

# *What Kind of Peace is Being Built?*

## *Critical Assessments from the South*

### **A Discussion Paper**

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## ***Interpreting Peace***

The Secretary General of the United Nations was to have visited El Salvador in March 2002. He had responded positively albeit unofficially to an invitation made by the El Salvador Government to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the signing of the UN-brokered peace accords. President Francisco Flores' idea was to seize the occasion to proclaim that, ten years after the signing of the peace accords, the transition from war to peace was over, that the accords had been implemented, and all thanks to the uninterrupted succession of his ARENA party in the presidency.

Initially Mr. Annan and his advisors believed the UN could also benefit from the stage appearance. 2002 also marked the tenth anniversary of the proclamation of the *Agenda for Peace*. A fine opportunity therefore for the Secretary General to review and project the UN peacebuilding record further highlighting what many considered a Central American peacebuilding showcase, a model of "successful" UN intervention. Former guerillas-turned-politicians in the FMLN, or at least its principal faction, disagreed heartedly. It was their position, shared with a number of union and peasant organizations, that successive governments including the present had purposely not complied with all the stipulated commitments, particularly in the social and economic field. For them, the proclaiming of a successful transition by Annan and Flores would be tantamount to releasing the government and other forces from the continuing obligation to fully comply. After an FMLN delegation visited New York, Annan decided to cancel the visit. He had avoided stepping into the political minefield of interpreting the degree and nature of compliance with the accords—as the UN was the official monitor, this would have been impossible to avoid.<sup>1</sup>

The episode highlights the inevitably political nature of casting judgment on both peace and the peacebuilding post-war role played by the UN. Even the concept of peace could not escape scrutiny: if peace was or is the absence of economic injustice and structural violence in general, then a poor nation such as El Salvador with a highly unequal distribution of income had a long way to go. No doubt the FMLN and many of its sympathizers within and outside the country visualized a peace that dealt with economic and resource issues, particularly land

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<sup>1</sup> According to an FMLN leader, Roberto Cañas, "*The most serious shortcoming in the architecture of the Peace Accords have been in the design of the economic and social issues. ... what was agreed has either not been honored or was quickly eliminated, as was the case with the Economic and Social Conciliation Forum, created as an arena in which the government, businesspeople and workers associations could settle post war conflicts through dialogue and negotiations. The government and the private sector eliminated the forum in 1993 out of fear that it would urge ratification of agreements signed by the Salvadoran state with the I.L.O., which the political and economic powers considered damaging to their interests....Peace didn't change the fundamental problems*", Interview with Roberto Cañas, "Images and Realities as the Free Trade Agreement approaches", *Envío*, (Universidad Centroamericana, Managua), March 22, 2002, p.29. . "Insisten en concluir proceso de paz" *Inforpress Centroamericana*, (22 de marzo de 2002, Guatemala), p. 12.

distribution. Much of that vision had found its way into the peace accords, largely in return for the demobilization of the FMLN army. Yet, street violence in the cities and rural poverty remained rampant in El Salvador. Observers generally agreed that new or revamped institutions created by the accords – such as the police and judiciary structures— were not yet fully trusted by much of the population. According to the Washington Office on Latin America,

“Daily life for the average Salvadoran is as bad, if not worse, than it was before the war. The levels of poverty and inequality, especially in rural areas, that helped cause the war remain extremely high. In fact, according to the World Bank, per capita GDP is lower today than it was before the civil war... Due to the lack of security and the dire economic situation of the majority of Salvadorans, emigration rates are as high or higher than during the war”.<sup>2</sup>

In effect, assessing the effectiveness of post-war peacebuilding, in a UN and donor policy context raises other considerations. To begin with it is a context that by and large reduces “peace” to questions of policy, institution building, conflict resolution mechanisms and effective governance in general. At the same time, however, questions persist as to role and responsibility of external forces, particularly so-called donors, so involved in the final outcome and so demanding of “reconciliation”. The contradictions witnessed in El Salvador and elsewhere, particularly in a post-war context, underscore different understandings of peacebuilding and peace itself. While the disagreements are essentially political in character, the differences are carried over when it comes to defining peacebuilding.

Salvadoran actors signed a peace accord and not a simple cease-fire with surrender by the insurgents. The difference between one and the other is precisely peacebuilding—it is a value-laden text abounding in references to universal human rights principles, informed by understandings of peace with justice, setting forth specific steps and stages to achieve justice in terms of political and economic democratization. At the moment of the signing perhaps all domestic and external actors believed that democracy and development would flow naturally from the peace accords as a binding framework. Good intentions however do not produce win-win situations because the full and forceful implementation of the accords, as in Guatemala and elsewhere, entailed a “loss” for the traditional landed elite and business sector. The conservative vision of peacebuilding, particularly the one entailing reconciliation, meant that the “loss” factor should be minimal, including access to the levers of economic and political power. So whose vision of peace or what peace are we referring to: the one signed in 1992 or the complicated scenario witnessed ten years later?

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<sup>2</sup> Washington Office on Latin America, “Tenth Anniversary of El Salvador Peace Agreements” (Press Release, January 16, 2002). [www.wola.org/salvador\\_anniversary\\_peace\\_press.htm](http://www.wola.org/salvador_anniversary_peace_press.htm).

In retrospect one could argue that the UN, national and donor governments grossly overestimated their capacity to bring sustainable peace/justice to El Salvador. But was there a common understanding of peace, or was there not a tendency to secure “peace” now and justice later on? Is there a connection between the successful right-wing reinterpretation of the accords, and the narrowing of the conceptual definition of peacebuilding? Interpreting what peace is being built in El Salvador is altogether more complex, where the responses of the international actors or of the political parties themselves still tend to be defensive and even celebratory of the document they signed ten years ago. However the question remains: what peace are we referring to? And it can’t be simply the ending of organized civil violence, which indeed merits celebration, if this comes at the expense of blindness to levels of economic and/or “criminal” violence that some claim rival those of the war itself.

The pursuit of peace must assume that economic violence is war by other means. Separating the two leads to unacceptable ethical and political considerations, as it would strike against the notion of non-violence itself. Gandhi was absolutely firm on this. His 1926 warning has lost none of its force and accuracy:

“An armed conflict between nations horrifies us. But the economic war is no better than an armed conflict. This is like a surgical operation. An economic war is prolonged torture. And its ravages are no less terrible than those depicted in the literature on war properly so called. We think nothing of the other because we are used to its deadly effects ... Because we are used to this lingering death, we think no more about it. The movement against war is sound. I pray for its success. But I cannot help the gnawing fear that the movement will fail if it does not touch the root of all evil—human greed. Will America, England, and the other great nations of the West continue to exploit the so-called weaker or uncivilized races and hope to attain peace that the whole world is pinning for? Or will Americans continue to prey upon one another, have commercial rivalries, and yet expect to dictate peace to the world”<sup>3</sup>

### ***Two Peacebuilding Concepts, Many Understandings***

Quite constructively, Henning Haugerudbraaten identifies two different basic concepts of peacebuilding. The first, which I will refer to as concept one, is characterized by the “short-term involvement of the international community, centralism and political measures primarily undertaken by external agent, even though attention is paid to the consent and support of the indigenous players.”

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<sup>3</sup> M.K. Gandhi, “Non-Violence—The Greatest Force”, *The World Tomorrow*, (October 1926) reproduced in Walter Wink, ed., *Peace is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation*, (Orbis Books, New York, 2000), pp. 2-3.

The second, referred to below as concept two, entails “long-term efforts by mainly indigenous actors to promote political and economic development, and a sustainable solution to the root causes of the conflict.”<sup>4</sup>

Haugerudbraaten argues that “diverging interpretations and use of on single term need not present problems, provided that scholars and policy-makers recognize their existence and take care in explaining what they are talking about.” The fundamental agents of peacebuilding, however, are neither scholars nor policy-makers: they are the people themselves, who are not objects or victims, and are more rights holders than one “stakeholder” among many. From a subjective or human perspective, there is indeed a problem that calls for much more than nuanced interpretations. More than careful explanations or theoretical refinements are warranted from the standpoint of peoples who find their livelihood impacted by decisions and policies determined elsewhere, along with the analytical basis that inform those decisions.

Peacebuilding as broadly described in the first concept, and as broadly applied by multilateral organizations as well as governments North and South, tends to be top-down, externally and supply-driven, elitist and interventionist. At the same time, and somewhat ironically, the externally-driven approach is reluctant to address external or global structural constraints and forces acting upon national and social peacebuilding scenarios. Root causes of conflict derived from particular insertions or interactions between subjects and international power centers (colonialism) are barely alluded to if at all. Joining in the rather comfortable blame-free setting are local governing elites in the South whose own interests are usually linked economically to the international market place. Peacebuilding in this context becomes an inherently conservative undertaking seeking managerial solutions to fundamental conflicts over resources and power, seeking to modernize and relegitimize a fundamental status quo respectful, reinforcing and reflective of a national and international and national market-oriented political economy.

Those on the other side of the political economic divide, that is to say most people in most countries of the South excluded from meaningful political and economic participation, have a different understanding of root causes. And that understanding—a systemic critique of neoliberal corporate globalization and a U.S.-dominated international political order that we refer to as South—logically remains impatient if not suspicious with short-term interventionist understandings and practices of “peacebuilding” according to concept one. In fact the “South” would not make the equation between peace and conflict resolution or conflict management/prevention, as concept one ostensibly does. Instead the equation

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<sup>4</sup> Haugerudbraaten, Henning. 1998. “Peacebuilding: Six dimensions and two concepts”, *African Security Review*, Vol.7. No. 6 pp. 17-26. (also accessible via website, ISS Pretoria – [www.iss.com.za](http://www.iss.com.za)).

is that of peace with socio-economic justice. The legitimacy of concept one conflict-resolution practitioners is fundamentally questioned *if* concerns of efficacy and stability are promoted at the expense of the maintenance of structural violence. Can the two be combined or set as a two-stage proposition in a war to peace paradigm setting? Relief from violence may or may not stand as a necessary step toward the attainment of justice: case specific studies may be necessary albeit the period between the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the US war on terrorism may not be long enough to warrant substantive conclusions.

