

Failing foreign policy

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Assessing the impact of the West
on peace and development in the MENA

Foreign Policy Failures

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1. Introduction²

This lecture is about Foreign Policy failures and the impact of Western military interventions in the 21st century on conflict and sustainable peace building in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) The first part highlights four rules of thumb for researching security and peace. The second part zooms in on situations in which well intentioned interventions (at least in most cases) cause unexpected problems or negative or harmful side effects. The third part defines foreign policy failures and identifies their causes, and the fourth part presents conflict and peace impact assessment tools that could be used to point out these negative consequences before, during and after interventions. At the end there will be time for discussion and comments.

2. Four re-minders

Peace research is a fascinating field of study; it is very important because the world can no longer afford the existent expensive and destructive military interventions, such as we have seen in the MENA. Today we are watching the sixth war fought by democratic countries in the 21st century – the war in Libya (the other battle fields being Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Gaza). Hopefully the Libyan intervention will be a success, but I doubt it. I wrote against the ‘carte blanche’ Security Council Resolution 1973 for many reasons³.

To study conflict and peace demands scientific discipline and a particular mindset. Let me list four aspects of the mindset one should cultivate and apply when researching conflict dynamics and peace.

Study the naked conflict
Clarify the security or peace theory
Foresee impacts
Look at the big picture

1. Study the naked conflict. Do not begin to legalize, moralize or psychologize. Study the problems as behavioral scientist. Look at what happens, what is done and said. Read the small articles, not only the front page news. Begin by removing labels such as just–unjust, evil, legal–illegal, rational–irrational, mad–sane, necessary versus wars of choice, terrorism–anti-terrorism, revolution, rebellion, collateral damage, military and civilian deaths, stability and change, etc. The war in Libya listens to the name ‘kinetic military action’. All these terms are political labels which

try to frame the reality in a way that distorts perception and misinforms the onlooker of the violent interaction.

Undress the conflict and study it naked. When a medical coroner performs an autopsy he/she undresses and checks the state of the body. Let me illustrate this by using the labels: terrorism-anti-terrorism. These labels suggest that terrorism is terrible, and anti-terrorism necessary and justified: a must and a good thing to do. If you look under the label you will find that anti-terrorism causes much more death and damage. In the last war in Lebanon in 2006, the Lebanese-Israeli ratio of dead was nearly 100/1 and the destruction was even higher. Instead of an eye for an eye, we see a policy of 100 eyes for an eye. Second, anti-terrorism does not tackle the roots causes. Third, it hides the fact that a great number of political terrorists are freedom fighters resisting direct or indirect occupation. So look at the naked conflict.

2. Make explicit the security and peace theory. When studying or discussing peace insist on (1) using clear operational definitions and (2) making explicit the theoretical and epistemological assumptions underlying peace policies.

(1) Use a clear operational definition of peace. Why? Because there are different kinds of peace (end states): Pax-Romana, -Sovietica, -Americana, the dictated peace of Versailles after the First World War which led to 20 years of crisis and the Second World War, cease fire, fragile peace, sustainable peace, etc. A study of diplomatic thinking shows that diplomats from rich and powerful countries use different indicators to assess peace than those from and poor and weak countries⁴. For both groups, the first indicator of peace is the same: absence of violence. The second and third indicators differ however: for developed countries these are stability and cooperation whereas developing countries assess peace by looking at the absence of structural violence and external intervention in internal affairs. Each peace looks different and requires different conditions and strategies to be built. When peace is

defined as the absence of violence, we must ask what violence means. There are narrow and broad definitions of violence. Violence can be narrowly defined as the absence of war and broadly as the reduction of life expectations. Life expectations can be shortened by direct violence (physical) and indirect violence (structural, psychological, environmental, and bad governance). The price of using a narrow definition of violence can be a surprise. In addition, do not confuse peace and military security. In the Middle East, America and Israel spends great amounts of resources on security; they may have brought some security, but they have not delivered sustainable peace.

(2) Make explicit the theory of war and peace: clarify the key concepts and relations between them and evaluate their internal and external validity. Always request that decision-makers and -shapers make their personal or institutional theories explicit. Each of us has theories about poverty, terrorism, peace, success, etc. J.M. Keynes once stated there is nothing as practical as a good theory. The theory underlying Western security and peace policies in the Middle East are flawed. Their validity needs to be checked.

3. Foresee negative impacts. The role of the scientist is to foresee. Therefore, it is important to learn how to assess the positive and negative impacts of several policy options on conflict and peace. In most situations there are alternatives, but you have to look for them. These assessments can be made before, during and after interventions. Ideally, they should be made before a policy is selected and implemented. The aim of conflict and peace impact assessment is to warn decision makers of possible negative outcomes so that plans can be corrected in time, ongoing policies be corrected and, after the operations, lessons can be learned. A major part of the impact assessment is the calculation and comparison of the costs and benefits of different policy options (for example of violence prevention and war). Joseph Stiglitz assesses the cost of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq at three trillion dollars; this is 110 times the yearly EU budget of 120 billion euro, 1000 times the Belgian defense budget, and three times the development aid given to

Africa the last fifty years. The price of violence prevention is lower than remediation. War produces dead and maimed bodies, destruction and radical attitudes, such as hate and a desire for revenge. Violence prevention is not cheap, but it is more cost-effective and requires other types of efforts, such as diplomatic, political, economic, security, legal, arms control and psychological support.

A better accounting of the cost and benefits can be used to make better choices and to hold policy-makers and -shapers accountable for their policies. War and peace are man made; they are human constructs.

Foreign policy is the last sector in the democratic Western world that is not transparent. It tends to escape from democratic controls. The policy vis a vis the Middle East is shaped by powerful groups and lobbies (such as the Military-Industrial Complex, oil, the Cuban lobby, the Christian fundamentalists or the American Israel Public Affairs Committee), which pursue their particular interests and this frequently at the expense of national, regional or global interests. This information cannot be found in wikileaks; it is off the record. They are very secretive networks. In the American elections, well organized minorities can make use of their swing votes to influence the policy of Senators or Representatives. As scholars, we are co-responsible for democratic control on foreign policy.

4. Look at the big picture. Don't allow someone else to frame a conflict in such a way that you see only part of it. To understand the current military intervention in Libya, it helps to look of the big picture of the West's Middle East policy. The Western (American, British, and French) policy towards Arab countries is mainly determined by two factors: the possession of oil-phosphates (Morocco) and the level of obedience concerning oil delivery and prices, arm sales and the American Israel policy. This gives us four types of policies (see Exhibit 1).

