

**Reflecting on Peace Practice Program**  
*Understanding Cumulative Impacts of Peacebuilding*

*Issue Paper:*

**LEADERSHIP AND ADDING UP**

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*This Issue Paper is a working DRAFT.*

*As part of our collaborative process,  
CDA's Reflecting on Peace Practice Program  
welcomes your feedback,  
based on your own experience and insights.*

*Please e-mail your thoughts or questions regarding this Issue Paper  
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*Thank you in advance  
for your observations and suggestions.*

This document was developed as part of a collaborative learning project directed by CDA. It is part of a collection of documents that should be considered initial and partial findings of the project. These documents are written to allow for the identification of cross-cutting issues and themes across a range of situations. Each Issue Paper represents the views and perspectives of a variety of people at the time when it was written.

**These documents do not represent a final product of the project.** While these documents may be cited, they remain working documents of a collaborative learning effort. Broad generalizations about the project's findings cannot be made from a single case or Issue Paper.

CDA would like to acknowledge the generosity of the individuals and agencies involved in donating their time, experience and insights for these reports, and for their willingness to share their experiences.

For background information on the collaborative learning process and cumulative impacts, please refer to the *Understanding Cumulative Impacts of Peacebuilding* document on the CDA website by directing your browser to the following pathway:

[http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/other/rpp\\_understandingcumulativeimpactsofpeaceefforts\\_background\\_Pdf.pdf](http://www.cdainc.com/cdawww/pdf/other/rpp_understandingcumulativeimpactsofpeaceefforts_background_Pdf.pdf)

*Issue Paper:*

## **LEADERSHIP AND ADDING UP**

“[Burundi’s history of] poor governance can be associated with absence of vision, or visionary leadership. Most often, this absence of leadership is characterized by a failure to understand the medium and long-term consequences of certain actions and to act accordingly to prevent them. According to a number of observers, this lack of visionary leadership has served to obscure the country’s problems and has facilitated a general denial of certain truths.”<sup>1</sup>

During the RPP collaborative learning process, for countries that remain stuck in conflict, the absence of leadership is often brought up as an explanation among both case interviewees and feedback workshop participants. This could also be seen as the absence of fertile ground for leaders to emerge. Often the leadership of individual people—from Nelson Mandela in South Africa to John Hume in Northern Ireland—to promote compromise, represents major turning points for peace. Examining the cumulative evidence, RPP explored the concept of leadership in relationship to adding up, asking:

- What is the function of different kinds of leadership (political, civil society, business, etc) in peacebuilding processes in divided societies?
- Do acts of leadership contribute to the adding up process?
- Is visionary or charismatic leadership a vital component for countries to emerge from conflict?
- How is leadership that furthers peace processes exercised?
- What are the conditions that allow people to emerge and exercise leadership?
- How is negative leadership or a lack of leadership dealt with?

RPP cumulative case study evidence suggests that there are several ways that leadership (broadly defined) has potentially contributed to Peace Writ Large. This discussion will include both acts of leadership inside formal political spaces (of people with authority) as well as outside formal spaces (the work of international agencies, civil society and communities). This paper will also consider acts of leadership by both groups and individuals and categorize what they do rather than who they are—not just looking at those who were elected, self appointed, or took power by coup.

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<sup>1</sup> RPP Burundi Case Study p 7

## Defining leadership:

What is the function of different kinds of leadership (political, civil society, business, etc) in peacebuilding processes in divided societies? Do acts of leadership contribute to the adding up process? How is leadership that furthers peace processes exercised? What are the conditions that allow people to emerge and exercise leadership? How is negative leadership or a lack of leadership dealt with?

