

Peace Building in Post-War Societies

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Abstract: Post-Conflict peace building is evidently not a simple process. There are significant limitations and complications that need to be addressed, including political and resource constraints and also peace building in post-conflict societies is a multi-component process, most important of which is finding lasting political solutions within the framework of nation states. While the term peace building is relatively new, external assistance for post-war rebuilding goes back to the reconstruction of post-World War II Europe and Japan. What was new in Boutros Boutros-Ghali's formulation, and what caught the world's attention, was a realization that the end of the Cold War opened new possibilities for international action? The United Nations, individual states and international non-government organizations (INGOs), have become increasingly involved in trying to rebuild peaceful societies in the aftermath of violent Conflict. Post-Conflict peace building encompasses the full range of non-military commitments undertaken by the international community to assist countries to achieve self-sustaining peace and socio-economic development. This article studies one such effort of peace building and sustainable development in a war-torn nation. This paper focuses on the original definition of peace building. More specifically, it examines elements of peace building and interventions by external actors to help war-torn societies not only to avoid a relapse into Conflict, but more importantly, to establish the conditions for sustainable peace.

Keywords: Peace Building, Conflict Resolutions, Post-War Development and Conflict Transformation

Introduction

The term peace building came into widespread use after the then United Nations Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali—announced his Agenda for Peace in 1992. “Action to identify and support structures which tend to strengthen and solidify peace to avoid a relapse into Conflict”. Since then, peace building has become a catchall concept, encompassing multiple (and at times contradictory) perspectives and agendas. It is indiscriminately used to refer to preventive diplomacy, preventive development, Conflict prevention, Conflict resolution and post-Conflict reconstruction.(Charles Call,2004).ever since then, peace building has become a broadly used but often ill-defined term implying activities that go beyond crisis intervention, such as long-term development, building of governance structures and institutions or building the capacity of non-governmental organizations (including religious institutions) for peacemaking and peace building. The United Nations distinguishes between several different kinds of intervention to bring about peace. In addition to humanitarian aid or emergency assistance, designed to provide the immediate means of survival for populations at risk, the main categories of intervention are:

Peace-making ... implies interventions designed to end hostilities and bring about an agreement using diplomatic, political and military means as necessary. The focus lies in the diplomatic effort to end the violence between the conflicting parties, to move them towards nonviolent dialogue and eventually reach a peace agreement.

Peace-keeping ... means monitoring and enforcing an agreement— even by using force as necessary. Peacekeeping operations not only provide security, but also facilitate other non-military initiatives. It may include:

- a) Assisting parties to transform from violent conflict to peace by separating the fighting parties and keeping them apart,
- b) Verifying whether agreements are being kept,
- c) Supervising agreed confidence-building activities,
- d) Managing through third-party intervention (often, but not always done by military forces).

Peace-building ... are programs designed to address the causes of conflict, the grievances of the past and to promote long-term stability and justice. Often it is understood as the phase of the peace process that takes place after peacemaking and peacekeeping. On the other hand, peace building is an umbrella concept that encompasses not only long-term transformative efforts, but also peacemaking and peacekeeping. In this view, peace building includes early warning and response efforts, violence prevention, advocacy work, civilian and military peacekeeping, military intervention, humanitarian assistance, ceasefire agreements and the establishment of peace zones.

The ending of overt violence via a peace agreement or military victory does not mean the achievement of peace.(Licklider,1995) Rather, the ending of violence or a so-called ‘post-Conflict’ situation provides “a new set of opportunities that can be grasped or thrown away”. (Robert L. Rothstein ,1999) The international community can play a significant role in either nurturing or undermining this fragile peace building process. The United Nations, individual states and international non- government organizations (INGOs), have become increasingly involved in trying to rebuild peaceful societies in the aftermath of violent Conflict. The dilemmas currently being faced in Iraq and Sri Lanka are only the latest in a line of learning experiences in this complex task of post-Conflict peace building. In Namibia and Cambodia, for the first time, the UN launched expanded peacekeeping operations which included not only military security but the coordination of elections. In East Timor, the UN mandate broadened even further to include the establishment of a functioning government and society through comprehensive development, law and order, security and governance objectives. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, extensive reconstruction activities have also been pursued, including an emphasis on establishing security, democracy and good governance.