Oil rich and obedient: Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain. They are protected and there is no intervention in internal policies. These countries guarantee oil delivery and prices, buy sophisticated arms in the West, fight terrorism, and do not disturb the US policy vis a vis Israel–Palestine. In turn, the West does not strongly disapprove of the repression of freedom movements in these countries.

Oil rich and disobedient: Iraq, Iran and Libya. They are the subject of coercive diplomacy, including sanctions and the use or threat of violence. They are stigmatized as evil (axis of evil) and made into scapegoats. Kadhafi is an ideal scapegoat. This approach focuses attention on Libya and makes the West feel good. It turns the attention away from failed interventions in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iraq and Gaza and it frames the conflict in terms of good and evil: we are the good and Kadhafi represents the bad, the ugly. The no-fly zone intervention may look like an humanitarian intervention, but it is about the establishment of a more obedient government and the control and competition of the oil resources (France, Qatar and Italy).

Oil-less and obedient: Egypt, Tunisia and Jordan. They are left alone and rewarded. Egypt receives 1,3 billion dollars a year. They are (were) expected to fight terrorism, buy weapons and not provide support to the radical Palestinians. In these countries we had relatively peaceful regime changes.

Oil-less and disobedient: Syria, Lebanon⁵ and Palestine. They suffer(ed) from neglect. Aggression and sanctions against actors are permitted or not disapproved of, for example in the Security Council.

Israel is oil-less and an ally of the West; it can do everything it wants. It is not a genuine democracy. It runs the largest open air prison in the world and supports of policy of irredentism and segregation vis a vis the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Despite all of this, the country continues to be rewarded. Since 1980, Israel has received 100 billion dollars; each year it gets more than three billion in American aid. Recently, its minister of defense Barrack asked the Americans for an additional 14 billion to cope with the new Middle Eastern environment.

Another facet of the big picture is the attitude towards democracy. The West does not support authentic democracies: (1) it allows only friendly democracies –, democratically elected groups (such as the FIS in Algeria, Hamas in Palestine or the Hezbollah in Lebanon) are shunned and excluded; (2) it continues to support the friendly authoritarian, oil-rich regimes; (3) it does not pressure Israel to end the segregation in the Palestinian territories.

The big picture also depicts the whole chain of causes, not just part of it. It considers not only the proclaimed or propagated justifications for the wars against Iraq, Lebanon or Libya, but also the hidden reasons.

Exhibit 1 Foreign policy toward Arab states

	Oil-rich	Oil-less
Obedient intervention	Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates Receive support (diplomatic / military); not much internal interference	Egypt, Tunisia, Jordan Not much interference; rewarded Egypt 1.3 billion yearly; no military intervention)
Disobedient	Iraq (SH), Iran, Libya Subject to coercive diplomacy including economic sanctions, boycotts, military threats and/or interventions	Syria, Lebanon ⁶ , Palestine (Hamas) Subject to neglect and allowance of coercive diplomacy, especially by Israel

3. Foreign policy failures

The third part of this article (a) highlights three problems in today's strategic landscape, which stand in the way of sustainable peace building, (b) provides examples of negative impacts at the sector and macro levels and (c) gives an operational definition to the 'foreign policy failure' concept.

1. Peace intervention problems.

High on crisis managing and low on violence prevention.

Security and peace interventions tend to be *high on crisis management and low on violence prevention*. In the nineties, the diplomat W.Bauwens and myself edited a book *The Art of Conflict Prevention*. To convince the policy-makers of the benefits of violence prevention, we told them that proactive violence prevention was much more cost effective than reactive intervention after a conflict has escalated. Brown and Rosecrance developed a methodology for comparing the costs of violence prevention and reaction. Despite the evidence, most of today's conflict management policies remain reactive interventions. The six wars in MENA are examples of reactive conflict management policies (see Exhibit 2). The promoters of the military intervention claim that the war in Libya was necessary to stop a potential 'Benghazi massacre' (a town in eastern Libya). At the beginning of the events, nearly 100 to 200 people died when the Libyan government responded with arms to a combination of peaceful protesters and armed rebels. This was reactive prevention.

Exhibit 2. Military interventions by the democratic West in the 21st century

Estimates Black statistics	MENA target country			Western military intervenor		
	Dead Bodies Most civilians	wounded	destruction	Dead Bodies	wounded	destruction
IRAQ	+ 120.000	x 5-10	Very high	+ 3500	+ 32.000	none
AF-PAK	+ 30.000	x 5-10	Very high	+ 2300	x	none
PALESTINA 2000-2011	+ 7000	30.000	Very high	+ (Israel) 1000	x	low

LEBANON 2006	+ - 1200	x 5-10	Very high	+ - 120	x	low
LIBYA	+ - 10.000 ?	x 5-10	Very high	+ - 0	x	none

Missed opportunities

The conflicts in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and many others are histories of missed opportunities. Missed opportunities are occasions or periods before a conflict becomes violent, in which something could have been undertaken to prevent the escalation (sending in blue helmets, mediation facilities, offering development cooperation, etc). In Yugoslavia, Rwanda and the MENA wars, the opportunities to prevent escalation were not seized; they were missed. There are several types of missed opportunities, such as 'too little too late' reactions or 'omission or neglect'.

Unexpected negative outcomes or side effects

When researching conflict prevention I stumbled on the phenomenon well-intentioned policies or projects with unanticipated negative side effects. In 1996 I wrote these experiences down and presented them at an International Peace Research Association conference in Brisbane in a paper titled 'Conflict Impact Assessment Systems (CIAS)'. The paper pointed out that well-intentioned governmental and nongovernmental policies frequently produce unanticipated negative side effects. The solution became part of the problem.

This phenomenon is well known in the medical and the pharmaceutical sector. In 1976, Ivan Illich wrote a book titled *Limits to Medicine* in which he researched doctor-inflicted illness (iatrogenesis) in hospitals. His writings were taken seriously and measures were enacted to reduce these doctor-inflicted illnesses. The same problems can be found in the pharmaceutical sector. Drugs can have negative effects; they promise to cure a disease, but can also produce bad things. The pharmaceutical sector is obliged to research proactively not only the positive, but also the negative impacts; to reduce them and to warn the patient of the negative impacts.

