

Concept note

International Workshop on the legacy of armed conflicts Southern African and comparative perspectives

Pretoria, 28-29 July 2016

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies and Centre for the Study of Governance Innovation (GovInn), University of Pretoria

Achieving stable peace, building accountable state institutions and (re)establishing trust are core challenges in the aftermath of an armed conflict. While violent conflicts are disruptive, they also offer opportunities for political and social change.

However, the passage from conflict to sustainable peace is a complicated process. Formal and informal processes taking place during the war and in its immediate aftermath can have profound long-term implications. The consequences of a troubled history are particularly visible in Sub-Saharan Africa, a continent that has been prone to civil strife. Even in Southern Africa, which has been heralded as a 'success story' of peacebuilding, past wars continue to shape in many ways politics and societies. More than twenty years later, in South Africa, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia politics is still dominated by the protagonists of past conflicts. Moreover, while Southern African societies are 'peaceful' in the sense that armed conflict has ceased, they are still affected by various forms of societal violence.

This event is part of the GIGA Research Platform events series. The GIGA is a leading research institute that combines social science expertise on four world regions, including Africa. The GIGA is particularly interested in advancing Comparative Area Studies (CAS), a scholarly field that combines the context sensitivity and knowledge of area studies with the explicit use of comparative methods, in order to generate both contributions to broader disciplinary and theoretical debates, and better insights into the cases. The aim of the Research Platform is to disseminate the findings of research carried at the GIGA in its regions of expertise, facilitate scholarly dialogue across regions and reinforce partnership with local researchers and local research institutions.

This event will bring together scholars based in and working on Southern Africa and GIGA researchers in order to reflect on the legacy of conflicts for sustainable peace. Researchers from Southern Africa have long debated Southern African conflicts and their impact on the present. GIGA researchers, through the research teams War and Peace Processes and Institutions for Sustainable Peace, have also analyzed the transformational processes that characterize the passage from war to peace in Africa, as well as in the Middle East, South America and Asia. By bringing together research on Southern Africa and research that focuses on

other countries and regions, the workshop will generate mutually beneficial theoretical insights and useful policy implications.

We are particularly interested in contributions that focus on one of the three following topics and that are either based on intra-regional (between African cases) or cross regional (between Africa and other region) comparison or that apply broader theories or concepts to the South African or other African cases.

Peace processes and long-term peacebuilding

The transition from war to peace is characterized by formal and informal bargaining processes about the distribution of power and the shape of future state institutions, particularly key ones such as the security forces and the justice sector. Many of the choices that appear necessary in the short term to achieve stability can prove counter-productive in the long term. Can decisions taken during peace negotiations hamper political and economic reforms? Can they encourage clientelism and corruption? We invite papers that reflect on the long term legacy of peace processes.

Former armed actors in post-conflict societies

What happens when former armed actors reinvent themselves as state rulers or political parties? The literature on civil wars and statebuilding suggest that when 'revolutionary rebels' – as opposed to opportunist rebels – come to power, this might have positive implications on post-war governance. However, area studies specialists from Southern Africa have also emphasized that the 'war time mindset' of liberation movements tends to discourage flexibility, adaptation and openness to criticism, all qualities that are important to rule a country in times of peace. We encourage contributions that explore the transformation of violent actors in time of peace and its impact on political governance.

Violence and trust in the aftermath of conflict

Violent conflicts disrupt societal trust and leave many people traumatized by the experience of violence. In some post-conflict societies, violence continues in peace time taking apparently non political forms, such as crime, gender based violence and violent protests. How can trust be rebuilt in these societies, so that they can become more authentically peaceful? We welcome papers that look at the long term impact of violence on society and that reflect on how to address post-conflict violence and restore trust.

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