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Instituto de Estudios sobre Conflictos y Acción Humanitaria
Institute of Studies on Conflicts and Humanitarian Action

Exploring concepts: Human security and peacebuilding

About FRIDE

FRIDE is an independent think-tank based in Madrid, focused on issues related to democracy and human rights; peace and security; and humanitarian action and development. FRIDE attempts to influence policy-making and inform public opinion, through its research in these areas.

About IECAH

IECAH, which is based in Madrid, is a private initiative that gathers together a group of experts specialising in the study of conflicts and cooperation, with particular emphasis on humanitarian aid. From a geographical perspective, IECAH focuses in particular on two regions of great interest to Spain and the EU, namely the Mediterranean and Latin America, though it also pays increasing attention to other areas of the world.

Since the end of the Cold War, peacebuilding processes have been in operation in almost fifty countries. These include providing security for citizens, reforming the political and institutional system and promoting social and economic measures essential for development.

These major tasks cover complex questions such as disarmament, demobilisation and the reintegration of combatants, legal system reform, the promotion of democratic participation processes, the rebuilding of infrastructures, guarantees for citizen access to education and healthcare and the consolidation of bases for a sustainable economy.

In spite of the lack of agreement among international players on how to define it, peacebuilding (PB) is a process involving short, medium and long term measures which establish the bases for a peaceful transition towards state building or rebuilding. It is therefore distinct from both peace operations and institutional measures for strengthening the state.

The seminar on *State Crisis, Peacebuilding and Human Security – Exploring Concepts*, which was held by FRIDE and the IECAH on 11th November 2008 in Madrid, dealt with the concepts and practices of peacebuilding.

Conceptual debate

Panel I: States in crisis and post-conflict situations

The end of the Cold War led to a reduction in armed conflicts between states in the international system. At the same time, the 1990s saw an increase in civil wars, as well as international efforts to reach peace agreements. As a result, post-conflict situations and processes are now present in more than fifty countries, requiring an immense effort on the part of the international community, including both civil (such as official and non-official development aid) and military instruments. The world financial crisis is further increasing the complexity of this task as a reduction in monetary contributions made by the donors is anticipated.¹

States in post-conflict situations are institutionally fragile and peace can easily be broken. The United Nations (UN) estimates that “approximately half of the countries emerging from a war return to a situation of violence within a period of fewer than five years.”² The underlying causes that gave rise to the armed conflict are not resolved but remain temporarily frozen or are transformed, only to reappear in other violent forms.

On the other hand, there are also states in situations of crisis and permanent violence, though not necessarily

at war, where there are no viable institutions to satisfy the needs of the population, or where those supposed to do so fail to fulfil their role. This is the case of Haiti, Guinea Bissau, Sao Tome, Liberia and Sierra Leone, among others. Crises can occur because of the breakdown of power structures in postcolonial states, the de-structuring of society, or a combination of both factors. The fragility of state structures prevents the peaceful resolution of conflicts and encourages violent confrontations that can result in open warfare.³

Owing to the situations of institutional fragility affecting between thirty and fifty countries, various sources state that peacebuilding is a practice in constant development that has earned a prominent place in policies towards this type of country.⁴

Peacebuilding can help to prevent conflict from breaking out, to prepare and support processes for promoting peace in countries where war has been declared and, similarly, to contribute to building societies in post-conflict situations in order to avoid a relapse into violence.⁵

Since the 1990s, peacebuilding has become a broad field which includes a variety of aspects, such as creating or strengthening the rule of law and security, promoting institutionalisation, taking the first steps towards a viable economy and providing essential services for the population.

However, the fact that concepts are superimposed hinders theoretical and operational debates on the possible actions and policies in post-conflict situations carried out by international and/or national players (see box overleaf).

¹ Megan Burke, “Recovering from armed conflict: lessons learned and next steps for improved international assistance”, *FRIDE Working Paper 22*, May 2006. Also Jesús A. Núñez, Balder Hageraats and Isaias Barreñada, *Conflictos en el ámbito internacional: aportaciones para una cultura de paz* (Conflicts in the international arena: contributions for a culture of peace), CIDEAL, 2008.