2. Unforeseen negative impacts

Examples are found in different sectors and at micro, meso, and macro levels.

-House construction. When the apartheid ended in South Africa in 1993, Mandela promised decent housing for everybody. But after, for example, 100 houses were built, they were distributed. Instead of delivering peace and happiness, there was also a lot of disappointment, fighting and some people were killed. These houses were scarce good and generated conflicts about who got in and who remained out. Later new formulas were found to stop the strife and violence.

-Alcohol control. The prohibition of alcohol in 1920s America led to the enormous growth of the alcohol Mafia, violence and corruption.

-The war on drugs. This war in Columbia is in essence a military campaign against the guerillas. It increased crimes against civilians and drug-related activities spilled over into neighboring countries.

-Humanitarian aid. During and after armed conflicts, the UNHCR builds refugee camps and takes care of the refugees. Some camps, however, were used by the militias to recuperate, as safe heavens and as bases of operations. In addition, these camps relieved the aggressor state from the duty to take care of its victims and refugees.

-Humanitarian–military intervention. The military intervention Libya in the name of the ‘Responsibility To Protect’ principle is expected to have many negative side effects. At first sight, it looks like an ideal type intervention, but personally, I have a lot of reservations. It is a war for the control of the regime and the country’s natural

resources done in the name of humanitarianism. I have spoken out against the military intervention⁷. I hope I am wrong.

-International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC is created to punish crimes committed against humanity and thereby deter this type of criminal behavior in the future. Strong countries, such as America or Israel have not ratified the statutes of the ICC. The people sent to The Hague do not come from the West or from other strong countries, but from the rest of the world. This criminal justice is not applied to all, but only to a selected group. The threat of being sent to The Hague can also lead to a prolongation of conflicts. Think of the Security Council Resolution 1970 that will investigate the killing of civilians by Khadafi.

-Democratization / regime change. A world full of genuine democracies would be great for sustainable peace building. Hopefully, the Egyptian and Tunisian liberation movements will be able to transform the political-economic system democratically. The regime change efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan failed. Other problems of democratic transition are the risk of violence during the 'anocracy' phase and the increase of exploitative foreign interference. There is also a lot of distrust toward 'the preaching of democracy' by rich and powerful countries. The preaching does not come across as sincere because (1) the foreign policy making process in the powerful democracies is not very democratic (it is dominated by interest groups), (2) the West supports only friendly democracies in the MENO and (3) it firmly resists the democratization of the international system.

-Development. The official aim of Western foreign policy towards developing countries is to improve their socio-economic conditions. In the last fifty years, Africa received one trillion dollars for development cooperation. In her book, *Dead Aid*, Dambisa Moyo concludes that the aid did not make a difference. In fact a great deal of Africa ended up ruined.

-War on terrorism. The aim is to stop terrorism by means of offensive and defensive systems. This very expensive war is assessed as a success. However, as long as one does not deal with the root causes (occupation, both direct and indirect) and continues to kill innocent people, for example by means of drones, the threats will remain. In fact, they could even become stronger. When we entered Lebanon in 1982, the former Israeli prime minister Ehud Barak said 'there is no Hizbollah'. Yitzak Rabin, the slain prime minister lamented that the invasion in Lebanon 'let the genie out of the bottle'.

-Counter proliferation. The counter proliferation policy of the US in Iraq was a disaster. There were no Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the expectation of a short and successful intervention to change the regime was an illusion. This war caused an enormous amount of destruction, killed more than 100.000 people and made refugees and widows. One million died because of the deteriorated conditions, 480 professors were killed, museums were pillaged, etc.

Peace keeping. At the beginning of the genocidal process in Rwanda, the Belgian blue helmets retreated after ten soldiers were killed. This action conveyed the message that the international community would close her eyes and would not intervene to stop the massacres.

-Deregulation of the economy. The deregulation of the financial services led to financial disasters.

These cases are from different sectors. There are also serious problems at the macro or grand strategic level. The current grand strategy to cope with these threats is the control paradigm. It is very expensive and unsustainable. This has been eloquently described by Chris Abbott, Paul Rogers and John Sloboda in *Beyond Terror: The Truth about the Real Threats to Our World* (2006) (see Exhibit 3)

Exhibit 3 Dominant and sustainable security paradigms

Control paradigm	Global threats	Sustainable security paradigm
<p>Control of the Persian Gulf An obsession with national energy through taking control of or gaining access to, key resources such as the Persian Gulf, which leads to further conflicts in the region. This a the single most important element of the current approach.</p>	<p>Competition over resources</p>	<p>Consumption reduction Comprehensive energy efficiency, recycling and resource conservation and management policies and practices. This would be coupled with large-scale funding for alternatives to oil.</p>
<p>Nuclear power An unshakable and unrealistic belief in the capacity of technological advances (including the generation of civil nuclear reactors) operating within free markets as the primary means of responding to what some still consider the myth of climate change (a belief shaken by the 2011 Tsunami in Japan)</p>	<p>Climate change</p>	<p>Renewable energy Introduction of a carbon tax and rapid replacement of carbon-based energy sources by diversified local renewable sources as the primary basis of future energy generation.</p>
<p>Societal control Problems of poverty and socio-economic divisions are largely ignored as a security issue. But when immediate threats to the homeland are perceived, the usual response is heavy societal control in an attempt to keep the lid on 'civil discontent', which only makes matters worse in the long term. Coupled with this is the belief that the free market will enable people to work their way out of poverty..</p>	<p>Marginalization of the majority world One billion survive on less than 1 dollar a day. 2.2 billion children live in poverty. We may not agree, but Gandhi called poverty the worst form of violence. In a globalizing world this leads to a growth of relative deprivation.</p>	<p>Poverty reduction Reform of global systems of trade, aid and debt relief in order to make poverty reduction a world priority.</p>
<p>Counter-terrorism A series of counter-productive, controversial and often illegal counter terrorism measures and</p>	<p>International terrorism</p>	<p>Political dialogue Addressing the legitimate political grievances and aspirations of marginalized groups, coupled with intelligence-led counter-</p>

