Although the relatively recent interest by scholars and policymakers suggests otherwise, many of these non-DAC donors like China, Brazil, or India actually have a long-standing record of providing aid (Manning 2006: 384; Mawdsley 2012: 77; Smith 2011). Hence, the assumption of aid being exclusively provided by the 'developed global North' to the 'developing global South' gives a distorted picture of actual aid flows. DAC and non-DAC

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aid have coexisted since at least the mid-twentieth century, with a major increase by non-DAC donors over the last decade (Manning 2006). Smith (2011: 7) finds that humanitarian action from non-DAC donors increased from US$34.7 million in 2000 to US$622.5 million in 2010. Yet, the comprehensive AidData database does not capture information on aid flows for any non-DAC donors except for Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Taiwan (Sinha and Hubbard 2012). While this lack of data on non-DAC donors renders it difficult to accurately assess their contribution to foreign aid in general and humanitarian action in particular, a growing number of historical studies suggest that non-DAC donors have engaged in overseas development and humanitarian aid for quite some time (Celik 2014).

The alternative term 'post-colonial donor', proposed in reference to India (Six 2009), has the advantage of 'disrupting Orientalist binaries which set up the "North" as giver and the "South" as receiver'. Though this label may be useful in the case of India, it excludes other important actors operating outside the DAC framework, such as China and Russia. It also raises the question of whether former colonies like Canada or the US should be included into this category (Mawdsley 2012: 5). As with many labels in the social sciences, none of the terms that have been evoked in order to take into account the diversification of international humanitarian donorship seem entirely suitable. This chapter is mainly concerned with the degree of convergence or divergence between the Indian principles and practices of humanitarian action and those of the DAC donors. Therefore, the use of the term 'non-DAC donors' seems the most fitting for the aims of this chapter.[2]

Having embarked on the path of economic growth, a number of non-DAC countries have not only repositioned themselves vis-à-vis the 'global North', but also have increased their engagement in the foreign aid arena (Smith 2011). The growing engagement of non-DAC donors in the international aid regime was, however, not met with unmitigated enthusiasm by the DAC members. Instead, it invoked concern surrounding how they would 'change the face of international cooperation' (Manning 2006: 1) and how their growing importance in the international aid architecture would lead to an undermining of the norms and principles that have been so painstakingly achieved (Dreher *et al.* 2011; Severino and Ray 2009). To say that a general uneasiness about their motives and norms exists seems to be an understatement. As Woods (2008: 1207) notes, non-DAC donors are accused of 'introducing and pushing "toxic ideas" that would harm both poor countries and established donors'. Their 'rogue aid' (Naim 2007) has been perceived as posing a serious threat to the existing multilateral aid regime. Questions have also been raised regarding the extent to which the DAC-established aid framework may need to be modified (Kim and Lightfoot 2011; Paulo and Reisen 2010). Despite these reservations, little systematic research has been conducted on non-DAC donors, their motives, or the norms that guide their engagement in the provision of foreign aid.

The field of humanitarian action has received particularly little attention. Whereas humanitarian assistance does not constitute the lion's share of foreign aid, humanitarian expenditure by both DAC and non-DAC donors have risen notably over the last two decades (GHA 2013). Though most official humanitarian action still comes from traditional DAC donors, the last decade in particular has seen an increase in non-DAC donor engagement in the humanitarian arena. A recent study by the Centre for Policy Research found that India's foreign aid has increased fourfold from 2003 to 2014 with most aid being provided to neighbouring countries (CPR 2013). Since 2005, India contributed US$56.5 million in humanitarian aid, not including unreported aid to Bhutan and Nepal, and became the fifth largest bilateral donor to Afghanistan. As humanitarian action is, however, not listed separately but subsumed under technical and economic cooperation, no detailed figures are available from India's annual reports. Thus, apart from insufficient data, the fact that the non-DAC donor definition of what constitutes foreign aid does not correspond to the DAC definition also helps explain the general misconception of aid flows (Smith 2011: 4).

In light of India's increasing contribution to international humanitarian action in both its immediate neighbourhood and beyond, this chapter explores the degree of isomorphism between the humanitarian principles and practices of India and DAC donors. It follows a constructivist approach that examines how actors emerge and find their organisational niche while not only being influenced by their organisational environment but also accepting, rejecting, or modifying existing humanitarian principles and practices, thereby ultimately contributing to the politics of humanitarian crises. The analysis draws upon secondary data, relevant official documents and statements as well as specific examples of India's humanitarian action. This chapter's contribution is thus twofold: first, it provides particular knowledge on the principles and practices guiding India's approach to humanitarian action; second, it contributes to the more general discussion of how the humanitarian action of non-DAC donors may change and (re) construct international aid regimes.

## India's Foreign Policy and Humanitarian Action

When governments engage in humanitarian action, it is part of their foreign policy agenda. Foreign aid is essentially a foreign policy tool and therefore subject to the 'same strategic calculations … made in other [policy] areas' (Mawdsley 2012: 27). India's humanitarian engagement thus has to be placed within the broader context of its foreign policy. When analysing the principles and preferences of Indian foreign policy, two important factors stand out: first, the region's historical experiences, above all with regards to colonialism. Malone writes that 'how Indians conceive of their country, its origins, its development through history, and its past relations with others is a vital component of how they imagine, construct, and aspire

to develop India's contemporary international relations' (2011: 19). The second important factor is how domestic concerns feed into India's foreign policy strategy. This is especially relevant in relation to its immediate neighbours, who are also – as will be discussed later – the principal recipients of India's foreign aid.

### India's Foreign Policy in a Nutshell: Historical Legacies and Current Strategic Interests

India's foreign policy since independence in 1947 can be divided into three main phases: Nehruvian idealism in the 1950s and 1960s; a realist turn in the 1970s and 1980s; and a pragmatic shift in the 1990s. India's foreign policy in the aftermath of independence, the first phase, has to be seen in the light of its colonial experience, the struggle for independence and the bloody partition of the subcontinent. Primarily associated with India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the first decades after independence became dominated by a policy of strategic autonomy and non-interventionism and a siding with other 'Third World' countries against the 'imperialist forces of the West' (Malone 2011: 49). During the 1950s and 1960s, within the context of the Cold War, India followed a policy of international independence and non-alignment, which Nehru described as 'the natural consequence of an independent nation functioning according to its own rights' (cited in Malone 2011: 252).

Conflicts with neighbouring China (1962 and 1965) and Pakistan (1971) and a leadership change at the domestic level prompted a realist turn in Indian foreign policy (Ogden 2011: 10). Indira Gandhi's *Realpolitik* at home and abroad, an alignment with the Soviet Union and interventions in East Pakistan and Sri Lanka dominated India's foreign policy during this second phase between the 1970s and 1980s. Tellingly, in a speech in 1970, Indira Gandhi stated that the problems of developing countries needed to be faced 'not merely by idealism, not merely by sentimentalism, but by very clear thinking and hard-headed analysis' (cited in Malone 2011: 50).

The end of the Cold War and the accompanying transition from a planned to a free market economy resulted in the third major shift in India's foreign policy. A more pragmatic course was adopted, with India shedding its 'non-aligned and anti-Western ideologies' (Malone 2011: 52). This allowed normalising relationships with neighbouring countries as well as a greater commitment to international institutions in line with the country's growing power and aspirations. In addition to better relations with China, this shift manifested itself in India's 1992 Look East Policy, which aimed at improving relations with Asia and ASEAN. In 1996, the so-called Gujral-Doctrine dominated India's foreign policy (Murthy 1999). The doctrine, named after the then Prime Minister I.K. Gujral, underlined the importance of maintaining friendly relations with neighbouring countries and reinforced the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs (Gujral 1998). In

line with the Nehruvian foreign policy tradition of non-interventionism, the Gujral Doctrine constituted a break with India's interventionist foreign policy of the years before.

Today, India's foreign policy displays both realist and idealist features, standing in continuous tension with each other (Stuenkel 2013: 347). Whereas traits of Nehruvian idealism are still discernible, Indian foreign policy is increasingly characterised by a growing pragmatism, and this is also reflected in its foreign aid. Calculating the 'strategic benefit' of such aid, India is principally concerned with the promotion of its economic interests, its graduation to the high table of international relations and enhancing its security within the immediate neighbourhood and beyond (Mawdsley 2012: 70). At the same time, anti-imperialism, anti-colonialism and a sense of solidarity with other former colonised countries, reflected for instance in South–South cooperation,[3] still form the ideological basis of India's foreign aid.

