

PEACE BUILDING MECHANISMS, PROCESSES AND PRINCIPLES: AN APPRAISAL

Justin Arinze Egbe, PhD
Department of Public Administration and Policy Studies
Tansian University Umunya, Anambra state

Abstract

Peacebuilding is a multifaceted process aimed at preventing, managing, and resolving conflicts while fostering sustainable peace and reconciliation. This abstract explores the mechanisms and principles that underpin effective peacebuilding efforts. Mechanisms encompass various strategies and tools employed to address root causes of conflict, promote dialogue, and build trust among conflicting parties. These mechanisms include diplomacy, mediation, dialogue facilitation, conflict resolution training, peace education, and economic development initiatives. Principles of peacebuilding emphasize inclusivity, impartiality, transparency, and local ownership, recognizing the importance of engaging all stakeholders, including marginalized groups, in the peace process. Furthermore, principles such as human rights, justice, and accountability serve as guiding frameworks for addressing grievances and ensuring sustainable peace. Effective peacebuilding requires a holistic approach that integrates these mechanisms and principles within the context of specific conflicts, considering the unique socio-political dynamics and historical backgrounds of the affected communities. By understanding and applying these mechanisms and principles, peacebuilders can contribute to the prevention of violence, the restoration of relationships, and the building of resilient and peaceful societies.

Keywords : Peace building, Principles, Society, Conflict, Justice, Peace Education

Introduction

Peacebuilding, today, is one of the well-established sub-fields of international peace operations and has become especially interesting as it has had the distinction of being located in a so far uncharted terrain of post-conflict activities i.e. when guns have stopped firing and there is a tacit or explicit ceasefire agreement between parties to the conflict. This is where conventional UN peacekeeping would normally come to an end and the UN forces would depart leaving parties to conflict to resolve their conflict using political processes. It is in this process of strengthening peace after end of violence that a ceasefire agreement has come to be the watershed point from where peacebuilding emerges as a specialized enterprise. The foundations of the contemporary concept of

'Peacebuilding' were laid formally in 1992 in UN Secretary General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali's report, *An Agenda for Peace*. This UN report defined peacebuilding as “actions to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.” Though the UN peacekeeping forces had been engaged in similar responsibilities since the early 1960s, this new mandate has since made peacebuilding both a specialized field as also an integral part of international peace and conflict resolution thinking and practices around the world. As of now, peacebuilding does not yet have a precise agreed definition other than that it locates itself in the unique 'post-conflict' context where the traditional peacekeeping was expected to come to an end. Nevertheless, even at the end of conflict, peacebuilding seems to comprise of a rather expansive mandate that involves a whole range of activities associated with capacity building, reconciliation, and societal transformation all aimed at building and strengthening norms, behaviours, and institutions for sustaining post-conflict peace. This makes peacebuilding a rather long-drawn process that begins when violence, in a given conflict, either ends or at least begins to slow down, allowing these efforts to be made for establishing a lasting post-conflict peace. Peacebuilding is a long-time effort that requires diligent designing and painstaking execution from different perspectives; the main proponents of different approaches and their chief arguments; recognise that various approaches highlight different dimensions of peacebuilding – political, social, economic, administrative, structural, or transformative; and appreciate the emphasis these approaches place on values like justice, national ownership, and international commitment.

Definition

Peacebuilding is an activity that aims to *resolve injustice in nonviolent ways and to transform the cultural & structural conditions that generate deadly or destructive conflict*. It revolves around developing constructive personal, group, and political relationships across ethnic, religious, class, national, and racial boundaries. This process includes violence prevention; conflict management, resolution, or transformation; and post-conflict reconciliation or trauma healing, i.e., before, during, and after any given case of violence. As such, peacebuilding is a multidisciplinary, cross-sector technique or method which becomes **strategic** when it works over the long run and at *all levels of society* to establish and sustain relationships among people locally and globally—thus engendering sustainable peace. Strategic peacebuilding activities address the root causes or potential causes of violence, create a societal expectation for peaceful conflict resolution, and stabilize society politically and socioeconomically.