<p>attacks on civil liberties, including the detention of suspects without trial and the extraordinary rendition of suspects to countries that are known for the use of torture.</p>		<p>terrorism police operations against violent revolutionary groups and dialogue with terrorist leadership wherever possible.</p>
<p>Counter-proliferation Counter proliferation measures focused on preventing weapons of mass destruction materials being acquired by terrorist groups or rogue states considered to sponsor terrorism. Where it is believed the actors already possess, are able to possess, or are close to possess these, strategies are pre-emptive and preventive military strikes (Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Gaza, Libya and the threatening of Iran).</p>	<p>Global militarization The West spends ¾ of the world's military expenditures. Military research is booming; think of drones, cyber war, etc.</p>	<p>Non-proliferation/ disarmament Alongside non-proliferation measures, states with nuclear weapons must take bold, visible and substantial steps towards disarmament at the same time as halting initiatives such as the development of new nuclear weapons and new bio-weapons.</p>

For those for whom it is still not clear that the neglect of considering impacts can have serious effects, let me tell you story about a problem with bears who were disturbing a campground in one of America's national parks. A priest, a minister and a rabbi wanted to see who was the best at the job of converting the bear to a better lifestyle. So they each went into the woods, found a bear and attempted to convert it. Later they got together to see who was most successful. The priest began: 'When I found the bear, I talked about Jesus and sprinkled him with holy water. Next week he will have his First Communion. The evangelical minister found a bear by a stream, and preached God's holy word. 'The bear was so mesmerized', he said, 'that he allowed me to baptize him'. They looked at the rabbi, who looked pale and was lying on a stretcher in a full-body cast. He said in a broken voice 'Maybe I shouldn't have started with circumcision'.

The aim is to further policies towards conflict zones that strengthen positive-impacts and reduce negative ones. The impacts can be positive or negative, strong or weak, short-term or long-term; applicable to one or more sectors or one or more levels of society; they create synergies or cause incoherence. The creation of the EU is an ideal type sustainable peace building policy. The wars in Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Gaza, and hopefully not Libya are examples of failed foreign policies.

3. A definition of foreign policy failures (FPFs)

A foreign policy failure can be characterized as an intervention in a conflict zone with the following characteristics:

- It is not a success story. The aims have not been achieved; the operation did not satisfy the national interest; it accommodated the interests of particular groups.
- The violence and destruction in the target country is disproportionately high. The level of human security has been reduced considerably (physical, political, economic, health, ecological, social and psychological).
- The operation has been very costly for the intervening parties. It was everything but cost-effective and the opportunity costs are large. Last week, the International Herald Tribune wrote that the use of drones in Pakistan and the killing of many innocents made people furious. This is reflected in a recent opinion poll about perceptions of threat in Afghanistan (7% identified the Taliban; 6.4% Al Qaeda, and 68% the US led war on terrorism (IHT April 1. 2011).
- The intervention did not create sustainable security. Instead, it created insecurity dilemmas, stimulated an arms escalation process and increased the enmity.
- Despite failure, the country finds it difficult to exit

Serious foreign policy failures could be called follies. Barbara Tuchman describes follies in her book *The March of Folly* (1984) as a particular type of misgovernment. She distinguishes: (1) tyranny and oppression, (2) excessive ambition, (3) incompetence or decadence, and (4) folly and perversity. To qualify as a folly the policy must satisfy three criteria: a) the policy must have been perceived as counterproductive in its own time, (b) a feasible alternative of action must have been available and (c) it must be a policy of a group, not a ruler that takes the decision.

Could the Western interventions in the Middle East in the 21st century be called FPFs or follies? Are the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Lebanon, Libya or the repression and colonization of the remaining 22% of the Palestinian territories rational strategies or follies? My hypothesis is: they are FPFs. They following the law of the hammer: if your favored tool is a hammer, everything becomes a nail. In other words, if your favored tool is military power, every problem becomes a military target. When there is a problem, bomb it!

The main reason for making conflict and peace impact assessments is that the world cannot afford any longer these destructive approaches to conflict. Tuchman was concerned about the acceleration of incompetence. 'Today, when there are no more cushions, folly is less affordable'. I think this is even truer today. The world is not only confronted with a human climate crisis. If we are not to manage conflicts in a more constructive way, we can forget about the weather. The people who long today for freedom in their country will tomorrow demand a more democratic world. As it is difficult to stop freedom movements at the national level, it will be difficult to stop the pressures for democratization of the global system. These pressures cannot be stopped by more deadly and sophisticated bombs.

4. What causes foreign policy failures (FPFs)?

To prevent or reduce negative impacts, it is important (a) to consider the possibility of failure. The expectation that good intentions produce positive results tends to lower the effort to look for possible negative impacts. Some organizations hide them or cover them up because it is not good for fundraising, prestige or votes (b) to respond in time and (c) to understand which (f)actors cause the negative side effects. What causes these failures? To answer this question, I consulted the work of B. Tuchman's *The March of Folly*, J. Diamond's *Collapse*, R. Jervis' *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, I. Janis' *Groupthink* and L. Reychler *Nieuwe muren (New walls)*. The causal findings can be summarized in two ways.

A roadmap

Jared Diamond, who has researched why societies choose to fail or succeed in coping with environmental threats, proposes a roadmap of factors contributing to failures of group decision-making. The roadmap distinguishes four phases in the history of failure: (1) failure to anticipate, (2) failure to perceive the problem when it has arrived, (3) when perceived, one does not try to solve it and (4) when trying to solve the problem one does not succeed.

Phase 1. A group may fail to anticipate the problem before it arrives because:

- The group has no previous experience.
- The group has forgotten their experience. After the gas shortages of the 1973 Gulf Oil crisis, the Americans shied away from gas-guzzling cars. But later they forgot that experience and embraced sport utility vehicles (SUVs).
- The group reasons by false analogies. Exemplary are the French military preparations before World War II. The French military expected that the next war would be similar to the first World War with strong defenses manned by defensive artillery forces and an offensive infantry supported by tanks. The Nazi

army, however, used tanks to spearhead their attacks and bypassed the Maginot line through forested terrain that was previously considered unfit for tanks.

- The group expects changes to happen gradually or that big causes will produce big changes. Malcolm Gladwell shows that this is not always the case, certainly not when confronted with a tipping point phenomenon. He explains, for example, the successful struggle for independence by the Americans in the 1770s by means of the tipping point theory. I think that the recent revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt can also be explained as such. Tipping points have three characteristics (a) contagiousness (think of the flu, epidemics or yawning; the same is true for fashion), (b) the big effects are the result of little causes, and (c) change happens not gradually but at a dramatic moment (e.g. fall of the wall). To understand tipping point changes you have to open your mind to these types of changes. The tipping points or political epidemics are produced by three rules: the law of the few, the stickiness factor, and the power of the context.