Bluntly stated conflict resolution is held in many quarters, with NGOs particularly in the international forefront, as yet a new form of Northern counter-insurgency. The fact that the poor countries in conflict are the target of the exports garbed in human rights language, as opposed to conflicts at home or in countries strategically protected by the great powers (e.g. Israel) further reinforces the suspicion. Peacebuilding then cannot be part of the problem (stability and disempowering conflict management) and at the same time part of the solution (addressing root causes and empowerment for resistance). In short, if peacebuilding is to survive as a field of inquiry but also positive engagement, then it has to shed its stability, short term, market oriented, toolbox facet. The latter may or may not have a socially positive purpose and role, but it should not be confused with peacebuilding. Rather it should be returned to the corporate world where it all got started.

This is not to argue for a vision of polarity between the two concepts, but rather their clear distinction and purposes. In the absence of greater consideration of issues such as empowerment v. globalization, and sovereignty v. global empire, the peacebuilding field will continue to suffer and indeed may prove to be victim of a failed concept one proposition. Hence the urgency of the disassociation, particularly in the context of the war on terrorism, and the undisguised intention of the warriors in Washington to send conflict resolvers in with the troops. Peacebuilding need not follow neoliberal economics in the Orwellian “newspeak” allowing propositions of bombing in order to build, war for peace, or “developing” for impoverishment.

Amidst the prospect of a new stage of never ending intervention and war, peacebuilding has the particular responsibility to remind one and all of the destitution caused not only by war but by globalized economic war. There is no need to repeat the figures on mounting poverty and inequality (especially if one excludes non-neoliberal statist China from the calculations). Empathy with the victims of violence cannot be set aside for the sake of analysis, influencing policy makers or, worse still, simply seeking to remain influential with those who pursue the war on terrorism. Risk management and quantified impact notions belong in banks, not in the peacebuilding field. Why repeat the tragedies and comedies admittedly experienced by the “development” and “poverty” specialists in the

citadels of power? Has it not begun to finally dawn upon the “experts” that their macro-political and macro-economic parameters were and are a source of maldevelopment, poverty and violence? That elites in the South are all too happy to repeat the mantras popular in the North—from anti-communism to good governance—as long as it insures some form of benefit and minimalist power sharing?

Indeed, employment of the minimalist criteria can become a source of conflict in itself, as it turns attention away from the real problems and inequities that are begging not for “administration” but for solution. Scholars in this sense and policy-makers should come to grips with the ethical implications of employing notions of peacebuilding when what they are in fact aiming for is a conflict management system utilized by an unjust globalization system to keep the globalized victims at bay. In a word, the latest round of imperial pacification which as in the past employs the big stick to establish hegemony under the guise of liberal principles.

Ideology can be hidden or presumed: the discussion is interesting but not important. The real debate must deal with the question of power as it informs both theory and practice, including “liberal policy” in the North and the superficial procedure of democracy and consensus building in the South. Unfortunately and tellingly, understanding of power in the global context does not figure prominently in most ongoing peacebuilding discussions. This is logical if one recalls that these discussions have been “donor” and policy driven (where conflict prevention is developed as a service for rich country foreign ministries). Also unfortunate is the fact that UN agencies figure as prominent contributors to the field, beginning with the Agenda for Peace. As the UN itself must take care not to upset the power centers, especially the Washington Consensus, the confusion of loyalties carries over into carefully worded ambiguous peacebuilding postulates. A confused organization can only contribute confused conceptualizations, generally characterized by evading the central notions of power and market generated inequalities. And donors and agencies seem to remain analytically and politically paralyzed in the face of United States power, compromised themselves by their own alliances and shared financial interests in securing “stable” markets. Self-serving formulas of economic growth and capital-friendly governance must, in this context, be congruent with peacebuilding criteria, all part and parcel of “nation building” and “re-educating societies” in a manner congruent with liberal capitalism and acceptance of US “leadership.”

The return to war, or indeed the capacity to deal with root causes, is related to capacity and will to tackle systemic injustice. Interpretations and interpreters will also be conditioned by power, and here we explicitly establish a linkage with the construction of counter power from the South<sup>5</sup>. Debates about peacebuilding

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<sup>5</sup> Of course, global references have their limitations and usually entail pro forma apologies by those who employ them. But rather than cast them off altogether on account of their “unscientific”

and its derivatives such as conflict prevention and human security must take account of the two ends of power, lest that discussion be left floating pitifully somewhere in the middle. Reality must inform theory, and not the other way around, so that in addressing the role of the state in waging war or peace, we take account of an international picture where *some* nations and states, far from disappearing, and are growing more preponderant and imposing “globalization” out of the power of multinational capital with the help of gun-boat diplomacy.

Our working premise here is that peace is more than cessation of military hostilities, more than simple political stability. Peace is the presence of justice and peacebuilding entails addressing *all* factors and forces that stand as impediments to the realization of *all* human rights for *all human beings*. Like globalization, the term peacebuilding is an inexact term. Its meaning depends on one’s vantage point, and who gets to do the talking. Unfortunately most of the talking on peacebuilding, interpreted as a specialized field, is taking place from the vantage point of the North. Not so with the term peace. For this reason we undertake in this essay the considerable risk of presenting perspectives on peace from the South. Whether they scientifically fall in or outside of the “peacebuilding/conflict management” discipline is less important than the need of the “field” (and, the North in general) to listen and hopefully incorporate perspectives allowing peacebuilding to avoid circumscribing itself to the policy or academic world.

Citing *An Agenda for Peace*, Haugerudbraaten argues that the Secretary General “made it clear that peacebuilding consisted of ‘*sustained, co-operative work to deal with underlying economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems...*’ However, the actual problems listed refer to chiefly operational programmatic tasks including disarmament, destroying weapons, repatriating rights, and reforming institutions. These measures, for the most part associated with short to medium term international interventions, are but small transitional steps do but in their totality neither address root causes nor can they deliver the goal of ‘*achieved peace on a durable foundation*.’<sup>6</sup>

In the final analysis, the problem is not to interpret peace but to achieve it in self-sustaining fashion. A very practical task is politically and ideologically loaded.

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nature, better yet to recognize their considerable historical and political importance, and why they are on the lips of so many people in so many parts of the world. For the purposes of this essay, the “South” is used as a short-hand geographic and political indicator to denote the combination of a) perspectives from the countries of Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, and b) a frame of reference grounded in the historical and social perspective of common experiences of violent colonization and contemporary forms of subordination to the dominant countries of the North. The usage is also made with the clear understanding of the existence of a ‘global South’ perspective shared or not by individuals in the North or in the South who identify with dominant perspectives or reject them altogether. Because most of the criticism comes from the geographical South, the term retains a descriptive utility. As for the subjectivity, apologies are not necessary.

<sup>6</sup> Haugerudbraaten, p. 1.



This is not easily admitted. Many prefer to downplay ideology, but concept one is also ideological as peacebuilding can be taken to mean getting the country back to business-as-usual. South critics of the operational peacebuilding framework would agree with Roland Paris that a single paradigm — liberal internationalism — appears to guide the work of most international agencies engaged in peacebuilding. The key paradigmatic assumption is that peace will be the product of a combination of liberal political polities and liberal market-oriented economies, what high US officials term “free market democracies”. According to Paris, “Peacebuilding is in effect an enormous experiment in social engineering—an experiment that involves transplanting Western models of social, political and economic organizations into war-shattered states in order to control conflict: in other words, pacification through political and economic liberalization.”<sup>7</sup>

David Moore, of the University of Natal in Durban, South Africa reviews the post-conflict discourse and how agencies like the World Bank employ the term to signify the marrying of post-war economies and societies to a free market oriented development, including structural adjustment.<sup>8</sup> Unlike the seeming neutrality of relief operations, the task of reconstruction is as openly political as that of development, carrying with it certain assumptions about the primacy of export-oriented economic growth, private investment and integration into the global market. Good governance presumably means political democracy based on economic liberalism. The central contradiction however is that post-conflict (or transition) liberalism requires heavy doses of interventionism, principally from the outside. State weakness provides the excuse or justification, but the end result is indeed the assumption of new sorts of political trusteeship in the “post-conflict” period (as though post-war were equal to post-conflict).

One could then ask whether liberal peacemaking shares the neoliberal assumption that there is no alternative but to trade in direct violence for an economic one. As Moore points out, “the debate is not really about ‘relief’ or ‘development,’ but rather *what kind* of development is best in war-torn societies and indeed in the rest of the periphery”.<sup>9</sup> The problem is that development models are already chosen for nations, namely integration into the global market. This means that, for example, the future of peace/development in El Salvador or Uganda may not be entirely separate, say, from the price of coffee or the flow of emigrant remittances, not to mention, the impact of Washington’s insane war on terrorism.

The Ugandan political economist, Yash Tandon, argues that there is a “mainstream” theory seeking “to hide the systemic causes of poverty and conflict

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<sup>7</sup> Paris, “Peacebuilding....”, p. 56.

<sup>8</sup> David Moore, “Leveling the Playing Fields & Embedded Illusions: ‘Post Conflict’ Discourse & Neoliberal ‘Development in War-torn Africa’”, *Review of African Political Economy*, March 2000, No. 93, Vol. 27, pp. 11-28.

<sup>9</sup> Moore, “Leveling...”, p. 17.

in Africa”.<sup>10</sup> According to Tandon, the dominant discourse on the causes of conflict in Africa will emphasize the lack of economic growth and poor governance. Ironically the approach is precisely the one posited by Kofi Annan when discussing conflict and development in Africa<sup>11</sup> reflecting either a personal or institutional perspective or both, placing the root causes at the internal level. On account of trade and financial dependence—the infamous IMF seal of approval—most Southern governments have little choice but to parrot the prevalent good governance discourse, as if the benefits and need for accountability and the rule of law were recent discoveries. “Of course,” says Tandon, “these aspects of good governance are important not because the West now includes these as part of the “conditionalities” for aid to Africa but because Africans also value life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, just like anybody else.”<sup>12</sup> Tandon argues that

“While there is much that may be accepted in the mainstream analysis, it suffers from severe faults...it does not adequately analyze the international, or global, dimension of the conflicts, and it does not connect various factors in a holistic manner...This is so because of its stake in the preservation of the existing system, which leads the analysis to become ideological. Thus, the very factors that have impoverished Africa—namely exploitation by foreign capital under ‘free market’ conditions—are the ones offered by mainstream thinkers as “solutions” to Africa’s economic woes. An African peace activist must not be taken in by these ideological assumptions of mainstream thought. He or she must look at both the internal and the international dimensions of the causes of conflicts in Africa as part of one whole. The external is also the internal. He or she must examine the implications of present-day globalization and how this has transformed the nature of the African state as well as the nature of the African economy.... the main creations for peacelessness in Africa lie in its continuing poverty. Poverty in Africa does not just exist, it is created. It is created by the manner in which Africa is integrated into the global economy... Africa’s peacelessness is rooted in this continued impoverishment by the system.”<sup>13</sup>

### **Whose Peace?**

Giving the liberal approach the benefit of the doubt, there is reason to reconcile in practice both dimensions of peacebuilding. This is fine for discussions but we are up against a time factor, particularly from a South where misery cannot be

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<sup>10</sup> Yash Tandon, “Root Causes of Peacelessness and Approaches to Peace in Africa”, *Peace & Change*, Volume 25, No. 2, (April, 2000), pp. 166-187

<sup>11</sup> Kofi Annan, “The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa,” *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization* (S/1998/318, 1998), 3-28.