The included in peacebuilding vary depending on the situation and the agent of peacebuilding. Successful peacebuilding activities create an environment supportive of self-sustaining, durable peace; reconcile opponents; prevent conflict from restarting; integrate civil society; create rule of law mechanisms; and address underlying structural and societal issues. Researchers and practitioners also increasingly find that peacebuilding is most effective and durable when it relies upon local conceptions of peace and the underlying dynamics which foster or enable conflict (Coning, 2013)

History of peacebuilding

As [World War II](#) ended in the mid-1940s, international initiatives such as the creation of the [Bretton Woods institutions](#) and The [Marshall Plan](#) consisted of long-term post conflict intervention programs in Europe with which the United States and its allies aimed to rebuild the continent following the destruction of World War II (Sandole 92). The focus of these initiatives revolved around a narrative of *peacekeeping* and *peacemaking*. After several decades saturated in this narrative, in 1975 Norwegian sociologist [Johan Galtung](#) coined the term "peacebuilding" in his pioneering work "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking, and Peacebuilding." He posited that "peace has a structure different from, perhaps over and above, peacekeeping and ad hoc peacemaking... The mechanisms that peace is based on should be built into the structure and be present as a reservoir for the system itself to draw up. ... More specifically, structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur" (Galtung, 2001). His work emphasized a bottom-up approach that decentralized social and economic structures, amounting to a call for a societal shift from structures of coercion and violence to a culture of peace. He catalyzed a major shift in the post-WWII global narrative by emphasizing how political, economic, & social systems need to address the root causes of conflict and support local capacity for peace management and conflict resolution.

Then, as the [Cold War](#) and the various phenomena of its fizzling came to a close (e.g. [civil wars](#) between [Third World](#) countries, [Reagonomics](#), "[Bringing the State Back In](#)"), American sociologist [John Paul Lederach](#) further refined the concept of peacebuilding through several 1990s publications that focus on engaging grassroots, local, NGO, international and other actors to create a sustainable peace process, especially with respect to cases of intractable deadly conflict where he was actively mediating between warring parties (1995). From a political-institutional perspective, he does not advocate the same degree of structural change as Galtung. However, Lederach's influence in the conceptual evolution of peacebuilding still reflects Galtung's original vision for "positive peace" by detailing, categorizing, & expanding upon the sociocultural processes through which we address both direct and structural elements of violent conflict (see, for example, his short article "[Justpeace](#)").

Peacebuilding has since expanded to include many different dimensions, such as [disarmament, demobilization and reintegration](#) and rebuilding governmental, economic and civil society institutions. The concept was popularized in the international community through UN Secretary-General [Boutros Boutros-Ghali](#)'s 1992 report [An Agenda for Peace](#). The report defined post-conflict peacebuilding as an "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (1992). At the [2005 World Summit](#), the [United Nations](#) began creating a peacebuilding architecture based on [Kofi Annan's](#) proposals. The proposal called for three organizations: the [UN Peacebuilding Commission](#), which was founded in 2005; the [UN Peacebuilding Fund](#), founded in 2006; and the UN

Peacebuilding Support Office, which was created in 2005. These three organizations enable the Secretary-General to coordinate the UN's peacebuilding efforts. National governments' interest in the topic has also increased due to fears that [failed states](#) serve as breeding grounds for conflict and extremism and thus threaten international security. Some states have begun to view peacebuilding as a way to demonstrate their relevance. However, peacebuilding activities continue to account for small percentages of states' budgets (Barnett, et al, 2007).

The Structural Dimension: Addressing Root Causes

The structural dimension of peacebuilding focuses on the social conditions that foster violent conflict. Many note that stable peace must be built on social, economic, and political foundations that serve the needs of the populace. In many cases, crises arise out of systemic roots. These root causes are typically complex, but include skewed land distribution, environmental degradation, and unequal political representation. If these social problems are not addressed, there can be no lasting peace.

Thus, in order to establish durable peace, parties must analyze the structural causes of the conflict and initiate social structural change. The promotion of [substantive](#) and [procedural justice](#) through structural means typically involves institution building and the strengthening of [civil society](#).

