# Local Peace Agreements: The Road to Peace and Democracy in KwaZulu Natal?

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This four-year project, funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, explores the role of local actors and institutions in mitigating political violence in the South African province KwaZulu Natal. In South Africa, democracy has been introduced successfully, but the transition from apartheid was not at all peaceful. In the run-up to the first democratic elections in 1994, all major parties participated in threats and intimidation and large-scale violence raged throughout the country. After the 1994 election, political violence ceased in most regions, but in KwaZulu Natal there are still outbursts of violence, in particular in relation to elections. At the national level, the power sharing agreement played an important role in facilitating the transition from apartheid towards democratic governance. The project explores the local dynamics in KwaZulu Natal by comparing societies with different types of mechanisms for conflict management - such as local peace agreements and power sharing - and different outcomes in terms of reduction of political violence. The research includes the development of a theory on local power sharing. This project will complement previous research on national and internationally mediated power sharing agreements where former enemies agree to share power in joint government. The results of the project will be useful in improving the design and implementation of future peace missions to also improve

democratic capacity in societies shattered by war.

# Introduction

Why has violence been reduced in some areas in KwaZuku Natal, while not in others? In South Africa, national power sharing paved the way for democratic rule. After the 1994 elections and after power sharing was implemented, political violence was reduced in most parts of South Africa. However, in KwaZulu Natal, outbursts of violence have continued, although at a declining level, and in particular around election periods. This project differs from most previous research on the impact of broad coalition governments including rival parties after civil strife - power sharing - because it focuses on 1) a sub-national level, and 2) a region where elections and power sharing have co-existed. The project will cover several sub-issues to enhance the understanding of why the level of political violence varies across a selection of locations, over time, in KwaZulu Natal.<sup>2</sup>

One issue concerns the role of traditional chiefs in instigating political violence and in the management of violence. In addition to the formal governmental structure, the system of chieftancy plays a political role. Especially in the rural areas in KwaZulu Natal, chiefs influence politics and local dynamics related to political violence.

Another issue regards the legacies of apartheid and the anti-apartheid struggle.

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Statsvetenskaplig Tidskrift 2010, årg 112 nr 1

<sup>2</sup> Part of this four-year project, funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, will be carried out in close collaboration with Associate Professor Kristine Höglund at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research at Uppsala University.

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In addition to violence between the apartheid regime and the majority population, groups associated with different black political movements were engaged in violence against each other. The communities became divided and the polarization still remains in many places. The relation between the political parties ANC and IFP (Inkatha Freedom Party), is key to understand why voters, activists and politicians have been targeted to a higher extent in KwaZulu Natal compared to the rest of the country.

A third issue concerns the experience of national and local power sharing. ANC has been the dominant political party since the first democratic elections in 1994. The degree of tolerance of political diversity, as well as the mechanisms for checks and balances on the hegemonic party, are issues of relevance for understanding why the level of political violence has been high in South Africa in general, and can also contribute to the explanation to why political violence still is relatively common in KwaZulu Natal, compared to other parts of the country. Power sharing at the provincial government continued in KwaZulu Natal also when it was abolished in the rest of the country. In addition, there are local peace agreements written in the spirit of power sharing.

#### What motivates this study?

Power sharing has come to the forefront as the most plausible form of governance in unstable states. In Kenya and Zimbabwe, power sharing was introduced after contested election results and large-scale violence. In Bosnia and Herzegovina and in Kosovo, power-sharing arrangements were installed after violent armed conflict. In Burundi, permanent power sharing ensures that both Tutsi and Hutu are represented in government. In South Africa, a period of transitional power sharing paved the way for majoritarian democracy after apartheid. These cases show that power sharing can be instrumental in peace processes. Guaranteed political power through a power-sharing arrangement often provides an incentive for armed groups to transform into political parties (Darby 2006; Höglund 2008; Söderberg Kovacs 2007; Stedman 1997). In addition, there exist few other options to avoid continued violence in the short term. International and domestic pressure to stop the killings often contributes to an allocation of political positions under a transitional form of power sharing.