<sup>12</sup> Tandon, “Root Causes”, p. 175.

<sup>13</sup> Tandon, “Root Causes”, p. 185.

indefinitely prolonged. A second factor inhibiting discussions is the 9/11 aftermath. Policy in the North has shifted abruptly toward fighting terrorism and giving security a new pre-eminence pitting sympathetic officials and even policy research ones against their colleagues across the hall, the street and across the ocean in NATO. Then there is the donor demand for quick results often dovetailing with the sense of urgency in the communities.

From a structural perspective, concept one activities—as with development assistance as such—contribute more to the problem and indeed are part of a conflict management strategy at odds with parallel processes for outright social transformation and sovereign self determination. Governments in the South, as opposed to the social justice movements in their own countries, will more often than not line up with the first approach.

Quick fixes carry their own rationalizations. Donors now increasingly attribute violence and poverty to the absence of “good governance”. One strand of social scientists, including those working at the World Bank, have pushed the notion of failed states, corrupt warring elites, greed and grievance. All of which supports the calls for sharper more extended intervention, conditionality along with a new set of one-size-fit all recipes, often leaving aside cultural factors and historical rooting of specific conflicts.<sup>14</sup> The external or international dimension, past and present, gets sidetracked. It is not enough to talk about the interdependence of peace, democracy and development on a national basis: it must also permeate the international power structures global governance, which it does not. How far can we advance locally and nationally in the context of the undemocratic tidal forces of globalization? Are we to be content with low-intensity peacebuilding? Nor is it acceptable, from an activist point of view at least, to simply acknowledge the international inequities and then move on to see what can be done through targeted humanitarian policies and programs. Or are those interventions devised precisely to take minds and energy away from the external constraints and the need to address peacebuilding as a transborder undertaking that in the North also begins at home?

The frontier, of course, between the internal and the external is the state. Yet true state building is not on the international agenda, at least not in a way that can assist, shape and defend “local spaces” and “national” capacities for peace. Global assaults are complemented by local failures to defend national integrity and sovereignty, and with it the possibility of autonomous development. However, such is the massive character of the neoliberal assault that we find a

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<sup>14</sup> The reference is to the World Bank Senior Researcher Paul Collier’s influential Greed and Grievance writings. Useful discussion reviews are contained in the Working Paper Series of the Clingendael Institute, including Pyt S. Douma, “Political Economy of Internal Conflicts: A Review of Contemporary Trends and Issues” (Working Paper No. 1, October 2001) and Jeroen de Zeeuw and Georg Frerks, “Proceedings, International Seminar Political Economy of Internal Conflict”, 22 November, 2000. [www.clingendael.nl/cru](http://www.clingendael.nl/cru).

pervasive sense of lack of alternatives as summed up in the widespread yet mistaken notion that globalization has rendered the nation state largely irrelevant.

It is not a question of disbanding the state but rather making it subservient to the global neoliberal market order. Thus where state building does appear on the agenda (good governance) it is with the intention of organizing governments to better conform to the dominant neoliberal international capital-friendly order. But it is the neoliberal framework itself that requires a peace and conflict assessment. Is a poverty-based peace the outcome of a logic of the free movement of capital, goods and skilled peoples across borders? Will the “supra-sovereignty” of the US and the international agencies like the WTO, the IMF and the various free trade agreements give people the same priority as they provide capital? If globalization is the enemy of local custom, democratically determined institutions, regulations and community needs, then can conflict and violence be far behind?

IMF, World Bank and donor “reform” programs—whose acceptance is often a condition for development assistance or debt relief—may indeed be contributing to conflict and violence. For example, World Bank land reform programs as studied in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, South Africa and Thailand found that “market-based land reforms”, in addition to evading the real land redistribution problem (at the heart of so many past and ongoing peasant rebellions), create conditions for new conflict by excluding traditionally marginalized groups like rural women and indigenous communities. Bank policy is to “encourage” countries under their programs to increase cash crop exports thereby redirecting small-scale agriculture away from domestic food crop production, displacing “non-competitive” small farmers, particularly women, for the benefit of larger externally-oriented food production.<sup>15</sup>

As long as neoliberal intervention is not recognized as a conflict-producing factor, then it will continue to be presumed as one of the solutions.

Even the US Central Intelligence Agency in its *Global Trends 2015* study predicted that “The rising tide of the global economy will create many economic winners, but it will not lift all boats...[It will] spawn conflicts at home and abroad, ensuring an even wider gap between regional winners and losers than exists today...Regions, countries, and groups feeling left behind will face deepening economic stagnation, political instability and cultural alienation. They will foster political, ethnic, ideological, and religious extremism, along with the violence that often accompanies it.”<sup>16</sup>

### ***Peace Interventions?***

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<sup>15</sup> See the Final Declaration of the International Seminar on the Negative Impacts of World Bank Market-Based Land Reform Policy, (April 22, 2022, Washington, DC). [www.50years.org](http://www.50years.org)

<sup>16</sup> US Central Intelligence Agency, *Global Trends 2015*, quoted in International Forum on Globalization, *Does Globalization help the Poor?* (San Francisco, 2001), p. 1.

When it comes to intervention, many South and North think of history, colonialism and militarism. Are we up against the latest version of the historical civilizing mission carried out by the North in a multifaceted fashion <sup>17</sup>? Indeed, UN and NATO (“donor”) thinking, even before 9/11, reflects a worrisome tendency toward making peacebuilding an extension of peace-enforcement or peace-keeping – the tail end or parallel of external military intervention and “transition”.<sup>18</sup>

Philippine social scientist and activist, Walden Bello, observed that “there is emerging a renewed respectability in direct intervention in the affairs of developing countries. Even before September 11, many developing societies, particularly in Africa and the Middle East, were already characterized as “failed societies.” Robert Kaplan’s 1994 essay in *The Atlantic* was but one of several influential writings to forcefully expound the view that decolonization had led, not to the emergence of stable polities in Africa and the Middle East but to a descent into “anarchy” that threatened to destabilize the whole world... ”Post-September 11, respect for national sovereignty and self-determination has been further eroded in Washington and London, with conservative intellectuals giving voice to opinions that powerful states cannot articulate...yet.” <sup>19</sup>

Yet “peace-making” and “peace-enforcement” – as the stage that will follow the bombing and the “taking out” of governments out of the West’s favor – stand as an oxymoron, contrary to the essence of peacebuilding and the notion of peace by peaceful means. Peacebuilders should not assume the role of NATO’s well paid clean-up brigade or civilian intervention contingents. Nor should peacebuilding be held to comprise relief and rehabilitation activities, which in essence are trying to humanize the war. The point is to end it.

Peacebuilding as a component of development activities, or as a proverbial “cross cutting” activity must also be addressed critically. Where development assistance is seen as part of a self-justifying need (either by donor agency officials or governments of the South) and not as part of the problem, then peacebuilding may be at odds with development thinking, or more precisely the economic debt-paying model that makes “development assistance” necessary. Political positioning is necessary lest “peacebuilding” increasingly assume the form of violence attenuation just as development assistance becomes a form of poverty relief. Why not conceive or indeed research actually existing alternatives

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<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately the peacebuilding literature and much of globalized political science show a worrisome trend to legitimize the term intervention.

<sup>18</sup> Witness for example the presentation of peacebuilding in a “peacekeeping” context in the Brahimi report, “Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (A/55/305), August, 2000, paragraphs 239-243.

<sup>19</sup> Walden Bello, “The American Way of War”, *Focus on Trade*, No 72 (Bangkok, Thailand, January, 2002), p. 14. <http://www.focusweb.org>

where violence is less the subject of containment than of extirpation, just as poverty is not relieved but instead eradicated? In all, a world of alternatives.

### ***The Politics of Protection***

Episodes such as Rwanda, like Somalia before it, tend to provoke precipitated angst and legalistic searches for new governmental “criteria” for intervening or not. Of late 9/11 has injected a new sense of mission that, to a far greater degree than its predecessor, sets up “new” rules of engagement unapologetically contrary to international law. Those close to policy-making war-on-terrorism circles cannot be allowed to argue “pragmatism” in order to set aside a core set of legal principles, let alone ethical ones for the sake of remaining “relevant”. Of course transnational authorities are increasingly required to deal with many of the transnational afflictions of humankind, including HIV-AIDS, drugs, terrorism and multinational corporations. But the word to underscore here is transnational: a far cry from the sort of unilateralism practiced across the board by the US Government, and more often than not meekly accepted by its G8 “partners”. Regrettably some allies prefer to go to bat with the US on issues of steel or lumber imports than on policy toward Afghanistan or Iraq. In big power trade-offs, issues of peace and development have a way of sliding downward in the multinational agenda.

US and G8 agendas are shifting rapidly. From the discussion of how to conduct post-war reconstruction we go to discussions of how to conduct war, from conflict prevention to conflict pre-emption, from human security and the expansion of human freedoms, to national security and the constriction of citizen rights. Where does peacebuilding stand? Does the production of civilian reconstruction know-how give the military license for destruction too?