### Providing Humanitarian Action: India's Foreign Policy Rationale

Considering the domestic challenges of mass poverty and vulnerability to disasters that India continues to face, the question arises of why India has increased its contribution to international humanitarian action. As with all donors, the motives for providing aid stem from both a genuine desire to alleviate suffering and from economic and political interests (Dreher *et al.* 2011: 1951; Manning 2006; Meier and Murthy 2011). Indeed, humanitarianism and the idea of giving to the needy lies at the heart of Indian cultural values – as reflected in the term *dāna* which stands for the religious practice of non-reciprocal giving in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism (Bornstein 2012; Heim 2004; Meier and Murthy 2011: 7) and the Islamic concepts of *zakat* and *sadaqa*, which take the form of charitable giving (Khan 2012; Krafess 2005).

Politically, India uses humanitarian action as a soft-power instrument to foster friendly relations with other countries. Soon after independence, India sought to establish friendly relations with neighbours like Nepal and Bhutan by providing substantial aid. In doing so, it was looking to secure regional allies and create buffer states in light of the conflict with Pakistan and rivalry with China. Moreover, as Chanana (2009: 11) notes, a 'new consciousness of aid as an instrument of foreign policy' has inspired India's rising expenditure in the field of foreign aid, in order to foster its economic interests and to gain access to new markets and energy supplies both in its neighbourhood and beyond. For instance, India's relations with African countries are strongly driven by its search for energy supplies and economic interests (Mawdsley and McCann 2011; Taylor 2012: 780), as is its increasing engagement with Central Asian countries (Shivakumar *et al.* 2014).

By staging itself as a responsible donor and maintaining friendly relations with other countries, India seeks to advance its global power ambition and

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gain support for its bid to a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (Mawdsley 2012: 73; Rowlands 2012: 636). India's ready provision of relief aid to other countries in the immediate aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and its rejection of incoming assistance demonstrated its pre-eminence within South Asia and its aspiration to become a power of global significance (Price 2005: 17). India wants to change its image from a needy recipient of aid to a strong, independent nation. When in 2003, the Government, under the leadership of the conservative Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), launched the India Development Initiative, a large part of the budget for development cooperation was spent on the 'India Shining' campaign that celebrated India's economic success in order to attract foreign investors (Price 2004).

### India's Shift from Recipient to Donor

When India gained independence from British colonial rule, it faced serious development challenges. Despite the government's reluctance to become so, the country was soon one of the world's major aid recipients (Mawdsley 2012: 71; Price 2005: 3). However, India also established itself as an important provider of aid, especially in its immediate neighbourhood. Although data is still scarce, a new wave of historical research is likely to provide insight in the near future.

In the 1950s, India signed the Colombo Plan, a framework for bilateral cooperation between countries in South and Southeast Asia, comprising South–South cooperation and technical assistance for economic and social development (Colombo Plan no date). It also provided substantial aid to neighbouring Nepal in 1951 and to Bhutan in the 1960s (Mawdsley 2012: 71; Price 2005: 7). By 1964, India had founded the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC), through which the country's bilateral aid was to be channelled.

Various political interests and ideological factors therefore informed India's aid programmes. The ideological facets of India's post-independence aid policy are closely tied to Nehru's policy of non-alignment and the formation of the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) in the 1950s. Though foreign aid was never central to the NAM, some principles echo in today's non-DAC aid discourse (Mawdsley 2012: 63). With its anti-colonial leanings, the NAM promoted assistance between newly independent developing states and South–South cooperation while upholding the respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. These principles continue to be at the core of Indian and other non-DAC aid programmes (Harmer and Cotterrell 2005: 5). Indeed, India seems particularly keen to cooperate with other countries of the 'global South', as illustrated by the India–Brazil–South Africa (IBSA) initiative (Rowlands 2012: 643).

While on a global scale Indian foreign aid has been minor until recently, two events signified a remarkable shift in India's position within the international aid regime, also demonstrating how India constructed itself as

a donor. After a decade of economic liberalisation and growth, the BJP-led government in 2003 announced that all but its six largest donors were to cease their aid flows into India. Other donors were to channel future aid through either NGOs or multilateral agencies (Price 2005: 3). While this was justified by a need to cut administration costs, it was also a clear demonstration of India's aspirations to change its image from recipient to generous donor. This new attitude is captured in the 2003/04 budget speech of the then finance minister, Jaswant Singh (cited in Price 2004: 4):

> A stage has come in our development where we should now, firstly, review our dependence on external donors. Second, extend support to the national efforts of other developing countries. And, thirdly, re-examine the line of credit route of international assistance to others … [w]hile being grateful to all our development partners of the past, I wish to announce that the Government of India would now prefer to provide relief to certain bilateral partners, with smaller assistance packages, so that their resources can be transferred to specified non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in greater need of official development assistance.

To underscore its new aid policy, India paid off outstanding debts to 14 bilateral donors, announced debt relief to seven African countries and launched a new aid programme, the aforementioned Indian Development Initiative (Mawdsley 2012: 74). The new foreign aid policy was, however, abolished just one year later by the Congress-led government (Price 2005: 3). Nevertheless, India has pursued changing its status from recipient of aid to a donor of international standing ever since. This general shift in India's aid policy was prominently reflected (and heavily criticised) in its rejection of incoming humanitarian action after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Instead, it was among the first countries to provide emergency aid to other affected countries like Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Maldives (Rowlands 2012: 636; Price 2005: 15). This highlighted India's shift from recipient to donor and received vast international (media) attention.

As stated earlier, India's foreign aid has increased fourfold from 2003 to 2014 (CPR 2013). According to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Outcome Budget Report 2013–14, nearly 47 per cent of the ministry's overall budget pertains to technical and economic cooperation with other countries (Ministry of Finance 2014: 12). Most aid goes to South Asia (76 per cent), but the share going to Africa and Latin America (3 and 4 per cent respectively) is growing rapidly from a very small base. Though not listed separately, the substantial provision of humanitarian action to a number of countries shows that its scope and expenditures are increasing too. In South Asia, the largest recipients are Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. India was the largest government donor to the 2010 Pakistan floods and an important donor during the 2005 Pakistan earthquake (GHA 2013). Increasingly, India also provides humanitarian action

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beyond its immediate neighbourhood and was among the first countries to provide humanitarian action in the aftermath of the 2010 Haiti earthquake. In 2011, it pledged US$8 million for humanitarian action to countries in the Horn of Africa (MEA 2011). Furthermore, it provided humanitarian action to the people of Palestine and Lebanon (2006), Kyrgyzstan (2005), Mongolia (2008), North Korea (2009), Libya and Yemen (2012) (MEA 2012). In 2013, India, 'being deeply conscious of the humanitarian dimension of the conflict' supplied food items to Syria through the World Food Programme (WFP) and pledged US$2.5 million towards humanitarian action at the 2nd International Pledging Conference for Syria in 2014.[4] Recently, India has provided assistance to cyclone-affected areas of the Philippines, Bangladesh and Fiji (Ministry of Finance 2014: 16).

At the same time, about 40 per cent of the Indian population continue to live on less than US$1.25 a day. In 2008, India was the eighth-largest ODA recipient (US$2.1 billion) and fourth overall from 1995–2009 (IRIN 2011). Despite economic growth since economic reforms were introduced in the 1990s, India continues to struggle with mass poverty and socio-economic problems. This makes it difficult for India to sell increasing expenditure on foreign aid at home (Price 2005: 18). The impact of the economic slowdown on India's engagement in humanitarian action remains unclear. However, with the BJP in power once again in 2014, it is likely that India will claim its place even more assertively as a strong and independent nation in its international relations, including through foreign aid instruments (BJP 2014: 39–40; Mullen 2014).

