Bringing Russia and China in from the Cold: Lessons from The Great War

By Dennis Sandole, Professor of Conflict Resolution and International Relations, dsandole@gmu.edu

It is ironic that, during the centenary of the First World War and a period of declining violence worldwide, as documented comprehensively by Harvard's Steven Pinker (2011) and others (see Goldstein, 2011; Morris, 2014), the possibility of war between major powers is once again rearing its head and in two volatile regions: The dispute between China and Japan over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea and the near-war standoff between Russia and the West over

Pro-Russian activists examining an armoured vehicle they claim they captured from the Ukrainian army. Photo: Flickr user Александр Лысенко.

Crimea and Eastern Ukraine.

Early last year, Britain's Financial Times (FT, 2014) commented that, "While there is no reason to fear that the world in 2014 is on the edge of such an epochal disaster, there are some disquieting similarities between then [1914] and now." Alliance commitments (The U.S. security treaty with Japan; NATO's Article 5, "all for one and one for all" collective defense guarantee); a nearly deterministic action-

reaction escalatory dynamic that renders rational human agency all but inoperable, and the impact of threat-based stress on the complex relationship between the limbic (emotional) and neocortical (thinking) parts of the human brain that, at some critical tipping point, allows the emotional to trump the rational. The insidious result is a self-stimulating, self-perpetuating violent conflict system where it no longer matters who threw the first punch because "conflict-as-process" will have overwhelmed and overtaken "conflict-as-startup condition" as the main driver (see Sandole, 1999, Ch. 6).

These conflict dynamics converge with the results of the classic work conducted on the arms race that preceded the outbreak of WWI by British physicist and peace studies pioneer, Lewis Fry Richardson (1939, 1960). Beyond some critical point of "no return" in the escalation of a dynamic conflict system, a stable equilibrium in the form of a balance of power can shift to an unstable equilibrium which tips over to either -- through positive feedback -- a runaway arms race and the outbreak of war or -- through negative feedback -- a condition of total disarmament, which Richardson likened to "falling in love".

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commentary

Inside This Issue...

S-CAR Student and Alum at USAID

By Jackie Finch, Career and Academic Advisor, jfinch@.gmu.edu

network

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), whose mission is "to partner to end extreme poverty and to promote resilient, democratic societies while advancing the security and prosperity of the United States," is the primary US federal government agency, tasked with administering civilian foreign aid. This agency was created by executive order in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy. Although the organization was started to mainly provide "technical and capital assistance programs," the 1970s show a shift to a "basic human needs" approach focusing on "food and nutrition, population planning, health, and human resource development and education." Currently, the organization also helps in rebuilding efforts after war in Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East. In addition, USAID has helped in disaster and poverty relief, as well as tackling global problems such as environmental issues, bilateral interests, and socio-economic development.

Over the years, many more people have come to work on projects that USAID assists than just permanent USAID staff. In 2012, the 3,909 employees of USAID, were helped on projects by over 1,000 people in local communities and government agencies who also received assiatnce from USAID to embark on projects.

S-CAR has many students and alumni that work and intern for USAID. Last summer, I visited Rahwa Woldeyesus and Daniel Sheehy at their workplace in Washington DC. Daniel an alumnus, is a full time employee at USAID, while Rahwa an alumna, is currently interning with them. They both expressed their commitment to the conflict resolution field and how this experience had made them come to enjoy working in the field as well as doing research and project management.

Rahwa began in the Pathways Program, a two year internship, managing ADR in Diversity and Inclusion while she was a student at S-CAR. She has also been involved in communication and marketing special events. She manages ADR mediation with informal EEO complaints. "It is all about partnership, so far as it is functional and sustainable." She graduated from S-CAR in May 2014 and is looking to make the step to also work as a full time employee at USAID.

