

Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding in International Development: Conceptual Frameworks

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Abstract: *Conflict resolution is ending a dispute and reaching an agreement that satisfies all parties involved. Since conflict is part of human life that may occur at any time nationally and internationally, effective conflict resolution is not designed to avoid disagreements. Instead, conflict resolution skills facilitate discussions, increase understanding and control emotional responses. Moreover, Peacebuilding discussions aim to include continued efforts to prevent violent conflict and build the foundations for lasting peace. In addition, it also involves an inclusive and long-term approach that addresses the underlying causes of conflict, promotes settlement, encourages justice and the rule of law, and supports socioeconomic development. This paper will analyse how the paradigm of international relation has changed due to globalization, later, the paper will focus on conflict resolution and peace building in international relation.*

Keywords: Conflict, Resolution, Peacebuilding, International Relations

1. Introduction

Conflict resolution and peacebuilding are critical to international development efforts to promote stability, security, and sustainable development in conflict-affected regions. This abstract provides an overview of the key concepts, approaches, and challenges associated with conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the context of international development. Furthermore, from this point on, Conflict resolution contains a variety of tactics and processes aimed at addressing the root causes of conflicts, managing disputes, and facilitating peaceful outcomes, (Amaresan, 2021). It involves various actors, including governments, international organisations, civil society groups, and local communities. Conflict resolution approaches include negotiation, mediation, diplomacy, and dialogue (Jacobson, 2021). Moreover, Peacebuilding indeed discusses the continued efforts to prevent the happening of violent conflict and to build the foundations for lasting peace in memory. It also involves an inclusive and long-term approach that addresses the underlying causes of conflict, promotes settlement, encourages justice and the rule of law, and supports socioeconomic development. Equally important, the reality of international development interventions in conflict-affected regions requires a deep understanding of the local context, changing aspects, and drivers of conflict, in addition to considering the complex interplay of political, social, economic, and cultural factors contributing to conflicts. Furthermore, actors must engage with various stakeholders, including local communities, marginalised groups, and non-state actors, to ensure inclusive and participatory processes.

2. Literature Review

Conflict resolution is a skill that benefits professionals across all types of career paths. What makes this accurate? Simply put, interpersonal conflict can occur in virtually any setting, from office jobs to in-field work. Understanding how to deal with interpersonal conflict, reconcile emotions and reach an understanding are valuable practices that boost

well-being and productivity—and all of these techniques are learned through conflict resolution (Schmitz, 2021). Conflict resolution is more than just a single technique for understanding the difference between mediation and arbitration. This complex skill set can lead to a rewarding career. It's more than just navigating difficult conversations. Read on to learn more about what conflict resolution is and why it's essential. Challenges in conflict resolution and peacebuilding include the persistence of deep-rooted grievances, the presence of spoilers and armed groups, the lack of trust among parties, and the difficulties of achieving sustainable peace in the aftermath of violent conflict. Additionally, the coordination and alignment of efforts among various development actors and the integration of peacebuilding considerations into broader development strategies pose significant challenges. Effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding require sustained commitment, long-term investment, and a multi-faceted approach that addresses the structural causes of conflict, promotes social justice, and ensures the inclusion of marginalized group (Lederach, 2015). It also necessitates collaboration and coordination among international, national, and local actors, as well as a focus on building local capacities and institutions for peace. In conclusion, conflict resolution and peacebuilding are essential components of international development efforts. A comprehensive and context-specific approach, grounded in local realities, is crucial for achieving sustainable peace, stability, and inclusive development in conflict-affected regions.

