Major events: Bougainville

1972	Commercial production begins at Panguna copper and gold mine, Bougainville, Papua New Guinea (PNG)
1975	Bougainville's Unilateral Declaration of Independence from PNG
1976	Bougainville Agreement ends secession bid (August)
1988	Power line pylons supplying power to Panguna mine destroyed; PNG police mobile squads deployed to Bougainville
1989	Sabotage of Bougainville Copper Ltd (BCL) property and attacks on buses carrying BCL personnel: closure of Panguna mine
1990	Ceasefire; PNG forces withdraw from Bougainville (March); Buka leaders request return of PNG forces (September)
1992	PNG forces continue to return to various parts of Bougainville
1997	PNG signs contract with Sandline International (mercenaries) (January); PNG Defence Force elements expel Sandline personnel (March); talks between Bougainville factions in New Zealand (July); Bougainville and PNG talks begin (October); New Zealand-led Truce Monitoring Group (TMG) deployed
1998	Agreement on implementation of ceasefire (April); Australian-led Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) replaces TMG (May); United Nations Observer Mission Bougainville (UNOMB) deployed
1999	Negotiations on future political status of Bougainville begin
2001	Bougainville Peace Agreement signed (August)
2002	PNG Parliament votes in favour of constitutional amendments giving effect to Peace Agreement (January and March)
2003	PMG ceases to operate from 30 June
2004	Bougainville Constituent Assembly adopts the Bougainville Constitution, endorsed by PNG Cabinet in December
2005	First general election and inauguration of Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG); UNOMB ends
2010	Second general election for the ABG

8 Bougainville

Conflict deferred?

Anthony J. Regan[1]

Violent separatist conflict in Bougainville between 1988 and 1997 was the most damaging conflict ever to occur amongst Pacific islanders, causing thousands of deaths.[2] Until the early 1960s Bougainville was a remote and relatively neglected part of what is now the Independent State of Papua New Guinea (PNG). Then discovery of a huge copper deposit led to the opening in 1972 of one of the world's largest copper mines, making Bougainville vital to PNG's economic viability as it prepared for its independence from Australia in 1975. Closure of the mine in 1989 by the conflict sent PNG into fiscal crisis.

Like many post Cold-War conflicts, the Bougainville violence has involved not just two parties, but rather several complex and changing groupings, as well as multiple localized conflicts. The central conflict began in disputes over distribution of mine revenues and economic opportunities that led to destruction of mine property. At that point ethnicity became a significant factor, for violent responses by PNG security forces were the catalyst for a wider separatist rebellion. However, localized armed conflicts also divided Bougainville.

Despite previously seeming intractable, the conflict diminished dramatically after a peace process that began in mid-1997. The process has not been without difficulties, with continuing tensions and divisions on the Bougainville side, and the re-emergence of localized violent conflict in parts of south Bougainville from late 2005. However, separatist violence has not resumed, and the worst of the internal conflict has ended. Major factors involved in conflict diminution include: stalemate and exhaustion; divisions amongst Bougainvilleans; aspects of Melanesian culture; international community intervention; economic development; and a complex constitutional settlement reached in 2001 involving autonomy for Bougainville and a constitutionally guaranteed right to a referendum on independence, deferred to between 2015 and 2020, with the two sides to negotiate on the steps to be followed if Bougainville votes in favour of independence.

Uncertainty remains as to whether the separatist conflict has diminished for the long term or has merely been deferred. There are continuing divisions amongst Bougainvilleans, with some elements of the secessionist leadership still opposing the 2001 constitutional settlement. Further, that Agreement involves deferral for some years, rather than finality, of decisions about the two most

deeply divisive issues between Bougainville and PNG – the distribution of mining revenues and independence for Bougainville. With the Autonomous Bougainville Government (ABG) considering permitting resumption of mining by Bougainville Copper Ltd (BCL), distribution of mining revenues could quickly become a source of dispute, as could the question of Bougainville's independence after the referendum.

Background: The conflict – resources, state violence, and ethnicity[3]

PNG is by far the largest of the 22 Pacific island countries and territories (its population is about 7 million in 2011 and its land area 462,840 sq km) and the richest in natural resources. It is also perhaps the world's most linguistically and culturally diverse country, with over 800 distinct languages.

Remote (600 km east) from mainland PNG, Bougainville – comprising the two large islands of Bougainville and Buka and hundreds of very small islands – contributes a small percentage of PNG's population and land area (its 250,000 people being under 4 per cent of PNG's population, and 9,438 sq km about 2 per cent of its land area). Geographically, linguistically and culturally Bougainville is the northern-most part of the main island chain of neighbouring Solomon Islands (a British colony until 1978). Bougainville's basic social groups are small hamlets and villages. None of its 25 language groups is a political unit, considerable cultural diversity existing even within the larger language groups. Although officially part of German New Guinea from 1884, Bougainville's first colonial station was not established until 1905. Australia took control of German New Guinea in 1914. Despite significant social, political and economic change resulting from colonial rule, Christian missions (from 1901), and new economic activity associated with colonialism (especially plantations), Bougainvilleans' pre-colonial social structures and practices proved resilient.

