Peacebuilding and development co-operation

Text based on a keynote address delivered at a joint Japanese-Norwegian seminar on 'Peace-building and Development Co-operation', Oslo, 25 September 2003

By Stein Tønnesson, Director, International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO)

Introduction

'Peacebuilding' is a superior term, and should in my view be used consistently by multilateral and government agencies in planning development co-operation with countries with armed conflict, countries which have recently emerged from armed conflict, or who are at risk of a violent outbreak. Why is peacebuilding such a valuable term? Because it is positive, because it links peace to development, and because it leads us to think comprehensively about how to construct the premises for durable peace both during and after armed conflicts. While the negative term 'conflict prevention' is also useful, it covers only a part of the 'peacebuilding' agenda.[1] 'Conflict management' is another first-rate term. While it covers the handling of, sometimes even resolution of, armed conflict, peacebuilding includes all the rest that needs to be done in order to ensure lasting peace.

How should the term be defined? Many competing definitions have been offered that link peacebuilding only to a post-conflict situation, but in February 2001, the UN Security Council threw this requirement aside and said that peacebuilding 'is

[1] Moreover, it makes sense only if by 'conflict' we mean 'violent conflict'. Conflict as such should not be prevented, but managed in non-violent ways.

aimed at preventing the outbreak, the recurrence or continuation of armed conflict.'[2] This has inspired a recent study of British, Dutch, German and Norwegian peace-building, carried out by former director Dan Smith of the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO), now general secretary of International Alert. He proposes the following definition: *Peacebuilding is development within a context of crisis and war. It is a kind of development that is designed to contribute to ending or avoiding armed conflict and may be carried out during such conflict, in its wake, or as an effort to prevent its resurgence.*[3]

This is a well tailored definition. Its first point is that peacebuilding *is development.* Statistical studies strongly confirm the general impression that economically developed countries have far less armed conflict than less economically developed ones. On the other hand, it is not so that any kind of economic and social development reduces the likelihood of armed conflict.[4] Peacebuilding is the kind of development that is conducive to peace. Peacebuilding projects must be designed in ways that take armed conflict, and risk of such conflict, into consideration. This is said in the second part of the definition. The third part of it underlines that peacebuilding not only applies to post-conflict situations, but also to societies with on-going armed conflicts, or who risk to see a renewed outbreak of violence.

The term peacebuilding carries a certain similarity with the unfashionable term *nationbuilding*, but peacebuilding is not uniquely linked to the state or the idea of a nation, but includes relations between sub-national groups and also international or

---

[2] S/PRST/2001/5, 20 February 2001.
[3] Dan Smith, 2003. 'Getting their act together. Towards a strategic framework for peacebuilding'. Final draft of paper to be discussed at a seminar on peacebuilding, Oslo 1-2 December.
[4] See Nils Petter Gleditsch, Are Knudsen, Astri Suhrke & Henrik Urdal, 2003. *Conflict and Development: Framework for a Proposed Research Area.* Prepared by CMI and PRIO, and submitted to the Norwegian MFA, March.

regional relations. Peacebuilding is a broad, comprehensive term with a potential for stimulating and guiding our thinking about development in areas of conflict.

Norway and Japan's Use of the Concept

Former United Nations Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Gahli introduced the term peacebuilding in 1992 in his report to the Security Council *Agenda for Peace.* Since then it has found its way into many documents not only in the UN system, but also in national vocabularies of development. Still it has not received any authoritative definition, has been used in a variety of meanings, and a majority of development projects in conflict-ridden areas are still being planned with little or no consideration for the effects they may have on ongoing armed conflicts, or the risk of renewed conflict.

In July 1999, the development ministers of Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom[5] met at the Utstein monastery in Western Norway. They did not use the term 'peacebuilding' in their joint declaration, but said under the heading *Conflict prevention:* 'Preventing conflicts: Peace is a fundamental prerequisite for development. This is a responsibility of all actors. Conflicts that have reached a peaceful settlement may arise again unless underlying causes are removed. Development efforts should be used strategically not just to prevent and settle conflicts, but also to consolidate peace when settlement has been reached.'