Can micro-successes outweigh the current macro-setback? As with development, the problem is not so much of intentions as with the inability to implement the same in the real world, beginning with the one remaining superpower. Or worse: the peacebuilding field, in its zealotry to achieve its goals, may have unwittingly undermined international legal barriers thrown up over previous decades intended to impede or deter military aggression and external interference. At one point some believed that conflict prevention and peacebuilding, along with human security, could become the new universal foreign policy paradigm. Supporters, particularly in Canada, pointed to the success of the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines and the Ottawa Treaty as a key accomplishment and forerunner of new “diplomacy” in global politics and the emergence of civil society-backed moral powers and soft diplomacy. But the decade long romance between the UN and NGOs is probably unwinding as the United States remained unimpressed before 9/11 and totally scornful afterwards. For their part the “allies” cannot have their cake and eat it too:

dropping bombs while funding small arms campaigns, approving development aid while creating poverty, or sending in the conflict resolvers while creating conflicts through their rigid defense of macro-economic neoliberalism. In the battle between human security and macro-economic fundamentalism, the economists won out. Of course there were the discourse adjustments and the multiplication of civil society consultations, but then it was back to business as usual.

The human security paradigm appears as the continuation of the liberal internationalist one albeit placing more needed emphasis on the social and economic components.<sup>20</sup> Politically however the discourse leans towards intervention. The “progression in the global lexicon”, as Lloyd Axworthy describes it, is also accompanied by diminished respect for the principle of national sovereignty. Of course sovereignty was never an absolute and it cannot be employed as a pretext to avoid compliance with human rights instruments. But sovereignty will be less important if indeed *all* the multilaterals and the big powers, particularly the US and not just the middle ones, were to be guided by notions of respect for self-determination of nations. As this is clearly not the case, before or after 9/11, one wonders whether human security notions are being twisted by NATO. We hear of “humanitarian” military intervention leading to abuses of all sorts.

What Axworthy terms “timidity” on the part of the UN Secretariat as regards pursuing a dialogue on the question of intervention, may in fact be a sensible and sensitive response to the multiple pattern of abuses and pretexts governing the use of military intervention in the past and present.<sup>21</sup> Interestingly enough, the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, states that “virtually all analyses of intervention and state sovereignty have examined the issues from the point of view of an intervener.”<sup>22</sup>

It is precisely from the perspective of the “intervened” that the report’s framing and conclusions invite greater scrutiny. Debating the “relativity” of national sovereignty entails much more than the standard juxtaposition between national rights on one side, and global responsibilities and universal principles on the other. A more realistic debate would take account of the current global system and balance of power, including the interests of the big powers that stand to gain from the “end of national sovereignty” of States (other than their own). The state

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<sup>20</sup> La ‘paix positive’, la ‘sécurité humaine’ et la ‘sécurité coopérative’ constituent les normes qui sont censées promouvoir l’agenda de la consolidation de la paix ainsi que les intérêts d’un ordre libéral stable au sein du système international.” David, Charles-Philippe et. Al., *Repenser la consolidation de la paix: fondements, intervention et rapprochements*, (Montréal: UQAM, Octobre 1998), p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> See the introduction by Lloyd Axworthy to Rob McRae and Don Hubert, eds., *Human Security and the New Diplomacy, Protecting People, Promoting Peace*, (McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal, 2001), p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> ICISS, *The Responsibility to Protect, Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*, (Ottawa, 2001).

in the most highly industrialized countries has never been more powerful than it is today, working unilaterally and collectively, to reshape the world and particular the global economy according to their own metropolitan interests. Part of the imposition takes the form of the propagation of 'principles' for "good" governance and "sound" economies. As Dot Keet from the University of Western Cape in South Africa argues,

"The powerful states which arrogantly intruded into the affairs of weaker nations constantly invoke and conflate 'higher principles', 'good governance', and the like, with their own strategic and national interests. Similarly, the so-called 'replacement of national sovereignty' by new forms of 'global accountability' and the internationalization of many matters of government applies most invasively to the weaker and weakest countries. It does not apply similarly in the stronger countries."<sup>23</sup>

Is global militarization now on its way to finishing the job of eradicating sovereignty initiated by global humanitarian intervention? Strong perspectives from the South will continue to insist on the inseparability of democracy and sovereignty, given that self-determination is a prerequisite for the creation and protection of national (and even local) democracies. This does not mean giving a blank check to national bureaucratic elites or even political parties. State sovereignty becomes peoples' sovereignty in the context of national participatory democracy. Any erosion of state sovereignty in effect robs the people of a fundamental instrument of economic and political self-defense, or at the very least the potential to achieve higher degrees of autonomy and freedom in the era of globalization. Sadly however given levels of elite incompetence, many national NGOs cry out for more external involvement and in countries with weaker governments the expatriates become a power unto themselves dismissing government officials.

Non-governmental strategic analysts in the South do not reject the need for improved global governance where improvement takes the form of actively containing the power of the World Trade Organization and the IMF and other such undemocratic bodies controlled by the richest countries and corporations. Global governance means something quite different to the highly presumptuous self-selected Group of Eight (G7 if one excludes Russia) of economic/military powers. Putting more power in the hands of the UN, including the power to intervene, becomes counterproductive as long as the big powers dominate the Security Council and many member governments lack democratic legitimacy. What is clear from a peace activist perspective at least is that the "responsibility to protect" also takes the form of resisting US-led globalization in all its corporate/militarized trappings. So is the "war on terrorism" simply a logical

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<sup>23</sup> Dot Keet, "Alternatives to the WTO Regime: A Discussion Paper on Tactics and Strategies", (Alternative Information and Development Centre, Cape Town, November, 2000), p. 43.



outcome of “humanitarian military intervention” and “bringing good government” to Afghanistan or Iraq? The “axis of evil” argumentation is much too crude to be taken seriously on doctrinal grounds. Of much greater concern is the more sophisticated liberal version of the contemporary white man’s burden. Writing (significantly) in *The New York Times*, Paddy Ashdown, the UN High Commissioner in Bosnia and Herzegovina, argues that “history will look back on our engagement in Bosnia and Herzegovina as the first faltering step toward a doctrine of international community”. He and others proclaim the legitimacy of this “ new model for international intervention” is supposedly geared to conflict prevention: “We are already applying the lessons of Bosnia in Kosovo, East Timor and Afghanistan. Perhaps they will be applied in Iraq as well...Our success is a reminder that the real work doesn't end when the soldiers leave — it's only just beginning”.<sup>24</sup>

Whether it is the European Union or the United States that carries out the occupation – or whether it is Security Council-sanctioned – is a secondary matter. The bottom line is that the big powers cannot be trusted—the compulsion to maintain unity gravely undermines the possibility of considering fundamental alternatives. In a scene worthy of Kafka the Security Council seriously debates a resolution to provide the United States and its “allies” with the authority to invade a sovereign nation without any specific act of provocation. Where is the international responsibility to prevent the United States from placing entire populations at risk and dictating the form of government other nations should have?

### ***Corporate Globalization and Conflict Prevention***

If Palestinians have not yet arrived at a just peace, Central Americans managed to get a peace without much justice. Income disparities have never been wider in the history of Central America, nor have the levels of corruption and the deterioration of living standards for the poor: is this the “peace” that was fought for? Even if the international community and the poor at war can coincide on the need for peace, the indifferent perspectives manifest themselves when establishing priorities for the “post-conflict” peacebuilding and development agenda.

The problem is not the association of peace with development, which is correct; the problem is the association of peace with a particular neoliberal model of development that generates poverty and inequality, and therefore with clauses of the peace agreement designed to tackle the roots of social inequity. As Jenny Pearce of the University of Bradford and others have explained, “the macro-level context of Central America in the 1990s has impeded creative micro-level

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<sup>24</sup>Paddy Ashdown, “What I Learned in Bosnia”, *The New York Times*, October 28, 2002.

peacebuilding initiatives in the region”<sup>25</sup> As in Nicaragua and Guatemala, issues affecting the poor and peacebuilding were given bottom priority in favor of economic stabilization, adjustment and liberalization policy issues, as convened between the elite and the global economic policy-making bodies. “The priority given to structural adjustment programs after peace accords were signed signaled to these elites that economic liberalization was ultimately far more important to donors than peace-building and the redistributive agenda that it would require”.<sup>26</sup> Along with the recalcitrance of the military and economic elites in Guatemala, post-war peacebuilding faces the obstacle of neoliberalism and globalization, both of which tend to militate against fundamental socioeconomic reforms and economic democracy.

“Donors” and intergovernmental bodies reflect and are part of the global power structure. They join the academics in their hesitancy to acknowledge, let alone address, considerations of power, global structures and market-based ideology. Hence the tendency (if not preference) of many to refrain from tackling the underlying assumptions of the peacebuilding concept reducing the notion to management techniques, application of tools and employment for Northern experts as consultants. Small wonder that we have trouble with definitions, when it is not a question of concepts but of politics and ethics.<sup>27</sup> Peace strategies lacking structural analysis do not bring us closer to justice, indeed they become a form of reinforcing the flawed systemic underpinnings. The term and practice of conflict resolution is said to suffer from the same ambiguity.<sup>28</sup> In short, peacebuilding and conflict resolution can be as much a tool of social change as one of social control, depending on whether it addresses the structural forces behind conflict. When peacebuilding does address global structural forces, then the observer and analyst must consider his or her own role and commitment. It is not enough to pledge allegiance to non-violence and reconciliation: opinions must give way to assuming a position and taking sides. In Palestine as in apartheid South Africa, notions of mediation and conflict resolution become suspect when the objective is not simply any settlement but a just one that addresses root causes of direct and indirect violence.

Associating peacebuilding with self-determination and economic rights was and remains a point of principle for many peacebuilders (others have given up on governments altogether). From a human rights perspective, the attainment of effective national self-determination (independence) with territorial integrity was – and in the case of Palestine remains the precondition of democracy, human

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<sup>25</sup> Jenny Pearce, “Peace-building in the periphery: lessons from Central America”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1999, p. 56.

<sup>26</sup> Pearce, “Peace-building...”, p. 66.

<sup>27</sup> See the arguments made by Roland Paris, “Peacebuilding and the limits of liberal internationalism”, *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2.