There are many, often competing ways of framing the concept of leadership that can provide useful lenses for this discussion:

- The “great man” theory of leadership assumes that leadership qualities are inherent and that great leaders were born and not made.
- The “traits” approach to leadership focuses on individual personality, ability, and other specific characteristics. In this case personality traits – for instance adaptability, confidence, charisma, etc – that enable leaders to inspire others to follow them, are connected to a leaders’ effectiveness.
- Behavioral theory identifies and analyzes the behaviors of successful leaders and assumes that leadership can be taught, and that it is not a quality that individuals are born with.
- Context theory rejects the study of individual leaders, their actions and personality, and describes leadership as an *activity*, which is the interaction of leaders, followers and their situational context.
- Transactional leadership is an exchange that takes place between leader and follower, often favoring the interests of one group over others and perpetuating the status quo.<sup>2</sup>
- Transformational leadership is characterized by leaders who engage with their followers in a way that raises both to higher levels of motivation and morality, often transcending factions and changing the way people view what is possible.<sup>3</sup>
- Adaptive Leadership theory frames leadership as “giving the problem solving work back to the people by getting them to face reality, learn, discover, solve problems, take responsibility for the work they must do to generate real progress.”<sup>4</sup> Leadership can be exercised anywhere, and is not just a formal title conferred on the elite few.

The significance of positive leadership to the adding up process is clear. Rothstein writes, “this scenario of weak leaders confronting weak leaders is something of a paradigm for protracted conflict, and breaking out of its constraints may be a necessary but not a sufficient prerequisite for peace... societies with strong leadership on both sides are more likely to make agreements which will be sustainable... societies with weak leaders on both sides are ore likely to continue to maintain the status quo within their society since their political positions continue to be assured.”<sup>5</sup>

The study of specific leaders and their particular traits may seem like a natural entry point. In societies that experience conflict or are in transition, focus on elites and their ability or missed

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<sup>2</sup> Bass, BM (1997) From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. P 20

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Heifetz et al. (2009) The Practice of Adaptive Leadership.

<sup>5</sup> Gormley-Heenan, Cathy, “From Protagonist to Pragmatist: Political Leadership in Times of Transition”, INCORE, P 22-24

opportunities to exercise leadership is important because it is likely to be elites who have the power to bring about peace processes or continue violence. Looking at the conditions and events that allow leaders to emerge and lead, as well as the missed opportunities in places where peace continues to be elusive, can also be useful for framing the concept. Often, leadership may not actually come from an individual or a small group of individuals, but rather stems from the structural conditions that enable or disable individuals to assume leadership roles.

In the article “From Protagonist to Pragmatist: Political Leadership in Societies in Transition” INCORE examines the evolving nature of the “culture of leadership” in South Africa, Northern Ireland and the Middle East and the roles of political leaders. In each of these diverse contexts, conditions had to change significantly to allow leadership to be exercised to advance the cause of peace. For example, in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s and the following decades, with a few exceptions, political leadership lacked the formal authority to make decisions and did not take risks, was heavily reliant on outside influences and political positions rarely changed hands. By the 1980’s, a series of shifts created a new culture of leadership. These shifts included changes like “political leadership became re-defined as leadership with a desire to hold power and ... more broadly defined and inclusive... and politics and leadership slowly became a profession which more people began to embrace.”<sup>6</sup>

### **RPP Case Evidence:**

RPP cumulative cases have evidence of 1) leaders creating essential turning points that represent paradigm shifts towards peace, 2) leaders and track I negotiation processes, 3) dynamics between leaders and their constituencies and 4) civil society and community level leadership contributing to adding up:

#### **1. Turning points**

*Symbolic/iconic acts that represent a new paradigm* A paradigm shift can occur when leaders show regard for the other side—not necessarily in the form of an agreement—but perhaps in the acknowledgement of the legitimacy of a set of interests or a symbolic act that represents thawing of relations. These events were often identified by interviewees as key turning points, even if they represented one step forward followed by two steps back (Cyprus). In Tajikistan, a meeting held between President of Tajikistan Rahmonov and Chairman of the UTO, Said Abdullo Nuri, in Northern Afghanistan was an extraordinary example of their willingness to find common ground. As experienced and informed leaders, they understood the consequences of continuing the military confrontation and brought their constituents along even if they were not ready for compromise. In the spirit of compromise and in recognition of the interests of the UTO, President Rahmonov pressed parliament to adopt amendments to the constitution allowing the activities of “parties based on Islamic values” in Tajikistan. These amendments are considered today a cornerstone for the peaceful coexistence between secular state and political Islam in Tajikistan.