Daniel works as a Program Analyst at USAID and is using his background to effect meaningful democratic participation. Daniel is a graduate from the S-CAR Malta program, a highly intensive program, in which students receive two degrees in a 14-month period - an MS in Conflict Analysis and Resolution and an MA in Conflict Resolution and Mediterranean Security. Although jobs and internships at USAID are very competitive, S-CAR graduates have demonstrated that they are attainable. Check out their website at: www.usaid.gov/work-usaid.

Thank you, Daniel and Rahwa, for letting me visit with you. Keep up the great work and representing S-CAR. ■

From left to right: Daniel Sheehy and Rahwa Woldeyesus. Photo: Jackie Finch.

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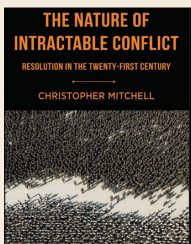
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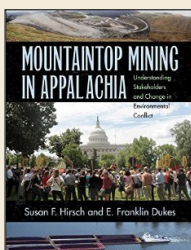
Mountaintop Mining in Appalachia: Understanding Stakeholders and Change in Environmental Conflict
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Ohio University Press

Experiencias Latinoamericanas en el Abordaje de Conflictos
Alicia Pfund, Editor
University for Peace Press

Peacebuilding Through the Airwaves

By Florindo Chivucute, S-CAR MS Student, fchivucu@gmu.edu

Angola achieved its independence in 1975 after a protracted liberation war against Portugal. After independence, Angola embraced communism and unfortunately became the scene of more fighting between the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), led first by Agostinho Neto and then by Jose Eduardo dos Santos, and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) led by Jonas Savimbi. The civil war eventually ended in the year 2002 after claiming more than 1.5 million lives over 27 years, and this was the period that I was born and raised in. Unfortunately, although the end of the civil war was expected to mark a significant change in the lives of ordinary Angolans, I made the hard decision to leave my homeland. To me, it seemed that the situation in my country, rather than improving, was rather getting worse.

In 2005, I decided to move to the United States of America instead of Portugal or Brazil where many Angolans had relocated because of the effects of the civil war. For me, while growing up, the United States had come to represent a beacon of what democracy ought to be, and I wanted to experience this system for the first time in my life. When I arrived in October 2005, I dedicated my time mainly to learn English as a second language because it was my first time to learn or take English classes. This learning process took two years but, in the meantime, I managed to survive in the United States by speaking Spanish that I learned when I was younger by watching television shows. After receiving my certification in English, I enrolled in college. In the summer of 2009, I earned my Associate's Degree in Liberal Arts from Northern Virginia Community College and in the fall, I was accepted to George Mason University where I was able to earn my Bachelors degree in Government and International Politics in the spring of 2011. A year later, I was accepted to Mason's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution (S-CAR).

I chose to join the S-CAR community because during my undergrad work, I realized that the transition from formal peace to social peace in Angola would take a long time and would require many people with the political will and skills to consoli-

Staff and Volunteers at Friends of Angola. Photo: Florindo Chivucute.

date this transition. As such, S-CAR was the place where I saw this hope in terms of learning the skills and tools needed to help my country.

By the start of 2014, I had acquired so much knowledge from my studies that I decided to form an NGO called *Friends of Angola* in order to help raise the consciousness of the world community about the challenge of the Republic of Angola and to support Angolan civil society, as I realized that many people in the United States did not know about the political and social challenges that Angolans were facing. This non-profit was created to help educate many about Angola and to empower Angolan civil society in order to build a peaceful, democratic, and prosperous society. A few months after forming *Friends of Angola*, I decide to also start a radio station called *Radio Angola*, in order to create a platform and space where everyone, in particular Angolan youth, could talk about any issue that they were facing. This move proved to be very popular and so far, we have had 87 radio shows with more than 28,000 people tuning in to listen to our shows. Due to the restrictions imposed by the government of Angola on traditional media such as national print and televised news that are controlled by government, many Angolans do not have the space where they can critically discuss issues that are not in the government's interest. So this project (Radio Angola) provides such a space, as well as a voice to the voiceless, a technique that I learned in one of my classes at S-CAR to bring about change. Some of the popular topics that we discuss on Radio Angola relate to the role of youth social movements as agents of social, political and economic change, democracy, human rights, domestic violence, corruption, transparency, the consequences of political intolerance, and the role of civil society. *Friends of Angola* is without a doubt in its infancy and we plan to create more projects to help to continue empowering Angolan civil society in order to build a peaceful, democratic and prosperous society. Links to *Friends of Angola* link: http://www.friendsofangola. org; *Radio Angola* link: http://www.blogtalkradio. com/radioangola ■