In spite of its popularity, power sharing seldom solves all issues at stake, and these states continue to be unstable. While such power sharing settles the immediate contest over political power, several scholars and practitioners have pointed to problems in the longer term (e.g. Hoddie and Hartzell 2003; Jarstad 2001; Jarstad & Sisk 2008; Jarstad & Nilsson 2008; Paris 2004; Roeder & Rothchild 2005; Reilly 2001; Sisk 1995, Spears 2000; Sriram 2008; Walter 2002). Power sharing often means deadlock, inefficient governments, and an institutionalization of polarization in already divided societies. Thus, power sharing is often seen as a constraint to democracy, and even an alternative to electoral democracy. For that reason, many scholars rule out power sharing as an efficient form of governance for moving unstable states towards peace and democracy.

While the consequences on democracy and durable peace are yet understudied, the majority of all contemporary peace agreements provide for power sharing. Such agreements have been struck in Afghanistan, Angola, Bosnia and Hercegovina, Burundi, Cambodia, Liberia, Rwanda, Somalia and Uganda, to name but a few (Jarstad, forthcoming in Africa Spectrum, 2010). While some research has been conducted at the national level, and with focus on internationally mediated agreements, there is a need to learn more about the mechanisms at play during power sharing, as well as its consequences. The study focuses on the less researched local dynamics related to conflict management, power sharing and democratization.

# Contribution to research on power sharing<sup>1</sup>

I build on two strands of research, namely conflict management and research on transitions to democracy. Scholars of conflict management have perceived of power sharing as a tool for short-term peace. Because contending parties cannot trust that the other side will uphold an agreement on democratic governance after a winner-take-all election, parties to a peace deal are likely to demand some form of power sharing (Walter 1999; 2002). However, several case studies illustrate that power sharing may be a source of instability, ineffective governance and violent conflict (e.g. Sriram 2008, Roeder and Rothchild 2005). Recent quantitative research has demonstrated that not even when political power sharing pacts after civil conflicts are implemented, do they have a significant effect on peace (Jarstad and Nilsson 2008). This means that although combatants are much more likely to sign an agreement if it reduces uncertainty by the inclusion of guaranteed positions in the future government, it is a poor tool for ending civil war.

It has been proposed that power sharing only works in tandem with other

forms of conflict management devices, such as territorial devolution of power and military division or sharing of power positions. Matthew Hoddie and Caroline A. Hartzell's quantitative research on war endings suggest that of the total of 38 civil wars ended by negotiated settlement between 1945 and 1998, only one did not include provisions for power sharing. In contrast to the most common notion of power sharing, guaranteed positions in the government are not a necessary component of their definition. In their 2003 study, power sharing includes any type of institution dividing or sharing political, economic, territorial and military power. They conclude that the more power sharing provisions in an agreement, the higher the likelihood that peace will endure (Hartzell and Hoddie 2003, 319). Jarstad and Nilsson define political power sharing as guaranteed positions in the government. In the 2008 study, no evidence was found on 'the more power sharing, the higher the likelihood that peace'. Moreover, that study, focusing on the effects of implementation of peace agreements, concludes that whereas the implementation of territorial and military power sharing provisions increases the likelihood of peace, the implementation of political pacts have no significant effect on peace (Jarstad and Nilsson 2008).

While there is a fairly large number of quantitative studies on power sharing as a way to resolve civil wars, several problems have not been adequately addressed. First, the theoretical expectation often builds on the notion that many warring parties are prepare to lay down their arms only in return for guaranteed inclusion in the future government. But power sharing is not part of the all contemporary peace processes and war endings. Even when such guarantee exists, it seldom proves to

<sup>1</sup> Parts of this summary of previous research is identical to parts of my article in *Africa Spectrum* 2009.

be enough. The causal relationship between power sharing and peace – or power sharing and conflict – is not clear: Why would violent groups stick to peace, given a guarantee of political power (and why give up fighting for more)? There is no clear theory on when, why and how power sharing can contribute to durable peace – or instability – in the longer term. This project aims to contribute to this conundrum.