-The law of the few. Any kind of success is heavily dependent on the involvement of people with a particular and rare set of gifts: connectors, mavens and salesmen. **Connectors** know lots of people (knowing in the broad sense). They have the ability to span many different worlds. This ability is attributed to their personality, some combination of curiosity, self-confidence, sociability and energy. Paul Revere was such a connector. There were also connectors at the Tahrir square in Cairo who could even amplify their connections by means of mobile phones. **Mavens** are people who collect knowledge – information; they are obsessed by it. They are databanks. Revere was told that the British soldiers were seen on shore in Boston and that they would march to Lexington to arrest colonial leaders and seize stores of guns and ammunition. **Salesmen** are able to convince the unconvinced and persuade them to take action.

-The stickiness factor. The law of the few looked at the nature of the messenger connector. The stickiness factor is about the nature of the message. Paul Revere's message was 'the British are coming'. This was a straightforward and irresistible message. Egypt's revolutionary message was 'Freedom Time: now'.

-The power of context. People are more attuned to personal factors than to contextual clues. While this is a fundamental attribution error, it makes the world simpler and a more understandable place. The context is very important. Think of a crisis, the number of people you see behaving in a particular way, night or day (Revere had a greater opportunity to pass on his message at night, when everybody was at home); having the ability to communicate; knowing that the world is watching, etc. In an unfree situation people tend to engage in *preference falsification* (public opinion is not the same as their private opinions). As a consequence there is a climate of *pluralistic ignorance*: no one expresses critique or hope and most people feel alone with their dissident opinions (Reychler 10). To predict protest or freedom movements it is not enough to inform yourself about the tensions (in young people as a result of urbanization, lack of economic perspectives, globalization, relative deprivation, etc.). It is also important to understand *revolutionary thresholds* (a term coined by Timur Kyran). This is the point where the external costs of publicly joining the opposition are lower than the internal costs of preference falsification. To assess this threshold requires access to information about the distribution of people's private opinions. Imagine a variation of thresholds where $T=0$ supports the opposition unconditionally: two countries have the following distribution of thresholds (0,20,20,30,40,40,60,70,80,100) and (0,10,10,10,10,10,20,20,60,100) In the second case it will be easier to start a revolution.

Phase 2. When the problem arrives, the group may fail to perceive it. This could be attributed to:

- The tendency to not pay attention to slow changes (think of the climate change of 0.01 degree (Celsius) per year).
- Creeping normalcy. People don't notice that conditions used to be different than now. People find it normal that the West in the 21st century fights several wars in the Middle East (Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Lebanon, Gaza and Libya).
- Landscape amnesia: forgetting how the landscape looked 50 years ago, because change (the melting of glaciers) from year to year has been so gradual.

Phase 3. After perceiving it, the group may fail to attempt to solve it. This could be the result of rational and/or irrational decision-making.

Rational decision-making

- The 'Good for me, bad for you and everything else' attitude. Some people may reason correctly that they can advance their own interests by behavior harmful to other people. In other words, they rationalize behavior that advances their own interest and hurts the interest of others. Think of pressuring weak countries into free trade without the necessary protectionism the wealthy nations reserve for themselves or the impact of the oil and arms trade lobbies (MIC). The friendly dictators in MENA supported as good customers. Think of the negative impact of the Israel or evangelical lobbies on American foreign policy vis a vis the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The American electoral system bestows 'swing power' on some small minorities; they benefit small groups at the expense a large majority. Several senators are elected by 51% of the vote. Small differences can determine the outcome. Active voting minorities can exert a huge impact on the platform of the candidates. (only 54% of eligible voters cast their vote in the presidential and senate elections).

- The tragedy of the commons, the prisoner's dilemma or the logic of collective action leads to behavior based on the assumption 'if I don't catch that fish or let my sheep graze that grass, some one else will catch the fish or let her sheep graze there'. In that case it makes no sense to refrain from over-fishing or over-harvesting. The same mechanisms can be seen in arms escalation.

- That's not my problem; it's someone else's problem.

- The problem is far away from my bed.

Irrational behavior

- The sunk cost effect: we feel reluctant to abandon a policy in which we have invested so much.
- Religious values. Some fundamentalist evangelicals believe, on the basis of the book of Revelation in the New Testament of the Bible, that the restoration of Eretz Israel will hasten the return of the messiah.
- Clashes between short- and long-term outcomes. Desperately poor people who think of food for the next day, do not have much time to consider long-term effects. Governments, especially democratic ones, tend to think not much further than the next elections.
- Crowd psychology or the tendency to follow the crowd.
- 'Groupthink' (a term coined by Irving Janis). This syndrome is found in small cohesive groups trying to reach a decision in stressful situations (crises). The stress and the need for mutual support and approval may lead to the suppression of doubt and critical thinking, sharing illusions of premature consensus, an unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality, inclining the members to ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions, stereotyped views of enemy leaders as too evil to warrant genuine attempts to negotiate, or as too weak and stupid to counter whatever risky attempts are made to defeat their purposes, and ultimately a disastrous decision.
- Psychological denial or blocking the mind from seeing one's own irrationality or considering worse and worst scenarios. A good example is the research done about the level of concern people exhibited about the dam bursting. If the dam burst, the resulting water would drown people for a considerable distance downstream. However, it is not surprising that people's fear is lowest further downstream and increases among residents closer to the dam. Surprisingly,

closest to the dam, where the impact would be the greatest, the concern falls to zero. This is due to denial: it is a way of preserving sanity. This phenomenon exists also at the collective level.

Phase 4. The group tries to solve the problem, but does not succeed.

- The problem is beyond the group's capacity to solve it.
- The solution is too expensive.
- The group's efforts are too little and too late; some attempts backfire and make the problem worse.

Four clusters

The FPF-enhancing and -inhibiting factors can also be summarized in four clusters.

Cluster 1. Normative causes

Interests

- The lack of interest can lead to criminal omission.
- The pursuit of particular interests at the expense of national, regional or global interests can generate policies with a great many negative side effects.
- The foreign policy-making in democratic states is in many cases not the result of a democratic decision-making process.
- Strong democratic countries resist the internationalization of the international system. In the UN Security Council there are five members with veto power (USA, UK, France, Russia and China (predominantly Western Powers): the UK and France still cater to the illusion of being a great power. It is not a reflection of the world community... it is an anachronism.