Reflections on "The Battle of the Narrative" Workshop

By John DeRosa, S-CAR MS Student, jderosa@gmu.edu

Earlier this year, the Department of Defense approved the prospectus for drafting a military concept to shape the development of future capabilities titled, "The Human Aspects of Military Operations." The concept prospectus recognizes recent U.S. military experiences and the importance of information and what it terms "the battle of the narrative." This concept recommends developing the ability to: identify, understand, and influence actors; build trust with key actors and groups; draw on sources of legitimacy; and address popular grievances and counter adversary messaging.

Unfortunately, reinforcing the military's current understanding of conflict narratives has proven costly and likely fuels narratives sustaining violence. Contrasting the current approach, narrative conflict resolution recognizes conflict dynamics where narratives are mobilized to account for actions and consequences of actions for conflict parties and how narratives shape relationships between conflict parties. Therefore, in response to the prospectus, students of Professor Sara Cobb proposed a day long workshop introducing the concept writing team to alternative approaches to understanding narrative conflict dynamics. To develop an understanding of alternatives to the "weaponization" of narratives by future military commanders and, if successful, influence the development of this military concept towards conflict resolution rather than escalation, the students proposed preparing an environment where a cross-section of knowledge-

Participants of the Battle of the Narrative Workshop. Photo: John DeRosa.

able practitioners participate in facilitated dialogue. Thanks to the tireless efforts of S-CAR students, the Center for Narrative and Conflict, and the Student Association of S-CAR sponsored a workshop, "the battle of the narrative" on November 18, 2014.

The workshop kicked off with a "Narrative and Conflict" world café asking participants to share a story from the last decade of war, where they were disappointed at our military's approach to narratives and conflict. The conversations continued with discussion on what do we know so far about narratives and conflict and what we still need to learn about use of narratives in military operations. Equipped with constructive possibilities developed in the world café, simultaneous focus groups examined tough, divisive issues around the themes of the use of imagery in narratives, narrative pathways, and the dynamics of counter-narratives. To end the day, the participants were invited back to a plenary session were they were led in a reflection of insights garnered throughout the day.

Insights included a recognition that the military does not own or control narratives and that there are a number of narratives present in conflicts that military does not recognize. Participants recognized that identifying, understanding, and engaging narratives requires a degree of expertise the military does not have and may need to be developed. Some participants voiced a realization that narratives are a reflection of identify and intent, provide context of the past and a vision of the future. Some participants voiced hesitation at engaging others' narratives, as this opened the opportunity to challenge the military's narrative.

The day's event concluded with multiple participant invitations to carry on the dialogue. U.S. Special Operations Command invited the Center for Narrative and Conflict to continue the discussion at a follow-on workshop on November 19 and 20, 2014. Additionally, the U.S. Army's Asymmetric Warfare Group invited the participants to form a working group to further examine the nature of narratives in conflict. ■

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, January 28, 2015
Book Launch: Alicia Pfund and Christopher Mitchell
6:00pm - 8:00pm

Tuesday, January 30, 2015
Resume Review Workshop
12:00pm - 2:00pm

Wednesday, February 11, 2015
S-CAR/SPIGIA Career Fair
9:30am - 5:15pm

Thursday, February 12, 2015
Legal Responses to Sexual Violence
6:00pm - 8:00pm

Thursday, February 19, 2015
S-CAR Undergraduate Dialogue and Difference Series
7:00pm - 9:00pm