Further, The UN plays an important role in relation to different aspects of crisis intervention and political tensions and the UN’s authority is very important in different aspects of addressing and resolving Conflicts to managing the consequences of those Conflicts. Over the last decades, and especially after the end of theColdWar, the role of the UN has expanded towards the construction and peace building of societies affected by Conflict.

There is a great deal of human suffering related to violent conflicts, political instability or unjust policies and practices. While short-term humanitarian relief and crisis intervention are most important to reduce the immediate sufferings in violent conflicts, they are not enough in fragile states or post-conflict societies. There must be additional initiatives for post-conflict reconciliation, for the development of capacity for conflict transformation and for the building of sustainable peace. Meanwhile there is increasing awareness of the need to increase the capacities for nonviolent conflict transformation everywhere, even before open violence has occurred.

Defining Peace building

While the term peace building is relatively new, external assistance for post-war rebuilding goes back to the reconstruction of post-World War II Europe and Japan. What was new in Boutros Boutros-Ghali's formulation, and what caught the world's attention, was a realization that the end of the Cold War opened new possibilities for international action. Traditionally, states intervened in the affairs of other states as part of their foreign policy. Where real politics permitted, intervention was undisguised and forceful. Where real politics blocked action, the United Nations and other multilateral institutions were paralyzed to act collectively.

Peace building is difficult to define and even more difficult to achieve in practice (Elisabeth M. Cousens, 2001). Here define post-Conflict peace building as “strategies designed to promote a secure and stable lasting peace in which the basic human needs of the population are met and violent Conflicts do not recur”. This definition takes a long-term focus (Stephen J. Stedman & Donald Rothchild, 1996 & C.P. David, 1999) and incorporates the goals of both negative peace (absence of physical violence) and positive peace (absence of structural violence), a distinction first outlined by Galtung. (Johan Galtung, 1969) My analysis is also informed by the more comprehensive and normative definition of peace building provided by Spence: “those activities and processes that: focus on the root causes of the Conflict, rather than just the effects; support the rebuilding and rehabilitation of all sectors of the war-torn society; encourage and support interaction between all sectors of society in order to repair damaged relations and start the process of restoring dignity and trust; recognize the specifics of each post Conflict situation; encourage and support the participation of indigenous resources in the design, implementation and sustainment of activities and processes; and promote processes that will endure after the initial emergency recovery phase has passed”. (Rebecca Spence, 2001).

These definitions assume that, to be successful, post-Conflict peace building must address the underlying causes of Conflict in addition to the surface manifestations such as the military culture and proliferation of weapons. As argued by Evans “at the heart of the notion of peace building is the idea of meeting needs: for security and order, for a reasonable standard of living, and for recognition of identity and worth”. (Gareth Evans, 1993)

The strategies mainly employed in the post-Conflict peace building processes include a wide range of activities. NGOs, international financial institutions and development agencies as well as local and national actors cover a whole gamut of ventures to ensure the healthy recovery of war-devastated states. Disarmament of combatants, procurement of political and economic concessions to stabilize the state, development of infrastructure, and consolidation of the legal, financial, and political systems are just part of the focal points that undergo changes in the years immediately following the peace agreements. The main mission is “to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into Conflict.” (Boutros Boutros-Ghali: 1992)

The concept has become an inherent component in the UN's efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, and to preserve peace. According to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan: By post-conflict peace-building, I mean actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to consolidate peace and prevent a recurrence of armed confrontation. Experience has shown that the consolidation of peace in the aftermath of conflict requires more than purely diplomatic and military action, and that an integrated peace-building effort is needed to address the various factors that have caused or are threatening a conflict. Peace-building may involve the creation or strengthening of national institutions, monitoring elections, promoting human rights, providing for reintegration and rehabilitation programmes, and creating conditions for resumed development. Peace-building does not replace ongoing humanitarian and development activities in countries emerging from crisis. It aims rather to build on, add to, or reorient such activities in ways designed to reduce the risk of a resumption of conflict and contribute to creating the conditions most conducive to reconciliation, reconstruction and recovery. (United Nations: 1998)