Despite many linguistic, cultural, and other differences amongst Bougainvilleans, during the twentieth century a distinct pan-Bougainville ethnic identity developed amongst them, the dark skin colour of most of them (considerably darker than most people elsewhere in PNG) being the principal marker. This identity emerged in the process of their engaging with people from other parts of PNG – Bougainvilleans worked elsewhere and people from other parts worked in Bougainville. At the same time, political demands became associated with identity, for Bougainvilleans developed a sense of grievance against the colonial regime, largely related to perceptions of lack of development (though in fact their situation was little different to much of the rest of PNG).

Resource revenue disputes

Prior to copper mining beginning in 1972, most economic activity in Bougainville involved agriculture. The mine, at Panguna in central Bougainville, was operated by BCL, owned 53 per cent by Rio Tinto, 19.06 per cent by PNG, and the balance

by thousands of smaller investors. Imposition of the mine by the colonial regime was opposed by Bougainvillean landowners in areas under mining exploration and development licences, as well as many from other parts of Bougainville. Several years of tensions and conflict as the mine was developed (including clashes between villagers and colonial police) intensified grievances against the colonial government. The mine (a workforce of 10,000 developed it, dropping to about 3,500 to operate it) and the many businesses associated with mining had huge social, environmental, and economic impacts. The small proportion of economic opportunities and mine revenue going to owners of land leased for mining purposes, other Bougainvilleans, and Bougainville's provincial government, was resented (though these arrangements were largely determined by the PNG government rather than BCL, which was in general reasonable when dealing with Bougainvillean demands).

Such grievances were significant factors in Bougainville's attempted secession in September 1975, just days before PNG's Independence Day, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) receiving no recognition. PNG acted with restraint, and the dispute was resolved in 1976 by constitutionally guaranteed decentralization arrangements for all of PNG's 19 provinces, though with special financial arrangements for Bougainville as the only province then receiving mineral royalties.

Initially the new constitutional arrangements appeared to have resolved the secession issue. But from the mid-1980s serious disputes emerged over the distribution of mine revenues, inclusive of intergenerational disputes amongst some mine-lease landowners, and broader objections by various Bougainvillean interests over distribution issues. In 1988 leaders of mine-lease landowner groups unhappy with how their grievances were being dealt with demanded huge amounts of compensation for mine impacts. Young Bougainvillean employees of BCL had their own grievances about employment and promotion opportunities. Mine power lines were destroyed as a gesture of frustration intended to bring BCL and PNG to the negotiating table.

State violence and ethnicity

Largely indiscriminate violence by police mobile squads brought from mainland PNG resulted in rapidly escalating conflict, with the PNG Defence Force (PNGDF) called in to support the police by April 1989.[4] People from many parts of Bougainville joined the young landowners and mine workers on condition that secession became the principal goal. The rebels – from mid-1989 known as the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA) – operated in small groups in difficult mountainous terrain that they knew well and where they had strong community support. They used guerrilla tactics against PNG forces facing hostile local communities with little knowledge of the terrain, no prior experience of such conflict, and limited capacity and resources. The mine closed in May 1989, and most non-Bougainvilleans had left Bougainville by early 1990. A ceasefire was signed in March 1990, and PNG forces withdrew from Bougainville. In May 1990

BRA leader Francis Ona made Bougainville's second UDI. It too received no international community recognition, and PNG imposed an air and sea blockade on Bougainville.

Bougainville was never fully united in support of secession, however, with BRA adherence quite weak in some areas, especially Buka, and the northern and east coast areas of Bougainville. These were the areas with the longest history of colonial contact, resulting in educational and economic advantages that saw many being open to Bougainville's integration into PNG.

With the departure of PNG forces from Bougainville, the loosely organized BRA was unable to establish an effective government.[5] In the early stages of the conflict the threat of the PNG forces had enabled the BRA to mobilize support centred on Bougainville identity. In the absence of the PNG threat, localized identity groups became more important, and small-scale conflict – over personal differences and issues such as land, renewal of past feuds, resentment of communities regarded as opposing secession, and so on – developed between local groups (for detail of identities amongst Bougainvilleans, see Regan 2005). From September 1990 PNG forces began returning to Buka, and from 1991 to parts of Bougainville, usually at the request of communities suffering in local conflict, BRA elements in such communities generally supporting the PNG forces.

Complexity of the conflict, the parties, and the impacts

From 1990 the conflict developed two main dimensions, one being BRA against PNG, the other involving armed Bougainvillean elements resisting the BRA – hence, Bougainville Resistance Forces (BRF). Total numbers of BRA and BRF personnel are not known, mainly because units were not highly structured, were based in local communities, and tended to have changing membership. There were only a few hundred on both sides who actively engaged in armed conflict, with many more acting as 'home-guards' in their local areas.