Second, the existing studies have not provided convincing evidence that power sharing really has a systematic positive or negative effect on peace. The explanation can be that power sharing in some instances has a conducive effect on peace, while it triggers conflict in other cases. Power sharing can take many different shapes, so it is debatable to which extent it is useful to draw any general conclusions about power sharing, apart from rather academic ones. For instance, many researchers, including myself, have discussed the difficulty of deciding who to include in a power sharing government (Jarstad 2008): Should all former warlords be included as a price for immediate ceasefire, or should those that have a high potential to spoil the peace process in the future be excluded? In practice, the decision rests more on what is at all possible rather than what would be the best agreement.

It has also been suggested that third party is important, which could indicate that any relationship between power sharing and peace could perhaps be spurious. It is generally believed that international attention has a mitigating effect on conflict. So far, most quantitative research has included controls for peace keeping, but there are of course also other international dimensions such as aid, diplomatic support, and diaspora engagement, that could be important with regard to international influence on conflict dynamics. The present project focuses on a case with comparatively little international involvement in the local conflict. This hopefully means that there are fewer factors that influence the dynamics of powersharing, conflict and democratization, compared to many other cases, where it is necessary to bring in the international level when analyzing the consequences of peace mechanisms.

Third, most previous research focuses on the national level. Because this project wants to uncover the mechanisms at play, the focus is on the local level. A challenge is to find an appropriate level of analysis. Since many conflicts in KwaZulu Natal boil down to personal relations, it can be difficult to determine to which extent an analysis can be generalized. For instance, it can be difficult to establish what is political motives for violence when the target was not only a politician, but also involved in a taxi war, business dispute, and chieftaincy succession rivalry, etc. It is often easier to determine what the political consequences are, e.g. when the removal of a politician allows for the election of an individual from a rival party in a by-election.

The second strand of research of particular relevance for this study, addresses the transition towards democracy. Also in qualitative studies on power sharing during transitions from war to democracy, there is a lack of (convincing) theory. It is not clear why and how power sharing plays a role and what the mechanisms are. Although power sharing is a poor device for promoting peace, there is little evidence to what extent other types of arrangement would better solve conflicts over political power. Conventionally, there are two major principles for just governance and durable peace without splitting up a state. The parties either decide to share political power or an elected majority governs alone.

Thus far, there are mixed results of studies on the consequences of power sharing with regard to democracy. Lijphart has advocated power sharing as a school in democracy socializing opponents into compromises and moderation over an extended period, as the only option for democratic governance for many divided societies.<sup>1</sup> In his early work, Lijphart defines consociationalism in the following way:

Consociational democracy means government by elite cartel designed to turn a democracy with a fragmented political culture into a stable democracy (Liphart 1969, 216).

According to Liphart, a majoritarian electoral system is inapt for a divided society, since it presupposes shifting majorities in parliament and fairly similar policies of major parties in order not to exclude the other parties' interests. Because political parties in divided societies diverge to a great extent and people often vote along ethnic lines, political parties representing ethnic minorities have no chance of ever forming a majority, and shifting majorities in parliament are unlikely. Under such conditions, Lijphart holds that majoritarian rule is not only undemocratic, but also dangerous and risks resulting in civil strife (Liphart 1999: 31-33). For countries such as Lebanon in 1985, Lijphart writes, "the choice is not between consociational and majoritarian democracy, but between consociational democracy and no democracy at all" (Lijphart 1985: 13).

Over the years, power sharing has become a more common term to refer to what Lijphart initially called consociational democracy (see e.g. Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; Horowitz 1985; Lijphart 1985; Lijphart 1993; Reilly 2001; Reynolds 2002; Sisk 1996; Spears 2000; Sriram 2008; Walter 1999; Walter 2002).