Core values / peace

- The crux of the success or failure of conflict resolution in our new world is to know which core values to hold on to and which ones to discard and replace with new values with the changes (Diamond 433). In the last 60 years the world's most powerful countries have given up long-held cherished values previously central to their national images. The EU, for example, left behind exclusive nationalism, national security became cooperative security, economic cooperation replaced protectionism, etc; Russia stopped its communist experiment; and the US retreated from its former values of legalized racial discrimination. We are at a time when core values need to be urgently changed (think of the Western addiction to oil or the neglect and marginalization of the majority in the world). We should also make an end to the distinction between first class, second class and third class victims.

Cluster 2. Analytic causes

- Inadequate theories

Many theories of international relations are not very helpful to understand particular conflicts, because (a) they are too general to be applicable (realism, idealism, Marxism, or even principle agent theory; they provide text without context); (b) they serve particular interests, such as the free market theory of the neoconservatives; (c) they are too reductive and see only part of the puzzle: for example, today's theories about terrorism, insurgency, coercive diplomacy, etc.; (d) they turned out to be myths or doctrines; think of some Cold War theories about the irreversibility of communism, the falling dominos or the convergence of communism and capitalism. Theories consist of three parts: normative assumptions, theoretical assumptions, and epistemological assumptions. Whatever we do is based on a theory (personal, organizational, scientific). Therefore it is important to make the theory explicit and assess its validity. The theory underlying the war on terrorism is an inadequate theory because it does not address the root causes.

Sustainable peace building cannot be reduced to military security. It involves work in several other sectors. The six wars in the Middle East are driven by nationalist military logic, not by a grand strategy for building sustainable peace in the region.

- Difficult access to data. One of the greatest problems is the lack of information that allows us to assess the costs of war, to find out the benefits and who are the profiteers.
- Good data are overlooked, such as the Arab Human Development Report of 2002 that warned the reader about three huge deficits: of freedom, education and women⁸.
- Constraints on academic freedom and intellectual solidarity. One of the greatest problems during conflicts relates to academic freedom; it becomes one of the first victims of war. In Iraq, 480 academics were killed and hundreds of schools were bombed. Some academics collaborate, most remain silent and only a few dare to stick out their necks to pursue the truth and to support the most powerless parties in the conflict.
- Lack of empathy and respect for the other parties. Without an understanding of the point of view and the concerns of the other, it is impossible to develop a fair and lasting solution for a conflict.
- The existence of cognitive propensities, such as the tendency to consider variables as constants or the expectation that the future will be an extension of the past.

Cluster 3 Structural causes

- Power asymmetry. Fear and power is a dangerous combination. It can lead to groupthink, characterized by a strong we-ness feeling, conformity pressure, intolerance towards dissidents and feelings of moral superiority. There is also the tendency to confuse power with virtue. Power corrupts especially those who are convinced that they have earned their power.
- The doctrine of military superiority and absolute security. Exemplary of such thinking is the global power of the US and the regional power of Israel. The US

spends this year 700 billion dollars on defense (nearly as much as the rest of the world). It has 1000 Generals and Admirals and 530 Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense. There are more musicians in the military bands than diplomats in the State Department.²

- The law of the hammer or the belief that more bombing and military intervention can end the problem and deliver our peace. The reiteration of this belief by the UK Minister of Defense and the French diplomacy during the contact group meetings in Doha on April 13, 2011 is a sad illustration of the law of the hammer mindset.
- Democratic deficiencies. The absence of a democratic global international environment and the lack of effective democratic controls of foreign policy make it difficult to assess the costs and benefits, and to hold decision-makers from strong and democratic countries accountable for the outcomes of their policies.

Cluster 4. Policy making and leadership

- Policy-making styles can be reactive or proactive, progressive or reactive, coherent or incoherent, consonant or dissonant, legitimate or illegitimate, and they can differ in terms of leadership.
- Problem framing. In war with Libya the way the military intervention has been framed is disturbing: as something desired by the international community; as a prevention of a potential massacre; as the only option left; and as proportional. The whole operation is an example of the old trick 'If you cannot convince them, confuse them'. There most important motives are not mentioned in the public forum.
- Leadership is very important, especially adaptive, integrative leadership and forward-looking leadership. Some great leaders were the founding fathers of the EU, Mandela, the leaders of the non-violent resistance in Tunisia and Egypt and Deng Xiaoping. Bad leadership has been expressed by Bush junior, Blair, Ahmadinejad, Netanyahu, Kadhafi and others from authoritarian countries and democracies. Learning from mistakes is crucial. Kennedy, during his

management of the missile crisis, referred to what he had learned from a previous failure at the bay of pigs in his 1961 intervention in Cuba. Leaders are needed with the courage to anticipate a growing problem or just a potential one, and to take bold steps to solve it before it becomes an explosive crisis. Such leaders expose themselves to criticism or ridicule for acting before it becomes obvious for everyone that some action is necessary. (Diamond 439).