The PNG forces were quick to recognize the opportunities presented by intra-Bougainville conflict, and supported the BRF (providing weapons and financial allowances). Although the PNGDF returned to, and with BRF support gained a reasonable degree of control over perhaps 40 per cent of Bougainville, they were always vulnerable to BRA guerrilla attacks. By 1996, although BRA military ascendancy was established, it was also evident that gaining a total military victory would be a long and costly process.

While there was undoubtedly an ideological aspect to the BRA versus BRF conflict, the BRF generally supported Bougainville integration into PNG largely from fear of independence under a BRA-controlled Bougainville government rather than due to opposition to Bougainville independence per se. The linking under the BRF 'banner' of groups opposing the BRA tended to mask the fact that localized BRA versus BRF conflict had little to do with ideology, and much more with localized factors. BRA and BRF units sometimes changed allegiances, or a BRF unit involved in intense conflict with a nearby BRA unit might work at the same time in cooperation with other BRA units.

The conflict continued until mid-1997, resulting in or contributing to many deaths. Though there were a few massed attacks by large BRA groups against established PNGDF positions soon after the PNGDF returned to Buka (late 1990 and early 1991) in which scores were killed, most armed clashes were small-scale (ambushes of patrols and individual fighters). PNG lost about 300 killed in combat. Bougainvilleans probably suffered between 1,000 and 2,000 combat deaths (Braithwaite *et al.* 2010: 88), with more being victims of extra-judicial executions. PNG forces were responsible for beginning these in 1989, but it is likely a majority were at the hands of other Bougainvilleans, again most often as a result of local disputes and jealousies. An unknown number died as a result of the PNG blockade of Bougainville from mid-1990, which severely restricted but never entirely shut down medical services and supplies, and which was gradually lifted as PNG forces returned to Buka from late 1990 and thereafter to other parts of Bougainville. Common claims of 20,000 deaths are undoubtedly inflated, and though actual numbers will probably never been known, probably numbered closer to 5,000.[6] However, that number of deaths over nine years from a population of less than 200,000 in 1997 indicates the terrible impact of this conflict.

Of course, impacts went beyond battle deaths. For Bougainville they included physical and psychological trauma for a large proportion of the population, displacement of over one-third of Bougainvilleans into internally displaced people (IDP) camps, severe damage to capacity of the previously impressive administrative arm of Bougainville's provincial government, and destruction of most infrastructure and modern economic production capacity. For PNG generally, the impacts were also extensive, including severe damage to morale and capacity in the security forces. Closure of the Panguna mine had major fiscal impacts, BCL having contributed 17 per cent of national budget revenue, over 36 per cent of gross export earnings, and 11 per cent of GDP (Griffin and Togolo 1997: 357). The conflict left deep distrust and divisions between pro-secessionist Bougainvilleans and the PNG government, and between opposing Bougainvilleans.

Conflict diminution

Overview of the peace process, 1997–2011[7]

From the earliest stages of the conflict there were peace efforts of many kinds – initiatives by PNG and Bougainville's provincial government, NGOs, and governments in the region. While generally regarded as unsuccessful at the time, they served many important purposes (providing invaluable experience to some participants that was put to good use in later processes, identifying what did and did not work, and so on). In 1997 a number of factors combined to enable moderate leadership to head both sides of the BRA/BRF conflict as well as the PNG government. War weariness and stalemate were of central importance, highlighted by PNG's failed attempt in 1996–1997 to use foreign mercenaries (Sandline International) to end the conflict. This attempt was blocked by elements of the PNGDF in deeply disruptive actions that came close to being PNG's first coup

(details, see Regan 2010: 32–35; Braithwaite *et al.* 2010: 40–45). These events underlined for PNG its lack of further military options. It also highlighted for the BRA the likelihood that full military victory might not only take many years to achieve, but could also be pyrrhic if gained at a cost of deepening internal conflicts. On the BRA side, this provided the basis for challenging the irrational aspect of Ona's leadership that had become increasingly evident through the mid-1990s.

While moderate leadership gained ascendancy in 1997 in the BRA, BRF and PNG government, some remained committed to armed struggle, a fact that added to the complexity of the peace process that now ensued.[8] The greatest difficulties involved the decision of the BRA's original leader, Francis Ona, to oppose the process. Supported by some elements of the BRA, in early 1998 he announced that Bougainville was already independent as the republic of Me'ekamui. Based in a 'no-go-zone' centred on the Panguna mine area (see Map 8), he retained support of the 10 to 15 per cent of BRA members (now designated the Me'ekamui Defence Force – MDF) based in communities with high levels of loyalty to Ona (see Map 8). However, the vast majority of the BRA supported the peace process, preventing Ona and the MDF from directly challenging the process.