Opinion: Reflections from Burkina Faso

By Innocent Rugaragu, S-CAR PhD Student, irugarag@gmu.edu

Many of us followed the political protests that led to the military coup d'état in Burkina Faso following President Compaoré's decision to change the constitution to allow him another term in office. Some agreed with Ambassador Johnnie Carson, who said "this is manipulating and subverting the constitution" and "an affront to democracy and to the rights of their own people." Others, like Simon Allison, cautioned against what he called "the excitement and romance of Burkina Faso's popular revolution as revolutions solve nothing on their own, it's what comes next that really counts." As we in the field of CR continue to follow the situation in post-Compaoré's Burkina Faso, we too can reflect on Burkina Faso's revolution and wonder whether violent change is good for unity, peace, and democracy, and whether such change should be hailed or prescribed for other African countries.

Two days of violent uprisings resulted in the deaths of several people, the destruction of government buildings, and the ousting of President Blaise Compaoré in October 2014. With Compaoré's flight to Cote d'Ivoire, the military quickly assumed power in Burkina Faso in order to maintain order. Talks soon took place in an effort to have the military allow civilians to lead a one-year transitional government while long terms plans were made to return to constitutional rule. ECOWAS representatives and three presidents: John Dramani Mahama of Ghana, Jonathan Goodluck of Nigeria, and Macky Sall of Senegal, and the Africa Union representative Mohamed Ould Abdel Azizi of Mauritania, called for a one-year period civilian-led government. The United Nations and some western countries also backed this civilian headed transition as the best way forward for the country. The final proposal that was put together by civil society groups led to a successful meeting where military leaders joined 23 electoral college representatives to name Mr. Michel Kafando as the new interim president, whose mandate started immediately and would end in November 2015. What was impressive was that the group met on a Sunday and by Monday they had named Mr. Kafando, a former foreign affair's minister and Burkina Faso's ambassador to the UN, as the new president. What is equally impressive is that this group was comprised of political, military, religious, and traditional leaders. Lt. Col. Isaac Zida was also installed as the new transitional prime minister. Together, they were tasked to elect 25 members to the interim government and a council of 90 members who will act as legislators until November 2015. Though this process happened smoothly, many pro-civilian groups have raised concerns about having a military Lt. Col., Isaac

Mass protests against Blaise Campaore. Photo: Flickr user Jennifer Touma.

Zida, as prime minister. The argument, though, has been that his presence was needed for national security purposes.

Before the meeting that named Kafando as the new president, I asked myself: Is Burkina Faso moving closer to democracy and peace following the recent changes and bouts of civil unrest? In light of previous violent revolutions in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Syria, I was concerned about the following issues: What might be the likelihood that violent change would tear apart the fabric of a country rather than strengthen it? Could change brought about by violence sacrifice democracy and human rights, rather than bring them about? Would the country be led into more political chaos and despair, if the military refused to hand over the reins of power to an eminent civilian personnel? And finally, What was the likelihood that violent change could lead to a power vacuum easily filled by extremist groups or rebel soldiers, as we have seen in Mali, Libya, Syria, and Iraq?

Although I am a strong proponent and supporter of change and democracy, I have become increasingly skeptical of some analysis of the road to democracy in African countries. In as much as democracy matters, should it not matter how democracy is attained? As a scholar of conflict analysis and resolution, I wonder if the lovers and leaders of democracy can safely and successfully embark on the long journey toward the democratization process without a marathon of violence, which, I am glad, Burkina Faso has avoided thus far. Often times, the "Multi-decade Leaders," as Ambassador Carson calls them, and military leaders are comfortable to use violence if they are challenged.