Most scholars perceive of power sharing as a constraint to democracy (e.g., Hartzell and Hoddie 2003; Roeder and Rothchild 2005; Walter 2002). While democracy involves much more than elections, it is difficult to imagine democracy at a country level without elections. Elections held in the shadow of war sometimes generate more violence in already war-torn societies (see e.g., Schedler 2006; Höglund, Jarstad, and Söderberg Kovacs 2009; Höglund 2009; Höglund and Piyarathne 2009). Ian S. Spears writes that power sharing is sometimes constructed as an *alternative* to competitive elections (Spears 2000: 108), although it can also "be compatible with democracy" (Spears 2000: 105). Although there are several cases where elections have been held during or after power sharing arrangements, such as Bosnia and Hercegovina, Burundi, DRC, Sierra Leone and Liberia, these cases are fairly recent and the long-term consequences for democratization are yet to be analyzed.

This projects seeks to contribute to the research on the consequences of power sharing on peace and democracy in countries struck by violent conflict, by focusing on the role of power sharing at the sub-national level in a case where power sharing is not guaranteed by a third party, and where elections take place.

# Towards peace and democracy in KwaZulu Natal

The study aims to explain the variation of political violence in selected locations, but

<sup>1</sup> For my analysis of Lijphart's work and an interpretation of the logic of consociationalism, see Jarstad 2001.

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also its consequences for peace and democracy in KwaZulu Natal by focusing on local politics, chieftaincy and local peace agreements. When exploring the mechanisms of power sharing in relation to the local dynamics in KwaZulu Natal, I expect several tensions to emerge: between a democratic ideal and autocratic forces; between modern versus traditional attitudes and organizations of society; between grass-root demands versus political deliverance; and as a result of the interplay between national and local government.

There are at least two features which contribute to the rather high level of political violence in Kwa ZuluNatal. First, the chieftancy system is especially strong in KwaZulu Natal. Secondly, the legacy of apartheid and anti-apartheid struggle had particularly severe consequences for KwaZulu Natal. Thirdly, power sharing perhaps plays a special role in KwaZulu. At least, it continued there when it was abolished in other places. In addition, there are other local peace mechanisms in use.

#### Chiefs

ANC originally wanted to abolish chieftaincy, but eventually gave it official recognition through the constitution and provided for a role of chieftaincy in local, provincial and national government. In addition, different laws ensuring its control over land and a small salary for chiefs, has contributed to institutionalizing the role of the chiefs in political life. Consequently, the number of traditional leaders, including kings, chiefs and headmen, in South Africa has increased to more than 2400 individuals (Mokvist Uggla 2006: 8).

According to Mokvist Uggla, the "political manipulation of the institution of chieftaincy began prior to the introduction of apartheid, the manifesto of systematic segregation that brought the National Party to power in 1948" (Mokvist Uggla 2006: 9). "Native Reserves" had been created in the beginning of the 1900s, barring Africans from acquiring land outside such areas. In 1951, the Bantu Authorites Act imposed indirect rule and forced chiefs to uphold apartheid law (Mokvist Uggla 2006:11). The KwaZulu homeland was created in the 1970s, not as an integrated entity, but as several scattered enclaves, administered largely by cooperative and compliant chiefs that had been put in place by the government to replace the original chiefs.

#### The legacy of apartheid<sup>1</sup>

The transition from apartheid to democracy was very violent and consisted of different types of conflicts. Between 1990, when African National Congress leader Nelson Mandela was released, and 1994, an estimated 15000 people were killed in politically motivated violence (Guelke 1999, du Toit 2001). Most actors - youth movements, political parties, and the security forces - were involved in violence. Two marginalised classes developed under apartheid – the migrant workers living in hostels, and the squatter communities and gave rise to conflicts over employment, land and water. There were also "generational conflicts between radical youth and traditional elders, disputes over chiefship succession, crime, economic rivalry (as in the so-called 'taxi' wars) and cycles of vendetta-like clan conflict" (Johnston 1994: 188). In addition, the battle for land was central in KwaZulu homeland and Natal province as many

<sup>1</sup> This section is largely based on a manuscript with Höglund on the management of electoral violence.

South Africans wanted a plot of land for subsistence farming.