In Cyprus, leaders on both sides were influenced by the gathering strength of the citizen based peace movement and set up a series of dinner meetings for discussion of the Annan Plan. “This

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid P 34-35.

type of informal meeting in a relaxed atmosphere gave the appearance of a gradual move towards friendship and reconciliation because it was not held at a formal, neutral, UN sanctioned meeting place. The whole of Cyprus as well as the world saw the first glimmer of hope in these affairs because the news was covered island wide and internationally.” Clerides and Denktash reopened the issue of missing persons from both sides, an issue that had been stalled for fourteen years without resolution.

***Events that represent conceptual shifts can change minds and change narratives*** In Burundi, the Arusha process had a huge psychological effect on the population, even though the Accords themselves had major shortcomings and are often called the peace agreement with no peace. It was the first time that Burundian society had come together to discuss key drivers of conflict and “the accord itself served as training ground for dialogue, tolerance, and search for compromise. Arusha marked crucial achievement not so much in terms of content, but of process it set in motion.”<sup>7</sup> Similarly, the border openings in Cyprus in 2003 represented a wave of hope for the future, and produced many concrete benefits like jobs and increased exposure to the other side through contact. Despite these gains, the defeat of the Annan Plan referendum on the Greek side and the general lack of political will of all the people in power quickly overshadowed any hope people had for border openings leading to progress.

## **2. Leadership and Track I negotiations**

***Leadership can catalyze negotiations*** John Hume engaged with Sinn Fein at a time when no one would talk to them. Sant’Egidio opened preliminary talks between the Burundian government and one of the rebel movements. A South African newspaper editor and a civil society leader went to Zimbabwe with exiled ANC leaders. These initiatives broke taboos and opened a process of engagement with those excluded from discussions. These steps prepared the ground for subsequent engagement of key actors in negotiations, and for public acceptance of the need for negotiations.

***Pressure and coercion by third parties.*** The evidence is mixed on the effectiveness of coercive leadership. In Burundi, Nelson Mandela “impose[d] solutions where parties did not agree,” and in Northern Ireland the Anglo-Irish agreement was imposed on the parties. Despite criticisms, these coercive moves were acknowledged as critical positive turning points for the peace process—creating structural changes in the situations that the parties could never have negotiated on their own. In Cyprus, by contrast, perceptions of coercive tactics by the United Nations, indeed quite similar to Mandela’s in Burundi, were perceived negatively and were partly responsible for the failure of the last round of negotiations.

## **3. Leaders in relation to constituencies**

The case evidence suggests that the relationship between leaders to their constituencies is a key dynamic to understanding what might add up to peace. Case evidence showed situations in which leaders were responsive to the demands of their constituencies, as well as situations when leaders set a new course and shaped a new understanding of what seems possible. Sometimes leaders sense constituent readiness, and sometimes constituents need to be brought along and make difficult choices and compromise for the larger goal of peace. The concept of elastic band

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<sup>7</sup> RPP Burundi Case p 10

leadership describes the potential hazards of leaders getting too far ahead of their constituencies. “The leadership is expected to stretch its constituents in the interests of peace, all the while remembering that if the elastic band is stretched just a little too far there is always the danger of it snapping.”<sup>8</sup>

***Leaders that create consensus within one’s own party or constituency is often more important as a step towards peace than reaching out to so-called enemies.***<sup>9</sup> In South Africa, the ANC did extensive internal consensus building work to bring along radical elements and ***consolidate*** their base before reaching across lines. In Tajikistan, both President Rahmonov and UTO leader Said Abdullo Nuri pushed their constituencies to take part in the peace process, even though many politicians and field commanders refused to recognize the peace agreement and were highly skeptical of the process. Their willingness to compromise and push their constituencies led to the signing of the peace agreement.