The peace process was initiated by moderate leaders in the opposing groups, with support from the international community, and especially the New Zealand government with Australian backing. The PNG and Bougainville parties always remained in control of the process, in conjunction with elements of what I have described elsewhere (Regan 2010) as a 'light intervention' by the international community. First, opposing Bougainville factions met in mid-1997 in New Zealand, where they later (October 1997) engaged jointly with the PNG government. A truce was agreed, monitored by an unarmed regional Truce Monitoring Group (TMG) led by New Zealand with contributions from Fiji, Vanuatu and Australia. An 'irrevocable' ceasefire operated from May 1998, monitored by an Australian-led regional Peace Monitoring Group (PMG) until it left in mid-2003. The TMG and PMG provided a sense of security for armed groups hitherto deeply suspicious of their opponents, provided mediation, facilitated the process in many ways, and supported a weapons disposal process. From mid-1998 to 2005 a small United Nations mission (generally known as the United Nations Observer Mission Bougainville – UNOMB) also monitored the peace process, provided mediation and facilitation, and oversaw a weapons disposal process (discussion of the international intervention, see Regan 2010: 63–84).

It was June 1999, two years into the peace process, before the previously opposed Bougainvillean factions agreed to a common negotiating position for a political settlement, and negotiations with PNG began. A detailed political settlement was signed in August 2001. Key elements involved:

- autonomy for Bougainville within PNG;
- a referendum on independence for Bougainville deferred for ten to fifteen years after the autonomy began to operate;
- withdrawal of PNG forces from Bougainville and disposal of weapons held by Bougainville factions;

- constitutional entrenchment of the arrangements;
- sequencing of implementation steps to provide incentives to parties to implement what they might otherwise have seen as against their interests.

Financial aspects of autonomy were weak (in terms of protecting Bougainville interests), mainly because PNG was facing a fiscal crisis at the time of the negotiations. The BRA accepted incorporation of most of the Peace Agreement into the PNG Constitution as the main basis for protection of the settlement largely because although PNG is in some respects a democracy with a poor record with some aspects of governance, other aspects had to then been impressive, including a judicial system with a strong record of independence and effectiveness in enforcement of the Constitution.

While implementation of the arrangements proceeded more slowly than many Bougainvilleans had expected, for the most part the record was reasonable, especially in the early stages. For example:

- Complex amendments to the PNG Constitution were passed unanimously by the PNG Parliament early in 2002.
- A Constitution for an ABG was made by late 2004; elections for the first ABG were completed in June 2005.
- The UNOMB-supervised disposal of weapons by Bougainville factions eliminated almost 1,900 weapons by mid-2005.[9]
- PNG continued to support the ABG with funding for subsequent elections (a presidential by-election in 2008 occasioned by the death of the first President of the ABG, and the second general election in 2010).

On the other hand, implementation became less impressive once the ABG began to operate. Transfer to the ABG of powers made available to it under the Agreement was frustratingly (for the ABG) slow. Despite clear constitutional authority for the ABG to appoint its senior public servants, PNG disputed the power for most of the period from mid-2007 to late 2010. Beyond the basic funding guaranteed by the Peace Agreement, the Bougainville leaders had understood that when PNG's economic circumstances improved, as occurred from about 2005, additional financial support would be provided to the ABG. It was expected that this would assist the ABG's efforts to make autonomy attractive enough for Bougainville secessionists to think twice about voting for independence when the referendum was held (sometime between 2015 and 2020). No such funding was forthcoming, and from 2010 even the constitutional minimum funding was contested. A major grant payable to the ABG in 2010 was not paid until 2011, and then only after much acrimony, and the equivalent 2011 grant was not paid until late 2011. That same grant was then supposed to be subsumed with a larger agreed payment in 2012, but arguments with PNG over control of expenditure of those funds were unresolved by mid-2012. Further, the weak capacity of the ABG's administrative arm and police resources could not be improved without additional financial resources, and the lack of any sign of interest from PNG in

providing such support has contributed to gradually increasing Bougainvilleans' frustration with the operation of autonomy.

Despite many frustrations, the overall impression in Bougainville in 2011–12 was of reasonably effective implementation of the Peace Agreement. That was undoubtedly a significant factor in a gradual process of consolidating support for the ongoing peace process. Elements of the M'ekamui Government and MDF increasingly cooperated with the ABG from about 2007. The death in July 2005 of Francis Ona was undoubtedly an additional factor. On the other hand, since late 2005, localized armed conflict emerged in the Konnou area of south Bougainville, causing well over 100 deaths by mid-2011. Beginning with resumption of unresolved conflict between opposing BRA and BRF elements that had begun in the early 1990s but had remained dormant while the PMG and the UNOMB were present in Bougainville, it has gradually expanded to involve a number of other small armed groups. A significant underlying factor involves the lack of economic development in south Bougainville, which leaves young males susceptible to the attractions of involvement in armed groups. Perhaps as many as 150 people died in this localized conflict. While such localized conflict did not involve resumption of secessionist conflict or of the main BRA/BRF conflict of the 1990s, it undermined prospects for further progress with weapons disposal, and had the potential to expand and cause wider problems. While it was apparenty ended by peace ceremonies in late 2011, the situation remained fragile. Without significant improvement of capacity in the ABG administrative arm and police resources, the ABG had difficulty developing realistic policy responses to the problems underlying the localized conflict (for detail on conflict in south Bougainville, see Regan 2010: 121–126).

