

bulletin

No. 57

July–September 2011

Re-defining the human security debate through social media

By Katherine Prizeman

Human security concerns have been redefined through new media and social technology widening public discourse on issues of global concern from mass atrocity crimes to disarmament. Commonly known as Web 2.0, social media tools and networking technologies have altered the rules of engagement for diplomacy, both official and unofficial. Human security challenges no longer fall exclusively under the purview of state officials and UN staff, but are open to a growing number of academics, advocates and avid networkers.

Global Action to Prevent War (GAPW) embraces a wide range of communication vehicles that we believe are necessary to a strong, dependable human security framework including research publications, regional workshops, UN-based monitoring, and in-person consultations with diplomats and civil society. Social media has quickly become a critical component of our communication with the UN-based and global diplomatic communities. Social media has enabled us to broaden and increase our conversations with diverse civil society partners and constituents who are most closely impacted by the core issues that define our work—including curbing proliferation of illicit small arms, preventing mass atrocity crimes, and increasing women's participation in peace processes.

Although the majority of social media is often used for personal and frivolous purposes, such tools, notably Facebook and Twitter, represent much more than vehicles for endless, banal updates on movie and dinner choices. They link individuals by providing a common platform for discussion in one centralized, easily accessible place. Such tools also create opportunities to

move beyond information sharing and venting personal frustrations to real action by motivating, inspiring, and organizing users. The leap from random sharing to more serious-minded human security research is neither overly wide nor overly ambitious. The dynamic nature of social media technologies allows for peace and security discussion to keep up with rapidly changing global circumstances and the research which chronicles, contextualizes and evaluates such circumstances.

There are strong proponents of social media who posit a causal relationship linking such media and deep political change, while skeptics view such technologies as channels of facilitation rather than direct agents of change. In any case, the power of Web 2.0 is incontestable. The Egyptian revolution of 2011, for example, exploded onto Twitter and Facebook as individuals sought a platform for exchange.

Social media tools should not replace traditional forms of journalism and research, but rather provide a digestible and creative way to consume and explore mass information flows. Social media is a powerful supplement to passively reading reporting and commentary in a newspaper. There is surely a propensity towards anarchic and unfocused discussion on social media. This is not, however, necessarily a categorical roadblock to providing educated activists and policy analysts with hands-on, pragmatic, reliable tools with which to research, organize, and collaborate.

It is imperative that these tools are not converted into mere sound bites devoid of content. They must be understood as tools that do not represent an end in and of themselves, but instruments that provide the opportunity for information linkage and exchange whereby a vast public of global citizens can both highlight and absorb new trends and perspectives in peace and security. It is, nonetheless, the responsibility of the user to make these tools relevant and robust.

Inspiration for new research and policy can be derived from direct social media contact offered to global constituents seeking a more robust human security. This is especially relevant to on-

going developments in the disarmament field, such as the arms trade treaty process, the entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, efforts towards a Nuclear Weapons Convention as well as wider peace and security concerns such as the Millennium Development Goals and UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security. Real-time reporting and analysis on disarmament discussions have supported robust civil society involvement, inspiring participants from around the world to have access to conversations inside the United Nations. With tools such as Twitter and Facebook, individuals have access to discussions occurring within the United Nations that could lead to parallel discussions outside of the United Nations—including academics, religious leaders and government officials—thus broadening and deepening the conversation on possible solutions to these complex problems.

Peace and security challenges do lie dormant. Thus, engaged stakeholders in the human security debate have come to rely on tools that allow a dynamic response to the formation of a comprehensive and integrated human security framework. GAPW has embraced this media movement as it has helped to expand our communication opportunities to better service and engage with diverse global constituents and advocate for the integration of new perspectives into policy at UN Headquarters. We believe that an expansive network of diverse communication tools is indispensable to the work of a multifaceted human security agenda.

Katherine Prizeman is International Coordinator of the Disarmament Program of Global Action to Prevent War (GAPW). More information about GAPW can be found on page four of this issue.

Bonn International Center for Conversion
bulletin No. 57

BICC (Bonn International Center for Conversion) is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to promoting peace and development through applied research, advisory services and training.