The Middle East peace process has been marred by leaders lacking an understanding of the attitudes of their constituents and not doing the necessary work to build internal consensus. As a result, negotiation processes have ground to a halt because of lack of ownership and buy in or an understanding of the agendas among the constituencies on both sides. A joint Israeli Palestinian research team concluded that the Oslo peace process failed in part because the negotiators were not seen as representing the interests of the people on either side of the divide. The Israeli population has been educated about the costs of peace but not the options or how to choose them; and there was a lack of ownership on the part of every day people and no understanding within the larger population what the destination was. There was also no public education on either side for a common future. One Palestinian peace advocate said he saw leaders and committed individuals who “lost their constituencies... there has been a loss of hope. There’s no hope for an agreement in the near future.”<sup>10</sup>

The INCORE evidence has examples in which political leadership on both sides was ready to make an agreement but their constituents were not, or when leaders failed to convey the significance of a concession made by the other side, missing opportunities to create bridges between parties.<sup>11</sup> Getting too far out ahead of constituencies can cause leaders to lose credibility and buy in and cause peace processes to grind to a halt. After observing so many failed attempts at compromise (albeit, with small gains along the way,) the RPP case writer asked, “whose job is it to bring the public along?” Is it possible to take steps towards peace without constituent support?

***Leaders can shape people’s understanding of the conflict as well as of what kind of change is possible.*** Despite some situations in which leaders risk pushing their constituents too far or losing them completely, presenting new ways of thinking about solutions can shape people’s understanding of the conflict as well as of what kind of change is possible. John Hume introduced the unpopular idea of engaging with the IRA in the Hume-Adams talks, a risky decision that created long-term positive change. At a time when neither the British nor the Irish

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<sup>8</sup> P 12 politics to pragmatist

<sup>9</sup> Gormley-Heenan, Cathy, “From Protagonist to Pragmatist: Political Leadership in Times of Transition”, INCORE, P 11-12.

<sup>10</sup> RPP Middle East Case, p 20

<sup>11</sup> Gormley-Heenan, Cathy, “From Protagonist to Pragmatist: Political Leadership in Times of Transition”, INCORE, P 9.

government was willing to talk with the IRA or its political wing, Sinn Fein, John Hume pursued his own agenda of drawing Republicans into political discussions. The Hume-Adams talks were unpopular, but helped assist republicans to move towards a more political approach. “His concepts and visions, which often seemed far-fetched at first, captured paradoxes and dilemmas that later turned out to encapsulate the way the situation needed to move, and tended to become the dominant discourse about the situation and the way people understood the conflict.”<sup>12</sup>

***Leaders can depart from the past by honoring the social contract.*** There are examples of leaders that honored their transaction with those who put them in power by subordinating their own self-interest. This kind of event proved to be a confidence building measure among constituencies in the durability of the law and the possibility of forward movement. In some cases these acts of leadership might not contribute to overall peace consolidation, but were building blocks. For example, in Burundi after the Arusha Accords were signed, Pierre Buyoya was forced to abide by his initial pledge to cede the seat of president to his designated successor in 2003. Despite his reluctance to leave power, his departure had symbolic importance because it showed that previous engagements needed to be respected, laying the groundwork for a culture of respect for communities and, in a certain sense, regarding them and the law itself as binding. In Mozambique, in 1990, the new constitution showed that the regime was willing to change substantively for the first time. This was a confidence building measure and represented steps towards democratization.

***Often, it is typical for leaders to promote the status quo, particularly in uncertain times.*** In Cyprus politicians on both sides promoted a divisive culture and deepened ethnic divisions and fears in order to maintain the status quo, and their positions of power. Papadopolous portrayed the Annan Plan as pro-Turkish, deepening Greek Cypriot fear of a yes vote and entrenching the status quo. The crossings momentarily helped smooth out old stereotypes and misconceptions, while creating new and different relationships, but the post referenda political climate was one of renewed mistrust and fear and betrayal on side of TC. There was a deep lack of faith in their own leadership, and many Greek Cypriots had perception that many politicians built their careers on the Cyprus conflict did not help bring more group cohesion either, as those forces worked against whatever “yes” movement was actually beginning to develop there. Confrontations between pro settlement GC political factions on the left and right did not help because the politicians became the obstacles, an issues of compromise were not part of any party’s official policies. This led to general feeling that the status quo was OK.