Since then the Norwegian government has issued a number of white papers on development policy. The papers contain references to peacebuilding, and it is recognised that the concern for preventing armed conflict and terrorism plays an increasingly important role in Norwegian development cooperation. The whitepaper

Fighting Poverty: The Norwegian Government's Action Plan for Combating Poverty in the South towards 2015, which was issued in March 2002, even promises that 'Norway's efforts in this field will be presented in a separate strategy for supporting and participating in peacebuilding'(p. 23). A draft for such a strategy was later written in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and concern for peacebuilding is frequently expressed in statements and speeches by the Norwegian Minister and State Secretary of Development, but this has not yet led to the adoption of a formal government strategy.[6]

Japan seems to have got a little further in adopting the concept in its official documents. In the revised version of Japan's Official Development Assistance (ODA) charter, the opening sentence on objectives says that the objective of Japan's ODA is to 'contribute to the peace and development of the international community'.[7] It talks about the need to contribute to 'the stability and development' of the target countries, and that 'Japan aspires for world peace'. Among the four priority issues enumerated in the document number four is 'peacebuilding':

> "In order to prevent conflicts from arising in developing regions, it is important to comprehensively address factors that cause conflicts. As part of such undertakings, Japan will carry out ODA to achieve poverty reduction and the correction of disparities .... In addition to assistance for preventing conflicts and emergency humanitarian assistance in conflict situations, Japan will extend bilateral and multilateral assistance flexibly and continuously for peace-building in accordance with the changing situation, ranging from assistance to expedite the ending of conflicts to assistance for the stabilization of peace and nation-building in post-conflict situations.

---

[5] Clare Short (United Kingdom), Eveline Herfkens (Netherlands), Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul (Germany) and Hilde F. Johnson (Norway).
[6] Wenche Hauge, 2003. *Norwegian peacebuilding policies. Lessons learnt and challenges ahead.* Report to the Norwegian MFA, November.

For example, ODA will be used for: assistance to facilitate peace processes; humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance...; assistance for assuring domestic stability and security, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants, and the collection and disposal of weapons, including demining; and assistance for reconstruction, including social and economic development and the enhancement of the administrative capabilities of governments."

Much remains to be done before Japan can be said to have fully integrated peacebuilding concerns in its ODA, but in principle, these concern are included in Japan's development planning as a matter of priority. This is not yet the case in Norway.

Promising trends

From a peace perspective the last few years have seen positive developments. Although this has barely been noticed in the international media, which have concerned themselves with September 11th and other terrorist attacks, wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, crises with Iran and North Korea, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the actual number of armed conflicts has been dropping since 1992, and the number of armed conflicts in 2002 was the lowest since 1977. Moreover those armed conflicts that have ended or been reduced in scope most recently, have been particularly serious in terms of human suffering. The most significant event in reducing the number of casualties and human suffering in the last two years has been the peace settlement in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the ensuing reduction in actual fighting, although warring factions continue to kill each other as well as civilians in many areas. Peace processes in Sri Lanka and Sudan and interventions in

[7] Revision of Japan's Official Development Assistance Charter, unofficial translation, 29 August 2003.

Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia have also contributed to reducing the number and seriousness of armed conflicts.[8]

The reduction in the number of armed conflicts should at least in part be attributed to the fact that since the Cold War, the great powers have not assisted insurgent movements in each others' spheres of influence. During the Cold War, particularly from the 1960s onwards, the number of guerrilla wars or 'low-intensity wars' increased significantly whereas international wars became less frequent. An example of a region benefiting greatly from the end of the Cold War is Indochina. With the loss of Soviet support, Vietnam withdrew its forces from Cambodia, and contributed to the UN-brokered settlement of 1991, after having reoriented its foreign policy towards a principle of making friends with all other countries and focusing the national energy on achieving economic growth. Vietnam normalised relations with China and the USA, and became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. Today, after fourteen years of peace, most of the Vietnamese population is much better off, and enjoy much greater human security than it did during the three Indochina Wars.