Post-conflict peace building is a complex and multidimensional, genuinely political process of transformation from a state of war or violent conflict to one of stability and peace, requiring, according to Kofi Annan, “a multifaceted approach, covering diplomatic, political and economic factors”. (. . . United Nations:1998). It embraces security, political, social, economic, and psycho-social dimensions, and it aims at the installation of both negative and, in the longer run, positive peace. While it is necessary to define appropriate measures and timetables (including exit strategies) and, in the interest of sustainability, to ensure transfer of ownership to local actors, this becomes a particularly difficult and cumbersome undertaking when the required multifaceted approach is not paralleled by “high-level strategic and administrative coordination” among the different actors involved in post-conflict peace building tasks.(United Nations: 1998) Moreover, in the interest of sustainability, coordination with local partners has to lead towards transfer of responsibilities. As the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) notes, “the long-term aim of international actors in a post-conflict situation is ‘to do themselves out of a job’ . . . by creating political processes which require local actors to take over responsibility both for rebuilding their society and for creating patterns of cooperation between antagonistic groups”(ICISS:2001)

This focus on satisfying human needs is derived from the Conflict resolution theories of John Burton. (John W. Burton:1990). According to Spence, “the process of peace building calls for new attitudes and practices: ones that are flexible, consultative and collaborative and that operate from a contextual understanding of the root causes of Conflict”.(Rebecca Spence,2001). The approach is transformative: it is based on terminating something undesired (violence) and the building of something desired through the transformation of relationships and construction of the conditions for peace.(John Paul Lederach,2000) It is consistent with the perspective enunciated by Ryan that the task of peace building “involves a switch of focus away from the warriors, with whom peace-keepers are mainly concerned, to the attitudes and socio-economic circumstances of ordinary people . . . So whereas peace-keeping is about building barriers between the warriors, peace-building tries to build bridges between the ordinary people”.(Stephen Ryan,1990)

An Agenda for Peace stimulated significant new thinking and policy development within and outside the UN. The 1995 Supplement to An Agenda for Peace, for example, noted the linkages between Conflict prevention and peace building: “Demilitarization, the control of small arms, institutional reform, improved police and judicial systems, the monitoring of human rights, electoral reform and social and economic development can be as valuable in preventing Conflict as in healing the wounds after Conflict has occurred.” It also acknowledged that implementing peace building could be complicated—requiring “integrated action and delicate dealings between the United Nations and the parties to the Conflict in respect of which peace- building activities are to be undertaken.”

The Supplement distinguished between the UN's peacekeeping and peace building roles: “Most of the activities that together constitute peace-building fall within the mandates of the various programmes, funds, offices and agencies of the United Nations system with responsibilities in the economic, social, initially have to be entrusted to, or at least coordinated by, a multifunctional peace-keeping operation, but humanitarian and human rights fields. In a country ruined by war, resumption of such activities may initially have to be entrusted to, or at least coordinated by, a multifunctional peace-keeping operation, but as that operation succeeds in restoring normal conditions, the programmes, funds, offices and agencies can reestablish themselves and gradually take over responsibility from the peace-keepers, with the resident coordinator in due course assuming the coordination functions temporarily entrusted to the special representative of the Secretary-General.”

Post-Conflict peace building is evidently not a simple process. There are significant limitations and complications that need to be addressed, including political and resource constraints, lack of political will, and lack of capacity to implement terms of the peace agreement. (E. Bertram:1995) The efforts of

the international community to promote peace in societies recovering from violent Conflict are further complicated when there has not been a negotiated end to the violence involving the international community, as in Rwanda after the genocide in 1994. Boutros-Ghali draws the distinction between post-Conflict peace building in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement, and peace building activities where the UN does not already have a peacemaking or peacekeeping mandate. (Ghali:1992) In the latter situation, it is not clear who has the responsibility for implementing, monitoring and coordinating peace building activities, and the parties to the Conflict are not bound by any agreement as to their part in the peace building process. If the violence has ceased because of a military victory, as in Rwanda, then there is the problem of an imbalance of power between the victors and losers to deal with in the reconstruction of society and the implementation of justice mechanisms.

