

Post-conflict Peacebuilding: Challenges to sustainable Peace Arrangements

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Abstract :

Along with preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping, peacebuilding was identified as one of a series of the United Nations instruments to respond to conflicts at the end of the Cold War. It represented a collective commitment by the United Nations and other international actors to remedy sources of violent conflicts in conflict-torn societies and to prepare the ground for sustainable peace and development. A wide range of activities and strategies were conceived to counter problems and factors in the post-conflict phase that could complicate the situation and risk a relapse into conflict. The purpose of this article is to address the issue of various problems challenging the process of building sustainable peace in the post-conflict phase.

Keywords: Conflict, Sustainable Peacebuilding, The Post-Conflict Phase, Peacebuilding arrangements.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, many countries are confronted with recurring internal conflicts driven by economic, social and political reasons, which lead to the failure of state institutions in performing their security, social and political functions. This situation requires intervention through peacebuilding approaches in the post-conflict phase to disarm the warring factions, restore security and resettle refugees, reform the security apparatus, monitor elections, reform the justice system, support efforts to protect human rights, reform government institutions and other arrangements that encompass building the state, transforming the conflict into a phase of positive peace and preventing the renewal of conflict causes.

The article aims at exploring the several challenges to Peacebuilding arrangements and activities in the post-conflict phase. It is divided into three sections:

- 1- Peacebuilding: trends and evolution of the concept.
- 2- Internal conflicts and post-conflict Peacebuilding arrangements.
- 3- The dilemma of conflict-torn societies and positive sustainable Peacebuilding.

2. Peacebuilding: trends and evolution of the concept

Peacebuilding is a process of conceptual evolution which defines and explains the arrangements and objectives of Peacebuilding, the stage in which this process can be carried out and the measures it entails in the post-conflict phase.

Although Peacebuilding is a very widely used term and practiced in many conflict-torn countries throughout the world, it does not have a set definition and it differs according to individuals and contexts.

Different authors and organizations have distinct opinions on what Peacebuilding is and what arrangements it encompasses. According to the United Nations document “An Agenda for Peace”, Peacebuilding consists of a wide range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation, and societal transformation¹.

John Paul Lederach defines Peacebuilding as a comprehensive concept that includes a full set of processes, approaches, and stages necessary to transform conflict into more sustainable peaceful relations, and thus involves the long term through the set of activities that precede and follow formal peace agreements, because peace is not just a stage or a temporary circumstance, but rather it is a dynamic, integrated social structure².

Lisa Schirch defines Peacebuilding as a tool to prevent, reduce, transform and help people recover from violence in all forms, even structural violence that has not led to massive civil unrest. At the same time, it empowers people to foster relationships at all levels that sustain them and their environment³.

The Peacebuilding process, therefore, includes a set of procedures and arrangements that are implemented in the post-conflict phase to prevent conflict recurrence by bringing about a set of changes in some elements in the areas that have experienced conflict. The purpose of the process is to create a new environment that reduces the contradictions, builds confidence between the conflicting parties and sets pillars for sustainable peace⁴.

Accordingly, Peacebuilding is also active in diffusing a culture of peace that aims at protecting and ensuring security rights such as preserving people physical safety, litigation rights which include protection from violations of the legal system, as well as protecting liberties such as freedom of expression, beliefs and assembly, and political and social rights to ensure the security and freedom of persons to reach human rights protection⁵.

Moreover, Peacebuilding has a structural dimension that includes rebuilding democratic institutions, which is known as the "New Aid Paradigm". These operations aim to end negative peace (the absence of war) and to activate positive peace, which consists of addressing the underlying causes of conflict like the economic deficit, social injustice and political corruption, by using peace-building tools: economic recovery, providing equal access to goods, and adopting democratic principles⁶.

Due to its persistent evolution, Peacebuilding has gained a multifaceted and complex role through a wide range of activities related to conflict prevention, conflict transformation, peacekeeping and reconciliation. It is a set of procedures and measures that are implemented in the post-conflict phase to prevent conflict

from recurring, ensure long-term stability through a conflict-free environment, enhance positive peace and create a culture of sustainable peace, which aims to protect rights and freedoms and rebuild a set of activities at the economic, social, and developmental levels⁷.

3. Internal conflicts and post-conflict Peacebuilding arrangements

Violent internal conflicts in Africa and other parts of the developing world have caused a loss of security and rights, lack of confidence, the proliferation of refugees and armed groups, the failure of government institutions, inequality and injustice, this requires activating peace-building arrangements in post-conflict situations to rebuild the state in various aspects and frameworks⁸.

- Peacebuilding on the level of human rights (children's and women's rights)

After the end of the conflict in Sierra Leone, the government has launched ambitious initiatives to foster the status of children in Sierra Leone, in addition to the signature of the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, aiming at immunization against diseases, strengthening an environment conducive to the rights of women and children, reforming education and establishing programs for free health care, Compensation for children who were victims of the civil war⁹.

As women are the most affected group by conflict, in Nigeria, women's rights have been strengthened and the slogan "African women: a voice for peace" was raised to preserve social cohesion, peace and tolerance in Nigeria¹⁰.

Peacebuilding is also working increasingly to assist refugees and internally displaced persons in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Eastern Congo, Liberia and South Sudan by providing aid and reintegration¹¹.

- Building peace through reforming institutions and spreading a culture of justice and reconciliation:

One of the pillars of Peacebuilding is restoring the principles of coexistence, justice and reconciliation. The structural change of state apparatus is considered as one of the most important and difficult challenges facing a post-conflict society by re-establishing trust in government institutions, respect for the rule of law and

imposing coherent and transparent principles in institutions. It is also necessary to build confidence in the idea of the state through transitional justice¹².