***When constituents want to shift the status quo, acts of leadership can happen outside of formal political spaces.*** Social movements can create change in response to what is happening in the government with respects to the conflict, and often has significant effects on creating positive change for peace. In the Philippines, the success of the People Power Revolution in 1986 in toppling the Marcos regime strengthened the legacy of non-violence as a social change mechanism. One academic notes that, “the democratic transition brought about by the people power revolution created the conditions for building national consensus on the need for social and political reforms that would break down the repressive apparatus of the martial law regime and address gaping social inequities.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> RPP Northern Ireland case p 1

<sup>13</sup> RPP Mindanao case



Unfortunately, constituencies sending clear messages to political leadership about the intolerance of the status quo does not always result in long term change. In Cyprus, the Turkish Cypriots found that while they were serious about a solution, their leaders were not. The 'Revolution from Below' is an example of constituents showing the way when leaders might have otherwise preferred to maintain the status quo. This mass mobilization to promote the referendum on the Annan Plan "...reflected the "maturation of the next generation of leadership... rallies opened the doors for people to express their desire for something different". It was supported widely by civil society, businesses and unions (in particular the Chamber of Commerce played a key role in uniting the Turkish Cypriot agendas), and forced the Turkish military and Turkish Cypriot leadership to open some check points across the green line which allowed a freedom of movement not seen since 1963, and led to the defeat of Denktesh in 2003, bringing pro-solution forces to power in the north. The Turkish Cypriot mobilization for a yes vote represented a significant shift, but competing interpretations (and misrepresentation by media and political leadership) of the plan caused a no vote on the Greek Cypriot side, reversing any progress and deepening divisions.

***Post-peace agreement political status quo is maintained in some relatively "peaceful" countries*** Case evidence shows that in some places, post peace agreement—despite differing degrees of reform and modernization—the way power is held functions very similarly to how it did before the conflict, yet there is little complaint from the general population about the perpetuation of this kind of status quo. Each of these countries has achieved relative peace and stability and change in other areas and has been praised by the international community: "Cambodia's progress has involved tinkering with the status quo rather than fundamental structural change: power, leadership and governance continue to be based on family ties, connections and "client" relationships, without change or questioning from the broader population." This has caused wealth to accumulate in the hands of a small circle and a loss of scrutiny by those close to the top.

Similarly in Tajikistan, President Rahmonov, has suppressed all political opposition and left major parts of the peace agreement unimplemented (in particular with regards to power sharing). The system of government is identical to what it was pre conflict, with a different clan in charge. Despite this, he has managed to maintain popular levels of support amongst the general population (called "the unifier of all Tajiks") and is heralded by the international community for his contributions to the peace process.

Finally, in Liberia, many interviewees said that little had changed and that the political system is as corrupt as ever and patron client relationships that characterized pre war Liberia persist. "Many interviewees stressed that they found the conditions in post-war Liberia to resemble pre-war Liberia and that the root causes of war had not been properly addressed... widespread poverty, underdevelopment and exclusion in parts of the country and the marginalization of parts of the population have remained unchanged."<sup>14</sup> Despite criticism by many interviewees, the leadership in these countries maintain a level of popular support that ensures they will stay in power, and the relative stability, despite persistent unaddressed issues, keeps violence from occurring.

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<sup>14</sup> RPP Liberia Case p 41

## 5. Civil society and community level leadership

In the RPP cases there were notable examples of civil society level leadership that affected the adding up process. Specifically when there was a lack of political will or political legitimacy at the government level, civil society and community level actors had catalyzing effects. Also linkages between the community and national levels became important for violence reduction at the community level, making community leaders particularly key.

***Civil society leadership provided linkages that contributed to adding up*** Maha Ghosananda is seen as a key civil society peace leader in Cambodia, most notably for starting the Dharmayeytra for Peace and Reconciliation walk through war torn parts of the country to promote peace. In 1993, he led the second walk through areas of open civil war, encouraging citizens to overcome fear of political violence and intimidation to exercise their right to vote. Ninety percent of the Cambodian electorate voted in the 1993 elections and many interviewees attribute the success of the elections to Ghosananda.