2.1 Conflict resolution

Before discussing the importance of this practice, it is important first address this question: What is conflict resolution? Conflict resolution is the process of ending a dispute and reaching an agreement that satisfies all parties involved. Since conflict is an essential part of being human, effective conflict resolution is not designed to avoid disagreements. Instead, conflict resolution skills are used to facilitate discussions, increase understanding and control emotional responses. This term refers to the process of one or more parties deciding what is “fair” from a biased point

of view. In workplace conflict resolution, people will learn skills that help you discuss conflict from a more neutral stance. To this point in looking self-confidence when arguing or disputing a matter can lead to undesirable outcomes. While superiority in a personal disagreement may simply cause embarrassment, this cognitive error can be even more detrimental when dealing with legal issues particularly when you are ill-prepared for the argument at hand. Conflict resolution allows for constructive change to occur. If problems and disagreements are ignored rather than being handled constructively, things can only go one of two ways; either things stay the same, or they get worse. But, when people discuss their differences and work through them together, the stage is set for positive change to occur. Although it might be easier in the short term to leave things as they are, this struggle helps everyone involved in the conflict to work through the problem while developing stronger relationships. Most importantly, those designing and implementing conflict resolution processes for peacebuilding in intra-state conflicts there are key workings of parties' interests and concerns, significant indicators of power asymmetry and sometimes power abuses, and often both a cause and a consequence of the conflicts that are trying to settle or transform. It is crucial that peacebuilders know and understand the strengths and weaknesses of both parties and norms, and how to use these norms in a constructive and appropriate way. * For further reading see: Babbitt, Eileen F. and Lutz, Ellen L. (eds.) (2009) *Human Rights and Conflict Resolution in Context: Colombia, Sierra Leone, and Northern Ireland*. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press; Babbitt, Eileen F. (2008) "Conflict Resolution and Human Rights: Pushing the Boundaries." In Zartman, I.W., et al., (eds.) *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco: Sage Publications. The international community, therefore, has a responsibility to incorporate international norms in conflict resolution efforts for peacebuilding in cases of extreme power asymmetry. Conflict resolution norms help address these asymmetries in two important ways. First, they help empower the weaker party, a norm that the conflict resolution community already endorses. By strengthening the quality of important norms, third-party conflict resolution processes can achieve greater efficacy by giving a weaker party the support it might need to negotiate from a more equitable vantage point. Second, peacebuilding norms are important in reinforcing the notion that a state's sovereignty carries with it a responsibility to protect the civilians within its arenas.

2.2 Conflict prevention and peacebuilding

In the Europe and Central Asia, Africa region, have witnessed an increase in compound risks, from diminishing civic space and continued challenges to the rule of law and human rights, to the erosion of social cohesion due to growing ethnic, religious, socio-economic, gender and generational divides as well as trends of stigmatization and hate speech, elite capture, governance challenges and corruption, and cross-border skirmishes and armed conflict. Across the region, recent experience has demonstrated how dormant tensions can quickly devolve into open conflict. One exacerbating factor is the unlimited borders across the region, despite commitment of states to peacefully resolve these issues. In the Africa, Central Asia

region, together with the unresolved status of enclaves, these have led to sporadic violence in the past decade and add to the risk of escalation. Violent extremist groups have been active across the region in the recent past. The return of foreign fighters to parts of Europe and Central Asia, combined with the concerns of instability and insecurity on Central Asia's border with Afghanistan adds to the multiple risk factors in the region. There are numerous factors of resilience in the region as well. For instance, both states and the divided communities who live in close proximity have mostly managed to maintain political, social, economic and cultural interaction despite the legacy of conflict that generates persistent fragility and risk. There are multiple regional cooperation mechanisms across the region and sub-regions, that aim to enhance neighborly relations, build confidence and foster economic connectivity. Young people have served as positive agents of change in addressing peacebuilding challenges and growing societal gaps. Across the region, civil society organizations, traditional mechanisms, local community institutions and women's groups have also played an active role over the past decades in support of positive transformation. COVID-19 has exacerbated political, social and economic exclusion and heightened socio-economic vulnerabilities and multi-dimensional risks. It has also exposed long-standing, un-addressed structural challenges, and amplified numerous political, socio-economic and rights-based shortcomings as well as brought layers of fragility to the surface. It has also created a moment of opportunity to address some of the deep-rooted challenges in the region and move towards inclusive solutions that leave no one behind. UNDP works to prevent conflict and build peace by 1) promoting an integrated approach, linking conflict prevention, social cohesion and peacebuilding, informed by in-depth analyses of local root causes, factors of risk and resilience and drivers of conflict and peace, 2) supporting long-term development solutions for preventing violent extremism; and 3) fostering confidence and healing tensions in communities living in protracted conflict situations.