In the first couple of years after the Cold War, the number of civil wars continued to increase. Some of the conflicts which had previously been seen as part of the ideological east-west struggle seem to have been exacerbated while losing their ideological dimension. Others, such as in Yugoslavia, were triggered by the demise of communism. The trend towards more civil war was the background for a tendency among peace researchers to move away from studying international wars and seek to understand the local origins of internal armed conflicts instead and also discuss under

[8] Mikael Eriksson, Peter Wallensteen & Margareta Sollenberg, 2003a. 'Armed Conflict, 1989-2002'. *Journal of Peace Research* 40 (5): 593-607; Sharon Wiharta and Ian Anthony, 2003. 'Major armed conflicts', *SIPRI Yearbook*: 87-108; Mikael Eriksson, Margareta Sollenberg & Peter Wallensteen, 2003b. 'Patterns of major armed conflicts, 1990-2002', *SIPRI Yearbook*: 109-121.

what conditions it is wise and legitimate to intervene in countries ravaged by civil war. The World Bank played an important role in the study of interrelations between economic factors and civil war,[9] and in 2002-2003, a new Centre for the Study of Civil War (CSCW) was established at the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO), led by Dr. Scott Gates. Developments in the 1990s also led peace and development researchers to establish new links and cooperation, since peace researchers need to understand how development patterns affect the propensity for armed conflict, and development researchers see a similar need to understand how armed conflict affects development.

Today there is little prospect of conflict between the great powers, and the present 'war on terror' has tended to bring states even closer together, cooperating on fighting trans-national terrorism, and accepting each other's repression of insurgent movements. From a human rights perspective this is a worrying trend, and it may also provoke grievances that will assume a significant role in forming new patterns of armed conflict, i.e., on religious or new ideological grounds. But in the short run, the 'solidarity of states' created after September 11th has probably contributed to reducing the number of conflicts and casualties from armed conflict, and enhanced the preparedness of the great powers to intervene in areas that could become breeding grounds for trans-national terrorism.

Since the Cold War there has been a sharp increase in the number of interventions. During the four decades up to 1990, the United Nations Security Council had authorised 15 peacekeeping operations altogether. The same number of operations were authorised by the Security Council in the next four years. The role of such interventions in the global pattern of armed conflict is ambiguous. An armed

[9] Paul Collier, Lani Elliott, Håvard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, Nicholas Sambanis,

intervention is in itself an act of war, at least if it includes bombing and if it meets armed resistance. On the other hand, an armed intervention may serve to impose a ceasefire agreement on local warring parties, and deter them from engaging in violent actions. It may also lead to a transition from a violent to a more peaceful regime. Much depends on the conditions under which the intervention is carried out, if it is locally and internationally legitimate, and if it is accompanied and followed up with peacebuilding. An intervention like the one we have seen in Iraq, without a clear authorisation from the UN Security Council, and without comprehensive plans and resource allocations for post-conflict peacebuilding, may be in danger of provoking more violence than it prevents. In such a case, an armed intervention may become part of a vicious circle of violence.

The Conflict Circle

Statistical research has strongly confirmed the general assumption that countries that have recently been through an armed conflict are in much greater danger than other countries of seeing a new outbreak of war. Violence may easily come to follow a pattern where after an outbreak there is a period of escalation, then of stalemate, eventually of fatigue, perhaps negotiations and a ceasefire agreement, then a phase where the parties reorganise, and then another outbreak. The challenge for the peace researcher is to explore the mechanisms that lead to outbreaks, sustain the duration and magnitude of the violence, and that drive the parties to enter into ceasefire or peace negotiations. In cooperation with experienced practitioners, researchers must also seek to identify what it takes to prevent violent outbreaks, what is needed in order to limit the magnitude and duration of an armed conflict, and what can encourage the

---

2003. *Breaking the Conflict Trap. Civil War and Development Policy.* World Bank and Oxford

parties to negotiate successful armistice agreements. All of this is extremely important, but it is even more important to study what happens when a society breaks definitively out of the circle of violence, and enters into a drawn-out period of peaceful construction.

A report from the Japanese Advisory Group on International Cooperation for Peace, led by Yasushi Akashi, lists a number of activities aiming at the consolidation of peace once it has been established: support to prevent the reoccurrence of conflict, including the promotion of the peace process, the enlargement of humanitarian and rehabilitation assistance, and the securing of domestic stability ad security. It includes 'nation-building' as a term for support for the creation of political, economic and social frameworks in regions where such instability exists, and then significantly adds: 'These above-mentioned activities are collectively known as 'peace-building'...'[10]

The Peacebuilding Frame

The opposite of the vicious circle of violence is the peacebuilding frame. Remember Dan Smith's definition of peacebuilding: *Peacebuilding is development within a context of crisis and war. It is a kind of development that is designed to contribute to ending or avoiding armed conflict and may be carried out during such conflict, in its wake, or as an effort to prevent its resurgence.*

Activities to promote such development fall under four main headings that constitute the four sides of the peacebuilding frame:

- security

- participatory, representative decision-making

University Press.