At the same time, India itself is vulnerable to disasters. Between 2002 and 2011, China and India have accounted for 78 per cent of people affected by natural disasters. Receiving little international assistance, both countries have taken an increasingly strong role in responding to disasters within their own borders (GHA 2013). To increase disaster preparedness, address vulnerabilities and mitigate the impact of disaster, the Indian government passed the Disaster Management Act in 2005. This also foresaw the establishment of the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs). These bodies aim to implement a 'holistic and integrated approach to Disaster Management'. They are now part of India's institutional structure of humanitarian action. India also increasingly shares its experience in disaster risk assessment, risk prevention, mitigation and preparedness and disaster response, relief, recovery and reconstruction regionally and internationally. In response to the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) established the SAARC Disaster Management Centre (SDMC) in New Delhi. Through this and the South Asian Disaster Knowledge Network (SADKN), which was launched by the SDMC, India shares knowledge with other SAARC members on various dimensions of disaster management.[5] At the global level, the NDMA has participated in joint trainings; for instance, in the 2010 Tunisia chemical

mock-exercise, it sent trainers to Singapore and cooperated and exchanged knowledge with Switzerland and the United States. In 2011, the NDMA dispatched its National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) for the first time ever in response to the 2011 Japan tsunami (Bhalla no date).

### Institutional Structure of India's Humanitarian Action

Though India's institutional structures in the field of foreign aid are highly fragmented, the MEA remains the key agency in India's provision of aid. Within the MEA, a number of geographically and functionally specialised divisions make and implement decisions on humanitarian action. However, due to high levels of fragmentation and lack of cooperation, the budget for humanitarian action is divided between different ministries and aid instruments (Meier and Murthy 2011: 9–11). In line with the broader aim of strengthening the Indian Foreign Service (IFS), India in 2012 took a first step in establishing a long-announced foreign aid agency. The newly established Development Partnership Administration (DPA) remains, however, a department of the MEA. Its objective is to manage India's aid projects. It is divided into three divisions: DPA I deals with project appraisal and lines of credit; DPA II deals with capacity building schemes, disaster relief and the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme (ITEC); and DPA III deals with project implementation. The ITEC is a government-funded programme, which is also administered by the MEA. As stated on its website, 'it is a demand-driven development scheme which aims at bilateral cooperation and partnership for mutual benefit'. ITEC invites countries to 'share in the Indian development experience' and consists of six components: training (civilian and defence) in India of nominees from ITEC partner countries; projects and project-related activities such as feasibility studies and consultancy services; deputation of Indian experts abroad; study tours; gifting/donation of equipment; and aid for disaster relief.[6] However, both the MEA and the DPA continue to suffer from a lack of staff, resources and strategy (Roepstorff 2013). Unlike China, India still has no formal policy document, and the establishment of the DPA in 2012 merely presents a new institutional arrangement rather than constituting a real shift in India's aid policy (Campbell and Suri 2013).

Another key actor, India's armed forces actively engage in the implementation of humanitarian action (Meier and Murthy 2011: 13). Being the third-largest contributor to UN peacekeeping and having long-term experience in dealing with disasters domestically, India's armed forces were, for instance, charged with providing humanitarian relief during the 1993–94 UN Operation in Somalia (Price 2005: 14). Yet, strained relations with neighbouring countries prevent India's armed forces from acting in a long-term capacity in the immediate neighbourhood and limit its aid activities in the region (Harmer and Cotterrell 2005: 13). For instance, aid from India was rejected by Bangladesh in the aftermath of the 1988 flooding (Price 2005: 14).

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Apart from the armed forces, the country's National Disaster Management Authority is likely to increasingly dispatch the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) internationally after its first successful deployment to Japan in 2011 (Bhalla no date). Similarly, the National Crisis Management Committee (NCMC), an inter-ministerial coordination committee, has also reacted to crises abroad. Though the private sector is likely to increasingly engage in external assistance, as with the tsunami relief effort, Indian NGOs play a marginal role so far in humanitarian action abroad (Meier and Murthy 2011: 14; Price 2005: 5). However, as indicated by Tony Vaux in this volume, numerous Indian organisations play a vital role in disaster mitigation and relief at the national and local levels.

## A Divergence or Convergence of Principles and Practice of Humanitarian Action

Rowlands (2012: 633) asserts that global and regional powers, with their differing economic, political and military strengths and their specific geopolitical agendas, are less likely to simply accept or adhere to traditional DAC norms. Instead, they may challenge the 'Western-dominated system'. This assertion supports the constructivist argument in this volume and India is no exception to this. A regional power in South Asia, India has become an increasingly important actor in the international playing field of foreign aid and has leverage in shaping the discourse and influencing the practices of humanitarian action. This is especially important as India operates outside the DAC and the Good Humanitarian Donorship Initiative. Thereby, India's significance as a non-DAC donor has more to do with its ability to challenge the 'mainstream' than with the actual size of its aid programmes (Mawdsley 2012: 74). In comparison with other non-DAC donors, India's contribution in foreign aid lags behind countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, South Korea or China (GHA 2013: fig. 2.7). Though figures in humanitarian action are less consistent and more fluctuating, India is not the most significant of the non-DAC donors here either (Smith 2011). Nonetheless, India – a country that has taken a lead role in speaking on behalf of developing countries since its independence – actively shapes international humanitarian action (Chanana 2009: 12) with the potential of constructing and changing the politics of humanitarian crises.

In 2007, India promoted the creation of the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) under the United Nations' Economic and Social Council. The DCF differs from the DAC in that it is composed of both donors and recipients of aid, 'seeking to identify mutually acceptable principles and priorities' (Chanana 2009: 12). At the regional level, India, as a member of SAARC, signed a disaster cooperation agreement with neighbouring countries at the 17th Annual Summit in 2012. This agreement obliges member states to take legislative and administrative measures, including the development of

standard operating procedures, to implement its provisions. As the agreement is based on the key principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity, assistance will only be provided upon request by the affected state (Cipullo 2012). This echoes the NAM principles at the core of India's aid policy.

### Principles Guiding India's Humanitarian Action

India – like other non-DAC donors – has been accused of being guided by mere self-interest in humanitarian engagement and of eroding the merit-based DAC system of aid provision (Naim 2007; Manning 2006). This understanding of the rationale behind India's engagement in humanitarian and development assistance finds resonance in India itself. In 2012, a group of prominent Indian analysts and policymakers, supported by senior officials in the Indian government, attempted to formally identify the basic principles that should guide India's foreign and strategic policy. Their report, *Nonalignment 2.0* (Khilnani *et al.* 2013: 34) discusses India's strategic opportunities, stating:

> India is operating in a context where rapidly growing economies like China have become substantial bilateral donors. Such new donor states have also got the ability to invest immense resources in the creation of new institutions. The entrance of new donor states, and donor competition between them and the old donor states, is a feature of the new global economic landscape. While India is now bulking up and systematising its aid program, more attention and resources will be needed to be given to this. This aid could potentially open strategic opportunities and spaces.

However, determining this as a specificity of non-DAC donor approach to aid seems difficult to uphold when 'the reality of established donors often falls short of their rhetoric and therefore DAC norms' too (Kim and Lightfoot 2011: 715). Just like other countries, India thus has to 'reconcile the tension between geopolitical strategy and humanitarian benevolence, and their tolerance of gaps between rhetoric and action' (Rowlands 2012: 637). In a comparison of the allocation behaviour of new and old donors, Dreher *et al.* (2011) find that allegations of aid being driven by mere self-interest seem to be exaggerated for both groups of donors. There is also a genuine desire to alleviate suffering and an aspiration to be perceived as a moral and responsible international actor.

Although there exists no official Indian policy on foreign aid in general or humanitarian action in particular, the priorities and principles that guide engagement in the humanitarian field can be derived from statements, official documents and practice. Their analysis shows that while India subscribes to the international humanitarian principles of universality, impartiality and neutrality, it is also guided by other principles that present major

divergences with DAC norms (Meier and Murthy 2011: 7–8). Price (2005: 3) identified three central ideas underlying India's attitude towards aid: first, aid is given for political and economic purposes and can be an effective means for improving bilateral relations; second, giving the wrong kind of aid can be counterproductive; and third, conditional aid can be degrading for the recipient. These ideas feed into India's principles and practice of humanitarian action. Apart from its colonial past and Nehruvian legacy, these ideas stem from the country's own experiences as an aid recipient and its desire to free itself from outside interference. Thus, in the spirit of the NAM and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Panchsheel),[7] India strongly adheres to the principles of non-interference and respect for the sovereignty of other states (Meier and Murthy 2011: 7; Paulo and Reisen 2010: 549). Undoubtedly, respect for the sovereignty of the affected state is a fundamental principle that guides India's approach to foreign aid and lies at the heart of controversies between India and DAC donors.