² Report by the Secretary General of the United Nations, *A broader concept of freedom: development, security and human rights for all*, United Nations, 2005, p. 35. Also see the studies by the World Bank directed by Paul Collier et. al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy*, World Bank, Washington D.C., 2003.

³ On the concept of the fragile state see Susan L. Woodward, “Fragile States: Exploring the Concept”, *FRIDE Comment*, December 2006.

⁴ See classification and indicators on state fragility by the World Bank in International Evaluation Group, *Engaging with fragile states*, The World Bank Washington D.C., 2006, p. Liii. www.worldbank.org/ieg/licus/. For the case of Spain see Jesús A. Núñez, *El enfoque de la construcción de la paz y la prevención de conflictos violentos en el Plan Director de la Cooperación Española (2005-2008)*, Cuaderno IECAH N. 2, 2006.

⁵ Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Peacebuilding – a Development Perspective”, *Strategic Framework*, August, 2004.

- *Peacebuilding*: actions undertaken to consolidate or institutionalise peace.
- *Peace implementation*: actions undertaken to apply specific peace agreements, normally in the short term. Generally it defines – and either makes possible or enforces – the framework for peacebuilding.
- *Statebuilding*: actions undertaken to establish, reform or strengthen state institutions and their relationship with society (which may or may not contribute to the consolidation of peace).
- *Nation building*: actions generally designed to forge *nationhood* to (1) overcome ethnic, sectarian or communal differences; (2) counteract alternative sources of identity and loyalty; and (3) mobilise the population in favour of a parallel statebuilding project. It may or may not contribute to the consolidation of peace. Often, this concept is equated in a confused manner with post-conflict stabilisation or statebuilding, particularly in political and journalistic circles in the United States.
- *Stabilisation*: actions undertaken to achieve a cessation of hostilities and build peace, which is understood to be the absence of armed conflict. A common term in United States policies, normally related to military instruments, which are used as a more short-term measure than peacebuilding, and associated with the post 11/S counter-terrorist agenda.
- *Reconstruction*: actions undertaken to support the economic dimensions and, to a certain extent, social dimensions for post-conflict recovery. It is also a concept used frequently by the World Bank (its formal name includes the term) and in political circles in the United States (for example, the US Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilisation), which dates back to the experience of post-war assistance in Europe after the Second World War.
- *Peace operations*: actions undertaken during or after an armed conflict. They generally consist of a peace-keeping mandate from the Security Council, which normally includes a series of civil and military tasks (“multidimensional peace-keeping” and peacebuilding).

Source: Adapted from Charles T. Call (Ed.), *Building States to Build Peace*, International Peace Institute, Lynne Rienner, 2008, p. 5.

Alongside PB, there has also evolved the concept of *human security*, which has a two-fold origin: on the one hand, it stems from the studies promoted since the 1990s by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on human development and the economic, social, demographic, environmental and political variables which strengthen or weaken it; and on the other, from critical perspectives on the traditional concept of security based on the role of the state and its armed forces for deterrence and the protection of sovereignty and national interests. As an alternative paradigm, human security focuses attention on the interests of people, who must be protected by states, as a central basis for improving world security. The idea of human security thus includes components from the liberal and cosmopolitan theoretical approach.

Human security prioritises the protection of people in areas such as access to healthcare, education and decent housing, and guarantees the protection of rights, gender equality and democratic participation in political life. In its widest acceptance, it proposes that citizens should be free from needs (such as hunger), and in a more restricted sense, that they should be free from fear (of war, for example).⁶

Peacebuilding or statebuilding?

During the seminar, the differences between PB and statebuilding were discussed. Stabilising a situation to eradicate war or violent social conflict does not necessarily mean that there are structural bases for peace. The bases for living together peacefully are guaranteed by democratic and inclusive states. At the same time, the presence of a state does not necessarily mean the absence of violence.