Avenues of political and economic transformation include social structural change to remedy political or economic injustice, [reconstruction programs](#) designed to help communities ravaged by conflict revitalize their economies, and the institution of effective and legitimate [restorative justice](#) systems (Lederach, 1997). Peacebuilding initiatives aim to promote nonviolent mechanisms that eliminate violence, foster structures that meet basic [human needs](#), and maximize [public participation](#).

The Relational Dimension

A second integral part of building peace is reducing the effects of war-related hostility through the repair and transformation of damaged relationships. The relational dimension of peacebuilding centers on [reconciliation](#), [forgiveness](#), [trust building](#), and [future imagining](#). It seeks to minimize poorly functioning communication and maximize mutual understanding (Lederach, 1997).

Many believe that reconciliation is one of the most effective and durable ways to transform relationships and prevent destructive conflicts. The essence of reconciliation is the voluntary initiative of the conflicting parties to acknowledge their responsibility and guilt. Parties reflect upon their own role and behavior in the conflict, and acknowledge and accept responsibility for the part they have played. As parties share their experiences, they learn new perspectives and change their perception of their "enemies." There is recognition of the difficulties faced by the opposing side and of their legitimate grievances, and a sense of [empathy](#) begins to develop. Each side expresses sincere regret and remorse, and is prepared to [apologize](#) for what has transpired. The parties make a commitment to let go of [anger](#), and to refrain from repeating the injury. Finally, there is a

sincere effort to redress past grievances and compensate for the damage done. This process often relies on interactive negotiation and allows the parties to enter into a new mutually enriching relationship

The Personal Dimension

The personal dimension of peacebuilding centers on desired changes at the individual level. If individuals are not able to undergo a process of healing, there will be broader social, political, and economic repercussions. The destructive effects of social conflict must be minimized, and its potential for personal growth must be maximized. Reconstruction and peacebuilding efforts must prioritize treating mental health problems and integrate these efforts into peace plans and rehabilitation efforts.

In traumatic situations, a person is rendered powerless and faces the threat of death and injury. Traumatic events might include a serious threat or harm to one's family or friends, sudden destruction of one's home or community, and a threat to one's own physical being. Such events overwhelm an individual's coping resources, making it difficult for the individual to function effectively in society. Typical emotional effects include depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. After prolonged and extensive trauma, a person is often left with intense feelings that negatively influence his/her psychological well-being. After an experience of violence, an individual is likely to feel vulnerable, helpless, and out of control in a world that is unpredictable (van der Merwe, 2001)

Building peace requires attention to these psychological and emotional layers of the conflict. The social fabric that has been destroyed by war must be repaired, and trauma must be dealt with on the national, community, and individual levels.

Approaches to peacebuilding

There are various ways to attempt to coordinate peace-building efforts. One way is to develop a peace inventory to keep track of which agents are doing various peace-building activities. A second is to develop clearer channels of communication and more points of contact between the elite and middle ranges. In addition, a coordination committee should be instituted so that agreements reached at the top level are actually capable of being implemented. A third way to better coordinate peace-building efforts is to create peace-donor conferences that bring together representatives from humanitarian organizations, NGOs, and the concerned governments. It is often noted that "peacebuilding would greatly benefit from cross-fertilization of ideas and expertise and the bringing together of people working in relief, development, conflict resolution, arms control, diplomacy, and peacekeeping" (Lederach, 1997). Lastly, there should be efforts to link internal and external actors. Any external initiatives must also enhance the capacity of internal resources to build peace-enhancing structures that support reconciliation efforts throughout a society.

In a very broad sense, we can distinguish between three primary approaches to peacebuilding, which each correspond to three primary types of peace: (1) *negative peace* (2) *positive peace* (3) *justpeace* (sometimes spelled "*just peace*"). In turn, these three

types of peace correspond respectively to three primary types of violence: (1) *direct violence* (2) *structural violence* (3) *cultural violence*.