Until recently, countries in need of outside assistance had little choice other than complying with DAC donor policies (Dreher *et al.* 2011: 1951, cit. Gilpin 2001). With a diversification in humanitarian donorship, recipient countries are now increasingly in a position to decide whom they accept assistance from (Paulo and Reisen 2010: 535). Objecting to the politicisation of aid and emphasising the principle of non-interference, India rejects aid conditionality (Price 2005; Rowlands 2012: 636). Thus, India has resisted pressure from the DAC to sign the Paris Declaration for aid effectiveness and attaches far less conditionality to its aid, seeking to give beneficiaries a greater voice in the process and not using aid as a means to demand regime change or interfere domestically (Chanana 2009: 12). This, of course, provides a welcome alternative to countries suspicious of the hidden or open political agendas of 'Western' donors. Whereas India and other non-DAC donors have been accused of undermining the 'governance and democratisation agenda of DAC donors' (Dreher *et al.* 2011: 1951), its policy also provides a niche for Indian humanitarian action. Due to its objection to the politicisation of aid, India was one of the first countries the military regime in Myanmar granted access to when Cyclone Nargis hit the country's delta region.

Another related controversy concerns transparency and accountability. Operating outside the OECD framework, non-DAC donors are not subject to the same reporting obligations as DAC donors. However, transparency is an essential principle of DAC aid. While a number of non-DAC donors make their aid information accessible and report voluntarily, India's level of reporting to various established databases is low (Smith 2011: fig. 24). Paulo and Reisen (2010: 550) note, 'while India does share the transparency features of Western democracies, its development policy is not exactly transparent'. This applies equally to its humanitarian action, which is not listed separately but seen as part of its development assistance. Moreover, India has been criticised for not monitoring how its aid is spent, as there are

no control or reporting mechanisms in place (Meier and Murthy 2011: 34). India's deficient monitoring mechanism may be explained by the country's fragmented aid architecture and the fact that it emphasises non-interference and provides aid with 'no strings attached'.

### Divergent Labels and Practices: Who and What

While the term 'donor' is generally accepted within the DAC-system, many non-DAC actors refuse to use this term as for them, it reflects the hierarchical structure of traditional aid from donors to recipients. Thus, like Brazil, India prefers to refer to itself as a 'partner' rather than 'donor' (Meier and Murthy 2011: 8). This is also reflected in the name of the country's newly established aid agency, the Development *Partnership* Administration.

Different understandings of what counts as humanitarian action and how it is to be distinguished from development cooperation are a 'potential source of misunderstanding' between different humanitarian actors (Binder and Meier 2011: 1138). While India now shares the DAC's conceptual distinction between short-term relief aid and development assistance, it emphasises the need to link immediate relief to long-term development and has played an important role in the drafting of the General Assembly Resolution 64/251 from 2010 on linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD) (Meier and Murthy 2011: 6ff.). As a result, both in its rhetoric and in its budget categories, India does not clearly differentiate between development and humanitarian action.

Moreover, the government of India uses the terms 'humanitarian assistance' or 'disaster relief' only in reference to activities that address human suffering caused by natural disasters. This definition is narrower than the DAC definition; it excludes the protection of civilian populations affected by armed conflicts (Meier and Murthy 2011: 6). A closer look at India's actual engagement in humanitarian action shows, however, that it has also provided aid to conflict-affected countries. In Sri Lanka, for instance, India provided aid to conflict-affected areas in 1987 and, more recently, to internally displaced persons (Ministry of Finance 2014: 15). Similarly, the Outcome Budget 2013–14 (ibid.) shows that India has been active in other conflict-affected regions: the same paragraph that states that India has responded to humanitarian challenges from natural disasters also includes the fact that 'relief supply and medicines have been supplied to war-affected Libya and Syria'. And at the Geneva II Conference on Syria in January 2014, India's then External Affairs Minister, Salman Khurshid,[8] declared India's commitment to humanitarian action to conflict-affected Syria. In sum, India's assistance to a number of conflict-affected countries shows that the alleged narrow understanding of humanitarian assistance does not hold true. However, when engaging in conflict contexts, India preferably contributes to humanitarian action through multilateral channels, arguably to prevent straining bilateral relations and 'to bypass politically sensitive relationship

barriers and channel their aid through more neutral mechanisms' (Smith 2011: 14). For instance, by channelling its funds through multilateral institutions, India was able to provide aid to Pakistan despite the long-standing conflict between the two countries (Meier and Murthy 2011: 17).

It needs to be noted, however, that India as an aid recipient has a strong preference for multilateral assistance and, like other non-DAC donors, it primarily uses bilateral aid channels in its provision of aid (Price 2005: 13). This may indicate a prioritisation of national over global interests (Mawdsley 2012: 31). A statement by India's National Security Advisor Menon during the 3rd International Studies Convention in New Delhi on 11 December 2013 supports this view. In his speech, Menon contended, 'we seem to use multilateralism for our values and bilateralism for our interests'.[9] Indeed, India has strong relationships with the UN system and its multilateral contributions have risen significantly over the last two decades (Price 2005: 13), contributing substantially to the WFP[10] and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF). In 2010, India was the largest government donor to the Pakistan Emergency Response Fund (ERF) and the eleventh largest donor to multilateral humanitarian financing mechanisms, just behind Germany, channelling 56 per cent of its aid that way (Smith 2011: 14). The following statement in *Nonalignment 2.0* (Khilnani *et al.* 2013: 34) provides further insight on India's stance towards bilateral and multilateral aid channels respectively:

> India's engagement with the U.N. will continue to be at several levels, and will also pose new questions for our policies. There is, for instance, often a trade-off between investment in bilateral engagements and the commitment of resources to multilateral institutions. On the one hand, bilateral aid is usually more flexible; and the donor is also more clearly identifiable and visible to the recipient. On the other hand, multilateral institutions like the U.N. are often less flexible, and donor identity is not highlighted: but participation in their program budgets can enable India to shape the global agenda. While there are real trade-offs, particularly in terms of beneficial use of resources, India's best option is to engage at different levels, and to use different levers.

In its provision of bilateral aid, India has been criticised by DAC donors for providing government-to-government aid rather than channelling it directly to the affected population. This approach, which reflects India's emphasis on respecting sovereignty and objections to the politicisation of aid, constitutes a major divergence from the DAC member preference to provide aid more directly (Meier and Murthy 2011: 8). Where a government is highly corrupt or itself accused of causing suffering, giving aid directly to the government may not reach the population in need.

India has further been openly critical of the 'supply-driven' aid of DAC donors (Meier and Murthy 2011: 8). In what India has labelled a 'demand-driven' approach to aid, assistance should be provided according to the

requirements and needs identified by the affected government. In general, due to their own experience as recipients of aid, non-DAC donors are presumed to be more familiar with recipient needs and able to provide better-targeted aid than their DAC counterparts. In their comparative study of 16 'new donors', Dreher *et al.* (2011) could not verify this assumption. However, their study did not include India. Further empirical research on the correspondence between recipient needs and India's provision of aid is required in order to make an informed assessment. Yet, the fact that India shares a preference for in-kind aid with other non-DAC donors is well documented; food and medicine are favoured items (Binder and Meier 2011: 1139; Manning 2006: 379). This stands in contrast to the trend of DAC donors to favour cash transfers over in-kind aid, as the latter has been criticised for having negative effects on the local economy as well as being inappropriate in many cases (Harvey 2007; Oxfam International 2005).

## Conclusions

Fearing the undermining of the traditional norms of good donorship, DAC donors have expressed their concerns over humanitarian action led by non-DAC donors. As an increasingly important actor with a lead role on behalf of developing countries, India has the potential to change and (re)construct the international humanitarian aid regime. As constructivist theory suggests, India is thereby not merely influenced by the existing organisational environment but contributes to the politics of humanitarian crises by actively challenging, accepting, rejecting and modifying established DAC principles and practices of humanitarian action. Its isomorphism to DAC donors is only partial. While it subscribes to the humanitarian principles in general, some major divergences to DAC donor approaches to humanitarian action can be detected, with the issue of non-interference likely to remain at the core of controversy between India and the DAC donors.