2.3 Peacebuilding

Peacebuilding is understood as a preventive tool (UN, 1995: para 47), essential to "heal the wounds" of conflict (ibid.: para 53) and significantly reduce the risk of return to hostilities (UNPSO, 2010: para 13). Peacekeeping and peacebuilding are labelled "inseparable partners" (UN, 2000: para 28) and peacekeepers as "early peacebuilders" (UNPSO, 2010: 9), since peacebuilding cannot act without peacekeeping and the latter does not have an exit strategy without the first. In my practical experience peace building for instance in societies that are impacted by war or fragility, peacebuilding discusses the actions taken to prevent the onset, escalation, continuation, or recurrence of violent conflict as well as to create a lasting peace. It entails dealing with the underlying causes of conflict, encouraging social cohesion, fostering reconciliation, and creating structures and networks that uphold justice, peace, and development. Equally important

Peacebuilding begins with efforts to prevent conflicts from arising or escalating. This involves early warning systems, diplomacy, mediation, and dialogue to address grievances,

resolve disputes, and promote peaceful resolution of conflicts before they turn violent. In other words, the central idea, then, is of continuum in between negative peace and positive peace, between stabilization and development, and between structural prevention and consolidation. The great potential for opening the concept of peacebuilding to numerous definitions based on different understandings and approaches – which could have gained a multitude of concrete forms in post-conflict contexts – was instead reduced to the specificity of the Western and liberal worldview, and therefore closed to other experiences and alternatives. The model in practice of peacebuilding, there was, since its beginning, a conjunction around what Kahler called the "New York Consensus" (2009), despite the absence of a central organ for all peacebuilding activities within the UN during the first decade, on the one hand, and the constant presence of several other international actors who arrogated responsibilities under international interventions on the other. The "New York Consensus" reflected the liberal dream of creating multiparty democracies with market economies and strong civil societies, as well as promoting Western liberal practices and values, such as secular authority, centralized governance, the rule of law and respect for human rights (Newman et al., 2009: 12). Richmond explains that, peace is thought by Western international community as an "achievable ideal form, the result of top-down and bottom-up actions, resting on liberal social, political and economic regimes, structures and norms" (2005: 110). To think of "peace as governance" (ibid.: 52-84) also involves looking at peacebuilding as a means to an end: that is, as an institutionalized model embodied in a set of steps needed to build liberal peace. I believe that Peacebuilding seeks to resolve conflicts through peaceful means, including negotiation, mediation, and reconciliation processes. It aims to address the underlying causes of the conflict, promote understanding, healing, and trust-building among conflicting parties, and facilitate the reintegration of ex-combatants into society. No wonder, therefore, that the practice of peacebuilding has involved a standardized framework for action that sought to take on a universal and hegemonic character. What's more, Peacebuilding involves strengthening governance structures, promoting accountable and inclusive institutions, and establishing the rule of law, this includes supporting the development of transparent and effective government institutions, promoting respect for human rights, combating corruption, and enhancing access to justice. I assume that Peacebuilding efforts focus on endorsing economic rescue and development in conflict-affected areas. This includes initiatives to encourage economic growth, create employment opportunities, and address inequalities that may have contributed to the conflict. Economic development can help reduce poverty, improve livelihoods, and create conditions for sustainable peace.

2.4 Peacebuilding psycho-social dimension

One of the most serious costs of war is the enduring nature of the impact of the culture of rooted violence in societies plagued by conflicts over a long period (Lederach, 2001). Equally important, the psychosocial dimension is an essential aspect of peacebuilding, focusing on the psychological and social well-being of individuals and