Building a functional state that controls the use of legitimate violence in its territory, guarantees basic public services, and articulates the demands of all players in society without excluding anyone or any

⁶ Karlos Pérez de Armiño, “El concepto y el uso de la seguridad humana: Análisis crítico de sus potencialidades y riesgos” (The concept and use of human security: a critical analysis of its potential and risks) in *Revista CIDOB d’affaires internacionals*, No. 74, Barcelona, 2007. www.cidob.org/es/content/download/4366/44237/file/76_perez.pdf

social group, are fundamental factors to ensure both the long-lasting resolution of existing conflicts and to avoid future violent confrontations. In this sense, statebuilding becomes a peacebuilding measure in the long-term.

However, without a viable productive economic system, it is not possible to have a functional state. Peacebuilding proposes laying down the bases of an operating economy. However, many states in post-conflict situations or with a high level of fragility see their economic systems affected by de-structuring, illegal production and trade and the lack of mechanisms for transferring resources between the private and public sectors articulated in a system of taxation.

These countries, especially those in a high situation of fragility, very often depend on international aid, which is integrated as part of their economic system, helping, but also altering or delaying, the possibility of local development.

In order to analyse peacebuilding, three areas of action were proposed:

1. Democracy: the experience of the 1990s in countries such as Angola or Rwanda appears to negate the principle of democratic peace.⁷ The attempt to liberalise the political systems by introducing multi-party elections did not always produce the expected results. Consideration should be given to intermediate political models with vertical, strong and inclusive authorities, as a solution for the transition from war to democracy. An agreement between the elites for the distribution

of power could be more useful, in the initial stage, than a weak democracy in which old rivalries could reappear in a violent manner. In this case, the manner in which democracy is introduced remains an unresolved question. The international community looks to improvised solutions depending on the context.

2. Economy: current civil conflicts have a political economy of war in which a variety of predatory players, including some governments, see violence as a structural form of life which makes it difficult to resolve conflicts. A priority is to dismantle this lucrative agenda through incentives for peace and the construction of state economic institutions that regulate the trade of, for example, natural resources through non-violent and non-corrupt channels. Functional and legitimate state economics is a key element which guarantees the sustainable and peaceful development of a society.⁸

3. Institutions: countries emerging from internal conflicts are weak and their governments and elites are, in many cases, predatory and corrupt. All or some of the violent players, on many occasions in confrontation with each other, continue to hold considerable sway. The international community intervenes and controls the process to guarantee the creation of effective and legitimate institutions. Transitional justice in its different aspects, for example, is used to purge responsibility for the atrocities committed and offer reparations to the victims, while at the same time trying to integrate the violent players into a framework of the rule of law. However, national appropriation of the process is considered essential as a key to the construction of a legitimate state which resolves the underlying causes of violence and in which everyone feels represented. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness recognises this tension between international intervention and national

⁷ The thesis of liberal or democratic peace maintains that the best way of keeping peace is through liberal, democratic and effective economies and states. Roland Paris suggests that in the peace operations of the 1990s the error made was that of promoting rapid economic liberalisation, in the hope that it would be accompanied by politic democratic liberalisation. But these projects did not take into account the structural obstacles faced by fragile states. Paris' proposal is to avoid rapid liberalisation plans and, instead, to favour strengthening local networks and government capacities that can progressively take charge of economic and political projects. See Roland Paris, *At War's End. Building Peace After Civil Conflict*, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

⁸ For an exposition of the different theories about the role of the war economy in conflicts between states see Cynthia J. Arnson and I. William Zartman (Eds), *Rethinking the Economics of War. The Intersection of Need, Creed and Greed*, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Washington D.C., 2005.

appropriation and, taking that as a basis, establishes the need to align aid with the priorities of governments in the area of development. But donors are reluctant to give “blank cheques” to enable these types of states to manage economic funds unilaterally.⁹

The importance of historical antecedents

Before designing peacebuilding plans, each context has to be taken into account to avoid mechanically reproducing models applied previously. However, some kind of general model is also needed as an analytical tool giving guidelines for possible actions. In addition to this analytical flexibility between the individual and the general, certain indicators are required that help assess progress made in the process. A series of dilemmas can affect the design of a possible paradigm for post-conflict intervention.