Along with other non-DAC actors like Brazil, India challenges the hierarchical structures of current international aid regimes discursively by using terms like 'partner' rather than 'recipient' or 'donor'. With an emphasis on national and local needs, it also refers to its aid as 'demand-driven' as opposed to the alleged 'supply-driven' aid of other donors. More crucially, apart from different labelling and categorisation practices, a major divergence between India and the DAC donors exists in India's categorical rejection of interference with the domestic affairs of other states. Shaped by India's own experience as a recipient of foreign aid, the specific role of the NAM, a Nehruvian foreign policy tradition, the principles of non-interference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty remain at the core of India's foreign policy norms and of its engagement in the humanitarian field. This position results in a divergence in both norms and practice as reflected, for instance, in the emphasis on aid unconditionality and the rejection of what India sees as the politicisation of aid; a consequential

preference of direct government-to-government aid; a lack of reporting and monitoring mechanisms that is only partly due to a poor institutional structure; and a continued preference of bilateral and in-kind aid.

Somewhat paradoxically, while India challenges the traditional framework of humanitarian action in many ways, it is increasingly taking part in multilateral aid operations, especially in politically sensitive contexts in order to bypass conflicts with beneficiary governments and to project itself as an important and responsible global actor. This may well result in a continuing integration of India within the international aid regime and a gradual convergence of principles and practice. Acknowledging humanitarian action as a soft-power instrument to further its geopolitical interests and great power ambitions, India has both a keen interest in integrating into the international humanitarian system and setting its own standards in accordance with its own foreign policy ideals and practices.

Whereas India's influence must not be underestimated, the extent to which it will actually be able to (re)construct and change international aid discourse and regimes remains to be seen. Still, the fact remains that as India's contribution to and institutionalisation of humanitarian action is increasing both in numbers and scope, the country's role in international humanitarian action can no longer be ignored.

## Notes

1  The term 're-emerging' is also used to emphasise the fact that the country is in the process of restoring its historical position in the international hierarchy and distribution of power. See for instance the statement of India's National Security Advisor, Shivshankar Menon, at the Munich Security Conference (quoted in Dikshit 2013).

2  This category is problematic for negatively defining what these countries are not, and for using the DAC as the ultimate reference point, thereby replicating its hegemony and suggesting a uniformity within the DAC, an institution that has 28 member states with diverging interests and opinions (Mawdsley 2012: 4).

3  South–South cooperation is a vague term applied to any form of interaction between developing countries (Mawdsley 2012: 63). As stated in the Paris Declaration, 'South–South co-operation on development aims to observe the principle of non-interference in internal affairs, equality among developing partners and respect for their independence, national sovereignty, cultural diversity and identity and local content. It plays an important role in international development co-operation and is a valuable complement to North–South co-operation' (OECD no date b).

4  See the statement of the Minister of State for External Affairs: www.mea.gov. in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/21138/Address+by+Minister+of+State+for+ External+Affairs+Shri+E+Ahamed+at+Highlevel+International+Humanitaria n+Pledging+Conference+for+Syria; and the statement by the External Affairs Minister: www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/22765/External+Affai rs+Ministers+Statement+at+the+International+Conference+on+Syria+GenevaII (accessed 20 February 2014).

5  In 2006, the SDMC was established in New Delhi with the mandate to serve the Member Countries of SAARC by providing policy advice and facilitating

capacity development for effective disaster risk reduction and management at the regional level. See: http://saarc-sdmc.nic.in/index.asp and www.saarc-sadkn.org/about.aspx (accessed 30 May 2014).

6  Website of the Ministry of External Affairs: http://itec.mea.gov.in/?1320?000 (accessed 25 January 2014).

7  As set out in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between China and India in 1954 and which were subsequently incorporated into the Ten Principles of International Peace and Cooperation at the Bandung Conference in 1955.

8  See the statement of the External Affairs Minister: www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/22765/External+Affairs+Ministers+Statement+at+the+Inte rnational+Conference+on+Syria+GenevaII (accessed 20 February 2014).

9  See the statement of the National Security Advisor: www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/22632/Address+by+National+Security+Advisor+Shiv+Shan kar+Menon+on+Strategic+Culture+and+IR+Studies+in+India+at+the+3rd+Inte rnational+Studies+Convention+held+at+JNU+Convention+Centre+New+Delhi (accessed 20 February 2014).

10  In 2005, India became the 15th largest donor to WFP.

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## 5.7 Insider Mediation in Peace Processes: An Untapped Resource?

FRIEDENSPRAXIS

# Insider Mediation in Peace Processes: An Untapped Resource?

Kristina Roepstorff and Anna Bernhard*

**Abstract:** Mediation is considered an effective and peaceful tool for the resolution of conflicts and has become an important instrument in international peacemaking. Interest in mediation has surged in recent years both at the international and regional level. In line with the discussions of local ownership in peacebuilding literature and practice, there is also an increased call for including local 'insider mediators' in peace processes. So far, scholars have paid little attention to the role of insider mediators in peacemaking. To gain a better understanding of their actual and potential role in peace processes, a systematic analysis of the phenomenon of insider mediation is therefore indispensible.

**Keywords:** Mediation, peace process, peacemaking, insider mediation, conflict transformation
Mediation, Friedensprozess, Friedensschaffung, Insider-Mediation, Konflikttransformation

## 1. International Peace Mediation

**M**ediation is widely used to handle disputes. Most generally, mediation can be defined as a process in which a third party intervenes in a conflict to bring about a peaceful settlement between the disputants and contribute to a successive transformation of the conflict. As extensively documented and analysed by anthropologists and sociologists, mediation has been applied for centuries in different cultural contexts. In particular, insights from the field of legal anthropology, with its primary interest in the social order of societies and the use of formal and informal mechanisms for enforcing laws and handling disputes, reveal the widespread use of mediation in cross-cultural perspective.

At the international level, the Charter of the United Nations from 1945 lists in Article 33 mediation alongside negotiation, conciliation and arbitration as a peaceful means to settle disputes between member states. Since the end of the Cold War, the international community of states has increasingly intervened in intrastate conflicts and civil wars and, as a result, international mediation efforts have extended to conflicts at the intra-state level. Today, mediation presents the most common, and often most effective, form of peaceful third-party intervention both in interstate and intrastate conflicts and has been successfully applied to initiate peace negotiations and broker peace agreements in violent conflicts around the world (Bercovitch and Gartner 2009).

Seen as an effective, peaceful, and democratic peacemaking tool, recent years have shown a renewed interest in the use of mediation in peace processes. Both the United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) have been called upon to strengthen their mediation capacities with the objective of becoming more actively involved in international peace mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes (Tamminen 2012: 10). On September 27, 2012 the UN launched a new 'Guidance for Effective Mediation' as part of a broader report on conflict mediation that has been issued at the request of the General Assembly. The European Council in 2009

adopted the 'Concept on Strengthening EU Mediation and Dialogue Capacities' with the objective of becoming more actively involved in mediation, facilitation and dialogue processes. This objective was reaffirmed in the 'European Council Conclusions on Conflict Prevention' in 2011 (ibid). In 2010, the Finnish and Swedish Foreign Ministers proposed the creation of a European Institute of Peace (EIP) to support peace mediation worldwide. Similarly, other regional organisations like the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the African Union (AU) continue to work to strengthen their peace mediation support capacities (Wolff and Yakinthou 2011).

