

# Time, “Temporament,” and Sustainable Peace: The Essential Role of Time in Conflict and Peace

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Time is the most precious resource we have. It is irreversible and nonrenewable. It makes the difference, more than ever, between the best and worst scenarios of climate change, energy competition, economic development, poverty, and security. Despite this, an incredible amount of time is wasted, especially the time of others and of nature. These latter resources are needed to prevent violence, build sustainable security, and ensure the well-being of all. Therefore, it is high time to radically change the way we deal with time and to develop a more adaptive “temporament.” This article defines time, surveys temporal deficiencies, and presents the parameters of a more responsible way of dealing with time in conflict transformation.

**Keywords** sustainable peacebuilding, temporament, time, democratic fascism, failed foreign policy

## Introduction

Something is fundamentally wrong with the way we deal with conflicts. Instead of contributing to sustainable peacebuilding, the foreign policy of the West has led to more insecurity abroad and at home. This has been especially true since 9/11 in the Middle East and North Africa. The obsession with military supremacy has transformed diplomacy into coercive diplomacy. Characteristic of the latter is the absence of proactive conflict prevention, a high level of temporal inadequacies, and the enormous waste of time, especially the time of others and of nature. Without a more adaptive “temporament” (the manner of thinking, feeling and behaving towards time) we will not be able to deal successfully with global challenges or achieve sustainable development and peace.

The first part of this article defines sustainable peace in terms of outcomes and necessary preconditions, given that sustainable peace is an indispensable precondition for the survival of humanity. The second part looks at the impact

of Western foreign policy on the global peacebuilding process. In the Middle East and North Africa, especially since 9/11, the impact has been disastrous. The third part highlights time as an essential factor in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. It also offers a multidimensional definition of time and stresses the importance of taking a big-picture view of time. Most people focus on one or two facets of time but overlook others. The fourth part of the article overviews several types of temporal inadequacies. The prevailing temporament is clearly not fit for dealing with the global challenges nor for achieving sustainable development and peace. The last part of the article deals with how to upgrade our temporal behavior. It defines the parameters of a more adaptive temporament. This discussion of time is based on the research done for my forthcoming book, *Time for Peace*, which includes a questionnaire to assess one's own or another actor's temporament. Most of the examples relate to the Middle East and North Africa, and to the Gaza war, which killed some 2,100 Palestinians and 73 Israelis, and destroyed 17,000 buildings in the Gaza area.

## The Imperative of Sustainable Peace

In our globalized world, building sustainable peace has become imperative. If we do not improve the human climate or handle conflicts more constructively, we will not be able to deal with the interlocking global crises successfully. Sustainable peace is an old dream that has become an indispensable precondition for the survival of humanity. The opportunity costs of the unresolved violent conflicts and military interventions are too high. Too many opportunities to deal more effectively with the global crises are lost. Military interventions in the name of democracy, regime change, human rights, or in pursuit of Netanyahu's "sustainable quiet,"<sup>1</sup> do not further sustainable security and peace.

Since terms like peace and sustainability have many different meanings, it is imperative to provide an operational definition. In this article, sustainable peace refers to a situation with a very low level of direct and indirect violence. It distinguishes itself from other types of peace by the absence not only of physical violence, but also of structural, psychological, cultural, environmental, and temporal violence. It is the most cost-effective means of violence prevention.<sup>2</sup> Sustainable peace requires the installation of five peacebuilding blocks plus one, which is called the peacebuilding pentagon (Reychler 2006).

The first building block focuses on the establishment of *an effective communication, consultation, and negotiation system at different levels* between the conflicting parties or party members. In contrast to the negotiation styles used in most international organizations, the European Union's negotiation style, for example, is predominantly integrative. Ample time and creativity is invested in generating mutually beneficial agreements. Without win-win agreements, the

Union could disintegrate and become a dis-union.

The second building block consists of *peacebuilding structures*. In order to achieve a sustainable peace, (conflict) countries have to install political, economic, and security structures and institutions that sustain peace. The political reform process aims at the establishment of political structures with a high level of legitimacy. The legitimacy status is influenced by: (1) the effectiveness of a regime to deliver vital basic needs, such as security, health services, and jobs; and (2) the democratic nature of the decision-making process. Initially, an authoritarian regime with high-quality leaders and technocrats can obtain a high legitimacy score, but in the end, consolidated democracies are the best support for sustainable peacebuilding. It is crucial to note that the transition from one state (e.g., non-democratic structures) to another (e.g., a consolidated democratic environment) is not without difficulties; the devil is in the transition (Reychler 1999). The economic reform process envisions the establishment of an economic environment that stimulates sustainable development, eliminates gross vertical and horizontal inequalities, and develops positive expectations about the future. The security structure safeguards and/or increases the population's objective and subjective security by effectively dealing with both internal and external threats. This implies a cooperative security system producing a high level of human security, collective defense and security, and proactive conflict prevention efforts (Cohen and Mihalka 2001, 69).

The third necessary building block for establishing a sustainable peace process is an *integrative climate*, which is the software of peacebuilding (Reychler and Langer 2003, 53-73). This peacebuilding block highlights the importance of a favorable social-psychological environment. Although climate is less tangible and observable than the other building blocks, it can be assessed by the consequences. The presence of an integrative or disintegrative climate can be assessed by the prevailing attitudes, behavior, and institutions. Characteristic of an integrative climate are expectations for an attractive future as a consequence of cooperation, the development of a "we-ness" feeling or multiple loyalties, reconciliation, trust, social capital, and the dismantlement of sentimental walls.

The fourth building block consists of *systems supporting the development and installation of the other peacebuilding blocks*: (1) an effective and legitimate legal system, (2) an empowering educational system, (3) peace media, (4) a well-functioning health system, and (5) humanitarian aid in the immediate post-war phase.