Firstly, finding a definition for peace or post-conflict situations in peace is not a simple task. A negative approach can be taken, which deems it to be the absence of violence. In this case, the model applied would be the rehabilitation of the situation prior to the confrontations rather than a reconstruction. However, conflicts transform societies and it is impossible to return to previous situations because the reality and the players have changed. Furthermore, an attempt to go back does not consider the underlying causes of the conflict, but rather it is limited to a peacemaking phase, generally imposed from the outside. The objective of this negative approach is for populations to live free from fear for their physical integrity, which coincides with the restricted view of human security (see below).

On the other hand, peace can be seen in a positive manner. Johan Galtung defined positive peace as something more than the absence of violence: the

presence of social justice through equal opportunities, egalitarian protection and an impartial application of the law.¹⁰ The objective of this piece is social justice and it supposes a broader view of the concept of human security based on people’s needs.

A paradigm for building sustainable and long-lasting peace in post-conflict situations requires the definition of a series of priority areas for intervention. There is a general consensus on three essential dimensions which reinforce each other: security, political development and social and economic development (see table below). The three dimensions must be addressed simultaneously, not sequentially. Some participants believe, in specific cases like the current situation in Afghanistan, that security should be given priority. Others believe that it is precisely in these cases where there is a need to work on all levels simultaneously.

Priority areas for post-conflict intervention

1. Security:
 - Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programmes for ex-combatants;
 - Removal of mines;
 - Monitoring of small and light arms;
 - Reform of the security system.
2. Political development:
 - Support for the political and administrative structures and authorities;
 - Reconciliation (institution-building);
 - Good government, democracy and human rights;
 - Civil society, including communication media;
 - Judicial processes and truth commissions.
3. Social and economic development:
 - Repatriation and integration of refugees and the internally displaced;
 - Reconstruction of the essential infrastructures and public functions;
 - Social development: education and health;
 - Economic development: private sector, labour market, trade and investment.

Source: Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, op. cit.. A similar model is proposed by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Memorandum on post-conflict reconstruction, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence and Economic Affairs, The Hague, 2005.

⁹ The Paris Declaration, OCDE, http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,2340,en_2649_3236398_35401554_1_1_1_1,00.html

¹⁰ Johan Galtung, *¿Hay alternativas? Cuatro caminos hacia la paz y la seguridad (Are there alternatives? Four roads to peace and security)*, Tecnos, Madrid, 1984.

At the same time, the internal and external players prioritise certain areas depending on their analysis of the causes of the conflict and the diagnosis. This has led to the development of various lines of thought since the 1990s which describe identity, political and economic factors as the principal causes of the so-called “new wars”. In other words, if there are “new wars” with new characteristics, there is also a need for peacebuilding in tune with that.¹¹

Debate on operational practice

Panel II: Human security: an operational concept?

Human security forms part of a new way of understanding International Relations. Traditionally, the state has been the central player in international studies and politics. Human security places the individual as the principal reference point. The realistic conception of security would lose weight compared to a cosmopolitan conception based on the needs of people. Non-military dimensions, such as political, social and economic stability, broaden and complement the notion of security according to this new view of the world.

Human security as a new paradigm supposes a reinterpretation of the concept of state sovereignty on which the conventional interpretation of the current international system is based. Sovereignty would thus cease to be a right of the state and become a responsibility, which would be conditional on states and

their governments guaranteeing the basic needs of their citizens.

Putting the concept into operation: principal critique of human security

Adopting a framework for analysis based on the concept of human security means that efforts aimed at resolving the impact of armed conflicts and poverty must be dealt with in an integrated manner. Human security therefore promotes the convergence of security, development and human rights agendas with the aim of achieving greater coherence and effectiveness in the response from the international cooperation system.