Sierra Leone signed the Lomé Peace Agreement establishing the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL) to consecrate the rule of law as part of building peace in Sierra Leone and to achieve justice and security in the country. A monitoring body was established, it includes the Anti-Corruption Commission under the 2000 Act and the Law Reform Commission under the 2003 Act. The law aims to establish justice and supervision. The Truth Commission also encourages reconciliation to eliminate arbitrary martial law¹³.

- **Meetings for Dialogue to mitigate cleavages:**

After the conflict in East Timor ended, the new government launched a process of dialogue, restructuring political parties, enhancing integration and independence, the consolidation of family relations and the creation of confidence among people of East Timor to overcome the cleavages and violent conflicts. Since 1995, a comprehensive annual meeting is held to address the political situation in Timor, discuss the issues of Timorese immigrants and refugees, and rebuild confidence between individuals. The meeting of Timorese leaders was also held in September 1998 to facilitate dialogue, promote reconciliation and disarmament¹⁴.

- **Building positive peace through long-term goals:**

Peacebuilding seeks to achieve long-term goals. It moves from emergency disaster response towards long-term work aimed at alleviating suffering: relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development operations. Peacebuilding works within a specific time frame whereby a sustainable transformation to achieve structural and systemic goals that meet basic humanitarian needs in a post-conflict period to promote positive peace¹⁵.

Peacebuilding programs involve disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, political and judicial reform, reconciliation through prosecutions of war crimes or truth commissions, the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to create a peaceful environment, and structural change or the creation of structures within a post-conflict society in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi and South Sudan.

- **Building peace through confidence-building and empowerment:**

In post-conflict Sri Lanka, notably the ceasefire period during the years 2002/2006, Peace is built by strengthening social cohesion between ethnic and religious communities, to overcome the disastrous effects of the conflict that resulted in hundreds of deaths and displacements and the hampering of economy and development. Furthermore, the flow of funding from international actors in the aftermath of the 2006 tsunami fostered Peacebuilding activities. The initiatives were, thus, successful in establishing horizontal relationships that could enhance social cohesion at the local level and the confidence-building measures necessary to build a permanent basis for Peacebuilding¹⁶.

4. The dilemma of conflict-torn societies and positive sustainable Peacebuilding

In the post-conflict phase, all Peacebuilding arrangements aiming at rebuilding all aspects of society immediately encounter a set of restrictions that hamper the fulfillment of positive Peacebuilding:

- **New security threats:**

The conflict-torn societies were thoroughly unprepared to respond effectively to the new post–Cold War challenges, which included the appearance of complex emergencies, poverty, disease, economic instability, climate change, terrorism and organized crime. These challenges posed serious obstacles to the peacebuilding process as in western Balkans from a humanitarian security perspective¹⁷.

- **Moral dimensions:**

In the post-conflict phase in Sri Lanka, there has been an emphasis on the institutional dimensions and neglecting the moral and psychological dimensions in Peacebuilding. The infrastructure was improved and the production of development goods and services increased, however, the psychological and social programming was not revisited to reduce the impact of trauma on people affected by conflict¹⁸.

- **Ideological differences:**

Ethnic strives and sectarian cleavages, fragile democracy, weak governance, and structural violence are widely believed to be the major reasons for the failure to build a lasting peace. Such ideological clashes could lead to a larger scale of violence even to genocide, as happened in Rwanda¹⁹.

- **Community acceptance and justice:**

The Peacebuilding process in Namibia has failed as a result of the refusal of local communities to accept aid aimed at preventing renewed conflict and establishing a stable and lasting peace²⁰. Also, Peacebuilding does not consist of reconciling interests of involved elites. Rather, it attempts to move from authoritarian politics and conflict to democratic alternatives that include expanding political participation in the post-conflict phase, establishing peace, reforming government institutions, enhancing the rule of law and achieving long-term security in the post-conflict period. Most importantly, the Peacebuilding process is conceived to develop solid pillars for a comprehensive and positive peace, building local capacities to resolve conflicts, underpinning state institutions, increasing political participation, and finding ways to respect ethnic identities to improve governance performance²¹.

5- Conclusion

This article has given an account of the concept of Peacebuilding, its major tools and activities and the reasons for its failure or success in bringing out relevant changes in conflict-torn societies. The article also highlighted several factors and problems that are wreaking havoc in post-conflict situations.

One of the more significant findings to emerge from this article is that Peacebuilding is a process to intervene in the immediate post-conflict phase, which aims to rebuild what was destroyed during the conflict period on various scales of social (rights and freedoms), economic (structural construction of institutions) and political (justice and law). All these arrangements require a fundamental study of the nature of internal conflicts to design adequate strategies

that could avoid a relapse into conflict, such as restoring confidence, empowerment, and capacity building.

The article also tackled Peacebuilding arrangements in some cases where internal conflict causes schism among individuals and creates a conflict environment that leads to the fragility of structures in various aspects. In these cases, a range of arrangements has been carried out in many issues: women's and child rights, reintegration of refugees, confidence building, institutional reform, Promoting justice and reconciliation. However, the various arrangements for Peacebuilding are confronted with a set of restrictions and obstacles that could restrain the achievement of positive Peacebuilding. The obstacles involve new security threats, neglecting moral dimensions, ideological bias, and societal acceptance of the process of building a positive and sustainable peace in the post-conflict phase.

Footnotes:

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