This newsletter is published quarterly by
© BICC

Pfarrer-Byns-Straße 1, 53121 Bonn, Germany.

Responsible for this issue: Susanne Heinke,
Heike Webb (editing, layout).

Phone: +49-228-911960
Fax: +49-228-91196-22
E-mail: bicc@bicc.de
Internet: www.bicc.de

Staff Spotlight



Christine Andrä

Christine Andrä joined BICC's research team on Natural Resources and Violent Conflict as a Research Assistant in August 2011 and is involved in two different research projects. The first one is about whether certification is a suitable instrument for improving artisanal gold miners' living conditions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. A second project Christine is contributing to looks into the socio-economic consequences of Chinese oil investments in South Sudan. Since BICC is the coordinating member of the international Fatal Transactions network, Christine also supports the network's activities on European consumption of extractive commodities from Southern producer countries.

Christine holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science and Rhetoric from the University of Tübingen and a Master's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Frankfurt. She spent semesters abroad at the universities of Coimbra (Portugal) and Uppsala (Sweden). Christine's studies focused on theories of international relations, on the causes of civil war, and on conflicts over natural resources. Her master's thesis dealt with collective identity change in post-conflict Sierra Leone. Christine has been interning with the GTZ's program on Transboundary Water Management in Africa and with the German Federal Foreign Office's Department for Environmental Questions. Furthermore, she worked as a student research assistant and as a tutor for first-semester students of Political Science.

In her spare time, Christine enjoys reading, practicing yoga, and travelling. She regularly volunteers for an international youth exchange organization, and she would like to give improving her French another try.

→ For further information please contact
Christine Andrä at andrae@bicc.de

Governance and Social Action in Sudan after the Peace Agreement

BICC has taken over the German partnership for the final period of the cooperative research project “Governance and Social Action in Sudan after the Peace Agreement of January 2005: local, national, and regional dimensions”.

The cooperation includes scholars from German and African research institutions from North and South Sudan, Kenya, and Ethiopia. It is sponsored by the Volkswagen Foundation within the program “Knowledge for Tomorrow: Cooperative Research Projects in Sub-Saharan Africa—Political, Economic, and Social Dynamics in Sub-Saharan Africa”.

The project has contributed to knowledge about conflict societies in the following areas:

- Social, political, cultural and economic processes in societies after the formal ending of civil war;
- Ways of sustaining peace based on implementing a formal peace agreement with economic, political and development-oriented dimensions;
- Reasons and motives for renewed or ongoing conflict;
- Regional dimensions of violent conflict and peace.

The project started in 2005 and will end in 2011. Seven young scholars from North and South Sudan, Kenya, and Ethiopia have already achieved Masters and doctoral degrees within the project, two more are in the final phase of graduation for Masters’ degrees, and another two researchers are in the process of finalizing their PhD theses. With 16 workshops and conferences, and common research activities the academic qualification and capacities of young scholars have been increased and academic exchange, intercultural learning and cooperation have been promoted within the region and internationally.

Project participants’ research findings question the suitability of the power sharing formula as applied in Sudan after the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2005 and identify new divides in society. For details, see our latest book: Grawert, Elke (ed.). 2010. *After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Sudan*. Woodbridge: James Currey and the publication list, soon available on the BICC homepage.

→ For further information please contact
Dr. Elke Grawert at grawert@bicc.de

South Sudan: Safe Storage of SALW and Ammunition

Since May 2011, BICC has been implementing a project funded by the German Foreign Office, supporting the Republic of South Sudan (RSS) to engage in the improvement of storage approaches to and practices of its security sector Services’ small arms and light weapons (SALW) including ammunition.

The RSS’s security sector in its core comprises the army and the Services operating under the Ministry of the Interior (Police, Correctional Services, Wildlife, Fire Brigade and Customs). The focal point institution for SALW (especially in the hands of civilians) is the Bureau for Community Security & Small Arms Control under the Ministry of the Interior. For this Bureau, BICC assessed the approaches and practices of SALW storage in all six Services in May/June 2011 including stakeholders such as the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), the Mines Advisory Group (MAG) and Danish Demining Group (DDG).