However, at the fore of violent conflict in KwaZulu Natal was the ANC-IFP rivalry, which had is roots in the struggle against the apartheid system. The locallybased cultural organization Inkatha, affiliated with the Zulu system of chieftaincy, was transformed into a political party the Inkatha Freedom Party- when most of the ANC leadership had been forced into exile. There are still conflicting views on the role of IFP during the anti-apartheid struggle. In contrast to other Bantustan leaders, Chief Manosuthu Buthelezi the leader of IFP - was an outspoken opponent to apartheid and refused independence for the KwaZulu homeland to ensure that white citizen's would always be outnumbered by Africans (Jeffrey 1997:22). IFP claim that they have not received enough acknowledgement for their struggle against apartheid within the country while ANC was in exile. However, IFP is associated with third force violence and has been portrayed as traitors to the cause.<sup>1</sup> The IFP-ANC rivalry divided not only politics, but society in general, and often became the basis of violent mobilization (Bonnin 2006, 63). Many residential township areas were transformed into no-go areas, where opposition supporters were not allowed to enter.

In the national elections in 1994, ANC gained a majority in seven of provinces, but in KwaZulu-Natal, IFP was able to secure a majority with slightly over 50 % of the vote. Since then, they have gradually lost in electoral strength, with the ANC gaining a majority of votes in the 2004 provincial elections (46,98% compared to IFPs 36,82%). While IFP remains as the main opposition party, its support has declined. This is the result of a number of factors, including "its inability to breakaway from its image as a Zulu nationalist organisation, its loss of support within its traditional rural stronghold, decreased levels of violence, higher standards of electoral monitoring, reports of poor governance in the province and the success of the ANC's election campaign in KwaZulu-Natal" (Mottiar 2004: 48). Due to continued violence in the province, the 1995 local election in KwaZulu Natal was postponed and instead held in 2006.

# Peace mechanisms

It has been stated that informal power sharing continues to be vital for moderation and compromise in South Africa (Sisk and Stefes 2005). In this project, I will try to collect written as well as oral agreements on local power arrangements, for example on power sharing. The 1991 national peace accord established local peace structures. In addition, an ANC -IFP peace process was initiated in 1996 (Nebandla 2005: 69ff). There are also local and traditional ways of making peace. Several actors are involved in managing and preventing political violence, including local and international monitoring and observer missions, and national, regional and local dispute resolution and mediation missions. The bodies involved in these activities range from public authori-

<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s, the National Party government formed Joint Management Councils (JMCs) providing for direct links between the army, the police and local governmental structures (in KZN: Inkatha councillors) to fight anti-apartheid movements and prevent a transition towards a democratic South Africa. This 'third force' instigated acts of violence, and the links between Inkatha and JMCs continued into the 1990s (Krämer 2007: 27).

ties, political parties, an electoral commission, religious organisations, civil society NGOs, and traditional authorities such as chiefs.<sup>1</sup>

# Summary and concluding remarks

This four-year project, funded by Riksbankens Jubileumsfond, will explore the role of local actors and institutions in mitigating political violence in the South African province KwaZulu Natal. In South Africa, democracy has been introduced successfully, but the transition from apartheid was not at all peaceful. In the run-up to the first democratic elections in 1994, all major parties participated in threats and intimidation and large-scale violence raged throughout the country. After the 1994 election, political violence ceased in most regions, but in KwaZulu Natal there are still outbursts of violence, in particular in relation to elections. At the national level, the power sharing agreement played an important role in facilitating the transition from apartheid towards democratic governance.

The project explores the local dynamics in KwaZulu Natal by comparing societies with different types of mechanisms for conflict management – such as local peace agreements and power sharing – and different outcomes in terms of reduction of political violence. A part of this research will be devoted to the development of a theory on local power sharing. In this way, the project strives to complement previous research on national and internationally mediated power sharing agreements where former enemies agree to share power in joint government. In addition, the aim is that the results of the project will prove useful in improving the design and implementation of future peace missions to not only attain ceasefire, but also improve the democratic capacity in societies shattered by war.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the subject of an article manuscript with Höglund.

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