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## KOFF – swisspeace

### Links

- [Beneath Everest – Nepal Reborn](#)

Further information:  
KOFF [Marcel von Arx](#)

### KOFF Premiere of Nepal Documentary Film

The Swiss premiere of the documentary film of Tulsi Bhandari „Beneath Everest – Nepal Reborn“ was held on 4 November at the KOFF Nepal Roundtable.

In the film young men and women tell why they became Maoist guerrilla fighters and went to war against the state, reasons which include poverty, discrimination and lack of perspectives. Victims of the military dictatorship and the war, notably those who suffered enforced disappearances, torture and forced recruitment especially in rural areas, illustrate the consequences of violence and how affected people have been left to fend for themselves, frustrated and helpless. Tulsi Bhandari’s first film also documents the difficulties of the current transitional phase, as Nepal seeks to establish peace and democracy, but is continually convulsed by instability and violence.

Those present considered „Beneath Everest – Nepal Reborn“ as a contribution to dealing with the country’s recent past. They also saw it as a warning, to politicians in particular, about the need for structural political and social changes indispensable for preparing a better future. In the view of the participants in the Roundtable this film should be shown to a wide audience in Nepal. 04.11.2009

### Links

- [KOFF Websites on Conflict Sensitivity](#)
- [Evangelical Development Service](#)
- [CDA: Do no Harm](#)

Further information:  
KOFF [Roland Dittli](#)

### KOFF Training on „Do no Harm“

As part of this year’s KOFF training series Wolfgang Heinrich of the Evangelical Development Service and Roland Dittli of KOFF conducted a 2-day training workshop on „Do no Harm“ at the beginning of November.

The „Do no Harm“ approach is one of the most important methods of conflict sensitive work. Originally developed in the context of humanitarian aid, this approach helps to anticipate unintended consequences of peace work and development cooperation, and to avoid negative side-effects on the conflict context.

With the help of real life examples the participants learned how to recognize at an early stage the possible negative consequences of their project work and to adapt their programs accordingly. The lessons learned so far from implementing the „Do no Harm“ approach were also discussed, as were possible applications in the participants’ own projects.

In an effort to ensure a smooth transition from theory to practice KOFF now schedules a practice day as a follow-up to each course. This enables participants, a few weeks after the workshop, to reflect on what they learned and discuss the challenges involved at the level of practical implementation. 06.11.2009

## Links

- [KOFF Websites on Conflict Sensitivity](#)
- [CDA: RPP](#)

Further information:  
KOFF [Cordula Reimann](#)

## Training on Effectiveness in Peacebuilding Activities

In collaboration with CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, KOFF organized in Basel the second part of the Training of Consultants/Advisors (ToC) in „Reflecting on Peace Practice“ (RPP). This part of the training, as for the first part in June, was in the hands of three professional consultants with international experience: Diana Chigas and Peter Woodrow (both from CDA), and Cordula Reimann (KOFF). Participants were from Swiss and international NGOs, development agencies and the federal administration.

The focus of the discussions and group work was on systemic conflict analysis, and related concepts from a systemic approach in conflict transformation such as archetypes. Archetypes designate systemic dynamics, such as the struggle for power among elites, which produce certain frequent patterns of behavior in violent conflicts. As in the first part of the ToC, here too the training relied on the participants' actual experiences and concrete examples. 13.11.2009

## Links

- [PalThink](#)
- [KOFF Websites on Israel/Palestine](#)
- [DCAF: Towards Palestinian National Reconciliation](#)

Further information:  
KOFF [Anita Müller](#)

## Gaza: Palestinian National Reconciliation and International Actors

KOFF organized a roundtable on Israel/Palestine in November on the subject of the „Palestinian national reconciliation process: A perspective from Gaza on the role of international development and political actors“. The guest speaker was Omar Shaban, a senior economic advisor and the current president of the Palestinian think-tank PalThink in Gaza. PalThinks works on the Palestinian reconciliation process and the effectiveness of international aid.

The discussion of the roundtable focused mainly on two issues, the effects of the siege and the national reconciliation process. Concerning the siege Omar Shaban emphasized the grave negative effects on the social fabric and on community values. Furthermore the blockade causes a huge administrative process to import, which has fostered corruption and led to the illegal but flourishing tunnel-economy. Finally the siege leaves Hamas unchallenged as the only service provider.