<sup>28</sup> According to one scholar, “terminological chaos is rife within conflict resolution as an academic discipline”, Lisa A. Fast, “Frayed Edges, Exploring the Boundaries of Conflict Resolution”, *Peace & Change, A Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 4., p. 529.

rights and, in many senses, of violence prevention itself, let alone post-conflict peacebuilding. In the context of a humanely unacceptable status quo, conflict needs to be promoted not prevented. Martin Luther King Jr. expressed the need for creating justice-oriented tension: in his *Letter from a Birmingham Jail*, King emphasizes that “nonviolent direct action seeks to create such a crisis and establish such creative tension that a community that has constantly refused to negotiate is forced to confront the issue”.<sup>29</sup>

That Israel can get away with the practice of state terrorism says volumes about the contemporary world and the peace we are unable to build, let alone define. Professed and professional neutrality in this context as in others is more of a problem than an “advantage”. Power is not neutral. If conflict resolution and preventive diplomacy are today mistrusted or discredited notions in many quarters of the Middle East and South today, it has much to do with the absence of history and commitment, let alone the fundamental premise of justice as inseparable from the attainment of sovereignty. Efforts to bring about symbolic Israeli-Palestinian civil society dialogues and youth-to-youth undertakings do have symbolic value, but unfortunately they may be less effective, given global power line-ups, than active resistance. Confronting US-Israeli policy, or racism decades ago in South Africa and the United States, required what King would have called the combination of confrontational direct action with constructive negotiation.

A problem here is that the peacebuilding field cannot divorce itself from the fact that diplomacy is also a power-induced game that does not guarantee a just or sustainable settlement. Indeed certain settlements are bound to produce even more violence. Referring for example to the 1993 Oslo negotiations, Edward Said states that “given the tremendous disparity in power between the Israelis and the Palestinians, in effect the peace process has simply been a repackaging of the Israeli occupation...”.<sup>30</sup> More charitably stated, internationally mediated negotiation processes may lead to a “peace” that fails to address the forces that gave rise to national liberation movements. In the end both the theory and practice of peacebuilding must correspond to the reality of people living in states of oppression and, therefore, theories and practices of democratization, self-determination and sovereignty which emphasize broad participation along with a democratization of the international political economy.

Notions of sovereignty take us to consideration of the State. Who is to determine and on what grounds that one or another state or “regime” lacks legitimacy? The same with the concern for building institutions. Institutions for whom? The liberal

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<sup>29</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,” in James E. Washington, ed., *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings of Martin Luther King Jr.* (New York: Harper and Row, 1986), p. 291

<sup>30</sup> David Barsamian, “Intifada 2000: The Palestinian Uprising. Interview with Edward Said”, *Alternative Press Review*, (Vol. 6, No. 1, Spring 2001), p.38

assumptions would have us believe that certain states need to be deconstructed in order to be reconstructed with external tutelage and resources. Deconstruction and construction of the State (and civil society)—normatively internal democratic questions—are now seen as the burden of the “international community”. Ideology not reality would have some believe that there are no tensions between one and the other, but in the context of income misdistribution there is a conflict, particularly where the “winners” internally are backed against potential majorities by donors committed to the imposition of pro-market institutions and neo-liberal model of development.

The veneer of peace-building rhetoric cannot disguise developmental and ideological presumptions that inform the peacebuilding strategies. Critical reflection (theoretical and case-based) is vital in order to break the vicious liberal peacebuilding circle, and courage is necessary in order to follow through with the conclusions. Liberal donors and accompanying NGOs have evolved sufficiently to now recognize that short and medium-term “conflict-sensitive development” do not, in and of themselves, bring us closer to sustainable engagement of long term structural problems and attainment of positive peace. Perhaps it is exaggerated to claim that the first serves as a conservative substitute for a more radical second. Yet concentration on issues of policy design and implementation reinforces the notion that it is a question of technically adjusting policy as opposed to challenging political parameters, particularly those that guide the “good governance” outlook of the rich countries. Of course it will always be easier and more convenient to limit the scope of the conflict problem to one of national dysfunctional social relationships. Yet in this “globalized” or latest version of colonialism, the national social relationships do not exist in separation from international economic relationships. Therefore the inclusive “dialogues” that are so often recommended should encompass Northern capitals as well, along with transnational corporations, recognizing their historical and ongoing role in the broader context of power, instead of pretending to be innocent, helpful, patriarchal white outsiders. The process of analysis so often recommended and packaged for export should be applied at home, and let every level of community and society in the North take part in that global analysis of “local” violence and structural misery. Rich country constituencies are better placed to demand that Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment and Early Warning be applied to the decisions of the World Bank, the IMF and the World Trade Organization, along with the policies of their own governments that give the orders in these institutions. The origins of that violence may be much closer to home. Peace research needs to explore how peaceful conflict engagement in the South can contribute to problem solving and building peace in the North.

As to process and methods, suffice it to add that if comprehensive structural change is most effectively and efficiently pursued through peaceful means, it must be proven also, with the utmost urgency, that the same structures are malleable and democratically responsive to public pressure. Here the electoral

scoreboard of the corporate democracies leaves much to be desired — where in fact some of those in the South, such as Brazil, stand as examples. By most accounts, it has been public street pressure that has forced minimal concessions as regards global justice and peace. In question here – in theory and practice – is not the adequacy of non-violence or direct action, but rather the inadequacy of the theological and moral liberalism that informs certain pacifist peacebuilding strands: the naïve belief in the innate goodness of all humanity, the superficial understanding of violence, evil (and sin), and the preferential concern with the pacifist’s own purity over the concern for those who suffer.<sup>31</sup> No surprise that Latin America’s “theology of liberation” gained wide acceptance across the South and in many parts of the North against “liberal theology” whose latest version, the “theology of reconciliation”, is making a strong comeback and also influencing the field.

If one objective of conflict prevention is to uphold the protection of human rights on a mass scale, then where is the intervention at the global level that will block the socially devastating impact derived from acquiescence to the policies of the financial multilateral institutions? According to UNCTAD’s *Least Developed Countries 2002*, poverty is increasing in those developing economies that have the most open trade regimes advocated by the International Monetary Fund and donors.<sup>32</sup> This is one cause of conflict. But who upholds the “right to protection” of the poorest countries to defend themselves by breaking with macroeconomic orthodoxy? Where is the intervention that will address imbalances of power and global distribution of resources by way of debt cancellation, improved commodity prices, access to Northern markets and protection of nascent industries? The point is underscored by Mark Duffield when he refers to the dominant tendency in post-conflict discourse to ‘normalize’ situations of protracted instability so that ‘development’ can ensue without a well-entrenched local state.<sup>33</sup> As institutions such as the World Bank and even UNDP welcome or are resigned to turning over development to the giant corporations, the demand that humanitarian assistance or peacebuilding become more “developmental” amounts to a call for its privatization.<sup>34</sup> Does peacebuilding become a euphemism for conflict management—that is the administration of poverty and violence to prevent larger challenges to global capitalist stability?

According to “social capital” theories and others, the goal is to increase capacities to resolve conflicts that presumably deter the accumulation of financial capital (investment). Ability to resolve disputes, according to Joseph Stiglitz,

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<sup>31</sup> See the essay by G.H.C. MacGregor, “The Relevance of an Impossible Ideal”, in Walter Wink, ed., *Peace is the Way: Writings on Nonviolence from the Fellowship of Reconciliation*, (Orbis Books, New York, 2000), pp. 17-29.

<sup>32</sup> Cited in Nirit Ben-Ari, “Poverty is worsening in the African LDCs,” *Africa Recovery*, Vol. 16, No.2-3,(September, 2002), UN Department of Public Information: New York., p.9.

<sup>33</sup> Mark Duffield, “Globalization and War Economies: Promoting Order or the Return of History?”, *Fletcher Forum of World Affairs*, Vol. 23, no. 2, (1999) p. 19; Moore, “Leveling...”, p.20

<sup>34</sup> The World Bank, *Post-Conflict reconstruction: the Role of the World Bank*, (Washington, 1999).

former World Bank Vice-President, is a critical part of social and organizational capital. But as Moore points out, “the causes of conflict do not have to be addressed, especially if they are seen as the inevitable result of ‘modernization’.”<sup>35</sup> What is of concern is the ‘ability to resolve disputes particularly where they involve property and business rights—yet another technical assistance capacity-building niche in order to entice internal and external investment?

Nothing is more detrimental to investor confidence than outbreaks of fighting. “Prevention” along these lines is built into the conceptual and policy framework of international actors, according to Laurie Nathan, Director of the Centre for Conflict Resolution in South Africa. Nathan chides the United Nations and other actors engaged in peacemaking in Africa’s civil wars for tending to equate ‘crisis’ with actual or imminent hostilities. Post-conflict strategies should give way to ‘pre-conflict imperatives’. He argues that violence is a symptom of intra-state crises that are rooted in structural conditions, and it is necessary to focus more on the structural causes of violence than on violence per se, learning how to distinguish between symptoms and causes of intra-state crisis. Indeed, the prospect of averting large-scale violence at short notice—the premise of the early warning/action models—is at best exceedingly small. Even where peace could signify profits, it cannot be forgotten that oil companies continue to make huge profits in Africa—another research inquiry—notwithstanding conflict situations: weakened or resource-starved governments cannot effectively bargain for better terms. According to Nathan, international organizations and foreign powers should abandon the illusion that they can resolve intra-state crises. International actors should practice what they preach: championing peace by stopping exports of arms to Africa and refraining from exploiting its natural resources.<sup>36</sup>

But can donors abandon such illusions? After all market liberalization and the promotion of privatization are two key bases of “war economies” that allow the conflict to expand, be it by way of drugs, lumber or diamonds. One research task would be to ascertain whether neoliberal thinking severely hampers policy and program possibilities for dealing with such matters. Or is diamond trade certification the limit of what can be expected—an expandable exception in the light of the trade liberalization promotion that is strongly pushed by the Washington-led neoliberal consensus? How much does the World Trade Organization model of integration stand as an obstacle in the way of placing sanctions on countries or key trade flows?

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<sup>35</sup> Moore, “Leveling...”, p 23.