communities affected by conflict. It recognizes that the experiences of violence, trauma, and loss can have profound impacts on people's mental health, social relationships, and overall sense of well-being. Addressing the psychosocial dimension in peacebuilding is crucial for promoting healing, reconciliation, and sustainable peace. It is true to say that it also recognizes the efforts and importance of treating trauma and offering mental health help to those who have experienced conflict as well as their communities. Trauma healing programs aim to create safe spaces for individuals to share their experiences, process emotions, and rebuild their lives. Mental health support may include counseling, therapy, and psychosocial interventions to address the psychological consequences of violence and loss. The restoration of the social fabric of war-torn countries depends on the deconstruction of stereotypes and the conditions that fueled the conflict and polarized communities, requiring, therefore, a change of individual attitudes and, more generally, the behavior of society as a whole towards reconciliation. In consisting, peacebuilding psycho-social dimension aims to foster social cohesion and promote inclusive societies. This involves addressing divisions and promoting dialogue among different social, ethnic, and religious groups. It also includes efforts to reintegrate marginalized and excluded populations, such as refugees, internally displaced persons, and ex-combatants, into society. What's more, Peacebuilding psycho-social dimension strengthening the capacity of individuals, communities, and institutions to manage conflicts peacefully. This includes providing training in conflict resolution, peace education, and leadership skills. It also focuses on empowering women and promoting their active participation in peacebuilding processes. Different societies have dealt with their psycho-social trauma resulting from conflicts in different ways. Some opted for what we call here the "Amnesia formula" – that is burying the past through amnesties lest to cause instability. This path is difficult to follow since sufferers are normally cursed with good memory. There are fundamentally three other recurring practices in dealing with the past in these contexts which may exist simultaneously or even be associated with amnesty laws): through (1) truth and reconciliation commissions, as in El Salvador; (2) the courts (judicial settlement, either domestically or internationally), such as in Rwanda; and (3) traditional reconciliation practices (rituals entirely dependent on local cultural resources), as in East Timor. This is, ultimately, a painful and slow process that involves readapting to each other and rebuilding peaceful relations. Reconciliation in its broadest sense is thus ultimately the end goal of a transition to peace. Consensus on peacebuilding's institutional practice was generalized. The global organization sought to strengthen it and streamline monitoring missions through administrative reforms such as the creation of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations as early as 1992, and also through the more systematic use of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. In particular, the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2005 intended to fill an institutional gap with regards to the UN's capacity to act in contexts of violence and state fragility, as well as to learn from its mistakes and best practices within a framework of liberal peace. Given the growing complexity of threats to international peace and security, the logic of

complementarity between the work of the UN and multiple regional organizations and civil society also gained momentum. Putting into practice what had been envisaged by Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, partnerships with regional organizations – considered a privileged space for crisis resolution and peace promotion – became stronger. Institutions such as the OECD, the EU, NATO and the African Union began to play an increasing role in peacebuilding, following, in general, the institutionalized model. In my opinion, these institutions may fairly assist peacebuilding initiatives by recognizing the value of social support systems and community inclusion for those impacted by violence. This could require supporting social cohesion, encouraging inclusive behaviors that value variety, and developing community structures. Social support systems give people a place to meet, exchange stories, and mend social ties. Additionally, and once more, I sense that Education plays a critical role in the psychosocial dimension of peacebuilding. It can provide a sense of regularity, promote social interaction, and contribute to the overall well-being of individuals affected by conflict. Lastly Including psychosocial support components in education programs can help in the development of resilience, the achievement of necessary skills for peaceful coexistence, and the ability for kids and young adults to deal with the impacts of violence. In conclusion, I suggest that by addressing the psychosocial dimension in peacebuilding it needs Capacity Building and Training for the local actors, including community leaders, teachers, and healthcare providers, is crucial for sustainable psychosocial support. Capacity-building programs equip individuals and organizations with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide effective psychosocial interventions, facilitate healing processes, and foster resilience within their communities.

2.5 Peacebuilding Criticism of the model

Expectations for this new era of global interventionism were high and soon dashed, giving rise to widespread pessimism, in large part because of the dramatic and newsworthy failures of missions in Angola, Bosnia, Somalia and Rwanda. Statistics on the recurrence of violent conflicts in societies previously ravaged by war about 50% in the first five years following the signing of peace agreements (Collier, 2003: 83) – led the favored model being openly questioned. But even where there was no blatant return to hostilities, the materialization of formal peace faced serious difficulties and, in many cases, the initial effusive statements of success proved premature. The main protagonist of this ambitious interventionist project attracted much of the responsibility for the setbacks and failures. In fact, the complexity of the problems faced in peace and security with the end of the Cold War egregiously defied the institutional capacity of UN missions of this scale on several levels: financial resources; qualified and experienced staff; information gathering and planning; communication; coordination; and operational knowhow (see Roberts & Kingsbury, 1993). The undeniable difficulty of operationalization of the UN proposal – evident right from the start – confirmed glaring weaknesses and difficult dilemmas that were undermining the credibility, legitimacy and intervention capacity of the organization. It would,