Integrating and giving coherence to these agendas poses a challenge on all levels. Although the importance of the concept of human security was recognised, its operation on the ground was placed in doubt by various participants. Meanwhile, the resistance and lack of political will to apply it mean that human security is currently relegated to a secondary plane in the international political debate (despite the efforts of some countries and the fact that it is a concept which has become part of the rhetoric of the United Nations).¹²

The operational application of human security depends principally on the approach, whether broad or restricted, which is adopted in the definition of the concept, on which there is no consensus. The key is in defining what is understood by “people’s needs”. In this sense, there are two different views:

- **Broad approach** (freedom from fear and need): this approach is based on the Report on Human Development which, since 1994, has been published by the UNDP. In 2003, the Commission on Human

¹¹ On this question see Jonathan Goodhand, *Aiding Peace? The Role of NGOs in Armed Conflict*, Intermediate Technology Publications, Rugby, 2006.

¹² See S. Neil MacFarlane and Yuen Foong Khong, *Human Security and the UN. A Critical History*, Indiana University Press, 2006. http://www.iupress.indiana.edu/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=22815

Security issued its report, led by the Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen and the former UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Sadako Ogata. This report believes that the security agenda must be broadened to include famine, diseases and natural disasters as threats, as these kill many more people than wars, genocide and terrorism together. The document identifies seven dimensions for security: economic, food, health, environmental, physical, community and political. It incorporates the definitions of human development and human security.¹³

- **Restricted approach** (freedom from fear): the restricted perspective focuses its attention on violent threats to individuals, such as, for example, antipersonnel mines, light arms and violence arising from civil conflicts, although it recognises that these threats are closely related to poverty, state incapacity and the different forms of political and socio-economic inequality. It distinguishes between the notion of human security and that of human development by focusing principally on the threats to the physical integrity of people as a vital core of security. An example of this perspective is the *Human Security Report* published in Canada.¹⁴

Defenders of the broad approach maintain that a relationship ought to be established between the dimensions of security, development and human rights, in order to ensure the stability of states and to guarantee peaceful coexistence between them. They also propose that the way it is applied should be adapted to each specific situation, depending on the analysis made of the different dimensions contributing to it.

They recognise, however, that a co-ordinated effort is required at all levels (international, regional and national, as well as on a state and civil society level) in

order to achieve the convergence and integration of agendas, without which human security would not be operational.¹⁵

On the other hand, given the difficulty of reaching a concrete definition of human security and integrating it into international agendas, and the lack of consensus and political will to do so, the restricted approach represents a minimum agreement in order to achieve the protection of people and populations and thus avoid genocides like the one in Rwanda.

The concept of human security is seen from some sectors as very broad and vague, and too imprecise to demand responsibilities when the insecurity is created by non-state players. Furthermore, other critics believe that it blurs the borderline between the armed forces, as traditional guarantors of security, and civil society players.

There is also criticism that, despite the fact that the paradigm or theory of security makes a distinction between the individual and the state, in reality, all the rights, freedoms and assets asserted for the broad protection of individuals must be provided by the state, which is the only player capable of guaranteeing them through the rule of law. In addition, the international system acts through the political action of states and the agreements and regimes established between them.

Also in the field of debate on the state, caution was expressed regarding a concept which, in short, calls upon the state to protect citizens, but offers no solutions to the victims of the actions of non-state players, such as warlords, international mafias dealing in illegal trade, and armed groups and terrorists.

Meanwhile, doubts arose as to how to put the concept into practice on the ground, especially from the humanitarian perspective and, more particularly, when faced with crises like that in Darfur.

¹³ Human Security Commission, *Human Security Now*, United Nations, New York, 2003. <http://www.humansecurity-chs.org/finalreport/>

¹⁴ See Human Security Centre, <http://www.humansecurityreport.info/>

¹⁵ Jesús A. Núñez, Balder Hageraats and Francisco Rey, "Seguridad humana: recuperando un concepto necesario", *Cuadernos del IECAH*, 07, 2007.