John DeRosa, S-CAR MS Student

By Kwaw de Graft-Johnson, S-CAR PhD Student and Newsletter Editor, kdegraft@gmu.edu

John DeRosa came to S-CAR "looking for alternative approaches to national security challenges. "I was confronted with finding a new path for myself," he said. John is a second year MS student who enrolled at S-CAR after completing a fellowship with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's Seminar XXI. The transdisciplinary approach of S-CAR encouraged John to continue his Seminar XXI investigation on how various analytical lenses reveal different courses of action to resolve security challenges.

John DeRosa. Photo: John DeRosa.

Unexpectedly, the lessons learned from this investigation had immediate application to his work in the Department of Defense and as an Adjunct Professor. Seminar discussions and conversations at S-CAR's various centers of practice informed and influenced elements of defense strategic planning he supports. In revamping his classroom to incorporate an elicitive approach, he discovered new voices in his classroom that has students asking about when is the next class he'll teach. John attributes finding a new path in his professional and personal life to the faculty and fellow students at S-CAR. "Their care, concern, and coaching has helped shaped a personal resiliency and provided me space to negotiate a new understanding of my experiences as a veteran of war." This resilience and understanding has allowed him to engage in new conflict spaces and to re-engage in familiar conflicts in new ways. This past summer he returned to Kosovo, where he once served as a peacekeeper, to facilitate a narrative-based program intended to collectively generate relationship patterns between the military and civil society that contribute to shaping a local security guarantee. In November, he led the "Battle of the Narrative" workshop to develop an understanding of alternatives to the "weaponization" of narratives by military commanders. Ultimately, John would like to discover how societies in the midst of protracted conflict collectively generate relationships patterns that contribute to shaping locally sustainable security guarantees. This research should inform the development of non-coercive alternatives to traditional military interventions that engage societies in a manner better suited to resolving security dilemmas through domestic means. ∎

Jeremy Tomlinson, S-CAR PhD Student

By Kwaw de Graft-Johnson, S-CAR PhD Student and Newsletter Editor, kdegraft@gmu.edu

Jeremy Tomlinson started the PhD program at S-CAR in the fall of 2014. "I chose the program because it was one of the very few institutions that offered a unique blend of academics with practice in the field of conflict resolution" he said. Jeremy is a dual citizen of the U.S. and U.K. and has also lived and worked in many places all over the world including Nigeria, Cambodia, India, and South Sudan. "One of my favorite places to visit and eventually work was Cambodia, where I experienced first hand how the people showed resilience in rebuilding their society after the genocide they experienced."

Jeremy Tomlinson. Photo: Jeremy Tomlinson.

Jeremy moved to Cambodia after he completed an MA in Post-war Recovery Studies at the University of York (UK) in 2011. For over two years, he worked as the Documentation and Learning Officer at the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS), where he undertook independent research, oversaw the organization's publication agenda, and assisted the Myanmar peace process support program. "I became interested in the Myanmar peace process because, of its complexity and uniqueness. Working with the non-state armed groups on the Thai-Myanmar border, I was impressed by their revolutionary thinking and their genuine desire to negotiate a lasting peace." In addition to that, Jeremy has worked as an independent consultant for Plan International, KHANA, and the Foundation for Local Development. These assignments included research projects, workshop coordination, conflict analysis, and, most notably, backstopping the Ethnic Peace Resource Project Phases I and II, funded by the Norwegian and Swiss Ministries of Foreign Affairs.