however, be criticism of the peacebuilding model, advocated both by the UN and by other more interventionist actors of the international system, that would prove more forceful. Of these, it is possible to distinguish two groups of critics through their analytical positions: (1) reformist critiques (the problem-solvers) – who, while recognizing relevant defects in the model, advocate its continuation, refining the process without challenging its ideological foundation; and (2) structural critics – who question the legitimacy of the model itself, its values, interests and the reproduction of hegemonic relations, challenging, thus, the order accepted as an immutable reality. In my opinion, whereas peacebuilding is a widely accepted approach to justifying and resolving conflicts, it is not without criticism. Critics argue that peacebuilding processes often prioritize external actors and their agendas over the participation and ownership of local communities. I believe and argue that there may be a lack of durability and legitimacy in peacebuilding initiatives because local needs, perspectives, and capacities are sometimes ignored or underestimated. This can limit the meaningful participation and representation of marginalized groups, undermining inclusivity and the potential for sustainable peace. However, this narrow focus on political processes can neglect the underlying root causes of conflicts, such as social and sectarian division, ethnic and religious grievance and economic inequalities, exclusion, and historical grievances. Critics argue that an inclusive approach that addresses these deeper structural issues is necessary for workable peace. I argue that, that there is often inadequate attention to transitional justice processes, such as truth commissions and accountability mechanisms. Failing to address past human rights violations and promote justice can obstruct peace and continue cycles of violence. Moreover, some scholars argue that peacebuilding initiatives, particularly those supported by external actors, may be driven by neoliberal economic agendas and the interests of powerful states or corporations. This can lead to the prioritization of economic development over social justice, potentially exacerbating existing inequalities and contributing to new sources of conflict. In my suggestion toward the peacebuilding, it is important to recognize and address these criticisms to improve peacebuilding practices. This includes promoting meaningful local participation, accepting adopting and all-inclusive methods, addressing structural violence and systemic inequalities, integrating transitional justice processes, and ensuring that peacebuilding efforts support with the aspirations and needs of affected communities.

2.6 International Development

International development plays a crucial role in conflict-affected regions by facilitating peacebuilding processes and addressing the root causes of conflicts. In the aspects of international development in conflict and peacebuilding it is important to address the underlying causes of conflict at the level of international development interventions focusing on understanding and addressing the root causes of conflicts, such as poverty, inequality, governance failures, and social exclusion. Development programs promote inclusive economic growth, social justice, and equitable access to resources and opportunities to mitigate these underlying drivers of conflict (Amarasan, 2021). In supporting the

process of peacebuilding International development initiatives that support social cohesion, institutional strengthening, and reconciliation all aid in the peacebuilding processes. This could entail lending support to truth and reconciliation commissions, transitional justice systems, and programs that encourage communication and the development of trust between parties involved in conflict. What's more, supporting the rule of law and good governance in areas afflicted by war. This entails backing initiatives aimed at fortifying democratic institutions, advancing accountability and transparency, and strengthening the legal industry's capabilities. Conflict prevention and resolution depend on strong foundations of rule of law and effective government. Creating chances for sustainable livelihoods is the main goal of international development interventions, especially in post-conflict environments. This entails assisting with programs for entrepreneurship, job creation, vocational training, and economic rehabilitation in order to help people and communities start over and reduce the financial grievances that can lead to conflict. (Schmitz, 2021). Additionally, for strengthening social services and infrastructure, international development initiatives prioritize the provision of basic social services, such as healthcare, education, and water and sanitation facilities, in conflict-affected areas. Access to quality services and infrastructure is essential for improving human development indicators and fostering social stability. As an author, I agree with other scholars that inclusive and participatory processes should be encouraged since international development understands how important these processes are in areas suffering by conflict. To guarantee that marginalized groups, local communities, and civil society organizations are meaningfully involved in decision-making and peacebuilding initiatives, engagement with these groups is necessary. Social cohesiveness and grievance resolution are facilitated by inclusivity. International development actors work in coordination and collaboration with national governments, local organizations, and other stakeholders involved in peacebuilding. This coordination ensures a coherent and integrated approach that avoids duplication of efforts and maximizes the impact of development interventions (Mac Ginty, R. (2011). Long-term commitment: International development in conflict and peacebuilding requires long-term commitment and sustained investment. Conflicts and their aftermaths are complex and protracted processes, and achieving sustainable peace and development necessitates ongoing support and engagement over extended periods (Paffenholz, T., & Spurk, 2006). Eventually, I suggest that and firmly believe that international actors, including local actors such as local actors, community leaders, is essential to addressing conflict and promoting peacebuilding, addressing the underlying causes of conflicts, and to encourage good governance, creating workable livelihoods, supporting social services, and encouraging inclusive and participatory approaches. International development helps to establish conditions for long-lasting peace, stability, and viable development in conflict affected areas by addressing the complex aspects of conflicts.