The concept of human security still lacks a universal character. It is an internationally recognised principle, but is not binding. In fact, some countries consider it to be an interesting concept, but are reluctant to include it in their foreign policies. This is the case with the principle of the Responsibility to Protect, promoted by the United Nations (to deal with victims of genocide or mass violations of human rights), given the fear that it will lead to international jurisprudence which forces countries to intervene in conflicts or situations which are not in their national interest.

In this sense, some governments and experts are undertaking an in-depth political questioning of the concepts and approaches. Human security could also be interpreted as a Western creation to justify possible humanitarian interventions, which would fulfil three functions. Firstly, it would be an instrument for global governance, particularly to control and maintain conflicts on the periphery of the system. It could also be used to implement the neo-liberal model of economic globalisation and, finally, would fulfil the function of rebuilding and supporting allied states which back the policies of the North (an example of this which was mentioned was the reconstruction of Iraq as a US ally in the “war on terror”).¹⁶

¹⁶ Mark Duffield, “Human security: linking development and security in an Age of Terror”, Speech prepared for the panel “New Interfaces between Security and Development”, at the XI EADI General Conference, Bonn, 21-24 September 2005. http://eadi.org/gc2005/confweb/papersps/Mark_Duffield.pdf

Development-security link

Panel III: Peacebuilding, development and security

With concepts such as peacebuilding and human security, two traditionally separate worlds converge: security and development. During the Cold War, security was associated with military force, deterrence and punishment devices. Meanwhile, development was interpreted in economic terms as a linear process, at the end of which all countries would end up equally developed. Official aid for development was used as a contribution given by the most advanced countries to the less developed, and depending on the interests of the bloc policy.

The report by the Secretary General of the United Nations, *A broader concept of freedom: development, security and human rights for all* (March 2005), is the first instance where these areas are officially linked in the order of priorities for maintaining world peace. “Humankind cannot have security without development, cannot have development without security and can have neither of them if human rights are not respected.”¹⁷

The report includes a general consensus that the security of states should not be limited to military means and is concerned, above all, with the well-being of its citizens. Security can and must be built by other methods. The promotion of political, economic and social development is decisive in achieving the ultimate

¹⁷ Report by the Secretary General of the United Nations, *op. cit.*

aim of security and preventing violence becoming the way of solving conflicts. In this way, development and security, and their players, are closely linked: security is a precondition for development and, at the same time, development works for security.

Seen in this way, peacebuilding is an ongoing task for all societies that is most meaningful in the present. If it is addressed during or after a violent conflict it represents a failure which must be analysed so that it is not repeated. In this sense, the local component of peacebuilding is crucial and any successful process is based on it. The effort, both in security and development, must be, in structural terms, simultaneous and constant.¹⁸

Once the importance of the individual has been recognised, the state is the legitimate fount of security. In a state which protects its citizens at the physical, economic, political and social levels, the three concepts analysed converge: peacebuilding, statebuilding and human security. However, the development tasks which lead to the security and well-being of the population are particularly complex in situations of state fragility.

Among other tasks, it is important to promote the rule of law; generate a system of taxes; encourage the bases of a productive economy that provides employment for the citizens of the country affected; and carry out strategic plans which link agricultural development with the industrial and service sectors and integrate the country in a fair manner into the international economic and commercial system.

Furthermore, peacebuilding projects in fragile states cannot be separated from the international economic and financial context, the limitations on exports from countries in the South or illegal trafficking, which involve them in international organised crime or make them dependent indefinitely on international aid.¹⁹

¹⁸ Francisco Rey, Jesús A. Núñez and Laurence Thieux, *Fuerzas armadas y acción humanitaria: debates y propuestas*, Working Paper No. 13, Fundación Carolina/IECAH, 2007.

¹⁹ On the relationship between fragile states and international organised crime, see Ivan Briscoe, "Crimen y drogas en los Estados frágiles", *FRIDE Comment*, July 2007.

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