<sup>36</sup> Laurie Nathan, “The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: The Structural Causes of Crisis and Violence in Africa”, *Track Two*, Vol. 10, No 2, (August, 2001), Centre for Conflict Resolution, Cape town, p. 1. An abridged edition of this seminal piece is found under the same title in *Peace and Change*, Vol. 25, No. 2, April, 2000, pp. 188-207

Once wars are settled, qualifying for reconstruction assistance presupposes immediate adjustment to a market system. While some in the World Bank try to argue for macroeconomic flexibility provisos, the reintegration programs themselves—for example the emphasis on micro-enterprises—reflect a development paradigm that applied to the immediate post-war period has had disastrous results. Peace fails to deliver the goods demanded by the population, much of which associates peace not with liberalism but with material improvement.

Progressive social movements and NGOs in Africa took issue with their own governments on account of the inadequate analysis contained in the New Economic Partnership document. History is always crucial, including the slave trade and colonial pillage. They do not forget episodes of destabilization and the alliance between the apartheid regime and economic partners in the North, never duly scrutinized under the Truth and Reconciliation Committee.

South African political scientist Kwame A. Ninsin suggests that neoliberal-caused impoverishment creates cultures of dependence of people on the state and of the state on external power. On the other side there is a growth of the culture of intervention:

“According to one study, about 100,000 expatriate technical assistance staff work in Africa meddling in every aspect of policy analysis, advice, policy making and implementation and gulping up US \$4 billion per annum...At the political level this amounts to the recolonization of Africa...At the economic level is the subjugation of the continent to the total hegemony of capital...This development has been facilitated by the continent’s external debt, which has placed the continent in virtual ‘economic receivership’ with the World Bank and the IMF.... Simultaneously the state security architecture has broken down, giving rise to private armies, the proliferation of weapons of war, economic and military banditry. Much of this has occurred with the complicity of powerful external economic and financial interests. Today the state is no longer able to provide adequate physical security for its citizens.<sup>37</sup>

Of late the “donors” insist that African governments take up their own regional police work. The New Economic Partnership document presented by key African governments to the G8 and embodied in the new African Union platform takes on the peacebuilding and good governance agenda. But once again, non-governmental actors asked if this was really an “African” agenda or simply a sop to the North in return for more assistance, debt relief and diminished protection. According to the July, 2002 African Civil Society Declaration on NEPAD:

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<sup>37</sup> Kwame An Ninsin, “The Quest for Democracy”, *African Insight*, (Africa Institute, Pretoria, South Africa), Vol. 30, Nos. 3-4, (January, 2001), p. 14,16.

“...Conflicts on the continent have their sources in the legacy of colonialism, economic exclusion, political intolerance, social polarization, artificial borders and unequal access to resources. We noted that NEPAD  
-ignores all these factors and approaches these problems mainly as technical peace-keeping operations;  
-does not point to the structural adjustment policies of the IMF and World Bank in exacerbating conflicts leading to further wars;  
-does not point to the interests of corporations, war profiteers and warlords, in their determination to control and exploit our resources, such as oil, diamonds, and other precious resources, as a major source of war and conflict in Africa.”<sup>38</sup>

According to the group, peace demands meeting human security requirements including freedom from discrimination. And it is Africans themselves that need to tackle “the divisions and tensions created by the legacy of arbitrary colonial borders and divisive social relations.” Tandon goes further to insist on a dual strategy of partially delinking Africa from the global system and developing a tolerance towards interethnic and political difference: “this approach requires a new kind of moral and political culture, and new structures of political decision-making and accountability that are locally accountable and diversified.”<sup>39</sup>

As in the anti-NEPAD response in Africa, Latin American and Asian anti-globalization forces also question the ability of Southern governments to emerge as real champions for a more economically just global order. Disparities within and among North and South countries (and within the Southern countries themselves) have eroded capacities and political will to effectively negotiate collectively – debt relief, development aid, global environmental controls or trade – against North governments whose power has correspondingly magnified over the course of the last decade.<sup>40</sup> Increased inequality within countries also creates powerful lobbies for neoliberalism inside South countries. The disputes that are carried over into the Group of 77 for example are less about national sovereignty or ideological contentment of globalization, but about the division of the spoils of the economic regime. The convergence of South governments along with the major European political parties on the neoliberal agenda leaves a vacuum at the level of formal political forces. It is left to others in the South to

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<sup>38</sup> African Civil Society Declaration on NEPAD, *Africa is not for Sale!*, July 20, 2002 (African Trade and Gender Network circulation). Supported by members of social movements, trade unions, youth and women's organizations, faith-based organizations, academics, NGOs and other popular civil society organizations from the whole of Africa, meeting in Port Shepstone, South Africa, 4-8 July 2002. Also on the AIDC website.

<sup>39</sup> Tandon, “Root Causes...”, p. 166. See also by the same author *Globalization and Africa's Options*, (Harare: International South Group Network, 1999).

<sup>40</sup> An exception was the negotiation at the WTO Ministerial in Seattle in 1999 when the combination of street protests and South government indignation and North/US tactics effectively blocked further agreement and dramatized globalization's legitimacy crisis.



take up the struggle for sovereignty and the resumption of a genuine nation-building project.

Unsurprisingly many of these divergences within and among countries carry over into the research agenda. The government-sponsored official research agenda dominates conferences in the North while the progressive agenda, hard pressed for resources, forges out on its own. For better or worse even the progressive agenda is shaped by the need to contest the new conventional wisdoms and campaign against strategic orientations being devised by governments or civil society organizations in the North to contest poverty and violence. For example, of late there are tendencies to argue that authoritarian or weak states and illicit commercial interests are the real driving forces behind wars in Africa and elsewhere. But are these not symptoms and accompaniments to war rather than structural causes? Is the illicit trade in diamonds any less damaging than the licit trade in oil? How convenient, as if weak states and “greed” provoked hostilities in the first instance, or as if narrow private interests can give rise to more societal violence.

The other side of the coin to this argument is that civil society must take the lead in the face of authoritarian local governments and elites. More spaces for “civil society participation” becomes the recipe offered by political liberalism and pushed by the donors. International NGOs are among the principal flag carriers of civil society and “grass roots” participation. However here too we witness a more nuanced pushing of an external paradigm that would relegate the figure of the national state in favor of one that glorifies local actors and admonishes sovereignty. This runs contrary to the thinking of many South social scientists who assert that a strong civil society requires a strong state, and vice versa. State security and conflict management responsibilities cannot be outsourced to NGOs or civil society, let alone foreign armies, although demand for private security services grows by leaps and bounds. As Nathan points out, “the fact that African states are frequently the main threat to the security of their citizens constitutes an argument for democracy rather than an argument against the state.”<sup>41</sup>

Nonetheless conflict resolution training and capacity building figures prominently in the good governance recipes. And because the G8 and official donor agencies see free market economics as part of good governance, we then come full circle. If it is to survive, peacebuilding must not become yet another externally-defined formula to create “good governance” in the “developing” countries. The field must resist the general emphasis by Northern governments on the failings and abuses of local political/governing elites. Certainly governmental abuses are a huge problem demanding urgent attention and counter efforts, but they are also an effect of other factors and forces. European governments and above all the US have a long history of colluding with or even creating such regimes in order to

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<sup>41</sup> Nathan, “Four Horsemen...”, p. 23.

defend vested interests. And then they blame the same elites for failures going on to hint at the broader “failure” and “weakness” of societies in the South, particularly in Africa.

“Good governance” and “peacebuilding” are no substitute for democracy. To say that peace and stability are central to tackling poverty is a superficial half-truth. As Dot Keet argues, such an analysis “fails to focus on the complex interaction of internal and external factors that create social tensions, conflicts, civil and inter-state wars, war-lordism, and even ‘collapsed’ states”<sup>42</sup>. Economic crisis underpins major social tension and instability, so that social conflict and violence are both effect as well as cause and effect of economic crisis. Economic crisis is fed by northern governmental insistence on the extension of deregulated market globalization intensifying poverty and social polarization, instability and conflict. Faced with economic dependence and political weaknesses, governments in the South tend to become part of the problem. Technical assistance—be it in the form of conflict prevention and poverty reduction “capacity building” schemes—are no substitute for independent policy rights. They become instead devices employed to deflect criticism of the global status quo by developing countries. To take attention away from the nature and functioning of the global economy, the policies and practices of Northern economic and political powers, the role and functioning of multilateral institutions—none of this is seriously recognized let alone dealt with, yet they are critical to genuine peacebuilding.

It is revealing how more external intervention is increasingly recommended to deal with the conflicts and problems posed by intervention in the first place. There is a consistency of sorts because interventions that take the form of short-term projects sometimes at the expense of those long-term processes that warrant greater and distinct attention. One suspects that conflict prevention emerges in consonance with the failure of the development model to deliver peace, but instead of reviewing that conflict-producing model the practitioners will emphasize violent conflict in a vacuum.

Over and above the macro-constraints, donor policy suffers as a conventional wisdom develops on how to handle conflict and/or development. New ideas are ignored, avoided or rejected simply because they are not properly packaged in policymaker-friendly way. Toolboxes, formulas, five step methods and log frames—a tireless search for “replicability”—tend to substitute for ongoing critical thinking. Conflict impact assessments tend to respond to the demands of donor programming and “intervention” funding them, much like bankers who demand risk analysis before investing their capital. Nowadays we are all called “stakeholder” but it is the people on the ground who are “rights-holders”. Does this mean training is necessary so that governments and communities can take their rightful place in the new international neoliberal pecking order? While the

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<sup>42</sup> Keet, Dot, “Views from the South on “North-South” issues and South-North Peoples’ Alternatives”, Transnational Institute website, (November, 2002), [www.tni.com](http://www.tni.com)

multilaterals train government, is it left to the international NGOs to train people? Empowerment or disempowerment? Ownership? Participation in design, implementation and accountability? Whose priorities? What assumptions?

Assumptions behind programs and methodologies, including expatriate roles on the ground, should be the focus of sustained discussion. For all the talk of “partnership”, there seems to be little room for the discussion of the broader issues of globalization and impoverishment that are at the heart of South concerns. Or are we more worried about being understood by the donors and policy-makers than by the victims and rights-holders? Can we have it both ways? Should the two peacebuilding concept routes part company once and for all? Perhaps an amicable divorce is preferable to a forced marriage.