An Assessment Report recommended a structured approach to advance safe storage in RSS:

- Two separate but interlinked Safe Storage Improvement Programs are needed; one for the security sector Services, and one for the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA).
- Safe storage should become a fixed element of training and operations at all levels of all security sector Services.
- Providing training and successfully applying the new knowledge and skills in practice will depend on the progress of institutional improvements and adequate infrastructure. Training, rules & regulations, and adequate infrastructure are interdependent and should be addressed together.
- Measures to enforce new rules & regulations should be introduced alongside Standard Operating Procedures. Independent institutions are needed to execute oversight of safe and secure storage practices.

The realities on the ground and competition for funds in the RSS will only allow a step-by-step approach to modernization, infrastructure-building and the introduction and improvement of processes and personnel’s qualification of handling SALW and ammunition safely. BICC will support this process on behalf of the German Foreign Office until the end of 2011.

→ For further information, please contact
Marius Kahl at kahl@bicc.de

New BICC Publications

Marie. Muller. 2011. "Turning the curse into a blessing: A convenient Illusion. Lessons from the Nigerian EITI process." In Jurgen Runge and James Shikwati (eds.). Geological Resources and Good Governance in Sub-Saharan Africa. Holistic Approaches to Transparency and Sustainable Development in the Extractive Sector. CRC Press, 23 June – 292 pages.
<http://www.routledge.com/books/details/9780415582674/>

Fatal Transactions Newsletter 07 (in German)
http://www.bicc.de/uploads/pdf/publications/other/2011/FT_Newsletter_7_07.06.11.pdf

BICC Notes

In August 2011, BICC and Global Action to Prevent War (GAPW) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). GAPW and BICC will cooperate closely in networking, policy and advocacy development within areas of joint interest including (1) Strengthening multilateral means of resolving conflicts, protecting human rights, and preventing armed conflict; (2) Reducing national military forces through a phased process of disarmament and replacing them with a modest UN force; (3) Supporting national policies of peace and disarmament by promoting the culture of peace and local initiatives, such as peace education. GAPW is a UN-based, transnational network of civil society, academic and diplomatic partners dedicated to practical measures for reducing levels of global conflict and to removing institutional and ideological impediments to addressing armed violence, mass atrocities and severe human rights violations at the earliest possible stages. With its robust access to academic research, advocacy networks and a diverse group of UN, regional and national policymakers, GAPW highlights and enhances advances in early warning, conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacemaking, nuclear and conventional disarmament, and the implementation of complementary response capacities to address genocide, rape as an instrument of war, and other gross violations of human rights. You can follow GAPW at @DisarmDialogues and <http://www.facebook.com/DisarmamentDialogues>

→ For further information please contact Peter J. Croll at croll@bicc.de



During a joint visit to Germany, political representatives from the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan discussed matters concerning small arms control and the demobilization of former combatants. The delegation—accompanied by BICC experts—conducted talks in Bonn and Berlin with representatives of the German federal government and various ministries, members of parliament as well as experts focusing on activities in security sector reform and small arms control in both Sudan and South Sudan.



→ For further information please contact Wolf-Christian Paes at paes@bicc.de

On 16 August 2011, Dr. Angelica Schwall-Düren, Minister for Federal Affairs, Europe and the Media of the Land North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), visited BICC. Peter Croll and some researchers at BICC presented the work of the center. The Minister honored the work of BICC for the Land NRW by stating, "We highly appreciate BICC's support of our work on 'One World', be it through partner activities with Ghana, be it on the topic of migration development or on the recent events in the Arab countries."

→ For further information please contact Peter J. Croll at croll@bicc.de

Photographs

Daniel Deng Lwal, Bureau for Community Security and Small Arms Control, German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Guido Westerwelle and William Deng Deng, Commissioner SSDRC (l.t.r)

Dr. Sulafeldeen Salih Mohammed, Commissioner General SSDRC and BICC Director Peter J. Croll (l.t.r)