This situation is different again and evens more challenging when the victor in the military Conflict is an outside intervener, such as the US in Iraq and Afghanistan. The US and coalition have the moral and legal responsibility to provide assistance in the rebuilding effort, but do not have the moral credibility nor practical experience to manage the process. The UN has the experience, but is lacking credibility in Iraq, and has limited resources to tackle such an enormous and complicated task. How can either the US or UN effectively implements justice and reconciliation processes in this situation?

Previous studies have concentrated on evaluating post-Conflict peace building as part of the implementation of peace agreements and have generally not included cases without a negotiated settlement. This is a limited approach as many Conflicts ‘end’ as the result of military victory, as in Rwanda and Iraq, which has significant implications for the consideration of transitional justice issues. (E.Bertram:1995)

There will be no lasting peace and stable democracy in war-torn societies without truth, justice, and reconciliation. Mass killing, ethnic cleansing, rape, and other brutal forms of conducting war in ethnic, religious, and similar types of Conflict render reconciliation extremely difficult. Although it is a long-term process, it has to be started as soon as the peace operation and peace building are initiated. (Winrich Kühne:2001). Justice and order are important aspects of peace building in a post-Conflict situation where there is a need to end violence, disarm combatants, restore the rule of law, and deal with the perpetrators of war crimes and other human rights abuses. The need to overcome or transform the enmities developed during a violent Conflict and “build bridges between ordinary people” suggests a need for reconciliation. Very few researchers have considered the roles of justice and reconciliation in the success or failure of peace agreements and peace building processes in sustaining a long-term peace.

In the international community’s past peace building practice, the focus on the political rather than the personal has tended to mask the underlying psychosocial processes that contribute to the willingness and readiness of people to choose a path of peace and reconciliation rather than engaging in further mass violence and/or abuse of human rights. As argued by Rasmussen, the concern with “hard-nosed” geopolitics needs to expand to include the realm of geo-social politics in which relationship-building and reconciliation take centre stage. (J. Lewis Rasmussen :2001).

Lederach’s theories on peace building also identify relationships as a central component. He argues that one of the most important needs is for peace builders to “find ways to understand peace as a change process based on relationship building”. . (John Paul Lederach:1999). He goes further to say that we need to reorient our peace building framework “toward the development of support infrastructures that enhance our capacity to adapt and respond to relational needs rather than being defined and driven by events and agreements”. . (John Paul Lederach:1999). In other words, rather than focusing on the political and legal aspects of peace agreements, truth commissions and criminal tribunals, we need to focus on the task of relationship-building and how that may be enhanced through these various processes.

Peace Building in doubt

Peace-building accomplished through international intervention, UN or INGOs has had little success in achieving sustainable peace. In February of 2004, Haiti slipped back into chaos and despair, turning ten years of international and Haitian state- building efforts to dust. Liberia is in its second round of international intervention since returning to Conflict in 2004 following UN supervised elections in 1997. There is daily violence in Iraq and ongoing instability in Afghanistan. Kosovo remains under UN administration, with an uncertain future and ongoing undercurrents of Conflict. It has become increasingly clear that the international community's peace building toolkit remains underdeveloped vis-à-vis the complex challenges of establishing sustainable peace in war-torn societies. Faced with the multi-layered and multidimensional challenges of post-Conflict peace building (Hänggi, H., 2005) which typically include everything from promoting social reconciliation to restoring functioning justice systems to disarming and re-integrating former soldiers – international efforts have often lacked the necessary capacity, coordination, and flexibility to effectively manage the difficult transition from war to peace.

Indeed, one of the clearest lessons to be drawn from the past decade of peace building is that addressing post-Conflict insecurity, in the form of renewed Conflict between armed groups, organized crime, ethnic unrest, or widespread banditry, is an essential first step along the road to sustainable peace and renewed social and economic development. Without security, democracy and good governance in other words, there can be neither peace, nor development, nor justice.