Jeremy describes his experience at S-CAR so far as being very exciting and enlightening. "It's great to be around such a diverse faculty and student body, with a broad range of experiences and research agendas." After completing his PhD, he would like to devote his time both in the classroom and the field, where he hopes to mediate conflicts between armed groups and governments. Outside his academic and professional experience, Jeremy likes to explore the world on his motorcycle. ∎

Lessons from the Great War: Bringing Russia and China in From the Cold

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In addition, crisis decisionmaking research tells us that highly stressed participants in a rapidly escalating crisis tend to over-perceive threat and, worse, to overreact to it (see Holsti, 1968; Zinnes, 1968). This dynamic appears to have overwhelmed Kaiser Wilhelm when, following Russia's mobilization during the summer of 1914, he panicked over the realization that Germany would likely be forced to fight a two-front war. By contrast, thanks to John F. Kennedy's reading of Barbara Tuchman's (1962) classic, The Guns of August, the president was able, in 1962, to deal deftly with his crisis team and Soviet Secretary Nikita Khrushchev and, as a consequence, prevent the Cuban Missile Crisis from spinning out of control into World War III.

To effectively manage these and other factors as the world gets further into the centenary of WWI, Gideon Rachman, the Financial Times' chief foreign affairs commentator, argued that national policymakers should avoid being impacted by the "Munich mindset" which, in summer 1914, resulted in the macho, nationalistic posturing that helped precipitate the catastrophic war. Rachman's continuing challenge is that, in some cases, the dominant approach to international affairs is still governed by the "Munich" instead of the "Sarajevo mindset;" for example, the provocative saber-rattling between China and Japan over the disputed islands -- a crisis compounded by the US treaty-based obligation to defend Japan should any of its territory, including the disputed islands, come under attack. Given China's declaration of an "air defense identification zone" over the islands, which clashes with Japan's long-standing similar declaration, plus the potentially disastrous "near miss" in December 2013 between Chinese and US naval vessels in the South China Sea, the possibility of an accidental collision or miscalculation in the East China Sea between Chinese, American, Japanese, and/or South Korean naval ships or aircraft, leading to runaway escalation, still cannot be ruled out.

Mr. Rachman lamented that the Munich mindset remains so entrenched that a real intellectual shift would be required to change it. Indeed, as Russia continues to escalate the crisis over Ukraine and its economy deteriorates further, some observers wonder if, through accident, miscalculation or overreaction, NATO policymakers will feel compelled to invoke their Article 5, "all-for-one-and-one-for-all" defense commitment, resulting in an East-West war. Two former UK ambassadors to Russia, Sir Tony Brenton (2014) and Rodric Braithwaite (2014), expressed their concerns in the editorial pages of the FT by joining with John Thornhill (2014) in declaring that "A settlement with Russia is the only option."

What would a settlement with Russia look like? Here, we must consider that since the end of the Cold War, NATO has expanded right up to Russia's borders, absorbing non-Soviet Warsaw Pact states (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, and Slovak Republic), threatening to embrace Soviet successor states Georgia and Ukraine as well. In the process, Russia has been pushed further to the periphery. The progressive exclusion of Russia from post-Cold War European security architecture converges with developments in conflict resolution theory informed by research in neuroscience; i.e., a major driver of violent conflict is exclusion from structures that privilege others at ones expense (see Taffel, 2012; Fitzduff, 2014).

A potential solution to the Ukraine crisis, therefore, is that NATO members should negotiate with Mr. Putin a Euro-Atlantic security structure that includes Russia. This is not far-fetched: In December 1991, then Russian President Boris Yeltsin said that Russia's membership in NATO was "a long-term political aim", which was very compatible with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev's (1987) concept of a "Common European Home" and U.S. President George H.W. Bush's vision of a new world order with "Europe whole and free." Later, even Russian President Vladimir Putin saw no reason why Russia should not be in NATO. The implication is, if Russia were inside the house – even as framed nearly twenty-five years ago by Richard Ullman (1991, Ch. 4) as the new European Security Organization -- Russia would have a stake in preserving it, and not what it is doing at present: destabilizing it.