While focusing on efforts to increase mediation capacities at the global and regional level, the importance to engage with local actors involved in peace mediation is mentioned in an increasing number of the international and regional organisations' guidelines and strategy papers. The UN Guidance for Effective Mediation (2012a: 9), for instance, stresses the importance to engage with local and community-based actors or organisations to encourage the use of mediation, to liaise with and ensure support for local peacemakers and, wherever appropriate, use indigenous forms of conflict management and dispute resolution (ibid: 15). The EU Concept on Strengthening Mediation Capacities states that "by supporting local mechanisms for mediation and dialogue, [these] EU activities on the ground help transform relationships between conflict parties, leading to genuine and sustainable solutions in conflict-prone environments" (2009: 5). Furthermore, it acknowledges the expertise of national, local and civil society actors as a resource already available and that should be made best use of (ibid: 11). In recognising their significant role in conflict prevention and early-warning, the *Economic Community of West African States* (ECOWAS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) already work with a network of local monitors and mediators (Hislaire et al. 2011). An explicit reference to the role of so-called insider mediators is made in a paper published by the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI) as a follow-up to the 'ASEAN-EU High-Level Expert Workshop on Preventive Diplomacy and International Peace Mediation' that was held in October 2011. The reference, worth citing in full length, states that

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"There is also a broad based understanding that 'peace mediation' automatically means a third party support being provided by persons and institutions outside of the affected country. A closer look at the reality of most peace processes reveals though that there crucial roles with respect to conflict transformation are also played by 'insiders', i.e. persons who are perceived as belonging ethnically, religiously or in other respect to one of the conflict parties, but who try to deescalate the conflict, build bridges, engage in peace advocacy. Sometimes they are also called '(semi-)partial insiders'. Many of them belong to the important group of insider peacebuilders being active on the 'Track 3' and 'Track 2' levels. But some of them also operate on higher levels of engagement, i.e. 'Track 1.5' and 'Track 1' and they often build alliances with different allegiances to the parties to support conflict transformation in a discreet manner. A closer look at mediation in the ASEAN region reveals that in most conflict cases there are persons with experience, commitment and a good rapport with the conflicting parties who play these roles. Because international intervention is a very sensitive issue for some ASEAN Member States, it is highly advisable to explore their contributions and potential more in detail and also to explore, how their support can be made more effective. In several cases it also advisable to look for creative ways to combine mediation efforts from outside of the country with those from inside."

(Cristescu et al. 2012: 19)

In a similar manner, non-governmental organisations such as the Berghof Foundation and swisspeace (Mason 2009), as well as the PeaceNexus Foundation (Hislaire et al. 2011) have highlighted the important contributions of insider mediators in peace processes.

As the references suggest, international interest in insider mediation is growing. Two main factors may explain this. First, the awareness among international actors of the importance to include local actors in peace processes both to enhance the legitimacy of international interventions and to allow for more sustainable peace processes has brought about a reconsideration of common peace intervention practices. As a result, international norms such as local ownership, inclusiveness, and capacity-building have become commonplace in peacebuilding scholarship and practice. Second, the realisation that peace processes are initiated and accompanied by mediation efforts from local insider mediators who facilitate, complement and support the work of official outsider mediators (Giessmann and Wils 2011: 188) has led to the realisation that although international outsider mediators play a crucial role in the settlement of conflicts, insider mediators play a critical role in linking external mediation efforts with local conflict transformation processes (Gourlay and Ropers 2012).

Proponents of the inclusion of insider mediators into peace processes point towards insider mediators' advantage of an in-depth knowledge of the conflict context, its dynamics, as well as the involved parties and their interests. They are familiar with the cultural norms, the language and ways of communication, as well as the social structures, power configurations and hierarchies exigent in the conflict context (UN, 2012b: 6). This knowledge allows them to "demonstrate a nuanced sensitivity in their contribution to find solutions to conflicts that are owned and valued by the parties themselves" (ibid). This closeness to the conflict and the conflict parties is regarded an asset rather than an obstacle for mediating in the conflict – something that stands in sharp contrast to the widespread ideal of the impartial and distanced mediator in Western professional mediation trainings. The interest in insider mediators thus raises at least two important questions. The first regards the distinction between insiders and outsiders. While the interest in the role of local actors, or insider mediators, in peace processes is growing, it is unclear who should be considered an insider or outsider in a given context. The second question concerns the extent to which Western ideals of mediation professionalism clash with local ideas and practices of mediation. And, as an extension of this question, how outsiders and insiders may work together and complement each other in their quest to achieve sustainable peace.

## 2. The Insider-Outsider Dichotomy

While there is a growing interest in insider mediation, it is far from clear who accounts for an 'insider' or an 'outsider' in a given conflict. Indeed, insider and outsider mediation are relative terms (Mason 2009: 4) and ambiguously used by scholars and parties to the conflict alike. For instance Elgström et al. (2003) use the notion of insider mediator in reference to regional organisations, rather than local civil society actors. A similar distinction between insiders and outsiders is presented by Gilbert Khadiagala (2007) in his book *Meddlers or Mediators: African Interveners in Civil Conflicts in Eastern Africa*. While not using the term 'insider mediator' explicitly, he distinguishes African mediators from external mediators. From this point of view, the regional organisation – in this case the AU – is more an insider to the conflicts on the continent than the UN. A national mediator, on the other hand, is more an insider than a representative from the regional organisation, and so forth.

The difficulties to differentiate between 'insider' and 'outsider' bares resemblance to the discussion concerning the categorisation of 'local', 'national' and 'international' widely used in the peacebuilding literature. The label 'international' is commonly used in reference to a broad set of actors, including foreign governments, international governmental organisations (IGOs), international and trans-national non-governmental organisations (NGOs), foreign NGOs, but also researchers from academic institutions and think-tanks. All of these compose what is often referred to as the 'international community', which is, however, far from unified. As with international actors, the term 'local' subsumes a broad set of actors who actively work in the conflict area, including activists, local NGOs, local government representatives, church groups, and local staff of outside or foreign NGOs and agencies (Anderson 2003: 36). The term 'local' is, however, misleading in the sense that it does not refer to a geographic area but rather to a person's or organisation's closeness and vulnerability to the conflict (ibid), or the impact of a peacebuilding initiative (Reich 2006: 21). In practice, 'local'

actors who are directly affected by and have a stake in the conflict and the impact of the conflict resolution initiatives are therefore often referred to as 'insiders' to the conflict and the conflict transformation initiative. According to Anderson (2003: 36), insiders either live in the conflict area and are thus vulnerable to the conflict, or experience the conflict from a distance and must "live with its consequences personally".

While the insiders cannot escape the conflict setting and its consequences, the outsiders – ranging from foreign staff of organisations, members of the Diaspora, and co-nationals from regions of a country not directly affected by the violence – have the opportunity to choose whether and to what extent they want to be involved in the conflict and its resolution process. This, however, has consequences on how they are perceived by the parties to the conflict. Thus, the insiderness and outsiderness are ascribed both on the basis of how actors are perceived by others and how they perceive themselves. This happens at different levels. First, an actor might subjectively perceive himself or herself as insider, while being perceived as an outsider by the parties to a conflict. On a different level, a researcher may use etic ascriptions of 'insiderness' and 'outsiderness' without these categories corresponding with emic categorisations. To further complicate matters, perceptions can change over time, depending on the context, position and perspective. Moreover, some actors can simultaneously hold insider and outsider positions. For example, national governments sometimes take up the role of a mediator between international and local actors. By doing so, they might also represent different and deviant positions when talking to international actors and to local actors (Bernhard 2013: 9).

As many other labels used in social sciences, the distinctions between 'local' and 'international', 'insiders' and 'outsiders' present an oversimplification that does not match the complexity of ground realities. As a consequence, one needs to define the meaning of the local and the external, the insider and the outsider, in each case, acknowledging that the labels themselves are not fixed but fluid categories and part of a process of hybridisation (Jacobsen and Lidén 2013: 29; Mac Ginty 2010: 397). Defining an actor is thus only possible in grades of insiderness or outsiderness by referring to one as being more or less of an insider or outsider compared to others (Anderson 2003: 36). Notwithstanding the relativity of the categories, the identification of basic characteristics may allow us to differentiate between insider and outsider mediation. Besides the mediator's closeness to the conflict and the conflict parties, insider mediation is often characterised by what could be defined as everyday mediation practice – and which differs in terms of techniques and strategies promoted by the Western model of mediation professionalism, as the next section shows.

## 3. The Phenomenon of Insider Mediation

### 3.1 Different Models of Mediation

Like other spheres of life, peacebuilding has experienced a technocratic turn in recent decades (Mac Ginty et al. 2012). Formal processes and standardised bureaucratic and technocratic means and norms are applied in peacebuilding and peacemaking (ibid: 37ff). Such a technocratic approach is believed to be value-free and neutral since decisions would be based on "objective criteria" (ibid). In the same line of thinking, and most important in the Western model of mediation professionalism, the mediator is supposed to be impartial to the conflict parties and an outsider to the conflict context (Wehr and Lederach 1991: 86). The distance between the mediator and the conflict parties is strongly emphasised and regarded as the source of the mediator's authority and professionalism. This emphasis emanates from the assumption that if this distance is not kept, the mediator's partiality, connectedness to the conflict parties, expectations for rewards and investments in outcomes of the mediation process would negatively affect and manipulate the outcome of the mediation process (ibid; Moore 2003: 15-16).