Secondly the question of national reconciliation was discussed. For Shaban the divide of the Palestinian people is a result of the Palestinian Authority's failure to achieve peace and internal development. Today, by contrast, national reconciliation is a precondition for exactly these objectives. The international community should promote the notion of political partnership, start engaging Hamas and support them in their transformation to the political sphere. Hamas on their part seems to be interested in becoming a recognized political actor.

In the discussion it was stated that the international community should abandon its focus on relief and to start addressing the root causes instead of the symptoms. This would mean that the international community strengthens its advocacy work, coordinates its efforts and makes its aid dependent on an improved economic and humanitarian access. 16.11.2009

## Focus

### Links

- [From War To Politics: Resistance/Liberation Movements in Transition \(Berghof, 2009\)](#)
- [In the Shadow of Violence: The Politics of Armed Groups. \(Schlichte, 2009\)](#)
- [Gontard speaks on his role as a mediator \(SF Tagesschau\)](#)
- [Rendez-vous/Tagesgespräch with Laurent Goetschel and Didier Péclard \(SR DRS\)](#)
- [Friedensverhandlungen als Gratwanderung \(SR DRS, Echo der Zeit\)](#)
- [Vom Umgang mit Guerillagruppen \(NZZ\)](#)
- [Literature: swisspeace Annual Conference](#)
- [Annual Conference: the concept](#)
- [Press Release \(German\)](#)

### Rebels with a Cause?

**Non-state armed groups play a key role in most of today's violent conflicts. It is important therefore for specialists from academia, diplomacy and peacebuilding to understand their motives and *modus operandi*. At this year's swisspeace Annual Conference researchers and practitioners discussed their knowledge of and experiences with non-state armed groups.**

With the end of the Cold War and the outbreak of civil war in Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone many commentators spoke of the beginning of an era of „new wars“. Non-state armed groups moved into the spotlight. Yet, the political objectives most of them pursue have largely remained unconsidered.

#### Question of legitimacy

Non-state armed groups differ so much in terms of their objectives, structures and development as to make it almost impossible to find a common definition. The question of their legitimacy however is a central contribution to the political understanding of these groups, as Klaus Schlichte of the University of Magdeburg explained at the swisspeace Annual Conference. Violence is destructive, claims human lives and causes long-lasting physical and psychic pain. This „shadow of violence“ forces armed groups to legitimize their actions, as only in this way can they hope to be successful in establishing themselves politically. To impose territorial control, clear internal structures and military dominance, military power must be legitimized within the group as well as in the immediate social and political environment and in the international political arena.

How can violence be legitimized? The external discourse focusing on solidarity and common experience of oppression plays a key role in this context. The Free Aceh Movement (GAM) in Indonesia for example put emphasis on the historic oppression and exploitation by the Javanese-dominated central government and military as well as the continuation of internal colonization even after independence. On this basis they argued for the right to self-determination for the people of Aceh. Rebel groups can also win support by taking on quasi-state functions such as ensuring order, operating legal or social welfare systems. Those structures create spaces used by combatants to carve out their position in society. This generates legitimization within the rebel groups which is consolidated by mechanisms of subjugation: military discipline, codes of behavior and disciplinary violence in the internal legal order.

#### Political transformation

What makes armed groups decide to lay down their arms, come to the negotiating table and transform into a civil political power? Groups like the Movimiento 19 de Abril (M-19) in Colombia, Sinn Fein in Northern Ireland or the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka were able to flexibly switch between violent and non-violent strategies, adapting their objectives to changed political circumstances. In most cases their decisions to pursue armed struggle or a political

strategy were based on rational considerations. Rebel groups generally transform their military structures only when convinced that their objectives can also be achieved through non-violent means. Such a fundamental strategic decision often meets with internal resistance. Therefore, internal cohesion and strong leadership, as in the case of Sinn Fein with Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, is of the greatest importance for a successful transition. Social and economic reintegration of the rebels is also indispensable for a peaceful transformation.