5. Conflict and peace impact assessment

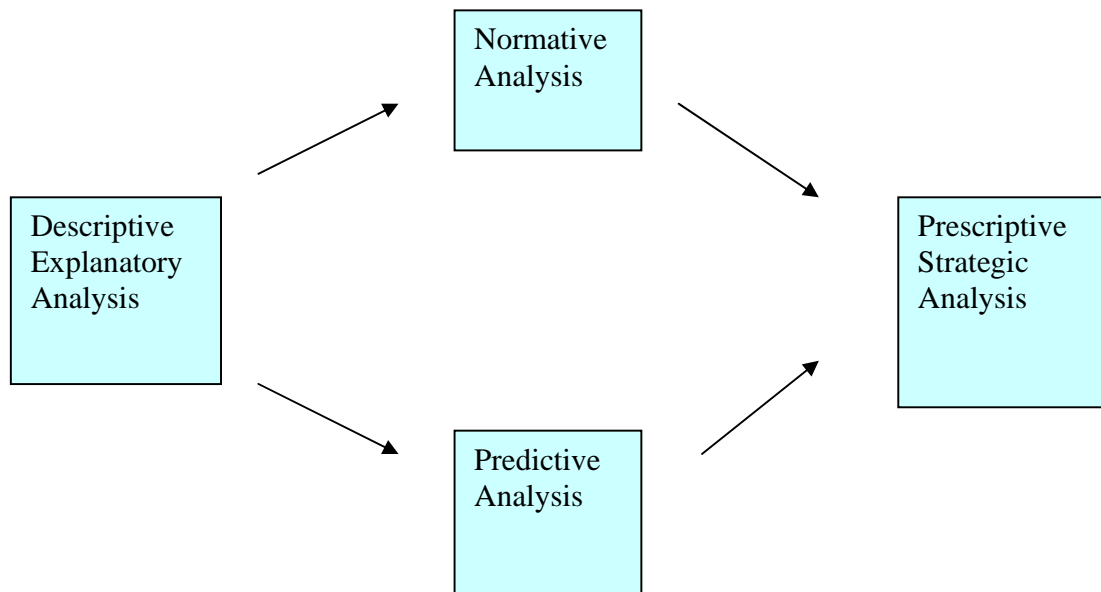
What can students and researchers do to prevent and reduce these foreign policy failures? We can master this transdisciplinary field of study; acquire a good understanding of power and nonviolent resistance via Gene Sharp (the Egypt and Tunisia regime changes are more cost-effective and human than the brutal three trillion Iraq and Afghanistan interventions); study foreign policy, especially how decisions are made and the weak democratic process; and sharpen our pens and speak out. One of the most effective ways to deal with these negative outcomes is to do peace and conflict impact assessments.

Since I wrote the paper on 'CIAS' (1996), many similar approaches have been developed, such as 'do no harm' (Mary Anderson), Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (Ken Bush), conflict sensitivity (International Alert) and 'Aid for Peace' (Paffenholz and Reyhler 2007). These methods can be used to assess the impact proactively, during and after violent conflict. They are all about anticipating, monitoring and evaluation.

1. Aid for Peace

The Aid for Peace (AFP) method is very useful; it provides the best synthesis of the state of the art of peace building. The method involves different types of analysis.

Exhibit 4 : Types of analysis



AIM

- to learn to analyze and anticipate conflict dynamics and peace building needs
- to plan new interventions and evaluate existing ones
- to assess interventions' relevance for peace building
- to assess the effects of interventions on peace and conflict by making hypotheses of change explicit

CRITERIA

The criteria for assessing the quality of the impact are :

- Peace building relevance:** are the efforts responding to the peace building needs?
- Peace building effectiveness:** have the objectives been achieved?
- Impact on macro peace building:** have the initiatives had an effect on the macro-level peace building process?
- Sustainability for long-term peace building:** does the intervention create conditions for long-term peace building?
- Participation and ownership of national stakeholders:** are the relevant stakeholders involved?

-Coordination and coherence: are the activities of the different parties involved coordinated? Do they lead to a coherent policy? Indicators of coherence are : a shared vision of the future; agreement on the assessment of the peace building needs; agreement on the planning of the activities (priorities, sequencing, synergies); agreement on the monitoring and evaluation process, etc. This is about synergies.

-Efficiency, management and governance: how efficient is the intervention? Are there enough personal and financial resources?

PROCESS

The process, or the way the evaluation is conducted, consists of seven steps and tries to be a good process. The donors, partners, implementing agencies and evaluators should be involved and the terms of reference (TOR) related to the objectives and process should be approved and clear.

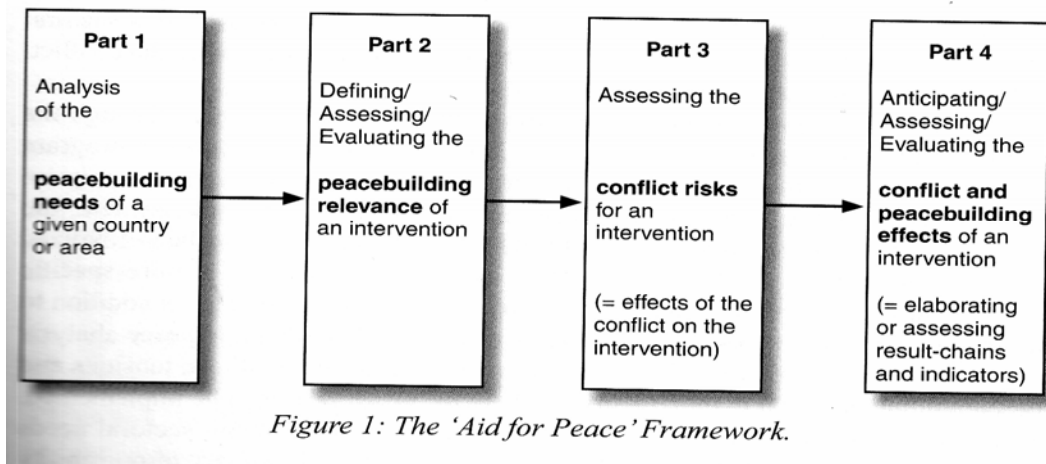
FRAMEWORK

The Aid for Peace framework consists of 4 parts.

Part one: Here an analysis is made of the peace building needs in a given country or area. This involves:

1. Analyzing the conflict and peace environment (actors, issues, conflict styles used, costs–benefits, escalating and de-escalating factors, connectors and dividers).
2. Anticipating the conflict dynamics and peace building (if everything remains the same, then what scenarios could take place?)
3. Analyzing the peace building deficiencies
 - Eliciting the peace vision. What kind of peace do the stakeholders want?
 - Clarifying the personal or organizational theory of peace building, indicating what is needed to build such a peace.
 - Specifying the peace building deficiencies (compare the present with the envisaged situation)
4. Specifying the needs/objectives for peace. What needs to be done?

Exhibit 5. Components of the Aid for Peace method



Part 2. Assessing the peace building relevance

- Compare the objectives and main activities planned
- Examine how and to what extent they are consistent with these needs (relevance scale)
- Avoid duplicating other's past and current activities

Part 3. Assessing the conflict risks

Assessing the risks (security and others; will you be perceived as positive?) and problems the intervention could face in the conflict zone. (Port Harcourt, Nigeria (Footbridge over the highway and stress ,dead bodies and meat pies (meat pies / dead bodies)

Part 4. Assessing the conflict and peace building

The objective in this fourth part of the Aid for Peace framework is to assess the effects (outcomes and impacts) of the planned or ongoing interventions on the conflict and peace building situation.

