

Speech on behalf of the jury, to be presented at the Visions of Peace Symposium and awarding of the Sixth Thesis Prize of the Foundation for Peace Sciences and UPEACE Centre The Hague, 4 December 2013 at the VU University, Amsterdam

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to introduce the next part of today's programme: the Visions on Peace thesis prize. This is the sixth year that the prize is handed out, to recognize the best master thesis in the field of peace studies - broadly defined.

While contemporary international society is often identified as a 'thick' society, with numerous treaties, legal regimes and multilateral institutions and supranational organisations to tame anarchy and conflict, the continued difficulties of promoting peace and hence relevance of reflecting on 'Visions on Peace' has been made painstakingly clear in the symposium today. The devastation in Syria is only the latest example of both gross injustice and the inability of states and international organisations to generate a meaningful response and secure peace.

As the numerous submitted research papers for this year's prize revealed all too clearly, the destructive and long-lasting consequences of conflict in Northern Uganda, international military interventions in Afghanistan, the decades-long impasse between Israel and the Palestinians, and reconstruction efforts in Ambon, South Africa, and Columbia all present complex challenges for scholars of conflict and peace studies, not to mention policymakers and peace advocates.

In the context of international deadlocks, it can be considered a sign of hope that many of the projects analyzed in the submitted theses are not exclusively focused on powerful state actors as the only brokers of peace, but show the importance of deeds and words of "ordinary" people and everyday practices to build peace from the grassroots.

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Before I introduce the jury of the 2013 Visions on Peace prize, I would like to welcome and thank the representatives of all the organisations involved with the thesis prize and the organization of this symposium:

the Foundation for Peace Sciences and IKV Pax Christi, which together took the initiative to establish this thesis prize 6 years ago,

UPEACE – who took over the administration of the prize from IKV Pax Christi, and last but not least ASN Bank for its financial contribution.

Thanks to these organisations, we have been able to continue this initiative for another year.

This year, the jury for the Visions on Peace prize consisted of

Jeff Handmaker (Senior lecturer in law, human rights and development at the International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam),

Hans de Wit (Professor of Internationalisation of Higher Education at the Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences and Director of the Centre for Higher Education Internationalisation at the Catholic University in Milan) and

me, Tanja Aalberts (Senior Research Fellow in the Faculty of Law at the VU University in Amsterdam), as Chair of the jury.

I also wish to express the jury's appreciation to Petra van der Ham from UPEACE for her invaluable assistance in administering the thesis prize.

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The purpose of the Visions on Peace award is to stimulate research in peace studies, a very broad area of studies encompassing many different disciplines and areas of expertise, from philosophy, politics and sociology, to law, history and anthropology.

Apart from the many different epistemologies that guide the field of peace studies, the field is also highly varied in relation to the research methods employed and units of analysis explored, from discourse analysis of laws; policies and institutional structures created to implement conflict-prevention strategies; to focused, ethnographic studies of specific, conflict-affected communities in remote locations, where people struggle to rebuild their communities.

The dynamics of conflict and the reconstruction of societies after a war, cry out for a continuation of critical and innovative research. The jury wishes to acknowledge that scientific knowledge, while sometimes overvalued, is also under-appreciated in developing practical steps to bring peace and to promote justice.

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The entries

This year, the jury received 46 theses, a nearly 65% increase in the number of dissertations from last year. UPEACE presented all of the entries to the jury as anonymous papers. The list of topics was extremely varied, from a historical analysis of peace movements; to classical evaluations on the power dynamics in modern-day conflicts, to the securitization of climate change and development, and intricate anthropological and psychological studies of peace and security at the grassroots.

In addition to the wide range of disciplines and topics, the research papers we received emanated from many different faculties and institutions.

As in previous years, we were pleased to receive submissions from graduates of political science, law, anthropology, development studies, criminology, conflict studies and history.

Candidates attended
Radboud University Nijmegen,
Tilburg University,
the Universities of Groningen, Amsterdam, Leiden, Maastricht, Utrecht and Wageningen,
the VU University of Amsterdam and
the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague.

This is an even broader range of institutions than last year.

As in previous years, the jury found this range and diversity to be immensely gratifying and we hope that it is broadened to even more institutions and disciplines in the future.