The fifth building block is a *supportive regional and international environment*. The stability of a peace process is often dependent on the behavior and interests of neighboring countries or regional powers. They can have a positive influence on the peace process by providing political legitimacy or support, by assisting with the demobilization and demilitarization process, or by facilitating and stimulating regional trade and economic integration. However, these same actors can also

stifle progress towards stability, for example, by supporting certain groups that do not subscribe to the peace process. Likewise, the larger international community plays a crucial role in most post-conflict countries. The international community, by means of UN agencies or other international (non-) governmental organizations, can provide crucial resources and funding or even take direct responsibility for a wide variety of tasks, such as the (physical) rebuilding process, political transformation, humanitarian aid, and development cooperation.

The installation of all these building blocks requires *a critical mass of peacebuilding leadership* (Reychler and Stellamans 2005) in different domains (politics, diplomacy, defense, economics, education, media, religion, health, etc.) and at different levels: the elite, mid-level, and grassroots (Lederach 1997). Peacebuilding leadership envisions a shared, clear, and mutually attractive peaceful future for all who want to cooperate; these leaders do everything to identify and gain a full understanding of the challenge confronting them; they frame the conflict in a reflexive way; their change behavior is adaptive, integrative, and flexible; they are well acquainted with nonviolent methods; they use a mix of intentional and consequential ethics and objectives; and they are courageous men and women with high levels of integrity (Reychler and Stellamans 2003, 1-49).

All of these peacebuilding blocks are essential and interlocking. The lagging of one or more can seriously impede the pace of the peacebuilding process.

## Failing Foreign Policy

What is the impact of Western foreign policy on peacebuilding? Instead of finger pointing at the so-called “undemocratic and less civilized world,” let us look at the three fingers pointing back at ourselves. After 9/11 the diplomatic landscape changed drastically. The art of diplomacy became a different creature:

- It transformed into a type coercive diplomacy that makes use of diplomatic isolation, sanctions, threats, armed interventions, and psychological warfare. In the 21st century, democratic countries are fighting most international wars in the world, in particular in the Middle East and North Africa. Interventions in the name of security, anti-terrorism, anti-weapons of mass destruction (WMD), regime change, human rights, and democratization have brought instability, human suffering, and material destruction, leaving weak and failing states. All of this could be judged as “failed foreign policy.” Powerful interest groups, however, consider these interventions successes; they prefer weak and unstable states over stable regimes that can resist Western interference. The prime goal of the West in the Middle East is to achieve absolute security by means of offensive and defensive military dominance and regime change. The democratic West is the best-armed group of countries in the world. The main difference between authoritarian and democratic regimes is that the former commit violence against their own citizens, whereas the latter does

so against other people.

- Domestic interference, or government-to-people diplomacy, became a major tool for the new diplomacy. Exemplary is the support and manipulation of “square democracy” in Iran, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Ukraine. The scenarios are similar: Protests are staged on a square in the limelight of the international news media; the opposition is supported and portrayed as the voice of the people; and the regime currently holding office is sanctioned and spurred to step down. When the new regime does not meet Western expectations, it is ousted by a coup d’état, repression, isolation, or by a new square democracy protest. Think of the elimination of the elected Hamas government in Palestine and of the Morsi-led government in Egypt. Regarding the former, when a Palestinian unity government was created, Israel claimed that it would never accept a peace agreement. Hamas needed to be destroyed first and then elections could be held.
- Foreign policy decision making has become less democratic. Winston Churchill’s observation that “democracy is the worst form of government, except for all others that have been tried” applies to domestic politics, not foreign policy. Worrisome, especially in regard to the West’s foreign policy towards the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), is the appearance of democratic fascism. This may sound like an exaggeration, but when judged by the main parameters of fascism, the foreign policy of the West and its allies in the MENA shows signs of creeping fascism. It is chilling to see how the foreign policy of the West gradually changed into an Ionescan Rhinoceros-type of behavior (Ionesco 1960).

First, foreign policy in the Middle East is extremely militaristic. The aim is military superiority at a price amounting to hundreds of thousands of casualties and billions of dollars. During the last Gaza war, Israel’s biggest-selling newspaper called for returning Gaza to the Stone Age (Regev 2014). Second, foreign policy has become extremely patriotic. Citizens are rallied around the flag to defeat terrorists and evil rogue regimes. There are first- second- and third-class victims. Enemies deserve becoming victims; they are collateral damage. “As Palestinian children are killed, that may seem like a lot to stomach, but it is no less necessary” (Jones 2014, 18). Third, the “enemy” is dehumanized and stigmatized as cruel, evil, vicious, backward or a terrorist. One seems to forget that anti-terrorism and state terrorism cause disproportionately more violence and destruction (in some cases 10, 100 or 1000 times more) than most terrorist acts. Fourth, this policy seeks full control of the region and is expansionistic. Much of the territory of Palestine since 1967 has become exclusive zones or colonized areas, and when the Israeli settlers left Gaza in 2005, it was turned into a ghetto with 1,800,000 people. Fifth, propaganda and spin-doctors define realities and responsibilities. For example, our domestic interference is justified; others are responsible for the rack and ruin. We are fighting in a civilized way whereas “they” use barbarism. Gazan people would receive telephone calls to inform them that their houses would be bombed five minutes later. If they did not leave their homes in time, the inhabitants would be considered fully responsible for their own deaths. ISIS fighters’ slicing of Westerners’ throats has rightly been depicted as full, barbaric horror. But what about the tens of thousands of innocent civilians, adults and children, who are pierced, torn to pieces, burned, poisoned, or suffocated by intelligent weapons. Part of the propaganda is the staging of

scapegoats, such as Iran, Hamas or more recently President Putin. There is a systematic denial of the policy of domination and of the responsibility for the negative consequences of interventions. Dissidents are labeled unpatriotic, traitors, leftists, peaceniks, and are ostracized and threatened with death or job loss.