When the government in question no longer feels itself able to secure military victory or when non-state armed groups are able to establish stable alliances with civil society and political parties, readiness for negotiations on both sides increases. Since armed rebel groups play a major role in most current conflicts and to some extent also possess a certain international legitimacy, the international community cannot ignore them in efforts to bring violent conflicts to an end. Engaging non-state armed groups does however confront mediators with a number of dilemmas.

### **Negotiating with rebels**

With which rebels can and should mediators engage? Jean-Pierre Gontard reported to the Annual Conference on his experience as a mediator in Colombia, where he acted on a mandate from the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). As far as he is concerned the existence of political motives is a necessary precondition for substantive negotiations. To include armed groups as partners in talks while respecting international law is another challenge. It can be that key members of such rebel groups have been indicted for committed crimes and human rights violations, but make the granting of amnesty a condition of their participation in peace talks. In such cases the mediator must respect the legal framework. International law and human rights issues must be addressed in talks, according to Gontard.

Another dilemma emerges when a group is divided into those who favor negotiations and those who oppose them, as was the case with the FARC in Colombia. It is even possible that efforts to negotiate may contribute to the emergence of splinter groups. This further increases the complexity of a conflict and renders the mediation process more difficult. Finally, there is the question of how mediators can protect themselves against being exploited by the parties to a conflict. Gontard faced this dilemma in Colombia, where both the government and the FARC rebels attempted to win mediators as allies to their own cause. Dealing with such dilemmas is made even more difficult by the fact that mediators under time pressure are often forced to take intuitive decisions. On the whole however Gontard reached a positive conclusion: „The most important aspect in this work is that while it focuses on people who believe that change can only come about through armed violence, it is nonetheless possible to show such people that more can be achieved through the power of politics rather than armed force“.

03.11.2009

Author:

swisspeace

[Lukas Krienbühl](#)

Further information:

swisspeace

[Didier Péclard](#)

## News from Swiss NGOs

### Links

- [mission 21: Projects in Indonesia](#)
- [Dialogue Centre: UIN Sunan Kalijaga](#)

Further information:  
mission21  
[Katharina Gfeller](#)

### Mission 21: Interfaith Dialogue in Indonesia

The interfaith Dialogue Centre of the State Islamic University (UIN) in Yogyakarta which is supported by mission 21 has completed a series of four interfaith workshops in Kalimantan. These four-day interactive interfaith workshops, entitled „Interacting – live in“, have been organized in each of the provincial capitals of Kalimantan over the past three years. The 145 participants were young religious leaders and teachers from a variety of local faith groups including Muslims, Catholics and Protestants, Buddhists, followers of Tridharma, Hindus and traditional nature worshippers.

The aim of „Interacting – live in“ was to make interfaith dialogue tangible and use it as a practical means in initiatives that promote living together in a spirit of solidarity, overcoming ethnic and religious barriers. The participants spoke and discussed openly about their mutual fears and prejudices, reviewed common problems and analyzed the potential for conflict. They also visited various places of worship and planned interfaith activities. In this way they were able to get to know one another better, establishing interfaith friendship relations, and learning to better appreciate the variety of religious and cultural traditions through theological exchanges.

Subsequent to the workshops a number of participants have on their own initiative created interfaith forums. They are combating discrimination on religious grounds, taking position in political campaigns and urging politicians to abstain from exploiting religious differences. With the help of the Dialogue Centre, which is well connected to offices of the national government as well as religious institutions, they will continue to develop interfaith cooperation at the grassroots level through initiatives to combat the most pressing social problems including destruction of the environment, poverty and HIV/AIDS.

25.11.2009

### Links

- [cfd: Medica Zenica](#)
- [Medica Zenica](#)

### cfd Visits New Project in Bosnia

Since the beginning of the year the feminist peace organization cfd has been supporting the Bosnian organization Medica Zenica, which offers young women further training combined with pedagogical, psychosocial and economic support in two villages nearby the industrial city of Zenica. As in other former war zones so in Bosnia violence, which can take various forms, is on the increase. Women from rural areas rarely have a chance to talk about domestic and sexual violence, and are usually unable to afford further education. Training in sewing and upholstery skills for women should facilitate or even allow in the first place access to pedagogical and psychosocial assistance.