We conceive of multidisciplinary as a real asset of the thesis prize, which makes it extremely interesting, and also a formidable challenge to be involved in the selection. The jury thankfully benefited from the diverse range of expertise between the three of us.

As in previous years, the predominant language of the submitted research papers was English, with only four theses being written in Dutch.

The length of the dissertations was also very diverse, from concise papers of some 40 pages, to almost epic-length works of over 100 pages, single spaced.

The process of selection and criteria applied

Unable to read every submitted thesis in full, candidates are requested to submit a summary highlighting the key points of their thesis. Thanks to the help of UPEACE, all of the entries were

presented to the jury as anonymous papers.

As indicated on the website, the first selection was made on the basis of a careful read of the 46 summaries. Each jury member independently made an initial shortlist of research papers that we wanted to read in full.

After making our selections, the jury met in person to discuss the shortlists. In the end, the jury selected 10 theses to read in full. This turned out to be quite a challenge, as some of the selected dissertations were of the more epic kind...

Against the papers that we read in full, we applied a range of standard criteria, each of which was weighted, primarily, according to six categories that emphasised scientific quality and originality. In addition to this, a number of criteria addressed the relevance of the research paper to the work of organisations in the peace sector.

After the jury members had scored each paper (again, blindly from each other), it was clear that four papers emerged at the top of the list.

The nominated students are – in alphabetical order:

1. **Jan Apperloo**, University of Amsterdam – with his thesis: *Makers of a better future: Assisting young men to navigate mental health and socio-economic problems in post-conflict northern Uganda*
2. **Toon Dirkx**, Utrecht University – with his thesis: *At the Margins of the State: Intervention-induced Opportunity Structures for Arbakai Militias in the Context of the Dutch Integrated Police-Training Mission, in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan*
3. **Niels Terpstra**, Utrecht University – with his thesis: *The Dynamics of Justice Provision in the Context of Irregular Warfare and Legal Pluralism: Why a majority of the Afghan population in Kunduz province continues to use informal justice despite international-led judicial reform*
4. **Eveline Wong**, University of Amsterdam – with her thesis: *Too Much to Govern. Agency, Governance and Governmentalities in Palestinian Refugee Camps in Lebanon*

It is worth noting that two of these theses, by Toon Dirkx and Niels Terpstra, were part of the same big research project on the Dutch mission in Kunduz.

We have invited the four nominated students to present their thesis at this symposium.

Unfortunately, Jan Apperloo and Toon Dirx were unable to join us today as they are currently working abroad. However, they have provided us with a video presentation, which we will broadcast in a moment.

We are delighted that Niels Terpstra and Eveline Wong are with us today, with your families and friends who can feel justly proud of your accomplishments. We look forward to hear more about your theses.

[PRESENTATIONS]

After the presentations: Final Selection

Thank you for these informative presentations. I think it goes without saying why these four theses were nominated. They all provide an original and critical analysis of peace and security in contemporary societies, whether that is in a domestic or international context. All theses make an important contribution to the academic debate in their respective subject fields, and are highly relevant for the peace sector.

That being said, one of these four theses clearly emerged, on the basis of all criteria, as the most outstanding paper. The jury was impressed by a number of aspects of this thesis, and this concerned not in the least the dedicated field work that the student has done for the empirical analysis. The student confronted a range of personal, ethical, bureaucratic and logistical challenges in conducting this research with a combination of modesty and confidence, and sensitivity. The thesis is based on well-developed and systematic methods, which were used to gather a substantial amount of original data.

The empirical research is based on a multisided theoretical framework, which the author has translated into concrete rationalities that are operational in the complex field of international cooperation she analyses.

As you may have gathered by now, I am very pleased to announce that the jury has awarded the 2012 Visions of Peace thesis award to ... **Eveline Wong** for her thesis entitled *Too much to govern*. While the other three finalists were, in our view, also outstanding contributions, Eveline's thesis stood out as the favorite in all categories.

Before I give the floor to Ewoud Goudswaard, General Director, ASN Bank, to hand over the prize, on behalf of the jury I would like to congratulate all four nominated students, Jan Apperloo, Toon Dirx,

and Niels Terpstra, and especially Eveline Wong for the excellent dissertations you have produced, and wish you all the very best in your future careers.

Cordially,

The jury:

Tanja Aalberts (Chair)

Jeff Handmaker

Hans de Wit

And with the help of:

Petra van der Ham