- Finally, the new diplomacy is shaped by the media revolution and by fear. There is not only the culture of instant news, but also the phenomenon that, except in extreme circumstances, it is scarier to follow an event on TV than it is actually to be there covering it (Brooks 2014, 13). David Axelrod points to the political and news media culture that has gone well beyond healthy skepticism and scrutiny. “There’s an impetus to create fear and then market and exploit it. And that’s true on the part of the media, and that’s true on the part of the politicians.” (cited in Backer 2014, 5). A Swedish conflict analyst, Jan Oberg, commenting on the submarine hysteria in the coastal waters of Sweden in October 2014, observes that during the last 20 to 30 years the quality of media work and commentary in the fields of security, defense and peace has steadily declined. There is less professional knowledge, research, and independent analysis; there is less resistance to marketing and psychological operations (PSYOPS), which is done by the military to boost its legitimacy in the eyes of the paying public; there is much more uniformity; the disease exists of journalists interviewing other journalists as if they were experts; and there is a fierce struggle for sheer survival in the digitalized media world with fewer owners in the business (Oberg 2014). The escalation of fear after 9/11, and more recently due to the ISIS and Ebola crises, has been amplified by the feeling that boundaries have become more porous and that government policies are less effective in preventing threats and keeping problems and death at a distance. According to Higgins (2014, 1), this hysteria and overreaction “springs from a paradox at the heart of the West.” The more we master the world through science, technology (and economic and military dominance), the more frightened we are of those things we cannot control, understand, and anticipate. “We live in very secure societies and like to think we know what will happen tomorrow. There is no place ... for the unknown” (ibid., 4). All of this has transformed the art of diplomacy into rapid-reaction diplomacy (Seib 2012). On the whole, the impact of foreign policy on peacebuilding in the MENA has been disastrous.

## The Essential Role of Time

### *The Relevance of Time in Conflict and Peace*

Time is an essential factor in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. First, it provides a more sensitive and comprehensive measure of violence. Attention is given not only to fast violence (killing), but also to slow, chronic violence that results from structural, psychological, ecological, cultural and other means of violence. Analysts frequently overlook temporal violence. Second, time is an important aspect of the conflict environment. Think of the impact of a crisis environment or of historical trauma. The appetite to join or not join the Arab Spring revolutions was strongly influenced by memory. In Algeria, the civil

war against the Islamists in the 1990s—at the cost of 200,000 lives—inhibited revolutionary escapades. Third, time is an aspect of descriptive, explanatory, and predictive analysis. There is, for example, the *sticky past*, events or developments in the past that have an impact on today’s behavior and are difficult to erase or neutralize, such as demographic and ecological trends, or traumatic experiences. There is also the *malleable past*, relating to lessons learned, the manipulation of history, and dealing with a violent past. Fourth, time is a major component of the planning and implementation of peace. Decisions have to be taken with respect to sequencing, prioritization, entry and exit, and the nature of change. Fifth, time is an important aspect of evaluation. It provides criteria for distinguishing bad and good temporal behavior. Good temporal behavior implies a high level of temporal democracy and temporal empathy, deference to nature’s time, and adequate efforts to build sustainable peace. Finally, time is a tool of power and influence.

### *The Dimensions of Time*

While I was writing *Time for Peace*, some people asked me if the book was about philosophy or history. I told them that it dealt with existential time. We are all heading to the future and to death, or the end of our time. To save our own lifetimes, or that of loved ones, most people would consider killing if no other options are seen. I also reminded them that history is very important, but it is only one facet of temporal reality. Time is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. A thorough temporal analysis investigates the big picture, the cross-impacts between the different dimensions, and the emotions of time. A narrow temporal analysis can lead to serious distortions and misunderstandings. The temporal dimensions are divided into five principal and four transformative dimensions. The principal dimensions distinguish the fundamental components of time in conflict and peace. The transformative dimensions draw attention to variables that can alter temporal perception and behavior.

### *Principal Dimensions*

1. **Existential time** is about life and death. The duration and quality of a lifetime can be reduced by fast (armed) violence or slow (structural) violence. People who

**Table 1.** Principal and Transformative Dimensions of Time

Principal Dimensions	Transformative Dimensions
1. Existential time	6. Manipulation of the perception of time
2. Orientation to the past, present, and the future	7. Temporal equality or inequality
3. Time modes	8. Temporal empathy
4. Anticipation	9. Temporal efficacy
5. Temporal management	

have been subjected to armed and long-term structural violence may decide to risk or even offer their lives to achieve freedom. Someone confided to me that he had played with the idea of considering himself dead. This made it easier to live and risk his life for freedom, as he was dead anyway. In the current Gaza conflict, the issue is not only how to bring about a cease-fire, but also a cease-occupation. The price of turning a blind eye to freedom aspirations is often a surprise.

**2. Orientation to the past, present, and future:** After a bloody conflict, a peace process must deal with the past, the present, and the future. The three time orientations are interdependent. It is very difficult to deal with the past successfully when the parties involved in a conflict cannot imagine a better common future.

**3. Time modes:** This dimension relates to change, succession, continuity, turning points, duration, and sustainability. Each of these modes can be further differentiated. Change can vary in terms of its speed or pace, its momentum, magnitude, pattern, and visibility or invisibility. The Gaza conflict entails a temporal confrontation between Israelis, who prefer the status quo or slow, step-by-step change, and Palestinians, who demand radical and immediate change, and an independent state here and now.

**4. Anticipating or not anticipating crises and the negative impacts of interventions:** The recent regime change in Libya is an example of tremendous temporal misconduct or violence. 9/11 may have been the most visible turning point in U.S. foreign policy, but the armed regime change in Libya altered the international landscape tremendously.