Violent conflict, with all the destruction and suffering that it entails, may be less costly in human terms than indirect violence. Deflecting resources and political attention from one to the other raises fundamental ethical questions. Are we simply to assume that the poor shall always be with us? And poverty unlike oil is not a foreign policy concern. Yet as violence spreads, official talk turns to conflict prevention. Not much intellectual or political progress can be reported here. To date, policy-frustrated NGOs and donors continue to ask what is being learned about conflict prevention, and how it relates if at all to development assistance. “Successful” conflict prevention experiences can be reduced to the diplomatic or state level, community or local ones, and even at the level of individuals—but a holistic prevention strategy will never emerge, at least from the donor driven side, because fundamental issues remain politically and institutionally off-limits.

### ***Beyond Victimhood (I): Gender and Bottom-Up Peacebuilding***

The linkage of peace and gender is generating new thinking that places us closer to devising alternative policy and practical strategies. Gender relations research forcefully provides us new ways of looking at structural power relations and the role of relational transformations in the process of peacebuilding. Rita Manchanda argues:

“Women’s peace activism and feminist critical consciousness has questioned the centrality of the dominant meaning of peace as defined in the strategic discourse as an absence of war and of security as national security. Instead, women’s perspectives tend to privilege the notion of a ‘just’ peace, as defined from the perspective of the discriminated and disempowered...it is the less privileged, the poor and the marginalized, the majority of whom are women, who are most concerned about a just peace and human security.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Rita Manchanda, *Women, War and Peace in South Asia, Beyond Victimhood to Agency*, (Sage Publication, California and London, 2001), p. 10.

Introducing social categories to address power relations, in this case between women and men, is critical to peacebuilding as it examines role constructions in society in its relationship to violence and conflict. Feminists such as the Israeli scholar Simona Sharoni were among the first to scrutinize conflict resolution theory in the light of feminist theorizing on gender and power, pointing to the uneven playing field as an impediment to “negotiation”. Many of her colleagues, North and South, argue that most social systems discriminate against and oppress women, and thereby require fundamental restructuring.<sup>44</sup> Upon examining the underpinnings of the social systems, neoliberal globalization increasingly stood out as a paramount obstacle. Research development along these lines should be encouraged.

A promising tendency is that which sets aside the historical meta-narratives featuring tales of grief and women as stereotypical “natural peacemakers”, or simply survivors of sexual violence. Masculinity is being addressed for the role it plays not only in the home but also in national and global institutions. Argon Appadurai, Bene Madunagu and Gita Sen from Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), along with North counterparts, speak of ‘genderscape’ as a gender lens applying to the analysis of corporate globalization. Fundamentalism is also a target. According to DAWN such beliefs “are often not traditional at all but are customs of recent vintage created for the specific purpose of controlling women or other groups.”<sup>45</sup> Our research needs to unpack this powerful proposition.

Since the 1980’s DAWN has sponsored country-level research to monitor the intensification of global fundamentalism and structural adjustment as it impacts women. The so-called revival of “values” goes hand in hand with increased integration with economic globalization leading, in South and South East Asian and the Pacific, “to patriarchal states or organizations systematically reasserting their hold on women as orthodox representations of some idealized concept or value from the past, further limiting the spaces in which women can continue to claim autonomy.” In Africa, DAWN studies show how structural adjustment programs came into existence within the content of patriarchy, neo-colonial globalization and new forms of exploitation that place women at huge social disadvantage. “Once again the combination of socio-economic arrangements gets mixed up with notions of African ‘culture and tradition’ phraseology always used to tell women they are not part of the discourse”. In Latin America, the great achievements with respect to women’s rights are being rolled back as the

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<sup>44</sup> Ingenor Breines, et al., *Towards a Women’s Agenda for a Culture of Peace*, (UNESCO Publishing, Paris, 1999) and Lois A. Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin, eds. *The Women and War Reader*, NYU Press, 1998; “Women, Violent Conflict and Peacebuilding: Global Perspectives’ Conference, organized by International Alert, London, 5-7, 1999.

<sup>45</sup> DAWN, “Addressing the World Social Forum”, *A DAWN Supplement* (January, 2002) (mimeo, ISSN 1562-4587), p. 2

region is not exempt from the regressive stands sparked by worsening economic conditions.<sup>46</sup>

Experiences of women's self-mobilization on the basis of motherhood and the political virtue of women's values remain under-researched. Fortunately, important studies now document cases of war impacting the social structures in which women exist, and how women are transformers in their own right. For example, South Asian scholars have studied women in the Maoist insurgency in Nepal (Shobha Gautam, Amrita Banskota and Rita Manchanda), in the Kashmir conflict (Manchanda), in Assam India (Anis Haroon), the Chakma women in Bangladesh (Meghna Guharhakurta), and women in India's Northeast (Paula Banerjee).<sup>47</sup> Conventional notions of private and public spheres, of domestic and "political" violence are contested in Banjeree's analysis of conflicts in India's Northeast where women who are denied space in formal politics creatively expand new informal spaces to negotiate and transform conflict. For example, Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake from Sri Lanka, examining the experience of Tamil women in conflict, shows how public sorrow becomes "political" when taking up public space, challenging our own conventions about traditional political action. She explores the new roles that women increasingly perform in their daily activities surrounded by war, including avenues of empowerment. She points to the need for more systematic study of the impact of war and ensuing social and gender transformations, including the effect on boys and men. Arundhati Roy and anti-nuclear activists in South Asia engage in political and intellectual resistance against the ethos that drive governments to see in nuclear weapons a currency of power and symbols of prestige.<sup>48</sup>

The study of women's experiences in and around conflicts/war is crucial if we are to conceive new ways of negotiating conflict and building peace. Just as important, conceptions of violence felt by poor women, along with their involvement in conflict, can greatly expand our somewhat rigid understanding of violence and conflict. However lest we run the risk of over-weighting the category of gender, that analysis must in turn inform and be informed by local and global realities, with corresponding sites of struggle. For researchers this may entail new ways of listening to those voices, as opposed to the selective interpretation of selective quotes practiced by the World Bank among others. In the face of the return of the old security paradigms, it is more important than ever that the research agenda encompass and support these focalized accompaniments, in a spirit of solidarity and joint learning. The feminization of global poverty also makes it necessary to better articulate peace and justice politics of the women

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<sup>46</sup> DAWN, "Addressing", pp. 2-3.

<sup>47</sup> Manchanda's compilation, supported by the South Asia Forum for Human Rights and the Swedish International Development Agency, includes contributions by the aforementioned.

<sup>48</sup> Smitu Kothari and Zia Mian, eds., *Out of the Nuclear Shadow*, (Palgrave, St. Marin's Press and Zed Books, London, 1999).

and poor, addressing unequal relationships between women and men and all spheres.

### ***Beyond Victimhood (II): Social Movements in the Global Struggle for Justice***

The reworking of unequal gender relations is for many inseparable (but not dependent on) the challenging of global power relations. From a power context the best form of resistance to imperialist globalization are national movements. And if governments are going to become truly national once again, it will be necessary to build the democratic social movements that can contest power. Just as there is no national movement without women's participation and co-leadership, there can be no effective counter-hegemonic resistance without the articulation of horizontal networks of national resistance. Issues such as debt and environmental survival, let alone US determination to employ force, demand new coalitions to force retreat on all these fronts.

Why social movements principally from the South and not present-day political parties in the North? The answer is that, with few exceptions, mainstream "democratic" political parties in the North have failed to lead or force states to effectively contest global economic violence and, of late, Washington's newly proclaimed imperial right to wage preventive war.<sup>49</sup> Social movements on the other hand, especially youth movements, have demonstrated a capacity for mass mobilization and occasionally to oust political leaders, hamper economic activity and confront imperial summitry. Just as important is the overall political clarity as grounded in their structural awareness of a world order that signifies economic, environmental and human destruction for billions while benefiting a very small minority.

The second question is how can multiple, differentiated local discourses across the globe approximate each other in order to achieve some degree of collective counter-hegemonic power? While movements and the left itself have a number of different expressions, demands and forms of actions, imperialism helps provide some common threads -- for example, the reliance on mass street mobilizations. There is also a shared broad analytical framework that, say, makes Latin American opposition to US intervention in Colombia, part and parcel of the resistance to Bush's Free Trade of the Americas proposition (FTAA), debt repayment, structural-adjustment policies and other IMF prescriptions. There is a corresponding broad support for land reform, food sovereignty, an enhanced

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<sup>49</sup> Ignacio Ramonet in *Le Monde Diplomatique* writes: "An empire does not have allies, it has only vassals. This is a fact of history that most governments in the European Union seem to have forgotten. As they come under pressure from Washington to sign up for war against Iraq, we see nominally sovereign countries allowing themselves to be reduced to the demeaning status of satellites.... In the process they are abandoning national independence, sovereignty and democracy, They have crossed the line that separates the ally from the feudal subject, the partner from the puppet", "Servile States", *Le Monde diplomatique*, (October, 2002).

economic role of the state via public investments in social services, new forms of popular representation and greater social and gender equality via income redistribution. The call is for another type of globalization based on cooperation and solidarity, to overcome the wall between democratic politics and a competitive militaristic economy, with greater rooting in associative and cooperative enterprises at local and global levels, including the person and the biosystem.<sup>50</sup>

Herein lies the importance of the World Social Forum. More than an annual event, the World Social Forums and its regional spin-offs constitute a process whereby, among other things, intellectuals and scientists connect with justice-oriented social movements in the search for alternatives to corporate-led globalization and war including environmental destruction, the degradation of women and children and certainly the new militarism.<sup>51</sup> As war and economic exclusion magnify gender, social and international inequalities, peace becomes a banner signifying transformation and achievement of justice. Not the return of the status quo, not its reworking, but its transformation. Alternative readings of local history come together, and together the possibility of global alternatives materializes, not as an aspiration but as work in progress. Of course different groups are positioned differently in the global hierarchical structures, divided by gender, ethnic, religious, geographical, class, cultural, and national borders. But identities are never static. They change by dynamically overlapping and interacting.