During a cfd visit to the project, head of project Sabiha Husic and the one in charge of the Zenica employment center praised the women's eagerness to learn.

Further information:  
cf [Annette Dietschy](#)

But at the same time they stressed the fact that even after they obtain their diplomas finding employment will be far from easy.

In most cases the 36 young women left school at around 14, married soon afterwards and moved in with the in-laws. Some are already mothers. Traditionally in the Bosnian countryside women who get hardly any social recognition are expected to look after home and family with no space for professional activities. However the prospect of a financial contribution to the household somewhat lessened opposition to the further training by the parents-in-law. The fact that the project also successfully helps to improve the young women's self-esteem is less well known to outsiders. Almost all of the participants want to take advantage of their diplomas to seek work in the city. Medica and the employment center are providing support by lobbying local entrepreneurs on the women's behalf. Finally, thanks to the new-found friendships with their peers the young women are finding it easier to deal with personal problems. 22.11.2009

## Links

- [PBI Switzerland](#)
- [PBI Nepal Project](#)
- [Protection Desk Nepal](#)

Further information:  
PBI Switzerland [Lisa Salza](#)

## PBI Invites Two Nepali Human Rights Defenders to Switzerland

Strengthening the role of women in the peacebuilding process was the main theme of a lecture and networking tour in Switzerland by two Nepali women human rights defenders, organized by Peace Brigades International (PBI). Laxmi Devi Khadka and Indira Ghale have different backgrounds. The former, due to her personal suffering as the wife of a disappeared person, is now a grassroots activist with the Conflict Victims' Committee against Impunity. The latter, a Dalit, works with Protection Desk Nepal, and trains peace activists in protection and security matters.

Highlights of the tour were a lecture given at the University of Basel's Institute of Sociology before an audience of about 100, a visit to the Forum on Minority Issues organized by the United Nations in Geneva, and a roundtable in Bern. In this context the two Nepali women stressed the importance of strengthening the role of women in Nepal while at the same time working to change the traditional conception of gender roles. Strengthening women's rights also means helping men to better understand the important role of women in peace processes. Members of their families often have difficulty in understanding why a woman wants to be heard and to defend her rights. At times the two women feel powerless, describing how due to its grassroots nature – and in the case of Ghale sometimes because of her caste – their work is dismissed by other human rights defenders as being of less importance. On this first visit to Switzerland Khadka and Ghale were able to exchange views with representatives of the Section for Peace Policy of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) as well as with other women human rights defenders, and thus to further develop their network. 13.11.2009

## Links

- [Palmyrah](#)
- [House of Religions](#)

Further information:  
Palmyrah [Nathalie Peyer](#)

## Palmyrah Meeting: Reflections on the Current Situation and the Future of Sri Lanka

„Sri Lanka – a forgotten country?“ was the title of a an event focusing on current developments and peace initiatives, organized by Palmyrah and the Sivanerikoodam Hindu temple association following a suggestion from the Bernese House of Religions. The event was attended by some 70 Swiss and Tamils, and supported by the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Bern-Jura-Solothurn as well as the Decade to Overcome Violence. The Palmyrah Association reported on its experiences during a recent project visit. The Tamils expressed concerns about the fate of war-displaced persons in the camps. Six months after the war ended a majority of them still live in camps controlled and guarded by the army. These displaced persons are not allowed to leave the camps. Because of an information blackout there are rumors in circulation that the Tamils find particularly alarming. The military victory over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the power and leadership vacuum it has created leave the Tamils in Sri Lanka as well as in the diaspora feeling disheartened and helpless.

Even so, many proposals were discussed concerning peace work and human rights, for which contributions can be made in Switzerland: the development of an international democratic movement of the Tamil diaspora, the promotion of dialogue with the Sinhalese/Buddhist side, psychosocial care for Tamils in Switzerland, collaboration between the various Sri Lankan groups in Switzerland, and support for the activities of young Tamils.