- socio-economic development

- reconciliation and/or justice

All four are likely to be needed in order for a peacebuilding project to be viable. It is necessary to provide security through demobilisation and disarming of troops, by training new police forces, adopting and enforcing laws. All groups must be represented in the decision-making process. The introduction of electoral democracy will often be a significant step in this direction, but it is not sufficient, and may sometimes even provoke imbalances that can lead to renewed violence if some groups are in a hopeless minority. Mechanisms ensuring minorities a say in political decision-making are therefore also needed. One of the aims of peacebuilding is to gear decision-makers towards socio-economic development rather than internal rivalry over scarce resources. In order for this to be successful, it is essential that development plans provide opportunities for all those groups who have been involved in the armed conflict. No group must be marginalised. Finally there is the concern for justice and reconciliation. One must often choose between the two, and this constitutes a serious dilemma. War crimes ought to be punished, but a peace agreement will often require amnesty or negotiated guarantees against persecution, and the number of guilty individuals from a period of sustained warfare will often be so large so as to make just punishment impossible. After the Khmer rouge genocide, for instance, most families would include both victims and executioners. Only a select few can be put on trial.

Research and planning on peacebuilding must include all four aspects.

The Utstein countries

---

[10] *Executive Summary of the Report of the Advisory Group on Internatioonal Cooperation for Peace.*

Dan Smith's study referred to above includes 336 peacebuilding projects undertaken by the four 'Utstein countries' Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and the United Kingdom. He finds what he calls 'a major strategic deficit'. There is conceptual confusion, inexact terminology, and most of the projects included under the 'peacebuilding' heading are unaffected by any broader country strategy. When an armed conflict ends, often too much aid is provided at once and too little a few years later.

Among the Utstein countries, Germany stands out for doing rather little in the security dimension, Norway for concentrating on socio-economic issues, the Netherlands for emphasising the political side, and the United Kingdom for focusing on security and reconciliation. The study also finds that new thinking about priorities has had more effect on the actual development project portfolios in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom than in Germany and Norway. The United Kingdom by the way has developed the most interesting system of inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation (a 'conflict pools system'), and Germany has made an interesting effort to create a pool of qualified and experienced personnel in both governmental and non-governmental circles (a trained 'Civil Peace Service').

Still Smith finds that none of the four countries has so far developed what may properly be called 'a policy' on peacebuilding. The United Kingdom even continues to prefer the term 'conflict prevention' and does not use 'peacebuilding' in official documents.

Thus there seems to be a need for stronger political leadership, someone who decides to push peacebuilding and shape policies. This will require the drafting and adoption of key policy documents, and significant exchanges of experiences,

---

Copy of English translation provided by the Embassy of Japan in Norway.

viewpoints and conclusions between donor countries, and multilateral agencies. The efforts of likeminded countries must be co-ordinated. And planners must draw on experiences of conflict-ridden countries whose political and civil society leaders must be provided access to arenas for trans-national exchange of ideas. It will be essential to avoid building significant new bureaucracies. The point is rather to reorganise or reorient existing institutions, and link them to each other in new ways.

Peace and development researchers may provide expertise, critique and analysis to this process. They need to develop both theories and empirical knowledge about how armed conflict and socio-economic development interact. They need to explore the causes and mechanisms of civil wars, outbreak, duration and end. They should investigate the absorptive capacity of conflict-ridden societies for various kinds of humanitarian assistance and development aid. And they should be used to evaluate and assess peacebuilding projects.

Researchers may also be useful in providing background knowledge during brainstorming sessions, and in systematising practitioners' experiences.[11]

The aim, both of research and engagement, will be to contribute to *civil peace,* both nationally, regionally and globally. When PRIO's new Centre for the Study of Civil War has completed its ten year research programme, we may perhaps establish a new Centre for the Study of Civil Peace.

[11] Mary B. Anderson and Lara Olson, with Kristin Doughty, 2003. *Confronting War: Critical Lessons for Peace Practitioners.* Collaborative for Development Action, March.