Negative peace: Direct violence

"Negative peace" refers to the absence of direct or "hot" violence, which refers to acts that impose immediate harm on a given subject or group. In this sense, "*negative peacebuilding*" (aimed at negative peace) intentionally focuses on addressing the *direct* factors driving harmful conflict. When applying the term "peacebuilding" to this work, there is an explicit attempt by those designing and planning a peacebuilding effort to reduce direct violence (Galtung, 2011)

Positive peace: Structural violence

"Positive peace" refers to the absence of *both direct violence as well as structural violence*. Structural violence refers to the ways that systems & institutions in society cause, reinforce, or perpetuate direct violence. In this sense, "*positive peacebuilding*" (aimed at positive peace) intentionally focuses on address the *indirect* factors driving or mitigating harmful conflict, with an emphasis on engaging institutions, policies, and political-economic conditions as they relate to exploitation and repression (Galtung, 2011). While Galtung's original & subsequent literature on the concept of positive peace do include references to cultural violence, for encyclopedic purposes it is still useful to reserve its absence for a term that Lederach and others have since developed to remedy gaps in understanding that were not sufficiently addressed through scholarly discussion of positive peace until the mid-1990s: the term *justpeace*. In proposing this term, Lederach identified "Three Gaps in Peacebuilding" this term could address: "The Interdependence Gap", "The Justice Gap", and the "Process-Structure Gap" (Galtung, 1990)

Justpeace: Cultural violence

"Justpeace" (or "just peace") refers to the absence of all three types of violence enumerated above: direct, structural, & cultural. Cultural violence refers to aspects of culture that can be used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence—the ways in which direct or structural violence look or feel "right" according to the moral fabric of society. In this sense, "*just peacebuilding*" (aimed at justpeace) intentionally combines the methods of "positive peacebuilding" (as described above) with a special focus on building and transforming sustainable relationships among conflicting sectors & cultures in such a way that promotes more alignment between each culture's *mores* (standards of "right" behavior or conditions) and the extent to which those *mores* are built/equipped to prevent, resolve, and heal patterns of direct and structural violence.

Barnett *et al.* (2007) divides postconflict peacebuilding into three dimensions: stabilizing the post-conflict zone, restoring state institutions, and dealing with social and economic issues. Activities within the first dimension reinforce state stability post-conflict and discourage former combatants from returning to war (disarmament). Second dimension activities build state capacity to provide basic public goods and increase state legitimacy.

Programs in the third dimension build a post-conflict society's ability to manage conflicts peacefully and promote socioeconomic development.

Reconstructive Versus Transformative Approaches

Bronwyn (2000) dwells on peacebuilding strategies – which he identifies as 'reconstructive' in approach – as applied in multilateral initiatives under international institutions like the UN. As opposed to this is the 'transformative' approach often adopted by the civil society actors and NGOs as part of their bottom-up initiatives. According to Kent, both these sets of approaches are two sides of the same coin and complement each other if balanced appropriately. Hence, too much focus on one is not going to be effective, as for instance excessive focus by the UN on reconstruction activities has undermined its transformative capacities. Reconstructive approaches concern themselves with more tangible aspects of peacebuilding such as addressing infrastructure needs like roads, communications, healthcare and public institutions where benefits and outcomes are immediate and easily measurable. Usually the UN post-conflict reconstruction involves (a) monitoring ceasefire, (b) disarming and demobilising rebels and ensuring their reintegration through security sector reforms, and (c) supervising or conducting elections. But given this 'tool-kit' of peacebuilding, it often begins to become too rigid and therefore vulnerable to donor agencies' expansive reporting processes and preferences. Instead, these need to be locally rooted, intensive and contextualised. Moreover, these efforts of the UN peacebuilding have often been accused of being driven by major powers' desire to implant democracy and free-market economy. Transformative approach, on the other hand, seeks to address exactly these lacunae i.e. less focus on physical reconstruction and more focus on transforming social relationship within and amongst the given conflict-prone communities. As the very first thing, their outcomes remain less measurable and its processes normally time-taking. But then transformative approach seeks to address not only manifest but also latent triggers of conflict that impel the conflict protagonists to see violence as only means of redress. It also believes that parties to conflict are not necessarily homogenous social entities. Therefore, the focus would be on addressing both the manifest and the felt needs for recognition of respective collective identities - and doing so in such a manner that this recognition does not appear to threaten other parties. Schirch (2005) believes that rituals and symbols may be useful for reducing direct violence. Rituals and symbols, she says, are widely used either to symbolically communicate commitment to nonviolence or to heal trauma or to transform relationships. However, it may be noted that symbols and rituals are not the mainstay of peacebuilding but only complement real tools and processes of peacebuilding like dialogue or mediation. On their own, rituals and symbols cannot adequately address conflict and peacebuilding.