Research Findings

In the absence of a common evaluation framework, this paper draws upon findings from several multi country studies to compare their assessment of peace building outcomes based primarily on the political/security aspects of peace building. The shortcomings of the economic benefits of peace building in terms of a return to a sustainable development course is easier to ascertain through a comparative review of the development indicators of post-Conflict countries and is therefore not covered below. However, it is also recognized that many Conflict-torn countries originally start with very low development indicators. Thus, the vicious cycle between Conflict and underdevelopment remains a perennial issue.

One of the most comprehensive studies of international peace building is the seminal work by Doyle and Sambanis entitled "International Peace building: A Theoretical and Quantitative Analysis." Using an extensive data set of 124 post-World War II civil wars, the study examines a range of international interventions ranging from monitoring missions, traditional peace keeping, multidimensional peacekeeping and peace enforcement. In other words, like many other similar studies, it does not differentiate between the peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-Conflict peace building roles of the international actors. The study finds that multilateral enforcement operations are usually successful in ending the violence and that there is a positive correlation between UN peace keeping operations and democratization processes after civil wars. However, even using their lenient criteria of success in terms of war termination, many post-Cold War civil wars covered by Doyle and Sambanis are considered failures.(Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis :1994)

Taking a narrower definition of peace building, in his recent book entitled *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*, Roland Paris examined eleven case studies. Focusing narrowly on two dimensions of post- Conflict peace building (namely political and economic liberalization), Paris sought to identify whether political and economic liberalization strategies promoted by the international community contributed in any discernible way to the resurgence of fighting or to ameliorating the conditions that had led to war. His conclusion is that the record is quite mixed: "In most of the eleven cases, the process of political liberalization, or economic liberalization, or both, produced destabilizing side effects that worked against the consolidation of peace. In some countries, liberalization exacerbated societal tensions; and in others it reproduced traditional sources of violence. The approach

to peace building that prevailed in the 1990s was, it seems, based on overtly optimistic assumptions about the effects of democratization and marketization in the immediate aftermath of civil war.”(Roland Paris:2004)

Defining success broadly as the ability to establish a stable and enduring democratic political system, these two companion studies examined several quantitative and qualitative indicators of success in the selected countries. These included the number of combat related casualties suffered by the mission, return rates of refugees and internally displaced persons, type of political system that evolved, and economic growth rates. On the two key criteria—of enduring peace and democratic development—the study concludes that among the sixteen cases studied in their comparative studies of UN- and US-led nation-building operations, five are not at peace today. The authors recognize that objective judgments are more difficult on democratic development; however, using Freedom House and University of Maryland Polity Project ratings, they conclude that eleven out of sixteen cases studied remain democratic.(James Dobbins et al:2005)

Conclusion

The persistence of intra-state and civil Conflicts in different regions, the breakdown of peace processes and the relapse of a number of countries into violent Conflict (such as in Sri Lanka in 2004/05 and Colombia and also Failed demobilization efforts have repeatedly led to a flaring-up of the war: in Angola (1994 and 1997), in Liberia (1996) and in Sierra Leone (latest 1999). For Haiti, Colombia and the DR Congo, and the emergence of new Conflicts ensure that post-Conflict peace building will continue to require international assistance in the coming years and decades despite its multiple shortcomings and weaknesses. If the United Nations and other external actors who were in the forefront of post-Conflict peace building of the 1990s and 2000s decides that peace building is too important an enterprise to give up, they face a dual challenge. They need to learn from and further improve upon the innovative but modest gains made to date in peace building policy and practice. They also need to stop the slippery slope of providing an easy cover for the unilateralist impulses of powerful members of the UN family by subordinating international peace building to the post-9/11 agenda of stabilization and reconstruction. As some of the most vulnerable members of the international community, Conflict-affected countries depend upon multi-dimensional international assistance to achieve their simultaneous need for security and development. The principles for effective peace building are now sufficiently established to enable the next decade of peace building to yield better results—provided there is the necessary political will.

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