



## CHANGING VIEWS FOR SUSTAINABLE CONFLICT RESOLUTION: MAPUCHE AS A MODEL IN ARGENTINA

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If we think beyond particular situations, and we see the big picture, political violence represents the “unsolved question” that lies beneath each society. We chose the expression ‘political violence’ because “politics” implies power struggles, and if that dynamic doesn’t have a proper channel, the stream leads to the materialization of violence and finally to extremism. In that sense, it is better to look above the specific players to identify the radical dissent that promotes that kind of reaction. As such, a holistic examination of reality is necessary to form a correct and uncompromising perception of the real root causes and the actors, without holding one party accountable while exempting others from such responsibilities. This requires we make efforts to solve the problem of political violence through the method of dialogue between all segments of society.

### CONFLICT AND PEACE

In geopolitics, the term ‘Balkanization’ refers to a country slipping into a civil war between its different ethnicities, plagued with ethnic cleansing, as is the case of the Balkans. With ‘Balkanization’ lurking around the corner, so a sustainable peace is the only option for these nations in order to achieve development. Facing this, people of these territories and more than anything their leaders need to find ways to resolve conflicts in a lasting manner.

As such, a possible way is through a joint-programmed solution, with mixed control, on a par with communities’ empowerment, basic social services based on local efforts (such as water, non-polluted environments, healthcare systems, education, etc.) and training for members of security and military forces in negotiation and dialogue skills practically and methodologically.

We have an example to analyze these affirmations in Argentina’s present situation on “political violence”. In that sense, we can see what happens in relation to two different

approaches that the National State has used on the same issue such as the Mapuche conflict in Patagonia Region, south of Argentina.

## STAGES OF CONFLICT

Argentina has an intermittent history of political violence rooted on various causes like independence war, the national state's consolidation, military dictatorships, leftist terrorism and external terrorism.

The last Military government (1976-1982) ended with Malvinas War and a democratically aperture began and fulfilled in 1983. That brought peace for a while and even started the civil prosecution and conviction of militaries for crimes against human rights. This lasted for a few years until new military rebellions started in order to stop civil prosecution for their actions in the so-called "filthy war". These rebels succeeded and the government secured a more durable peace but at the cost of citizens' disappointment with the democratic process.

During the nineties, a new government following the administration of President Carlos Menem put economy as the main issue and a huge reconversion began according to the policies delineated. Internal violence based on politics disagreement decreased rapidly in parallel with pardon granted to ex-guerrilla leaders and the convicted militaries. However, a new social violence rose linked to drugs trafficking, robberies and kidnappings, fueled by social inequalities and rise of poverty.

In that period, two tragically violent situations took place: in 1993, a bomb attack was launched in the Israelian Embassy in Buenos Aires; in 1994, another bomb exploded in the Argentinian-Israelian mutuality association. These events haven't been solved yet and are still ongoing on the judiciary as an eternal prosecution. Even so, probably they were retaliation against President Menem's alignment with the USA during Iraq's First War and as an echo of Middle East's conflict internationalization. In 1994, the Constitution was reformed, including amendments, such as the recognition of indigenous people's preexistence to the National State and the equalization of the Constitution itself with a series of human rights treaties. The years that run from then go peacefully until 2000-2001 when a social clash began due to economic crisis and political leadership's deterioration on the eyes of citizens.

In 2003, a process of recuperation began under another's Peronist governments (President N. Kirchner and President C. Fernandez) in terms of productive economy (not speculative) and a human rights' strong policy that re-started the prosecution of

militaries thanks to the 1994's reform and the Human Rights Treaties that had reached constitutional hierarchy. The new trend consecrated a progressive approach related to individual and social rights which allowed indigenous people to experience a period of re-ethnization, recognition and the recovery of ancestral lands. This process has been gradual and strengthened by new generations that recover their ethnical identities, securing their territories and surroundings against the advance of private real estate projects, mining operations and mass soy farming.

In 2015, the political tonic changed with President M. Macri who intended to solve social conflict with a paradigm of "firm hand" that provoked distrust with security forces and also escalated conflicts.

### **THE MAPUCHE PEOPLE**

One hot spot in Argentina is Patagonia region where the Mapuche People are settled. This nation experienced an ethnocide during the so-called "Desert Conquest" (1878-1885) which was part of the territorial expansion and consolidation of boundaries of Argentina's National State.