Failed strategies for ending the conflict

Early strategies to end the conflict did not take sufficient account of deep Bougainvillean resentment at the violence of the PNG forces that had consolidated support for secession. Efforts from the mid-1990 onwards (many initiated or supported by New Zealand, Australia, Solomon Islands and other parts of the international community, including the United Nations and the Commonwealth Secretariat) failed to take sufficient account of the extent of the divisions amongst Bougainvilleans.

In terms of PNG government strategies to end the conflict, there was difficulty in achieving policy coherence, partly because of limited capacity in key agencies and also because at all stages there were significant divisions within the government and the bureaucracy, some supporting negotiation and others very much opposed. Until 1997, opponents of negotiation tended to dominate. As a result there was a tendency to rely heavily on suppression. This continued despite ample evidence, in the early stages in particular, of not just failure, but of the major contribution violence made to consolidation of Bougainville support for secession. With the return of PNG forces to Bougainville from late 1990 – invited by Bougainvillean leaders of communities suffering as a result of localized conflict – it appeared to

many in PNG that the best available strategy was one of dividing Bougainvilleans, and supporting the BRF. For a time this strategy appeared to be succeeding. But it gradually became evident not only that divisions amongst Bougainvilleans were not as immutable as had at first been assumed, but also that ongoing conflict was hardening BRA attitudes. By 1996–1997 the possibility of a military victory was clearly receding even in the view of most senior PNGDF personnel. Although suppression failed to end the conflict, it did, however, play perhaps unexpected roles in diminution of the conflict.

Conflict diminution

The key factors contributing to diminution were:

- exhaustion and stalemate, and divisions amongst Bougainvilleans;
- cultural factors;
- international community involvement;
- the 2001 political settlement;
- economic development.

Exhaustion, stalemate, and divisions

The initial view of PNG that the destruction of pylons critical to the supply of electric power to the mine could be dealt with by violent repression failed spectacularly. Repression consolidated what had previously been diverse Bougainvillean agendas around secession as a primary goal. The PNG strategy of exploiting the armed conflict amongst Bougainvilleans that emerged from mid-1990 never came close to delivering victory to PNG. However, localized conflict amongst Bougainvilleans, and the support PNG provided to the BRF, ultimately contributed to conflict diminution in at least three ways. First, PNG support for the BRF greatly enhanced the capacity of the PNG forces (the BRF's local knowledge alone was invaluable), and over time helped to convince moderate BRA leaders of both the difficulties of achieving a military victory and the need to seek a political settlement. Second, the intra-Bougainville conflict contributed to war weariness in Bougainville that put increasing pressure on the BRA leadership to seek a political settlement (Regan 2010: 34). Third, the concerns of both BRA and BRF leaders about the divisive impacts of intra-Bougainville conflict helped them to agree on the dangers for Bougainville of ongoing conflict.

Cultural factors

In the small, autonomous and stateless societies of Melanesia, complex processes for maintaining social order developed over millennia. They include a focus on maintaining balance within and between social groups through cycles of reciprocal exchange. Where balance is damaged, there can be strong pressures to restore it, often through ritual processes of reconciliation. Intergroup conflict, sometimes

involving extreme violence, was common in pre-colonial times. It could involve serious danger for the viability of small social groups. Senior leaders (both male and female) often played important roles in building consensus about the need to end conflict and restore balance through reconciliation.

There was little room for such efforts in the early stages of the Bougainville conflict, but as war weariness and concerns about divisiveness grew, and as the awful impacts of some of the localized conflicts in various parts of Bougainville became evident, there was increasing scope for efforts towards reconciliation. These efforts, especially at the local level, helped to create a constituency for peace that moderate leaders on all sides were able to draw upon. When the opposing Bougainville factions met in New Zealand in mid-1997, they were quite clearly drawing upon well established reconciliatory processes. When Bougainvillean leaders engaged with PNG, similar understandings of the need to restore balance in relationships were part of the impetus for the process (for detail on the cultural aspects of reconciliation, see Regan 2010: 36–41; Braithwaite *et al.* 2010: 67–76).

The international community

International intervention and mediation have been of critical importance to the diminution of conflict. First, encouragement, support and pressure from parts of the international community in 'unsuccessful' peace efforts from 1990 were a factor in the emergence of the moderate Bougainvillean and PNG leadership that established the peace process in 1997. Second, the 'light intervention' (through the TMG, PMG, UNOMB, donor assistance and mediation on critical issues) from 1997 to 2005 was essential to the success of a peace process initiated and largely controlled by Bougainville and PNG. Third, the continuing interest of the international community in Bougainville has been a factor in the generally positive record of implementation of the Bougainville Peace Agreement.