- This can only be done when a baseline study is made prior to the intervention.
- During the planning phase, stakeholders need to make their hypotheses of change operational, by agreeing on result chains and strategic maps with milestones or indicators of progress. These indicators can be used in the impact assessment work.

Analysis and evaluation. Impact assessment does not only involve analytic and evaluative work. It is not just reacting to planned, implemented or completed policies, programs, or projects from others.

Creativity and imagination. A great deal of attention in the Aid for Peace guide is also given to the design of alternative policies, programs or projects. This requires also imaging alternative and realistic futures, a great deal of creativity, and respectful and ethical minds. The vision of the future determines the present and the past. The EU would not have been here with a leadership that was defeatist, cynical and pessimistic nor without the vision of an European community. The fathers of the EU could imagine an alternative future and developed plans to realize that dream.

Respectfulness. The design of a sustainable peace building process demands respectfulness. Not false respect or pseudo respect. We also do not need unconditional respect (Gardner 114), but at least we must create spaces for meeting, working together, and learning to empathize. Edward Said, a Palestinian writer, and Daniel Barenboim, a Jewish pianist and conductor set up the Western Eastern Divan workshop: an orchestra with Israeli and Palestinian musicians. Barenboim reminded us that 'A person who is determined to do something constructive with his life needs to come to terms with the fact that not everyone is going to love him'.

An ethical mind. Slavery has been outlawed in the 19th century segregation in the 1960s in the US and in South Africa in the 1990s. But there are still gross inequalities and a great amount of physical and structural violence in countries and at the international level. The seventeenth century author Molière declared 'We are responsible not only for what we do but also for what we do not do'. (149).

Two additional methods can help to develop policies, programs and projects to resolve conflicts and build peace: appreciative inquiry and outcome analysis. Appreciative inquiry, also called the 5D approach, is a method that helps (a) to identify ways and means to motivate the conflicting parties to explore the possibility to transform their conflict into a win-win situation: this is the **discovery phase**, and (2) to imagine better common futures (which is called the **dream phase**). The other D's are the definition of the problem, the design of a solution, and the delivery or implementation of the plan. The first stage of outcome mapping of Sarah Earl, of the International Development Research Centre, is 'intentional design'. This stage consist of several steps such as the description of the vision, the identification of the mission, outcome challenges, progress markers, etc.

To assess conflict and peace impacts is not easy, but it is very important. The world cannot afford security follies, high opportunity costs and the waste of precious time and means to solve the many challenges with which we are confronted today. It is not easy because we are dealing with complex behavior. Peace building deals with several sectors, levels, time frames and layers all at the same time. It is also not easy because decision-makers and decision-shapers do not always (especially in the field of security and peace) like to independently monitor and evaluate. Consequently, it is difficult to find funding, resources and the data to assess macro-conflicts. Despite these difficulties, scholars can do a great deal to make the decision process transparent, to account for the outcomes, and to hold the decision-makers and -shapers accountable. Even if that is difficult, we can have an influence by repeatedly raising the question 'WHY?'

2. Reflective thinking From 'My way' to 'Why way' thinking

Let me end by presenting a method to check and develop one's own thinking about war and peace issues, especially sensitive issues. It is called reflective thinking. It is a method that helps to look at one's own thinking about war and peace and to evaluate and improve the quality. It invites reflection on the normative, theoretical and epistemological assumptions that underlie our opinions about issues of development and peace. Opinions are influenced by our values and interests, theories, and the information and knowledge we have about the issue. The method can be used for reflecting our own opinions or for transforming a hot pro and con debate into a reflective exercise. It consists of several steps.

1. Select a hot topic and policy, for example the Libyan war or military intervention.
2. Determine and express your opinion. Are you for or against?
3. Answer the question 'Why are you for or against the intervention?'
4. Write down the reasons given (security, freedom of the people, Kadhafi is crazy, oil, weapons, the whole world supports it, it is the only option, etc.).
5. Rank order your reasons in order of importance.
6. Address each of the reasons with 'why'. Why do I say the world community wants to intervene? Why do I think that Kadhafi only responds to force? Why do I believe he would have killed lots of people without this intervention?
7. Continue to search for answers with more 'Why?' questions. Ask, for example, how do I know? Do I consider Kadhafi as more violent than other leaders in the region? Is his behavior worse than the president of Bahrain, the king of Saudi Arabia or Ariel Sharon of Israel? Why?

The purpose of this exercise is to reflect on one's own opinion (each of us are a opinion-holders), but also to invite or challenge other opinion-holders, opinion-shapers and -makers to reflect on the underlying normative, theoretical and epistemic assumptions.

6. Conclusion

The last ten years, the democratic West has fought six wars in the Middle East and North Africa. These wars have the characteristics of foreign policy failures, resulting from inadequate violence prevention, a high number of missed opportunities and unanticipated negative outcomes. FPFs are caused by problems related to interests and values, analysis, power structures, and policy-making and leadership. Students and researchers can help to transform the failing foreign policy into a more successful foreign policy that furthers our interests in a more constructive way, and strengthens sustainable peace building in the world. Peace and conflict impact assessment is a mindset and tool that makes a difference.

¹ Luc Reyhler (Harvard Ph.D. '76), is emeritus professor at the K.U.Leuven. He specializes in violence prevention and sustainable peacebuilding, security and strategy and multilateral diplomacy, negotiation and mediation. He was Secretary General of the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) from 2004-2008 and holder of the UNESCO Chair: Sustainable Peace Building and Intellectual Solidarity of the Center for Peace Research and Strategic Studies (CPRS) in 2010. He is currently writing a book on the role of time in conflict and peace (*Time for Peace*). luc.reyhler@soc.kuleuven.be The new director of CPRS is prof. Arnim Langer.

² On April 4 2011 Luc Reyhler presented the paper to the students of the peace research course. "Thanks for the invitation. It feels good to be back. As emeritus I feel again a student and enjoy it. Retirement can mean retreatment or putting on new tires. I opted for both. At least, now, I have time to do more in depth research and to speak out".

³ "De keerzijde van de oorlog in Libië", in *De Standaard*, 29.03.2011.

⁴ Luc Reyhler, *Diplomatic Thinking*, Praeger Publishers 1979.

⁵ The interventions 2006 and before.

⁶ The interventions 2006 and before.

⁷ "De keerzijde van de oorlog in Libië", in *De Standaard* 29.03.2011.

⁸ see International Herald Tribune 24.02.2011.