The NPC in the Solomon Islands was a group of councilors and advisors representing each of the nine provinces and had field monitors that served an essential role in traditional reconciliation ceremonies and helping RAMSI and the IPMT access to communities through their contextual knowledge and relationships, creating an essential linkage. One NPC Advisor reflects “In the absence of inspired political leadership or will within government, or of consistent or coherent leadership from churches, or an effective civil society, NPC created and occupied a unique space between government and the civil sector. At the same time it had greater influence and contact with government than other civil society orgs.”

***Good leadership at the community level and intra-community bonds and social networks were among the most significant resources that communities drew upon to avoid or resist violence and kept communities from being pulled to extremes***<sup>15</sup> In Kosovo, in all cases of successful avoidance of resistance to violence, individual leaders in communities took a clear stand and mobilized community action, or in the case of communities that did not react prematurely to reports of violence, sent a clear message to stay calm and not to provoke. Not only were timeliness and clarity of message important, but in some communities leaders took public stands against violence and failed...Leadership that was listened to was credible and connected to the community and could command attention and disseminate info quickly to their communities. In Mindanao community efforts at establishing ceasefire mechanisms and longer-term resistance to violence have been successful, as persons caught in the crossfire realize that, together and networked to others outside their communities, they can have a positive impact on

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<sup>15</sup> The Steps Program at CDA explored evidence of community resistance to violence and if leadership was a contributing factor: Evidence showed that leadership was an important contributor, but not the determinant factor, of processes and outcomes in communities that resisted violence. Leadership assumptions that Steps evidence debunks:

- Strong charismatic leadership is necessary to motivate people to resist violence.
- To resist violence, people need particular ideologies or visions.
- The leadership required to enable a community to choose the extraordinary path of conflict prevention must, itself, be out of the ordinary. It is assumed that new and non-traditional leadership and leadership structures are required.

the violence thrust upon them. This shows the importance of establishing a critical link between community leaders and national leaders.

## **6. Leadership development programs**

Feedback workshop participants reflected on working with leadership in conflict-affected contexts, and determined that initiatives must be directed at both the structural and individual levels. In working on the individual level, creating incentives for positive leadership and removing obstruction to good leadership are key. Central in this regard is removing fear and emphasizing legacy (i.e. how will leaders be remembered). Reducing fear can be seen as removing an obstacle whereas focusing on the legacy that leaders leave behind is an incentive. It is key in working on an individual level, that leaders are included in processes and are able to exert influence, or their buy-in to change will be limited due to fears of marginalization.

In working on the structural level of leadership, it is key to understand that change is long-term. Augmenting structural conditions for good leadership can take 20-30 years and may very well come in tandem with a shift of mindset brought on by a new generation. This is particularly the case if the leadership culture is institutionalized, and poor leadership is a way of life than an exception.

In working on systemic factors of leadership, traditional leadership can play a vital role. Such leadership may have strong influence over political elites, as well as represent communities and general public. For structural change in leadership to be effective, however, the entire chain of leadership needs to be targeted, thus impacting national leadership all the way to local leadership. Without this holistic approach, structures are unlikely to change in a sustainable way.

### **Ongoing questions:**

- Are there examples of leadership helping people see a broader vision for the future, building consensus within communities, and shaping people's understanding of what is possible that have contributed to peacebuilding on a larger scale?
- How does a notable *lack* of leadership affect the adding up process? Are there examples of political space becoming constrained, including events that might actively undermine the peace process on the part of leadership?
- Does higher-level leadership provide the context/principles for lower level people to do their work or the other way around? What kind of legwork/other forms of leadership create the conditions for key people to emerge and lead?
- What helps to open political space and how have leaders taken advantage/not taken advantage of this kind of window? Is the act of leadership to open the political space itself or are they taking advantage of political space becoming open (reactors)?