It is also worth noting that competition in the international community was a factor in the process, particularly in relation to New Zealand's active role in the early stages of the peace process. A small state whose prior role in international relations in the Pacific was largely limited to the Polynesian cultural area, New Zealand had long aspired to a greater role in the southwest Pacific area where Australia tended to dominate. Key figures in New Zealand also aspired to doing better in the region than what they saw as their more obtuse, culturally insensitive but wealthier neighbour, Australia.

The political settlement

The political settlement contained in the Bougainville Peace Agreement addressed key drivers of the conflict, in particular ethno-nationalism and disputes over revenue distribution from mining. Ethno-nationalism was addressed through the high level of autonomy potentially available to Bougainville, much greater than that available to the provincial governments in the rest of PNG. Further, provision for a deferred referendum on independence addressed the intensified support for

Bougainville independence generated by the experience of the conflict. The revenue distribution issue was in part dealt with by agreement that powers over mining, oil and gas are available to the Bougainville government (the ABG).

However, the 2001 Agreement also deferred decisions on crucial aspects of both of these highly sensitive issues. The provisions of the referendum left open the possible outcome should Bougainville vote in favour of independence. This formulation resulted from a compromise proposed late in 2000 by then Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer. He persuaded the Bougainville leaders to agree that the referendum outcome need not be binding. He cited East Timor as a precedent, for the international community had supported giving effect to a majority East Timorese vote for independence even though the referendum law in that case had not made the outcome binding. At the same time to persuade PNG to accept such a referendum, he argued that PNG's sovereignty was preserved by the fact that Bougainville agreed that the PNG Parliament had authority to reject a vote in favour of independence. The main reasons for the deferral of the issue in this way were that Downer's compromise offered both PNG and Bougainville a way out of stalemate and potential breakdown, and perhaps because of that the two sides never openly addressed that fact that they had quite different interpretations of what Downer's compromise would mean for international community action in case of a vote for independence (for details of compromise on Bougainville referendum, see Regan 2010: 88–90).

In relation to mining revenues, the Agreement provided that the ABG reach 'fiscal self reliance' when revenues collected in Bougainville from PNG company tax and customs duties were sustainably greater than the amount of the main PNG grant payable to the ABG. At that point, an amount equivalent to the grant would become payable from those same tax sources, while the distribution between PNG and the ABG of any remaining balance from those sources would be negotiated between the parties. At the time the Agreement was negotiated it was recognized that fiscal self-reliance would be reached only if a large resource project began in Bougainville, such as the re-opening of the Panguna mine. In effect fiscal self-reliance deferred the difficult question of distribution of mining revenues, mainly because in 2001 it seemed most unlikely to most Bougainville leaders that mining would ever resume again. But as the realities of the limited revenues available to the ABG later became evident, consensus began to emerge about re-opening the Panguna mine or establishing an alternative mining project. As a result, the need to negotiate the deferred issue of division of mining revenues could arise much sooner than was expected in 2001.

Economic development

From the late 1990s, extensive expansion of economic development (from a very low post-conflict base) occurred, providing business and employment opportunities to many former combatants and younger males who might have otherwise been attracted to armed groups. Donor support helped re-establish a significant smallholder cocoa production industry, with copra production also significant

when prices were high. Australian funding supported reconstruction of the main trunk road and wharves in Bougainville (critical to getting agricultural produce to market). In addition, there was significant small-scale gold production, beginning with extraction of alluvial gold from the tailings from the Panguna mine, later expanding to many other areas of Bougainville, and extending to small-scale hard-rock mining. Donor funding was provided in ways intended to assist involvement of former combatants. Unfortunately, economic development did not spread evenly, cocoa being particularly concentrated in the north and gold production in the centre, with limited economic activity in the south.

Prospects

Diminution of conflict in Bougainville has been remarkable. There has been no return to the conflict of the 1988 to 1997 period (between either PNG and Bougainville, or BRA and BRF). This is not to say that all conflict has ended. Some groups remain outside the peace process (though not actively opposing it) and localized armed conflict has re-emerged in parts of south Bougainville. Nevertheless, the progress towards consolidation of Bougainvillean groups supporting the peace process has been encouraging, in large part because of the generally positive record with implementation of the 2001 Peace Agreement.

In terms of whether this progress can be maintained, there are five significant caveats. First, Me'ekamui, MDF and other elements oppose the 2001 Agreement. Further, some of them (as well as other leaders) also oppose resumption of the Panguna mine, some mainly because they have high hopes of a compensation claim against Rio Tinto in the United States, and others because they support other mining interests that might be threatened by the return of BCL. The complexity of competing claims about and interests in mining could contribute to tensions in unpredictable ways.

Second, the localized conflict in the south has the potential to expand in unanticipated and unmanageable ways.

Third, many weapons remain in the hands of former combatants, new armed groups (especially in the south) criminal elements, and business people. There has been virtually no further progress in weapons disposal after the UNOMB left in mid-2005. The significant number of weapons still available and the readiness of individuals and groups to use them for criminal purposes, and to threaten their use in pursuit of political goals, are matters of concern, especially in circumstances where resumption of some localized armed conflict has already occurred.