3. Conclusion

I suggested that, it is important to recognize that conflict resolution and peacebuilding are difficult and long-term processes. It requires continued commitment, harmonization, and cooperation among international development actors, governments, civil society organizations, and local communities. By integrating conflict sensitive tactics into development programs and policies, international development efforts can contribute to building peaceful societies, promoting human well-being, and achieving sustainable development goals. The following results can be attained by international development players through their involvement in peacebuilding and conflict resolution.

- 1) Conflict Prevention and Mitigation: The main objectives of peacebuilding and conflict resolution are to stop conflicts from starting and getting worse. Interventions, such as early warning systems, diplomacy, mediation, and negotiation, can assist in recognizing and resolving conflicts before they become violent.
- 2) Healing and Reconciliation: promote dialogue, understanding, and empathy to assist opposing parties in resolving their disagreements, building trust, and moving closer to a shared objective of peace,
- 3) Reinforced Institutions and Governance: Interventions in peacebuilding and conflict resolution support the development and strengthening of accountable, inclusive, and both kinds of institutions. These actions promote openness, sound governance, and the rule of law, which help to preserve stability and create an environment that is favorable to growth. Stronger institutions guarantee that conflicts are settled amicably and legally, which fosters a culture of justice and peace.
- 4) Sustainable Economic Development: Conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives recognize the importance of economic development in sustaining peace. By addressing economic grievances, promoting inclusive economic policies, and supporting livelihood opportunities, interventions contribute to reducing poverty, inequality, and social exclusion—key drivers of conflict. Economic development, in turn, creates the conditions for social stability, peace, and long-term prosperity.
- 5) Social Inclusion and Empowerment: Conflict resolution and peacebuilding prioritize the inclusion and empowerment of marginalized groups, such as women, youth, and minority communities. By ensuring their meaningful participation in decision-making processes, interventions promote social justice, equality, and human rights. Inclusive peacebuilding efforts acknowledge the diverse needs, perspectives, and capacities of all members of society, fostering a sense of ownership and shared responsibility for sustaining peace

Moreover, there is no doubt that the model of peacebuilding undertaken by the various actors who today take the lead in international interventionism is a particularly ambitious project. From the ordinary freezing of armed conflicts, it had to have proceeded quickly in order to try and resolve their underlying issues through an institutionalized paradigm that fundamentally altered the goals and customs of fostering peace in the margin. The results of this interventionist project were, however, far short of the desired, particularly for those

who actively anticipated a new period able to solve the challenges to international peace and security of the post-Cold War. Two decades of internal and external criticism of the peacebuilding model did produce some reforms towards a modus operandi that is occasionally more flexible and more sensitive to other approaches. These adjustments did not, however, truly question the cultural and ideological assumptions of this paradigm, neither the global North's interests underlying the international action in conflict and post-conflict contexts. In fact, they could not even suitably solve most of the problems identified by the problem-solvers, as shown by the successive reports and assessments of peace operations led by international actors themselves. Indeed, most of the criticism over the past twenty years remains valid today.

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