International peace mediation is predominantly shaped by this Western ideal of professionalism that has its origin in the ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) movement and which started in the 1970s in North-America (Roberts and Palmer 2005). Successfully promoting mediation as an alternative to court for the settlement of disputes, it can be argued that the ADR movement prompted a technocratic approach to mediation. An ensuing model of Western mediation professionalism is based on an understanding of mediation as a formal process initiated by an experienced third-party professional (Merry 1987: 1; Moore 2003: 15-16) and used in the training of mediators around the world. Thus, although many Western countries have a history of diverse informal models of mediation still being applied in local everyday situations, a formal model of mediation has established itself and become widely accepted.

This formal model of mediation with its specific ideas about the proper process of mediation, the qualifications and role of the mediator as a professional and distant facilitator, and the relationship of the mediator to the parties to the conflict (Golbert 2009: 83) stands in contrast to what we know from anthropological and sociological studies of dispute settlement in different societies. These findings allow us to rethink some of the assumptions originating from the West about what makes mediation work in different cultural contexts (ibid). As early as 1908, the German sociologist Georg Simmel identified the omnipresence of the mediator across all cultures and distinguished between mediators as disinterested neutral third parties (outsider mediators) on the one hand, and mediators actively and equally concerned with the interests of all parties, such as family members and community elders (insider mediators) on the other hand (Simmel 1950). Likewise, Augsburger (1992) finds that mediation is the most frequently used process of dispute settlement in traditional societies. His and other anthropological studies call into question the Western formal model of mediation that suggests the ideal mediator to be impartial, unbiased, and unconnected to the conflict and parties to the conflict (Golbert 2009: 87). In his study on the dispute settlement process in the *Chamar* community in North-India in the 1950s, the British anthropologist Bernard S. Cohn found that the leaders of the disputants' community units take the role of mediators

in the settlement process. By social definition, the leaders' legitimacy is based in "his ability to function not only as a leader of one unit but to lead in the next larger unit" and to "bridge the gap" between these units "by balancing between advocate of the rights of this immediate followers and the demands of the wider social group" (Cohn 1959: 85). These mediation processes are characterised by public attention and commenting while the mediator's task is to "sense" and "direct" the "public opinion" during the process (ibid).

Similarly, findings from peace and conflict research have called into question the emphasis on neutrality and impartiality common in Western mediation trainings (Wehr and Lederach 1991; Elgström et al. 2003; Golbert 2009). In this regard, the distinction between processual, outcome and relational partiality as suggested by Elgström et al. (2003: 15) is particularly useful. Whereas processual partiality refers to the mediator's favouritism of one party during the mediation process (by e.g. giving them more time to express their viewpoint), and outcome partiality refers to his/her preference of one party's idea of settlement, relational partiality refers to a mediator's closeness to the conflict parties. It is argued that the insider mediators' partiality is relational rather than processual or outcome-oriented (Elgström et al. 2003: 15; Mason 2009: 5; UN 2012a: 6).

As Lee and Hwee Hwee (2009) claim for Asian societies, the mediator's 'connectedness' to the conflict parties is more treasured than a neutral relationship to them. Depending on the level and nature of the conflict, the mediators can be relatives, anybody the disputants built up a relationship with, someone who is highly regarded in the community, or in the field where the conflict takes place (e.g. certain business branch). It is the connectedness or commonalities with the disputants that makes them trustworthy mediators. This is based on an understanding of trust as a "subjective element of intent" with a "strong [...] relational orientation" (ibid: 74). In this understanding, trust means that the parties can rely on the mediator's benign intention and benevolence towards all involved parties, and that the mediator will not take advantage of a party's vulnerability created by cooperation in the mediation process (Billings-Yun 2009: 149-150). This understanding of trust is different from the one prevailing in the West, where trust has a more objective connotation and a person gains generalised social trust in someone due to his/her educational background, experience, and achievements (ibid). While in Western professional mediation trust is centred on the mutual perception of unreliable behaviour of the disputing parties, a neutral mediator who has no connections to the conflicting parties is necessary, in order to facilitate non-judgemental interaction between them so that trust can be rebuilt during the mediation process (ibid). In societies where trust is relationally oriented, the mediator is not a detached facilitator but a party to the process of mediation and therefore needs to be trustworthy to all parties involved. He/she is expected to actively seek a solution to the dispute and ideally has positive intentions. In order to be accepted, the mediator has to first prove his/her benevolence to the parties, which usually happens in a preparatory phase of the mediation processes (ibid: 151-152). Thereby, it is important that the grade of connectedness

to each conflict party is as equal as possible, or, in Cobb and Rifkin's words "equidistant" (1991). If a mediator is more closely connected to one party, the other might not accept him/her as mediator and the mediation process is likely to fail (Lee and Hwee Hwee 2009: 75). In the case where no equally connected mediator can be found, co-mediators or multiple mediators can be an accepted solution (ibid).

In sum, these studies of mediation in contexts outside of Europe and the US reveal that neutrality and impartiality are not necessary preconditions for a mediation process to be successful. On the contrary, these characteristics can have inhibiting effects on the conflict parties' openness to talk and agree on a compromise (Billings-Yun 2009: 155). Accordingly, local mediators from within the conflict context being connected with all conflict parties may be more successful in mediating a conflict than their outsider counterparts (ibid). By being directly affected by the conflict, they are perceived as being more dedicated to the mediation outcomes. Following from these findings, insider mediation is characterised by the mediator's relational partiality and geographical and cultural closeness to the conflict; his/her legitimacy is derived from in-depth knowledge of the situation and rests in the trust and acceptance of the conflict parties. Thus, insider mediators stand in opposite to the ideal type of an outsider mediator who is characterised by his/her neutrality and 'distance' to the conflict and the parties. An outsider mediator might not have an in-depth knowledge of the conflict, but gains his legitimacy from professionalism (training as mediator) and his/her neutrality and impartiality.

A word of caution is required, however. It is important to acknowledge that insider mediators may be influenced by, or trained in, Western-style professional mediation. As Lee and Hwee Hwee (2009) discuss in reference to mediation in Singapore, but also in China, South Korea, Japan, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines, traditional mediation methods may have been replaced by and combined with Western-style mediation techniques. They state that in these countries, preference has traditionally been given to insider mediators. The mediator has mostly been a person of "high standing in the community", known and trusted by the parties, and derived his/her authority from the disputants' respect for him/her, their faith in his/her integrity, wisdom, expertise and experience (2009: 10). In the traditional mediation methods, "moral persuasion" based on cultural and community values (e.g. virtue of forgiveness, compassion, respect and reason) played an important role. In these cases, the disputants were convinced to agree on a compromise for the sake of showing respect for or giving face to the mediator, to satisfy their community, to restore the relationships and social harmony (ibid). Nowadays, the mediation techniques have changed. Influenced by mediation models based in Western societies, the mediator is usually trained and certified, and acts under the official law. He/she takes up a rather facilitative role and avoids intervening into process- and substance-related issues or morality. Mediation is usually rights-based and judge-driven, while the judge discusses possible settlement options and respective consequences with the disputants (ibid: 11-13). What remained the same is the expectation of a mediator to

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be an authoritative figure who takes the lead of the mediation process (ibid: 73). Depending on the context and the dispute, an elderly community leader may be respected as an authority to mediate in a dispute among neighbours, while a judge with commercial law experience may be respected as an authority to mediate in a conflict between high-end corporations (ibid: 73).

The interaction of outsiders and insiders often result in compositions of exogenous and endogenous models. In reference to peace processes, Mac Ginty (2010) and Richmond (2009; 2010) have therefore pointed out the 'hybridity' of peacebuilding realities. However, as Mac Ginty argues in his book *International Peacebuilding and Local Resistance: Hybrid Forms of Peace* (2011: 2), the agency and diversity of local-level actors in peace processes is generally overlooked – as in the case of insider mediation and its contribution to peace processes. Apart from the above mentioned exceptions, the literature on international peace mediation mainly focuses on mediation as something that is 'done to' rather than 'done by' civil society members or local actors, as Porter and Every put it (2009: 44). As a result, and despite of a growing interest in insider mediation, little is known about their role in peace processes and the ways in which they complement external peace mediation efforts.