15.11.2009

## News from Swiss Government Agencies

### Links

- [3C Conference 2009](#)
- [KOFF Newsletter article on the 3C Conference](#)

### 3C Approach Finds International Approval

Switzerland has been invited, following the 3C Conference of last March on comprehensive approaches for improving the effectiveness of international activities in fragile contexts, to introduce this approach at various strategic forums. The „3C“ approach (coherence, coordination, complementarity) focuses on the outcomes that should be sought in the field in fragile contexts, and relates to cooperation between Whole of Government and Whole of System approaches. In September Switzerland was invited to participate in a symposium on the Whole of Government Approach at the Marshall Center in Germany of the United States European Command (EUCOM) and the German Armed Forces. It was represented by representatives from the Federal Department of Defense, Civil Protection and Sport, the Political Affairs Division IV of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. The purpose was to discuss the dialogue and exchanges between the various approaches in a forum of both military and diplomatic personnel from the West Balkans and Black Sea riparian states. Participants stressed the importance of common mechanisms for planning and institutionalized information exchange.

Further information:  
SDC [Cristina Hoyos](#)

The Swiss example with its pool of experts made available to various institutions should be promoted. As far as concrete implementation of discussions is concerned Switzerland for its part plans joint training programs. It also takes into consideration the type of institutionalized, interdepartmental exchanges that have already been successfully experimented in the USA and Germany. Thanks to the considerable approval with which the 3C approach was met at the symposium a presentation to the US government in Washington has been scheduled for 11 December, to be followed by presentations to the EU in Brussels and in a number of European capitals. At the same time, states should be identified that are interested in cooperation for further joint conceptual development of and delving into the 3C approach.

15.11.2009

## Links

■ [PA IV](#)

Further information:  
PA IV  
[Henriette Eppenberger](#)

## Burundi Configuration For Peacebuilding

Switzerland has been a member of the Burundi Configuration of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission since May, and since July Switzerland's Permanent Representative to the UN in New York, Ambassador Peter Maurer, has been serving a one-year term as its chairman. The Ambassador can rely on Switzerland's many years of experience of cooperation in Burundi, where Switzerland is active in areas such as the promotion of political dialogue, containing the spread of small arms and light weapons, justice in transitional processes, good governance and healthcare.

Ambassador Maurer has set as his goal the mobilization of both the attention and the resources of the international community in New York, notably with regard to the elections due to take place next year. Another aim of his tenure is to improve coordination between the members of the Commission and the Configuration but also between the various UN agencies and the World Bank in so far as peacebuilding in Burundi is concerned.

As chairman he has already made two visits to Burundi and has spoken out on holding free and fair elections in discussions with the government as well as the international community. The socioeconomic reintegration of demobilized combatants, of returned refugees, internally displaced persons and of other disadvantaged groups, as well as the mobilization of resources needed to carry out activities in these areas have also been on the agenda.

16.11.2009

## Links

- [Global Forum on Migration & Development](#)

Further information:  
PA IV [Manuel Jakob](#)

## Third Global Forum on Migration and Development

At the Third Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD), held in Athens on 4 and 5 November, the 130 states in attendance discussed the issue of increasing international cooperation in the area of migration and development.

Migration and development are linked in various ways. Lack of development is among the most important reasons for migration. At the same time migrants are themselves actors in economic and social development, both in the destination countries and the countries of origin. This interrelationship has become increasingly important in recent years. The states are today also more aware of the positive aspects of migration and increasingly prepared to make use of them. International migration dialogue plays a key role in this context, both for exchanges of experiences and for the launch of concrete projects.

In just a few years the GFMD has managed to establish itself as the most important international platform for migration dialogue. At this year's conference in Athens Switzerland was represented for the first time by Eduard Gnesa, the recently named Ambassador Extraordinary for International Migration Cooperation. The interdepartmental nature of the Swiss delegation – representing the Federal Departments of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Police, and Economic Affairs – is an indication of the Confederation's efforts to involve all relevant institutions in the debate.

This issue of a comprehensive approach to migration policy was also the focus of a discussion round at the Forum, co-chaired by Switzerland and Morocco. Switzerland has been striving for years to achieve greater coherence in migration and development policies at the international level. In this area the Confederation can rely on considerable experience, having created bodies in which representatives of the various departments concerned meet regularly to develop an interdepartmental approach in the area of migration. 05.11.2009

## International Partner Organizations

### Info

News from ten international KOFF partner organizations.