Fourth, PNG has not yet understood the peace-building opportunity inherent in the combination of autonomy and the deferred referendum on independence. That combination offers PNG the incentive to assist in making autonomy work so well that many Bougainvilleans might find it difficult to choose independence. Instead, PNG has not been grasping the opportunity – the transfer of powers moved slowly, there were arguments over ABG powers of appointment and payment to the ABG of

a constitutionally guaranteed grant, and so on. There has been increasing frustration in the ABG about what is seen as limited PNG commitment to the Peace Agreement.

Fifth, the deferral under the Peace Agreement of decisions on the two crucial issues of Bougainville independence and the division of mining revenues offers the possibility that major points of tension between PNG and Bougainville have not been resolved. Rather, they remain potential sources of conflict that could readily emerge either when a major mining project is negotiated, or if the referendum results in a Bougainville vote in favour of independence. Both issues could be all the more difficult to manage if internal problems in Bougainville continue to increase, or if tensions between PNG and Bougainville over implementation of other aspects of the Agreement continue to rise.

Lessons

There are several possible lessons from diminution of the conflict in Bougainville. However, the extent to which such lessons might be applicable elsewhere depends on the extent to which any success in diminution in Bougainville is related mainly to factors specific to the particular context there.

First, the Bougainville experience illuminates both the difficulties of repression as a response to ethno-nationalist conflict and some possible indirect 'benefits' of repression efforts for a central government opposed to secessionist rebels. Not only is effective repression difficult to achieve, especially when the state is weak and when topography and other local circumstances favour dissident groups, but also ineffective repressive efforts can consolidate support for dissidents. Further, PNG's attempt to undermine the rebellion by encouraging divisions amongst Bougainvilleans was a difficult strategy to execute effectively. Nevertheless it contributed both to exhaustion and stalemate, and also to the emergence of moderate leadership willing to explore a political solution.

Second, aspects of culture can contribute to the diminution of conflict. The significance of the role of reconciliation processes in restoring balance in relations within and between Melanesian social groups that have been damaged by conflict cannot be underestimated. This experience highlights the need for international mediators and potential interveners to have a deep understanding of the context in which they propose to become involved.

Third, Bougainville sheds light on approaches to diminishing conflict and building peace in situations involving multiple and changing parties, rather than the two parties around which so much of the literature on conflict resolution and peacebuilding tends to be based. Among the 25 lessons for international interventions that I discussed in Regan (2010: 133–160) were several related to dealing with conflicts involving loose coalitions rather than defined parties. They included:

- the need for patience, allowing time for workable coalitions to emerge;
- the need to recognize that peace initiatives that do not succeed in ending violent conflict may not be failures (they may contribute to progress towards a successful process);

- the need for mediators to engage with all groups;
- the need to seek opportunities to support moderate leaders and moderate coalitions;
- the possible advantages of large and inclusive negotiating teams, and extensive consultation systems that enable negotiators to maintain their coalitions.

Fourth, Bougainville demonstrates that interventions by the international community in support of conflict resolution and peace building can be quite 'light' in circumstances where there are strong groups of local leaders committed to peace, meaning that much of the decision making about and management of the process can be left in the hands of the local actors.

Fifth, constitutional arrangements can address drivers of conflict, such as disputes involving resource-revenue distribution or ethnicity. While there may be immediate advantages in such arrangements that defer decisions on key divisive issues, there may also be dangers, with conflict simply being deferred, particularly in circumstances where there are other sources of tensions between potential protagonists.

Notes

1 I am grateful to Hank Nelson for insightful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

2 Arguably there have been even more deaths in the Highlands of Papua New Guinea since 'tribal fighting' resumed on a widespread basis from the late 1960s, but this violence has occurred in the context of hundreds of localized conflicts. For more on such conflicts in one of the five Highlands provinces, see Haley's chapter in this book.

3 In relation to the origins and unfolding of the conflict, see Regan (2010), Chapters 1 and 2; and Braithwaite *et al.* (2010), pp. 9–34.

4 In June 2011 an Australian television current affairs programme aired allegations that the police and the PNGDF were deployed at the direction of BCL: www.sbs.com.au/dateline/story/about/id/601246/n/Blood-and-Treasure (accessed 29 July 2011). The claims are of dubious veracity.

5 The BRA was divided into 11 main companies ('A' to 'K') located in particular regions of Bougainville (see Map 8) and further divided into sub-units based in the communities from which they originated.

6 Issues about the complexities involved in determining numbers of deaths, including those caused or contributed to by the blockade, are discussed in Regan (1999), pp. 557–559. Roles of Australian and New Zealand politicians in possibly exaggerating the numbers of deaths are touched upon there, and discussed further in Braithwaite *et al.* (2010), p. 86.

7 For more detailed discussion of the peace process in Bougainville, see Regan (2010), especially Chapters 2 and 3, and Braithwaite *et al.* (2010), pp. 35–82.