**5. Temporal management** deals with the timing of interventions, proactive or reactive conflict prevention, the prioritization of efforts, sequencing, synergy, and coherence. Today's diplomatic landscape is dominated by a reactive approach to conflicts. As long as an anti-terrorist policy does not deal with the root causes, it will likely remain expensive, counter-productive, and incapable of delivering lasting results.

### *Transformative Dimensions*

**6. Manipulation and framing of the perception of time:** The Gaza war of 2014 has been the subject of a great deal of temporal manipulation. The bombardments of Gaza by Israel were justified as reactions to Palestinian missiles. Crucial elements in the causal chain, such as the transformation of Gaza into a mega prison camp and the imprisonment of a great number of political leaders, are left out of the picture. The same is true with regard to Iranian-American relations. America tends to delete from the narrative: the CIA-assisted coup of an elected, secular government in 1953; giving the green light to Saddam Hussein's war against Iran in 1980; and shooting down an Iranian civilian airliner in 1988.

**7. Temporal equality and inequality:** In a genuine democracy the time of each citizen is equally valuable. In the occupied territories, the time of the Palestinians



is controlled and wasted by checkpoints, slow and unpredictable administrative procedures, political imprisonment, and so forth.

**8. Temporal empathy** is the capacity and will to discern how others think and feel about time. Each culture has its own orientation to the past, present, and future; a preference for sequential or synchronic organization of its activities; particular uses of short- or long-term time horizons; and each has a distinctive sense of temporal control, and of the value of human, natural, and transcendental time.

**9. Temporal efficacy** is the opposite of determinism, fatalism, powerlessness, defeatism, despair. It indicates a reasonable confidence in one's ability to understand the significance of time and to deal with time in ways that further one's interests.

To fully grasp conflict and peace behavior, attention should be given to the big picture of time. First, this implies assessing the impact and cross-impact of every temporal dimension. It also means paying attention to temporal emotions. Time is not only an abstract, conceptual experience. Emotion is central to the experience of time. The past can be very painful. People can become victims of future shock, which can lead to maladaptive behavior, such as denial, obsessive nostalgia for previously successful, adaptive routines, or the use of super simplifiers (Toffler 1970). Significant changes can trigger strong emotions, such as the feeling of unpredictability or surprise, anger directed against those who resist or push too hard, denial and disillusionment. Change can also raise high expectations, hope, euphoria, enthusiasm, anticipation, happiness, love, and fulfillment (Cloke and Goldsmith 2002). While researching temporal emotions, I was surprised not only by the importance, but also the great variety, of temporal emotions. Twenty-four could be distinguished. Each emotion has its opposite (hope/despair, trust/distrust, or optimism/pessimism), but also subcategories: smart and blind trust, generalized and particularized trust, moralistic trust, strategic trust, deterrence-based trust, and identification-based trust. The strongest feelings accompany death or closeness to death. The best and the worst emotions take over when wars break out, such that war itself becomes the cause of more war. Finally, the big picture entails paying attention to the influence of both secular and religious time. Despite the process of secularization, religion remains an important factor in human behavior. For the majority of people in the world, religion is a major part of private and collective identity. Religious institutions promote moral principles and defend their interests. They also have become part of the globalization process in which people compare and evaluate the limits and possibilities of different belief systems. This can lead to friction and conflict, but also to the growth of eclecticism or shared (poly-) religious truth (Galtung and MacQueen 2008).

**Table 2.** Temporal Inadequacies

<b>Temporal Insensitivity</b>
1. Weak appreciation of the role of time in conflict and peace processes
2. Neglect or denial of temporal violence
3. A wide gap between the value of my time and your time
4. Low level of temporal discernment and empathy
<b>Temporal Malpractice</b>
5. An unsatisfactory and unbalanced orientation to the past, present and the future
6. Strong propensity for reactive conflict prevention
7. Incoherent temporal management
8. Low investment in sustainable development and peace
<b>Unethical Temporal Behavior</b>
9. Low accountability for temporal misconduct and violence
10. Undemocratic time
<b>Low Temporal Efficacy and Reflexivity</b>
11. Temporal inefficacy
12. Low reflexivity, invention and learning

## Temporal Inadequacies

Conflict transformation and peacebuilding efforts continue to be seriously hampered by multiple temporal inadequacies. In *Time for Peace*, twelve inadequacies in the ways people deal with time are distinguished. The inadequacies are split into four groups dealing with problems of temporal sensitivity, temporal praxis, temporal ethics, and temporal efficacy.

### *Low Temporal Sensitivity*

**1. Weak appreciation of the role of time in conflicts.** The military intervention in Libya (March–October 2011) illustrates several temporal deficiencies that significantly raised the human and material costs. This intervention, although not recognized as such, has been a major turning point in international relations. Despite the fact that the intervention was lauded as a success and role model for humanitarian intervention, it can also be judged a case of temporal folly or temporal misconduct. Alan Kuperman (2013) calls it a negative model of humanitarian intervention; it suffered from serious temporal deficiencies.

The first of these was the manipulation of the perception of the past, present, and future. The media diabolized Kaddafi's violence as a lunatic massacre, reminded its audience of the Lockerbie bombing, warned them of a new Srebrenica or Rwanda, depicted the protests as nonviolent, and exaggerated the initial death toll by a factor of ten. In fact, large-scale violence was initiated

by one part of the protestors and the government never responded with indiscriminate force. Second, a strong sense of urgency and existential crisis was created in which no time could be wasted by delays or diplomatic niceties to prevent or stop a possible human disaster. Third, several opportunities for dealing with the conflict in more constructive and effective ways were missed. Offers by Venezuela, the African Union (AU) and Turkey for mediation towards a ceasefire were refused. The primary objective of the rebels and NATO was to overthrow the regime. Fourth, regime change was prioritized as the preferred outcome, even if this escalated and extended the civil war and thereby raised the threat to the Libyans (*ibid.*, 115).