- [Akademie für Konflikttransformation](#)
- [Berghof Center](#)
- [CDA Collaborative Learning Projects](#)

### International Alert

- In the context of a civil society [dialogue project](#) involving Georgian and Abkhazian representatives, International Alert has published a document on the need for security guarantees and obstacles to their implementation. Each side has made its own analysis to serve as the basis for a dialogue process.

### Conciliation Resources

- A [report](#) entitled „Out of the margins: Securing a voice for internally displaced people, lessons from Georgia“ documents the efforts of an NGO network to strengthen the political participation of internally displaced persons in Georgia. It outlines ways to improve the political participation of this population group in the aftermath of violent conflicts.

- [Conciliation Resources](#)
- [European Centre for Conflict Prevention](#)
- [European Peacebuilding Liaison Office \(EPLO\)](#)
- [Gruppe Friedensentwicklung \(FriEnt\)](#)
- [GTZ](#)
- [International Alert](#)
- [Plattform Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung](#)

## EPLO

- On 2 October representatives of EU member states gathered in Brussels to discuss progress on the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 on women, peace and security. Representatives from Nepal, Bosnia, Liberia and the African Union described their experiences. EPLO and two of its member organizations, International Alert and Kvinna till Kvinna, presented a list of [recommendations](#) which were developed during the EPLO-Alert civil society conference in September. The meeting took place just two days after the adoption of two new [resolutions](#) on women, peace and security and shortly before the UN Security Council's annual debate on UNSCR 1325.

## CDA

- CDA Newsletters are now available [online](#). For a subscription free of charge contact [Candice Montalvo](#). In its latest edition CDA published a [paper](#) that discusses the conceptual confusion involved in distinguishing between peacebuilding and conflict sensitivity and proposes concrete solutions.

## Akademie für Konflikttransformation

- For research and training purposes the Academy for Conflict Transformation of the Forum Civil Peace Service (ZFD) presents a comprehensive resource list on civil peace service. It encompasses all conceptual and policy documents since the earliest stage, publications related to ZFD projects, resources on civil conflict transformation as well as a selection of publications in English. [Download](#).

## Events

### Info

This section gives pointers to selected events in Switzerland pertaining to civil peace building.

- KOFF offers a five-part [training series](#) this year.
- swisspeace is organizing a [presentation](#) in German of the book „Facing Global Environmental Change: Environmental, Human, Energy, Food, Health and Water Security Concepts“ on 10 December from 11am to 1pm at which co-publishers and authors will introduce this comprehensive volume on security issues. A laudatio and aperitif will follow the presentation.
- For the second time more than 60 organizations in German-speaking Switzerland are participating in the „16 Days on violence against women“ [campaign](#) to raise attention on gender specific violence. One of the events scheduled in this context, on 9 December, deals with „Masculinity and Gender Violence – Implications for Security in Post-Conflict Contexts“. Ursula Keller,

cfed expert on gender and peacebuilding, will discuss with South African political scientist Sheila Meintjes. Starts at 18:15 in the main building of the University of Bern. [Contact](#).

- [Peace Brigades International Schweiz](#) and [Peace Watch Switzerland](#) have scheduled afternoon information sessions on 30 January in the AKI in Bern and 6 February in the Kulturhaus Helferei in Zurich.
- This year's [Geneva Peacebuilding Platform](#) Forum, entitled „Saving lives or building peace? Roles and Responsibilities of External Actors in Conflict Settings“, takes place on 11 December from 9am to 5pm in the Auditorium Jacques Freymond (AJF), Parc Barton, 132 rue de Lausanne, Geneva. Contact: [Frédérique Guérin](#).
- The „[Go for Peace](#)“ course imparts theoretical as well as practical knowledge on how to deal constructively with conflict situations in four modules. The participants reflect on how they behave in conflicts and put their new knowledge into practice in everyday life. The course includes a total of 14 days and lasts from February to June 2010.
- PBI Switzerland is organizing a [photo exhibition](#) on the peace process in Colombia entitled „Visions of Justice“ by Jorge Mata from 7 to 18 December at the University of Basel. On 10 December there will be a [vernissage](#) with a screening of the film „Sin Tregua – Unwanted witness“.