The Mapuche People is from both Chilean and Argentinian Patagonia and has a warrior' and proud ethos that makes them very active and more mobilized human collective. When violent acts happen, the accusation is directed at the Mapuche People automatically even without evidence, which usually involves millennials and triennials, who participate in the recovery of ancestral identities, knowledge, beliefs, systems and land claims. However, they are also people from these times and have their own generational cynicism on traditional party politics or unions in parallel with an active grassroots work.

During the rule of President M. Macri, this conflict developed into a brief but violent escalation where federal forces intervened over local authorities in order to repress a route block and later a land occupation, both situations supposedly led by an organization called RAM (Resistance of Ancestral Mapuche). This group is not accurately identified and many Mapuche people reject them. However, it could be part of a phenomenon linked to the youngest ones who are experiencing inherited social inequalities in the context of their ancestral identity recovery. Lack of dialogue or proper channels to solve this particular grassroots claims could be the root of a chronic instability in that region. The intervention of the federal forces resulted in the death of two persons; the first is a supporter of the indigenous population, and the second is a

young person active in community. Inasmuch as the death file was not properly addressed and decisive for its political implications, President Macri was not re-elected.

## NEW ERA

In 2019, a new coalition government led by President A. Fernández began its mandate with an electoral promise of a productive economy and policies directed at human rights. However, after a six-month COVID-19 quarantine and the weight of an economic debt inherited from Macri's administration, the social situation has become harsh. Later, a new conflict broke out in Patagonia related to land occupation and destruction of public and private property apparently by RAM (Villa Mascardi, Bariloche City) in August of 2020. Too many interests and factions participate in this scenario. For instance, new groups of Mapuche and young leaders like Machis (female spiritual leaders), private real estate projects, mining operations, the provincial and the National State.

The experience during Macri's administration ended with an unsolved conflict because it happened twice and again in Fernandez's presidency, with two innocent deaths and a deterioration of security forces' image in the eyes of the civil society. Possibly, this outcome was due to:

- A. Lack of a comprehensive approach from authorities or agents considering factual situations modeled by different variables like land reclamation and re-ethnicization process.
- B. Lack of articulation between local and federal authorities.
- C. Lack of a systematic state policy related to conflict resolution and protocols.
- D. Lack of a complementary communities' empowerment.
- E. Lack of consideration of international treaties and like ILO.

## UPDATED PLAN

The Fernandez government has implemented a different plan that contributes to formulating a new approach to address the conflicts related to the claims of indigenous people. The new plan was implemented under the leadership of the Ministry of National Security, in light of an agreement between the Ministries of Security and Environment at the local and national levels, which defines a key basis for alternative methods to address conflicts related to the claims of indigenous peoples. The most important methodological characteristics of the updated plan include:

- A. Recognition of environmental protection, the role that indigenous people play in that matter, their right to ask about local natural resources, preservation of individual and collective lands ownership.
- B. Articulation of local and national ministries of security, justice, environment, the leaders of local indigenous communities and incorporation of all possible players.
- C. Re-conversion of the National State intervention from a territorial action force to space of dialogue that represents all segments of society.
- D. Promotion of a protocol for security forces according to ILO 169 Convention.
- E. The invitation to all provinces to subscribe to this mechanism as well as Chubut and Rio Negro Province to solve the recent conflicts.

Since this new intervention, based on multiple actors, competencies and diverse views started, the violence went to zero and little by little the land's occupation are getting normalized, the indigenous people' claims are being heard but private property is being respected.

This is only the beginning but not the perfect solution. The project still lacks policies oriented to empower communities and young people in such a manner that local and national society reconnects with native people, who are Argentineans, encouraging a mutual development in intercultural terms.

## CONCLUSION

This ongoing conflict is due to many interrelated reasons, and the national state can change the reality of the conflict, and to avoid violence rapidly without delay, if it has the serious willpower and creates the conditions for change. This will undoubtedly lead to deescalating conflicts until they fade away permanently, achieving peace for all individuals, while developing local and national environments for real sustainable development, in conditions free from violence and terrorism. This will be a great example and a model to follow for sustainable conflict resolution in the future.