Fifth, there was a failure to anticipate and prevent negative external side effects or harm.<sup>3</sup> The war spilled over into Mali and also had a negative effect on the non-Western part of the international community. Russia, China, and the AU felt betrayed by a transformation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle of the intervention into regime change. The most negative external impact was felt in Syria. The success of the rebels in Libya raised the expectations of the Syrian armed opposition. With external support the opposition expected a quick, decisive victory and so negotiations with Assad were out of the question. On the other side, the Syrian regime was prepared to do anything to avoid what they had seen in Iraq and Libya (the hanging of Hussein, the lynching of Kaddafi, and the degradation of the countries into broken and weak states). Major international players, especially Russia, China and the African Union, refused to support military intervention in Syria, even to protect civilians.

**2. Neglect or denial of temporal violence:** Temporal violence refers to a quantitative and qualitative depreciation of one's life expectancy as a consequence of protracted conflict, long-term sanctions, structural violence, ecological deterioration, or the killing and wasting of others' time. Everybody has the right to be fully alive right now. Corrupt regimes and failed countries waste a disproportionate amount of the time of their citizens. Colonization goes hand in hand with considerable temporal violence. In the remaining Palestinian Territories (approximately 22% of the mandatory Palestine of 1947), Palestinians undergo long-term structural violence (also called apartheid, colonization, sanctions), thousands are political prisoners (Brown 1998). The timeframes of Gaza's inhabitants are enclosed, their economic and educational opportunities curtailed, and a great deal of their precious time wasted at checkpoints and in the absence of corridors between isolated parts of the territory. Another example of temporal violence is poverty. The term "extreme poverty," used by the rich and powerful, veils the impact of gross inequality and the long-term violence experienced by the less poor.

**3. A wide gap between the value of my time and their time:** Earlier we distinguished first- second- and third-class victims. Second- and third-class victims are those on the other side. Our victims are prioritized as first-class.

Threats to “us” are strategic or existential threats, which justify the disproportional use of firepower, torture, and rapid dominance. Innocent citizens on the other side are labeled collateral damage, as the regrettable outcome of “unintentional,” but predictable, incidents. After shooting down an Iranian airbus in 1988 (in the same year as the Pan Am Lockerbie bombing), the U.S. government regretted the loss of human lives and paid reparations, but never apologized or acknowledged wrongdoing. And in the climate debate, future generations have no voice.

**4. Low empathy for temporal differences:** There are many temporal cultures. Academic disciplines conceive of time in a variety of ways. The professionals involved in conflict transformation and peacebuilding have different views about priority setting and sequencing. People think and act differently in peacetime than in wartime. The temporal culture of the rich and strong contrasts significantly with the time experienced by the poor and weak. Religious time differs from secular time. Despite these differences, there is a tendency to interpret the temporal experiences of others through one’s own familiar temporal lenses and/or to impose our temporal culture on others. On the whole, the will and ability to view and feel how the other party conceives and experiences time and temporal violence is low.

### *Temporal Malpractice*

**5. An unbalanced orientation to the past, present, and future:** Temporal orientations can be considered inadequate when the needs and challenges of the past, present and future are handled insufficiently and in unbalanced ways. For example, the past can be repressed or put between brackets in order to build a new future, or inadequate efforts may be made to raise hope for a better and common future. In many conflicts, the violent past is not dealt with satisfactorily. On February 27, 2012, the Spanish Supreme Court exonerated Judge Baltasar Garzon of abusing his authority (prevarication) in an investigation into disappearances during the Spanish Civil War. Previously, Garzon had successfully issued arrest warrants against the Chilean dictator Pinochet and the Argentine military command for their responsibility in genocide, torture, and state terrorism. The trouble came when he applied his theory that neither statutes of limitation or amnesty laws could preclude investigations into crimes against humanity in his own country. No one has ever been held accountable for crimes during that civil war and up to 150,000 dead remain unidentified in unmarked graves (Roht-Arriaza 2012).

Several problems relate to the handling of the present. George Loewenstein says that the ceaseless influx of information has conditioned our decision-making machinery to what is latest, not what is more important or more interesting (the “recency” effect). “We pay a lot of attention to the most recent information, discounting what came earlier” (Begley 2011). Decisions are driven by what is urgent rather than what is important.

Finally, there are future orientations that inhibit adaptive change. Think of the short-term thinking of the majority of politicians or the use of worst-case scenarios. Tony Judt (2012) criticized the state of Israel for its use of fear, especially “the fear that Israel could be wiped off the face of the earth,” in order to justify the continuation of an unavailing policy. The fear, he argued, is not a genuine one, but a politically calculated, rhetorical fear. Many governing elites are not seizing the moment to create responsible financial systems, sustainable economies, and a more equal world, nor for dealing with environmental deterioration and the shrinking access to vital human necessities, such as food and water (George 2010).

**6. Propensity for reactive conflict prevention:** Proactive violence prevention is at a low point. Following 9/11, traditional diplomacy was high on force and low on diplomacy. The very word diplomacy became unfashionable on Capitol Hill and in some European capitals, such as Tony Blair’s London; the drums of confrontation, toughness and inflexibility prevailed (Cohen 2013). Concepts like preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention were removed and replaced by layers of economic sanctions, diplomatic pressure and isolation, military threats, preemptive and preventive wars. The Middle East turned into a living museum of defunct diplomacy. In reactive policy most if not all the attention went to the symptoms and not to root causes. The war on terror aimed at killing or incapacitating the terrorists and the organizations or networks behind them. Frequently negative side effects were not anticipated, were denied or considered necessary evils. Think of the American support of Muslim fighters in the Afghan-Soviet war, or the emergence and growing strength of Hezbollah during the 18 years of Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. Measures are taken to eliminate risks to “our” people by the installation of stringent border controls, the building of protective walls, fighting from the air, launching missiles from distant bases, and engaging private security corporations and mercenaries. In the short term, reactive conflict prevention may seem successful, but in the long term it can be counter-productive and overly expensive.