## Publications

### Info

- [In the Shadow of Violence: The Politics of Armed Groups](#) (Klaus Schlichte)

### In the Shadow of Violence

Trajectories of non-state armed groups differ considerably: some fail whereas others are able to establish quasi-governmental institutions. In his recently published book „In the Shadow of Violence: The Politics of Armed Groups“, Klaus Schlichte from the University of Magdeburg aims to explain these differences. Based on a socio-political approach he identifies legitimacy as the central variable explaining the success or failure of non-state armed groups. Power achieved through violence has to be transformed into domination and some sort of institutionalized rule to be stable in the long run. In this process the use of armed violence has both delegitimizing and legitimizing effects. The book analyzes how armed groups strive for legitimacy within the group, in its social and political environment and on the international arena in order to overcome the „shadow of violence“ created by the pain inflicted upon victims. Different legitimizing mechanisms have been observed: charismatic leadership, narratives of common experiences and oppression, internal subjectivation, discipline or clientelist structures. In a comparative study those aspects are addressed with reference to a number of examples ranging from the Serbian Volunteer Guard to the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN) and illustrating that the politics of armed groups lies at the heart of the understanding of various trajectories.

24.11.2009

## Web Tip

### Info

- [Transnational and Non State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses](#)

### Transnational and Non State Armed Groups Project

Non-state armed groups have attracted increased attention in the post Cold War era. However, the prominent role of these armed groups in conflicts has not been matched by systematic research on the characteristics of those groups. „Transnational and Non State Armed Groups: Legal and Policy Responses“, a joint research project of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies and the Program on Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research based at the Harvard School of Public Health aims to fill this gap by providing an online database on non-state armed groups (NSAG).

The adopted definition of NSAG is fairly inclusive and vague since it encompasses both national and transnational groups that have the capacity to challenge the state's monopoly of legitimate force. One can navigate the database through a user-friendly interactive map or a search function. The profiles of 50 NSAG ranging from the National Democratic Front of Bodoland to the Mayi-Mayi in the Democratic Republic of Congo describe comprehensively features such as origins, objectives, structure, leadership, external aid or funding. Very useful is also the listing of external resources such as books, reports or websites available on specific non-state armed groups. If one is interested in a NSAG available in this database, the range and comprehensiveness of information will certainly satisfy the user. However, for many countries such as Colombia, Chad or Sudan the map is still blank.

16.11.2009

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• [Alliance Sud](#) • [APRED](#) • [BAHA'!](#) • [Brücke Le pont](#) • [Caritas Switzerland](#) • [Caux - Initiatives of Change](#) • [cfd](#) • [CIMERA](#) • [Common Cause Switzerland](#) • [DCAF](#) • [Eirene Switzerland](#) • [Fondation Hironnelle](#) • [Forum für Friedenserziehung](#) • [Geneva Call](#) • [Green Cross Switzerland](#) • [GSoA](#) • [HEKS](#) • [Helvetas](#) • [IICP](#) • [Intercooperation](#) • [International Association for Human Values](#) • [Interpeace](#) • [Interteam](#) • [LIPS](#) • [Media21](#) • [Medico International Schweiz](#) • [Medienhilfe](#) • [mission 21](#) • [MIVA Switzerland](#) • [Palmyrah](#) • [Peace Brigades International](#) • [Peace Watch Switzerland](#) • [PeaceWomen Across the Globe](#) • [Pestalozzi Children's Foundation](#) • [Quaker United Nations Office](#) • [Schweizerischer Friedensrat](#) • [Schweizerischer Katholischer Frauenbund](#) • [Schweizerisches Arbeiterhilfswerk](#) • [Service Civil International Schweiz](#) • [Society for Threatened Peoples](#) • [Swissaid](#) • [Swiss Academy for Development](#) • [Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund](#) • [Swiss Red Cross](#) • [Swiss Refugee Council](#) • [terre des hommes Switzerland](#) • [Women for Peace Switzerland](#) • [World Vision Switzerland](#)