In addition, building upon recommendations I outlined at the outset of Barack Obama's first year in office (Sandole, 2010, Ch. 5), the president could embark on a strategic course of action by convening, within the context of the G20, a series of meetings to start the process of establishing more effective global governance. A global problemsolving regime whose objective would be to tackle the interconnected, intractable elements of the "Global Problematique" (Sandole, 2010) -- prevent or manage crises and address conflicts that, if left unaddressed or dealt with simplistically, could escalate into global catastrophes. Such a regime would comprise the "best and the brightest" from around the world, including Russia and China: Social and natural scientists, humanities scholars, policy experts, retired military officers and diplomats, former officials, and others would publicize widely and share with political leaders their evidence-based research findings on the etiology and optimal handling of select complex conflicts and other global challenges that no one state or international actor can address adequately on its own (e.g., climate change, environmental degradation, pollution, Ebola, poverty, state failure), but only by "communicating, cooperating, coordinating, and collaborating" among themselves (see Nan, 2003).

At this point, we have nothing of the kind. We have only traditional, one-dimensional politics and policies, all stuck in Thucydides' (1951) box which continues to reflect the cross-cultural, cross-temporal, near dominance of the core "take-away" from the Melian Debate of 416 BC: "The strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must!" But surely, we now know that that simple but compelling Realpolitik logic has been serially upended by the attacks perpetrated by marginalized and alienated young men and women on the World Trade Center, Pentagon, Bali, Madrid, London, Boston, Montreal, Ottawa, New York, Sydney, and Paris!

One hundred years after the outbreak of the Great War, and more than fifty years into the development of the European Union – despite its manifold challenges, the closest thing on the planet to Immanuel Kant's (1983) "perpetual peace" – we can surely do better than "sleepwalk" into a replay of the 1914 catastrophic exercise in global carnage and assault to the commons (see Clark, 2012).
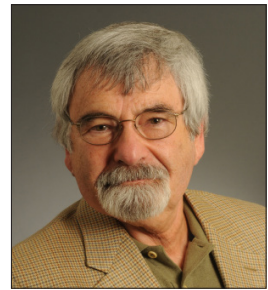
Dennis Sandole, Professor of Conflict Resolution and International Relations. Photo: Mason Creative Services.

Reflections from Burkina Faso

This often leads to the reactive use of violence from those clamoring for change. Violent revolutions with high death tolls seem to have very little success continentally, as seen in Libya, Mali, and Egypt, but revolutions with fewer deaths, like Burkina Faso, seem to have better results. From a leadership for unity, peace and reconciliation perspective, would it not be more prudent and wise to consider other roads to democracy in Africa that do not involve as much violence or may involve fewer deaths? For example, would it not be better for the African Union, European Union, the USA, Canada, and other pro-democracy countries to be more pro-active than reactive? Should they not engage in practices such as building and nurturing democracy via diplomatic dialogue, pressure for leadership integrity, private and civil society pressure based on performance failure, and just institution-building and support? At the same time, these countries and institutions can help to plan a safe exit strategy for those leaders who are trapped in their postions, following the danger of the coup d'état or mob justice that might end their lives or legacy.

As building democracy and peace takes time, Burkina Faso should expect things to get tough before they get better.

The good thing we see, though, is that the unity and patriotism shown by pro change groups, especially youth, women, and traditional leaders, and some military and political leaders, for positive change becomes the foundation for a bright future. Also, both the African Union and the United Nations threatened to impose sanctions on Burkina Faso if the military regime did not return the presidency to civilians. Canada was the first nation to withhold aid and the US also contemplated the best course of action to take. My fear was that if more sanctions were imposed, would they not have hurt most the common people struggling for democracy? As for the hypothesis that what we are seeing in Burkina Faso is the "Black Spring" much like the "Arab Spring," and will spread across the African continent bringing much needed change, remains to be seen. African countries are uniquely different and each nations' path to democracy involves complex political, economic, military, external, social, and cultural contexts that differ. Perhaps the developments in Burkina Faso would usher in a shift in how nations on the continent are governed. Leaders may actually start to govern for the people and not just a few and, perhaps, the journey toward a mature democracy in Africa would begin. ■

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