8 For more on the internal divisions amongst the various groups involved in the conflict and the peace process, see Regan (2010), pp. 45–62.

9 However, many weapons remained in the hands of Bougainville factions for reasons discussed in Regan (2010), pp. 95–99, 107–108, 121–123.

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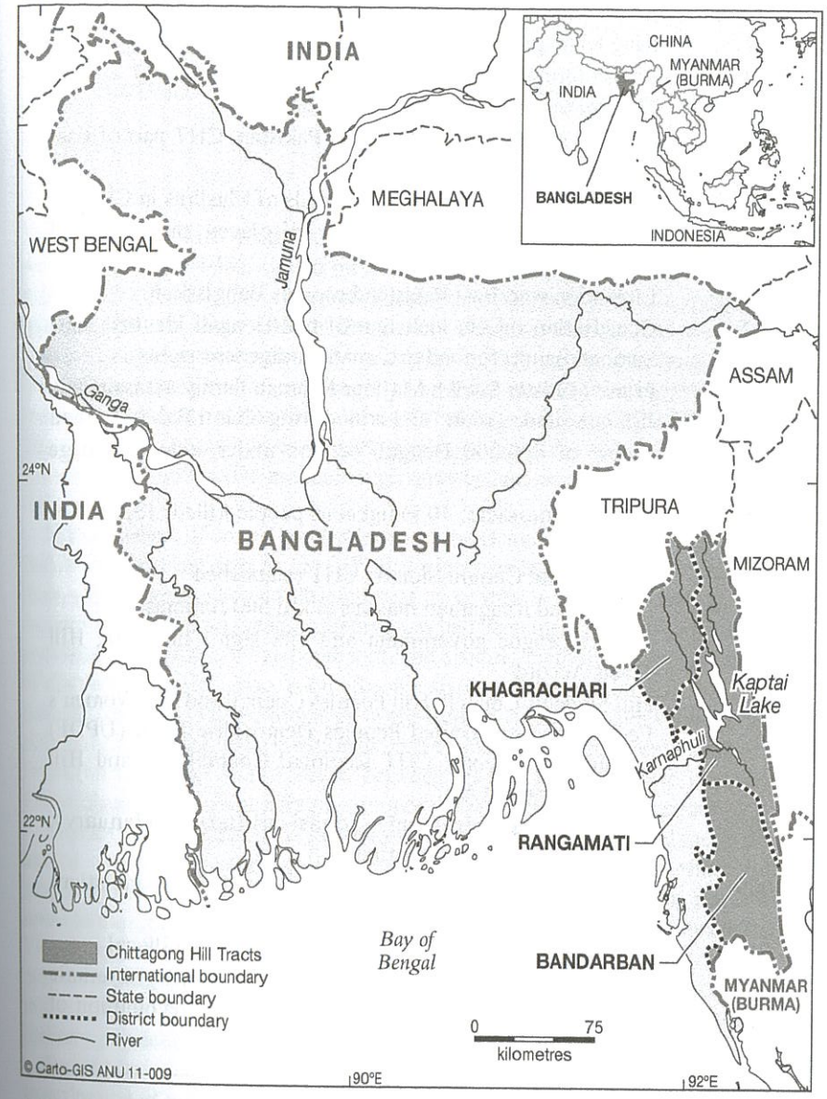

Map 9 Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh

Major events: Chittagong Hill Tracts

1666	Chittagong region conquered from Arakanese by Shaista Khan, Mughal governor of Bengal
1787	King Khan pledges allegiance to East India Company
1860	British formally annex Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT)
1900	The Chittagong Hill Tracts Regulation
1947	Partition of India and creation of Pakistan; CHT part of East Pakistan
1950	Pakistan government settles hundreds of Muslims in CHT
1957–64	Kaptai Hydro Electric Project displaces thousands of indigenous people
1971	Liberation war: East Pakistan becomes Bangladesh
1972	Constitution rejects inclusion of non-Bengali identity; Jana Samhati Samiti formed to demand indigenous rights
1975	Prime Minister Sheikh Mujibur Rahman family assassinated; JSS goes underground and armed wing Shanti Bahini formed
1979	Inflow of 400,000 Bengali settlers under state patronage begins
1989	Longudu massacre: 40 indigenous people killed; 13,000 flee to India
1990–91	International Commission on CHT established
1992–93	Logang and Rangamati massacres kill 500 Jummas
1997	Awami League government and JSS sign Chittagong Hill Tracts Accord
1998	Hill Students Council, Hill Peoples Council and Hill Women's Federation form United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) denouncing Accord; CHT Regional Council Act and Hill Districts Council Act
2007	Caretaker government (quasi-military) (January); militarization of CHT continues
2009	Awami League returns to power; human rights violations continue in CHT
2010	High Court declares CHT Regional Council Act illegal
2011	Parliamentary special committee acknowledges ethnic minority groups in Constitution, but rejects recognition of them as indigenous (Adivasi) people