### 3.2 The Role of Insider Mediators in Peace Processes

Findings from anthropological and sociological research on dispute settlement in various societies, as well as findings from peace research suggest that in societies with a relational-oriented understanding of trust, it is more difficult for outsider mediators to be accepted as mediators. In a seminal work on peace processes in Central America, Lederach and Wehr (1991) develop the concept of the insider-partial mediator. They find that mediators were selected from the community on the basis of *confianza* (trust) and suggest broadening the concept of mediation to include the intervention of the insider-partial mediators in the transformation of conflicts. Moreover, as Lee and Hwee Hwee (2009: 74-75) find, in the Asian context mediators who are connected to the conflict parties can gain an 'insider rank', while neutrality towards the parties would downgrade them as members of an out-group or outsiders who are held off. The insiders are accepted as mediators to pave the way for the settlement, they enjoy easier access to information, and the disputants might be more open to accept mutual compromise, and even to give face to the mediators. Gourlay and Ropers (2012: 93 ff.) hold that their insiderness and partiality allow them to operate in situations where external actors do not have access or are not accepted; they can complement the role of outsiders by linking mediation from the high-level to the lower level processes; they are relevant for countries in transition or fragile contexts where there are no formal mediation structures; and they can play a crucial role in preventing and containing conflict. Findings from Nepal and other countries show that "in many conflict-affected countries the majority of domestic and land disputes are resolved through mediation efforts by local networks of individuals" (ibid: 97). Similar findings from the author's field research conducted in Assam, Northeast

India, in May and June 2012 support this.[1] During clashes between ethnic groups in several parts of Assam in 1996 peace committees (shanti committees) were formed, which then mediated between the different ethnic groups. Among other things, they held meetings in IDP (internally displaced persons) camps. The peace committee consisted of members from both communities, including members of student organisations, women's organisations and other respected individuals like religious leaders. References to comparable committees in other parts of Northeast India were made in a number of interviews.

The literature that links mediation and peacebuilding provides some additional insights concerning the role and strategies of insider mediators in peace processes. Though not explicitly addressing the role of insider mediators as such, the literature addresses both informal and formal mediation processes and actors. As Bercovitch and Kadayifci (2002: 21) argue, mediation is an important aspect of peacebuilding. This view is shared by Lund (2001) and Paffenholz (2001) who place mediation within the broader framework of formal and informal peacebuilding activities. According to Porter and Every (2009:75) informal peacebuilders within civil society can make a substantial difference to disrupting political deadlocks and providing alternatives to on-going conflicts. Findings from this field of research suggest that whilst state-level mediators typically use a traditional diplomacy approach to mediation, civil society mediators such as international and local NGOs, research institutes, churches and individuals use a variety of mediation approaches and strategies (Paffenholz 2001: 75).

This is supported by the few reports published by non-governmental organisations and that explicitly address insider mediation. Based on experiences of insider mediators in Nepal, Uganda, Mali, Philippines, Burundi, Kenya and Kyrgyzstan, Simon Mason concludes that insider mediators draw in multiple resources that are deeply embedded in their cultural context (2009: 16). Their insiderness and partiality also allows them to influence the conflict parties' behaviour "on a normative level" (ibid: 4). He further stresses the complimentary roles of insider and outsider mediators as well as the role insider mediators play in 'weak' states (ibid: 18). Furthermore, they are more flexible regarding methods, activities and time compared to official outsider mediators who usually are bound to a given mandate and timeframe (Giessmann and Wils 2011: 188).

Insider mediation may thus also help to overcome what Kyle Beardsley (2011: 4) has identified as an important dilemma of international peace mediation: the trade-off between the short-term and long-term effects of mediation. The argument is that third-party leverages exaggerate the trade-offs because their interfering involvement, while shaping the short-term incentives for peace, do not facilitate durable settlements. As a result, half of the mediated conflicts recur – leading to the conclusion that mediation makes peace less stable in the long run (ibid: 4). The long-term risks inherent in mediation can be even more pronounced in intrastate conflicts such as ethnopolitical conflicts. For instance, Gurses et al. (2008)

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[1] Roepstorff (2012); unpublished findings from research on conflict-induced displacement in Assam, North-East India, funded by the Canadian Government.

argue that mediated agreements and great power mediation increase the fragility of peace after civil war. This stands in contrast to the various scholarly works that argue that leverage is crucial for successful mediation (Sisk 2009; Zartman and Touval 1996). Here, insider mediation may contribute to sustainable peacebuilding. Because insider mediators – unlike their outsider counterparts – stay and do not leave the conflict scene, they have a keen interest in the implementation and realisation of the peace agreement. Among other things, the legitimacy of insider mediators stems from the fact that in contrast to outsider mediators, insider mediators do not leave the scene after a peace agreement has been agreed but stay and support its realisation (Lederach and Wehr 1991: 94). In addition, their efforts at the local level may help to transform the conflict in the long run. Due to their in-depth knowledge of the conflict and the parties, insider mediators are more aware of the conflict parties' fragmentations and changing goals and strategies during war time and, thus, "can play an important role in facilitating the transformation of relations between the conflict parties" (Giessmann and Wils 2011: 189).

Insider mediators may, however, have very limited space to act. Comparing the activities of insider mediators in Kenya, Ghana, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mozambique and Uganda Hislaire et al. (2011) find that apart from Kenya and Ghana, official peacebuilding efforts were largely driven from the outside. In the remaining cases, a reduced space for political dialogue and the threat of violent action are seen as the major obstacles for insider mediation. Thus, the extent to which insider or outsider mediators may play an active role in peace processes largely depends on the particular political context. In cases where outsiders may not have access to the conflict region and actors, insider mediators play a crucial role in the peace process. A case in point is Northeast India, were conflicts have not seen international intervention.[2] An oppressive political climate may, on the other hand, limit the space for insider mediation and make the intervention of outsiders imperative. In either case, insiders and outsiders may work together and their activities can complement each other in the peace process.

## 4. Conclusion

Though insider mediation is increasingly acknowledged as an important resource for peacemaking and peacebuilding, there is a surprising lack of systematic scholarly research of insider mediators' roles in formal and informal peace processes. Insights from anthropological and sociological research on dispute settlement practices suggest that their characteristics, strategies and techniques may differ considerably from the mediation model as promoted in Western professional trainings. Findings from the few studies suggest that insider mediators may play an important role in peace processes. Yet, many aspects and fields of insider mediation still remain un-researched and vague, like the practical application of the dichotomy of insiders

and outsiders, the way insider mediators contribute to peace processes, and the interaction of insiders and outsiders in peace mediation. This lack of research and appreciation has a negative impact on insider mediators' work in peace mediation processes. Being regularly sidelined and ignored, insider mediators often work independently from outsider mediators, and the insiders' knowledge and resources thus often remain untapped. Their efforts are, however, generally not subsumed under a comprehensive peace strategy. This is surprising, especially in light of the local ownership debate and numerous studies and evaluations on international peacebuilding that show that international initiatives which include local perspectives, ideas and resources are more likely to be effective and sustainable than those which do not. This is also true of mediation – an awareness that is growing both in the research and practice of international peace mediation, but that requires further research for a better understanding of the existing and potential role of insider mediators in peace processes.

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2  Here representatives from the Central Government have mediated in the peace processes. Due to the political context and the (geographic, cultural and political) division between 'mainland' India and Northeast India, it can be argued that this presents a case for outsider mediation rather than insider mediation.

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**Annex: Declaration**

I hereby declare that I am familiar with the Habilitation Regulations of the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education of Otto von Guericke University of 03.03.1999.

Furthermore, I declare that, in accordance with §5 of the Habilitation Regulations, I have written this thesis independently and that the aids used are fully indicated. In the selection and evaluation of the stated material, I have not been assisted by any persons, either paid or unpaid, other than the co-authors named in the respective chapters. Data and concepts taken directly or indirectly from other sources are marked with the source.

The work has not been submitted to any other examination authority in the same or a similar form, either in Germany or abroad.

I assure that to the best of my knowledge I have told the pure truth and have not concealed anything.

Berlin, 24.1.2022                                                Signature