Confidence-building: this is a socio-biological factor holding people together where it exists and tearing them apart if betrayed. It is affirm trust in an individual or group. Here, peace-makers/builders establish reasonable degree of mutual confidence between factions and this could lead to signing of agreement. The purpose of confidence-building is sustaining and nourishing trust, and involves honest and transparent actions.

Information must be exchanged to avoid rumour, misunderstanding, misconception and misrepresentation of intentions. This act promotes national integration, peace and security: a pathway to international peace, security and reduction of conflicts.

Feminist Approach

Feminists regret that feminist approaches have been underutilized in peacebuilding at community, national and international level. Women are often seen as helping the mainstream (read malestream) as an easy way to be accepted and to make contributions to peacebuilding. Feminists believe that in spite of women's continued marginalisation in international peace and security discourses, their work in actual peacebuilding has been substantial in almost all societies, and that its importance is being increasingly recognized across the world. They call for gendering of peacebuilding approaches and strategies and urge for inclusion of women's skills and capabilities into peacebuilding, especially in projects like healing, reconciliation, reintegration and demilitarisation. McKey and Mazurana (2001), for example, noted how women pursue different and largely nonviolent approaches to social change. Women are relevant in peacebuilding process involving relationship building, cooperation, networking, psychological and spiritual processes and above all reconciliation and human relationships

Conclusion

Peace-building developed in 1986 as a positive, continuous cooperative human endeavour to build bridges between conflicting nations and groups. It aims to enhance understanding and communication and dispel distrust, fear and hatred. It is expected to create attitudes, behaviours and structures which will make further conflict improbable. It is more meaningful after the cessation of hostilities, and involves things like assisting refugees and displaced persons return and resettle in their homes, removal of dangerous weapons, provision of social amenities, organisation of leadership system, rebuilding of infrastructures and retaining the presence of military/police where necessary. This takes longer duration. Furthermore, it demands fairness in all ramifications. Equity and sincerity should be the hallmark of such lofty efforts. Consequently, prejudices and biases must give way for impartial dialogue and fair consideration of the parties in the conflict. Terms of agreement must be strictly adhered to, otherwise the whole process may be jeopardized

References

Barnett, M. et al (2007). *"Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?"*, Global Governance, [*"What is Strategic Peacebuilding?"*](#), Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies,

- 2018, in <https://kroc.nd.edu>, Retrieved April 15, 2020.
- Boutros-Ghali, B. *An Agenda for Peace*. New York: United Nations, 1992, Retrieved April 15, 2020.
- Bronwyn E. (2000), *Transformative Peacebuilding in Post-conflict Reconstruction: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, London: TUK Press
- Coning, C (2013), "Understanding Peacebuilding as Essentially Local" in *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, vol. 2 (1): 6, <https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.as>, retrieved April 14, 2020
- Galtung, J. (1990), "Cultural Violence", in *Journal of Peace Research*, vol.27 (3), <https://doi.org/10.1177>, retrieved April 13, 2020
- Galtung, J. and Paffenholz T., eds.(2001), "Peace, Positive and Negative", *The Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology*, American Cancer Society, Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Reinner Publishers, Inc.
- Lederach, J. (1997), *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, D.C., United States Institute of Peace
- Lederach, J. (1995), *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation Across Cultures*, New York: Syracuse University Press.
- McKey S. and Mazurana, U. (2001) *Women & Peacebuilding*, Montreal: Rights & Democracy,
- Sandole, D. (2010). *Peacebuilding*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press
- Schirch, L. (2005), *Rituals and Symbols in Peacebuilding*, Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press
- van der Merwe H. and Vienings T, (2009) "Coping with Trauma," in *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*, Limburg: Luc Reyckler
- ["Peace Building Initiative - History", www.peacebuildinginitiative.org](http://www.peacebuildinginitiative.org), retrieved April 16, 2020