**7. Incoherent temporal management:** Achieving a coherent peacebuilding process is difficult. Coherence depends on the confluence of decisions taken with respect to the six components of the peacebuilding architecture: (1) inclusion or exclusion of the major stakeholders; (2) definition of the end state—the peace they want to install and the theoretical assumptions about how to get there; (3) assessment of the conflict at the baseline and the peacebuilding deficiencies; (4) analysis of the context, including power relations, the willingness to build peace, and the peacebuilding resources; (5) the nature of the peacebuilding process, including temporal issues, like when to intervene and when to stop, priority setting and sequencing of operations, and the creation of synergies; and (6) monitoring and evaluation of the results.

**8. A shortage of investment in sustainable development and peace:** Despite

the fact that sustainable development and peace resonate with strongly held convictions about the present and the future, their realization has proven to be highly illusive (Adger and Jordan 2009).

### *Unethical Temporal Behavior*

**9. Low accountability for temporal misconduct:** Decision-makers and -shapers are accountable if they are expected to explain their decisions and believe they can be rewarded or punished as a result. When they are held accountable for their decisions, they are likely to be more careful and will be more likely to procure and evaluate recommendations or policies in a more holistic manner (Mintz and De Rouen 2011, 30-33). For Mintz and De Rouen, a holistic search means reviewing all the information on alternative courses of action, the dimensions that influence the decision, and the implications of each alternative. The level of unaccountability and immunity for temporal misconduct in foreign policy is high. Temporal misconduct can involve: the neglect of early warning signals of genocidal behavior or civil war, the absence of adequate preventive or damage-limiting measures, exaggerating threats and thereby the manipulation of fear, negligence towards the negative impacts of economic and political interference, the defense of policies with inappropriate historical analogies, killing and wasting the other's time, giving more time to military and coercive intervention than to diplomatic efforts to stop violence, and so on.

**10. The undemocratic control of time:** Controlling time has always been a key to power. Giordano Nanni illustrated the linkage of power and time in his book, *The Colonization of Time* (2012). Nanni examines British rituals and concepts of time imposed on other cultures as fundamental components of colonization during the nineteenth century. Today, time remains an important source of political, economic, and military power. Jeremy Rifkin observes that some people's time is more valuable or expendable than others': millions starve while a minority lives in splendor. The rich and powerful tend to shape the (preferred) future world order (Kapur 2014). Jaron Lanier, a philosopher and computer specialist, argues that the corporations with the newest and fastest computers, using data gathered for free from the public, are able to calculate ways to avoid risk, thus making the society riskier for everybody else. "Instead of leaving a greater number of us in excellent financial health, the effect of digital technologies—and the companies behind them—is to concentrate wealth, and challenge [the] livelihoods of an ever increasing number of people" (Lanier 2013). Temporal autonomy, or discretionary time, which is unequally distributed, is a salient measure of freedom and democracy (Whillans 2011).

### *Low Temporal Efficacy and Reflexivity*

**11. Temporal inefficacy:** Several developments have increased feelings of discomfort and temporal inefficacy in different parts of the world. There

is growing pressure to be efficient and meet the fast pace of life. There are complaints about the world changing at lightning speed (Benkler 2011), the increasing scarcity of time or "time famine," fast information and communication facilities, and short response times. The world is plagued by chronic crises. More than a billion people must try to survive on less than \$1 a day. Urban youngsters with poor economic prospects are impatient and slow political change has led to revolutionary protests in Sarajevo, Kiev, Cairo. Indicators of temporal efficacy are the emotions of fear in the West and humiliation in the Muslim world, as described by Dominique Moïsi (2009).

**12. Low on reflexivity, invention, and learning:** Our brains need more space and time to have new strategic insights and ideas. The lack of understanding of rapid political changes seems to be sublimated by moralizing international affairs. Secular missionaries pursue national interests in the name of the responsibility to protect, human rights, democratization, freedom, liberalization. However, interpreting Lao Tzu, Ralph Alan Dale reminds us that the course of events does not simply follow our wishes and prayers:

The harder we try to force events to conform to our moralization, the less likely our success. On the other hand, the more we yield to the rhythms of life, the greater our fruition. How often Lao Tzu bids us to put aside our ideological predilections so that we may be free to ebb and flow with the new opportunities of every pregnant moment. (Lao Tzu 2002, 172)

Temporal inadequacies can result from poor temporal intelligence, the arrogance of power and greed, pseudo democratic decision making, a low level of accountability for temporal misconduct and violence, the denial of temporal problems, the sanctioning of dissident voices, and the blaming of others for negative impacts.

Although people pay ample attention to time, they tend to focus on some aspects, for example the past and the near future, and overlook the other aspects of time. Temporal inadequacies have also been attributed to stupidity. Barbara Tuchman calls it wooden-headedness. It consists in assessing a situation in terms of preconceived and fixed notions while ignoring or rejecting any contrary signs. She epitomizes this type of self-deception with an historian's statement about Philip II of Spain: "No experience of the failure of his policy could shake his belief in its essential intelligence" (Tuchman 1964, 7). The pursuit of power, prestige and greed can intensify and prolong violence. Nixon and Kissinger's New Year's wish of 1973, to end the Vietnam War with a "peace with honor," protracted the terrible war more than two years. During the eighties, America supported brutal pro-Western dictatorships and opposed truly popular governments and opposition movements in Latin America. Exclusive democracies characterized by segregation, apartheid and repression commit temporal violence to control

second-class citizens. When elections are held in the Occupied Territories, elected collaboration is favored and elected resistance repressed. Liberal democracies that do not provide a minimum of social security can create gross inequalities and poverty. Another factor that enhances temporal inadequacy is the lack of political accountability for temporal misconduct and violence.

Problematic also, especially in the Middle East, is the denial of double-bind policies by the West and Israel. Both strongly avoid recognizing and confronting their conflicting aims, such as pursuing military dominance and at the same time expecting sustainable security and peace, or Israel's colonization of the occupied Palestinian territories and its expectation of "sustainable quiet." These policies are confounded by inherent unresolvable dilemmas. To deal with emotionally distressing dilemmas, resolute efforts are made to deny responsibility, to silence critics, and to blame and punish others for the negative impacts. Governments who are not willing to confront an unresolvable dilemma will neither resolve it nor opt out of the situation (McNally 2012; Gisha 2009).<sup>4</sup> The people who suffer most of the negative impacts of double-bind policies are those in the area where the interventions take place. A double bind is also present in our relation to nature. On the one hand, we do try to preserve the natural environment; on the other hand, we wish to continue economic growth although our standard of living disrupts nature and our relation to it (Wedge 2011). Human beings act in destructive ways towards other human beings and fragile ecological systems because we do not want to see the impact of our behavior upon others, the environment and, in the end, on our own lives. To overcome these policies we must throw light on the contradictions, place the problem in a larger temporal context, and protest these double-bind policies.

## Towards a More Adaptive Temporament

Temporal behavior can be upgraded by: (1) installing a more effective accounting or monitoring and evaluation system of temporal behavior, (2) codifying gross temporal misconduct and temporal violence in international criminal law (the responsible decision-makers and -shapers should be made accountable), (3) making people more conscious of the limits of the prevailing temporament, and (4) developing a more adaptive temporament. The prevailing temporament today—the manner of thinking, feeling and behaving towards time—is clearly not fit for dealing with the challenges of the world or achieving sustainable development and peace. An adaptive temporament can be defined by twelve parameters.

### *Temporal Sensitivity*

1. **A high level of appreciation of time:** Appreciation of time refers to the value



**Table 3.** Parameters of an Adaptive Temporament

<b>Temporal Sensitivity</b>
1. High awareness and appreciation of time
2. Discernment of temporal violence
3. An inclusive approach to time
4. Recognition of, and empathy with, different temporal cultures, interests, and needs
<b>Good Temporal Practice</b>
5. Constructive and balanced orientation to the past, present, and future
6. Strong propensity for proactive violence prevention
7. Synergetic temporal planning and implementation
8. Enabling sustainable development and peace
<b>Ethical Temporal Behavior</b>
9. An ethical approach to time
10. Democratization of time
<b>Temporal Efficacy and Reflexivity</b>
11. A sense of temporal efficacy
12. Reflexivity and adaptive leadership

people attach to the role of time in the pursuit of one's interests and needs, especially with respect to economic well-being and security. Time is not only money, but also well-being and security. People with a high appreciation tend to pay ample attention to the role of time and try to use time in ways that further their life expectancy.

**2. Discernment of temporal violence:** An adaptive temporament is attentive to temporal violence. This involves an awareness that the quality and quantity of life can be reduced by both fast and slow killing, long-term poverty, wasting and imprisoning the time of adversaries and dissidents, unequal opportunities, allowing conflicts to become protracted, not allocating the necessary time and means for conflict prevention, denying or not anticipating negative side-effects of our actions, too-little-too-late responses, criminal negligence, failing to address root causes, and so forth. People with an adaptive temporament pay serious attention to the role of time in conflict analysis and conflict transformation.

**3. An inclusive approach to time:** Inclusion implies that not only my/our time is considered and valued in decision making, but also that of other stakeholders, including past and future generations. Inclusion also implies recognition of the biological and physical clocks of nature. Religious people demand respect for sacred and transcendental time. Those with an exclusive time approach focus solely on their own lifetimes and life expectations; others' lifetimes are secondary. People with an inclusive temporal approach respect the time of others and of nature.

**4. Recognition of, and empathy with, different temporal cultures:** There are no universally accepted timeframes. In fact there are many temporal cultures. The way people deal with time is influenced by their culture, but also by the interests at stake, power, professional outlook, age, generation, gender, and religion. Temporal empathy (cognitive and emotional) refers to the will and ability to view and feel how the other conceives and experiences time and temporal violence. High temporal empathy correlates positively with a high level of understanding and compassion. This enables conflict transition and peacebuilding. Low temporal empathy leads to inconsiderate, indifferent, and often disproportional or vindictive temporal behavior.

#### *Temporal Practice*

**5. A balanced orientation to the past, present, and future:** People with an adaptive temperament tackle the needs of the past, present, and future in a sufficient and balanced way. An unbalanced approach deals with these needs insufficiently and in an imbalanced way. For example, the past can be repressed or put between brackets in order to build up something new in the present, or inadequate efforts can be made to raise hope for a better and common future. Dealing with the past without an attractive common future is a tantalizing experience. Bracketing the past for some time is possible, but denying or forgetting it can spoil the future.

**6. Propensity for proactive conflict prevention:** Serious efforts are made to anticipate future threats and opportunities by means of scenarios and other forecasting methods. The analysts are acquainted with such concepts as theory-based methods for anticipating civil wars, genocidal behavior, ripeness of conflict, and also with research on tipping points, black swans, decisive moments, and so on. Efforts are also made to anticipate the positive and negative impacts of interventions. They are acquainted with the newest impact assessment methodologies. Proactive conflict prevention is a high priority; special attention goes to the identification and elimination of the root causes and to the building of sustainable peace. When prevention fails, effective crisis management, and damage limitation skills and facilities are available.

**7. Synergetic planning and implementation:** An adaptive temperament furthers synergy and coherence in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. This involves decisions with respect to: (1) the nature of the involvement and coordination; (2) clarity and consensus about the end state or peace sought as well as the roadmap to get there; (3) conflict analysis and assessment of the peacebuilding deficiencies at the baseline; (4) entry and exit timing, the prioritization and sequencing of military, diplomatic, political, economic, educational, and other interventions; the pacing or the speed of external intervention; the preference for slow, gradual or fast and radical change (such as military shock and awe interventions, or Jeffrey Sachs' economic shock therapy for Russia after the Cold War<sup>5</sup>); and the

anticipation of possible negative side effects and measures to stop or reduce such negative impacts.

**8. Enabling sustainable development and peace:** Sustainable development and peacebuilding are considered vital for humanity and our planet. Sustainability requires a lot of cooperation, or agreement to work together for mutual benefit (Mainelli and Harris 2011, 43), and more emphasis on social enterprise (Smith 2012). Robert Axelrod, in *The Evolution of Cooperation*, writes that cooperation depends on “the shadow of the future,” or the expectation that interactions in the future might be affected by the quality of current ones (Mainelli and Harris 2011, 43; Axelrod 2006; Benkler 2011).

#### *Temporal Ethics*

**9. An ethical approach to time:** Ethical time deals with the normative assumptions underlying temporal thinking and behavior. It judges the negative consequences of intervention, but also of non-intervention, of delay and criminal negligence, and demands more accountability for temporal misconduct and temporal violence. It favors and advocates sufficient investment in sustainable development and peacebuilding.

**10. Democratization of time:** Time is dealt with as a political issue. Everybody’s time is considered equally valuable and no one person’s time is regarded as more expendable than another’s (Rifkin 1987). People cannot be disempowered by manipulating time, by destroying artifacts and documents from the past, or by controlling their future. A genuine democracy, at both national and international levels, respects the time of all citizens.

#### *Temporal efficacy and reflexivity*

**11. A sense of temporal efficacy:** Temporal efficacy is the opposite of determinism, fatalism, temporal disorientation, and stress. There is a reasonable confidence in understanding the role of time and dealing with time in ways that further one’s interests and the pursuit of conflict transformation and sustainable peace. Temporal efficacy demands a great deal of practical experience, learning from history, imagining alternative futures, self-esteem, and courage. In tough conflicts it requires embracing death, not necessarily physical death, but death of the ego. When we are too invested in our egos, we cannot collaborate, change, adapt and mediate in peace negotiations (Warner and Schmincke 2009). Temporal efficacy should not be confused with temporal hubris (the feeling that one is the future), which leads to security and foreign policy follies.

**12. Reflexivity and adaptive leadership:** One of the most frequently heard complaints concerns the lack of time and/or too much time pressure. In essence, the problem is the allocation of enough time for important issues and decisions, and for developing good judgment and legitimate political governance at different systemic levels.<sup>6</sup> An adaptive temporament frees time for: (1) broader and deeper

understandings of conflict dynamics and seeing the big picture; (2) reflexive framing of conflicts;<sup>7</sup> (3) developing more accurate measures of temporal misconduct and their costs and benefits; (4) imaging and planning mutually attractive and sustainable common world futures; (5) anticipating the positive and negative consequences of interventions or policies; (6) resolving difficult inter-temporal problems faced by people who are both farsighted planners and myopic doers by aligning incentive systems and/or imposing rules (Mainelli and Harris 2011, 72); and (7) diplomatic work and the improvement of conflict management systems.

## Conclusion

Reading this article has likely taken approximately 40 minutes, or 2,400 seconds, of your life. That time is now gone. I hope it was worth it. However, as one Sufi saying goes, even “when the heart weeps for what it has lost, the soul laughs for what it has found” (Atwater 1999). This article reminds us that in our fast-changing globalized world, the way we deal with time will more than ever determine the success or failure of dealing with global crises and the building of sustainable peace and development. Despite the urgency of handling time more effectively, too much time is wasted. The prevailing way of dealing with conflict is glutted with temporal inadequacies. Illustrative is the foreign policy of the West in the Middle East and North Africa after 9/11. The impact has been disastrous. A thorough and comprehensive analysis and evaluation of temporal behavior in foreign policy is needed. This implies considering the big picture: the temporal dimensions and emotions, as well as both secular and religious time. Assessing the temporal behavior of the stakeholders in conflict and peace should be an essential part of monitoring and evaluation. It could also help to identify the temporal inadequacies more systematically and steepen the learning curve of peace builders. It could advance the accounting for the costs of temporal misconduct and the accountability of policymakers. Above all it should make us more aware that today’s prevailing political temporament stands in the way of sustainable peace and security. Thus, take the time to get to know your temporament and start making it more adaptive.

## Notes

This article is a long version of the keynote speech the author gave at the International Peace Research Association (IPRA) in Istanbul in August 2014, on the occasion of IPRA’s 50th anniversary.

1. A term used/coined by Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in an interview during the Gaza war of 2014. <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/07/20/world/meast/mideast-crisis-blitzer-netanyahu-interview/> (accessed February 19, 2015).
2. A complete cost assessment considers: humanitarian, economic, political, material, social, cultural, psychological, ecological, and spiritual costs (Reychler and Paffenholz 2001, 4).
3. The promise of military intervention encouraged the armed rebellion and the refusal to negotiate. The NATO intervention also increased the number of casualties significantly.
4. Also see Wikipedia, "Double bind," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double\\_bind](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_bind)> (accessed January 5, 2015).
5. Shock therapy involved a sudden privatization of Russia's 225,000 or so state-owned businesses, a sudden release of price and currency controls, withdrawal of state subsidies, and sudden trade liberalization. See Smitha n.d., and Wikipedia, "Shock therapy," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shock\\_therapy\\_%28economics%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shock_therapy_%28economics%29) (accessed February 19, 2015).
6. The legitimacy of a government depends on effectiveness and democracy. Political legitimacy = democracy x effectiveness.
7. For Jay Rothman (1997, 33-52), this is a slowed-down and self-conscious analysis of the interactive nature of reactions that allows actors to be proactive agents in a conflict instead of reactive victims, and which furthers analytic empathy.

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