Capitalist globalization itself is forcing more people to live under the same imposed conditions (i.e. “interdependence”) as part of a more “rational” global division of labor. The danger is that people can be set against one another whereupon the WSF, as other instances that have preceded it, works for the counter-organized reversal of the neoliberal globalization-forced unity. What begins to emerge is a spontaneous alliance where groups interact, think and plan through their own choices. Social Forum processes function with no political regimentation or democratic centralism, as justice and genuine peacebuilding would begin with the acknowledgment of the rich diversity of human communities each with its own dignity, spirituality, culture, and rooted-ness. This is a far cry from the cosmopolitan idea of global citizenship reflecting a western civil society

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<sup>50</sup> See for example the work of the Brazilian economist and activist Marcos Arruda as presented in the Seminar on a Solidarity Economy, at the World Social Forum, February 3, 2002, [www.tni.org/publications/arruda.htm](http://www.tni.org/publications/arruda.htm)

<sup>51</sup> According to its charter of principles “The World Social Forum is an open meeting place for reflective thinking, democratic debate of ideas, formulations of proposal, free exchange of experiences and interlinking for effective action, by groups and movements of civil society that are opposed to neoliberalism and to domination of the world by capital, any form of imperialism, and are committed to building a planetary society directed towards fruitful relationships among Mankind and between it and Earth....The World Social Forum is a world process. All the meetings that are held as part of their process have an international dimension” Documents of the World Social Forum can be found in [www.worldsocialforum.org](http://www.worldsocialforum.org)

model that flourished in the 1980s-90s under the influence of international NGO culture shaped in turn by Northern and northern-minded NGOs and the UN and donor agencies employing the analytically useless trilogy of “state”, “civil society” and “market”.

Like globalization, violence is felt and examined in Social Forum processes as comprehensively and specifically as possible. Along with direct violence there is the disguised or indirect violence: hunger, racism, sexism, domination and the economic and geopolitical interests of the wealthy powers. Given the nature of globalization, and of market-driven economies and societies in general, it becomes apparent that genuine peace is not a win-win proposition. Most social movements, while acknowledging their support of non-violence, would not label themselves peacebuilders but rather justice-builders: peace does not precede justice, and the best way to fight for peace, in their perspective, is to make justice. Others would have us believe that today’s violence and inequality are essentially failures of management to be cured by increasing doses of “good governance”. Social movements gathered in Porto Alegre and elsewhere are convinced that genuine peace (justice) is not possible in the framework of contemporary globalization. Direct violence can and should be diminished, but this is no substitute for peacebuilding. A huge gap remains between the two and it cannot simply be wished away, or acknowledged with regrets in order to move on with less principled notions of peace. Minimalism elevated to the level of principle (there is no alternative) constitutes an ideological attempt to have people accept the ethically unacceptable.

As with many NGOs, the academic peacebuilders have to address the globalization and economic justice questions. Not an easy task, as alignment with the “radical” positions would invariably strain the relationship with official policy-making circles. Arriving at a broad consensus as to a specific project will be a longer-term task, but the social movements gathered in Porto Alegre and elsewhere agree that they are moving toward a common critique of the “real” globalization.

As a new transborder initiative, the WSF seeks to transcend single-issue and single-country focus/regional focuses. The idea is that the power of neoliberal globalization requires the building of countervailing power characterized by greater political coherence that movements, groups and party activists still lack. Militarism will not be defeated by anti-militarists acting alone. Action and analysis however from the different experiences require identification and recognition in order to contribute to larger strategies of resistance and articulation and building of alternatives on local, national and international levels, already an ongoing process.<sup>52</sup> Our problem here is ignorance of what is happening on the ground in

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<sup>52</sup> A good overview is provided by Sanjeev Khagram, James V. Rikder and Kathryn Sikkink, eds., *Restructuring World Politics, Transnational Social Movements, Networks, and Norms*, (University of Minneapolis Pres: Minneapolis, 2002).



terms of resistance to the divergent forms of violence, from gender to environmental.

It is the forms of resistance (not only the conflict itself) that must interest the peacebuilder. As the Indian scholar and activist Smitu Kothari has argued, there are a million mutinies that are lesser known:

“For every well-known people’s movement for the environment...there are dozens of smaller movements across India where communities are struggling against destructive development and for the right to control resources and decisions that affect their lives.... They provide a crucial window into the range of communities and groups at the base of our society feel and act on. They are a powerful microcosm of both the problems and the resolutions that Indian society faces.”<sup>53</sup>

Yet another research task, best left to the local researchers themselves.

### **Peacebuilding after 9/11**

Are the analytical assumptions in *An Agenda for Peace* still valid after 9/11? Is the balance of the last decade essentially one of failure? Or is getting back to the pre-9/11 status quo ante-bellum the new goal that “pragmatic” peacebuilders set for themselves? To conceptualize peace or peacebuilding in that manner is to engage in yet another form of violence or, worse yet, partake in the Orwellian doublespeak favored by the current US Administration where war is peace, freedom is subjugation, and ignorance is power. The pre-9/11 status quo is also unacceptable because it successfully developed its own more sophisticated double-speak where the peacebuilding field was supposed to accept its own niche. As with concepts such as human rights, democracy and gender justice, peace and peacebuilding run the risk of being appropriated by the globalization regime so as to assist in its own legitimatization.

Separating something called civil society, from market and state allows Washington and its multilateral power instruments to conceptually amalgamate democracy and human rights with free market, free trade, privatization, free competition etc. as though they were the natural combination (“good governance”), and urges the people to swallow the package or else they would be punished. The terms and meanings must be recaptured.

Nonetheless, it may well be that the question “What kind of peace is being built?” has two different answers: before and after 9/11. There is no way of seriously

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<sup>53</sup> Smitu Kothari, “A Million Mutinies”, *Humanscape*, (October, 2002), pp. 1-5.  
[www.humanscape.org](http://www.humanscape.org).

talking about what has happened over the course of the past decade unless it is through the perspective of what is now taking place. Our understanding of the historical inquiry and the search for more effective peacebuilding can make one of three assumptions. First, that the 9/11 aftermath is a temporary set-back and before too long governments and social scientists can go back to peacebuilding as usual picking up where it left off, only perhaps with more ground or countries to cover, where we can apply our professional skills, tools, techniques and impact assessments. Some non-governmental sectors of the “peacebuilding” field will no doubt benefit by providing services demanded in the post-9/11 NATO agenda.

A return to the pre 9/11 discussion or the status quo ante-bellum has its own problems, namely that it was quo with no shortage of bellum. Of course one must defend the internationality of the *Agenda for Peace* and the peacebuilding field, but at the same time recognize not only its theoretical imprecision but the outright lack of meaning when it came to areas such as Palestine (or globalization).

A third road is for the field—and its research agenda—to be more critical about its shortcomings, come out of its academic and technicist garb, in order to squarely face up to the post 9/11 barbarization. Commit us to concept one and go to work for one side, or genuinely get on with the task of being a part of the construction of countervailing power. Maybe it is time to ask honestly whether much of our own thinking around intervention, sovereignty, and the right to protect and so forth intellectually facilitated the brutality of the US-led reaction not only against Afghanistan, but also in the Philippines, Colombia and the new murderous onslaught in Palestine. The same logic seems to be unfolding as we witness the resurgence of militarist sectors within and among nations, affecting the very core of civil-military relations, if not democratic liberties and citizen security across the board. War making and “National Security” are being reasserted, if indeed they ever disappeared at all, while the expanded notion of human security – and with it peacebuilding and human security – seem to be beating a hasty retreat. What seemed to be a promising emerging thrust to take on the reform of security institutions may now be overtaken by the need to “combat terrorism”. In the short term at least, the war on terrorism and the reform of security agencies constitute two conflicting agendas.

There can be no underestimation of the grave implications of current US behavior, and not simply on our research agenda. Bush dismissed the UN principles that made war illegal except for immediate self-defense, by bringing in the notion of pre-emptive defense. The notion of ‘just war’ (against evil) is back in vogue, with the US as the supreme privileged body to judge who are the evil to be destroyed. US national decisions are to be simultaneously and automatically global decisions. All constraints on US sovereignty should go or be simply ignored.

Where is the counterpart of the optimism and fruitful thinking and action that accompanied the meaning of the *Agenda for Peace*? Have ten years of work done so little to impede the way governments and public opinion have assumed patriotic militaristic rhetoric encouraging ignorance and retaliation, in defiance of historical facts and moral principles?

When it comes to social scientists and academic debate, care must be taken not to allow a return to the days of the intellectual war on communism with its accompanying orchestration of intellectual dishonesty and complicity. History will also remind us that during the 1950s and 1960s too many intellectuals and social scientists accepted too many compromises, collaborations and even fabrications, with the CIA and FBI underwriting “scholarly research”, magazines, travel and even concerts, in a black period where so many universities and intellectuals and artists simply abandoned their critical responsibility to society. A new shameful period in the history of the US and the intelligentsia may be at hand. And no doubt it already is making recruits in the peacebuilding field. Sometimes simply by insisting on defining with muscle and money “politically correct” parameters of the new phase of “post-war” reconstruction, dismissing the “wrong” questions and approaches. Yet another option, more openly dishonest, is to take the form of organizing programs for the propagation of lies abroad.

A minimal peacebuilding response can take the form of stepped-up monitoring and analysis that contests official and media lies helping to give a voice to victims and dispossessed. Important efforts in this regard continue to take place where people join people in order to change the course of world politics, and to effectively enlist agencies in this regard, with realistic understandings as to the UN’s real capacity and mandate.<sup>54</sup>

### ***Conclusions: The West vs. the Rest?***

That the United States more than the United Nations is at the center of the picture explains suspicions held in many quarters in the South and elsewhere as regards “peacebuilding”. The apprehension is only reinforced when, in the global discussion, history and research of past interventions are not sufficiently featured, according to the critics. Where is the victim’s perspective? Is peacebuilding (conflict prevention, humanitarian intervention, etc.) simply a new name for the latest chapter of a long-term process featuring more continuity than change? World history including the Cold War and its aftermath looks different when viewed through the North/South as opposed to the East/West or

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<sup>54</sup> See the recommendations of the International Policy Workshop, “Empowering Local Actors: the Un and Multi-track Conflict Prevention”, (New York, December 10, 2002).

North/North lens. Does the last decade really entail the preservation and consolidation of the victory of Western civilization or Western imperialism?<sup>55</sup>

The greatest centralization of power and wealth ever witnessed in modern history underpins the “new world order”. *An Agenda for Peace* of course could not pose it in such terms, but even a non-Western Secretary General could hope that the absence of a veto in general, or of the USSR in particular, would somehow liberalize the policy of the sole remaining superpower. In the short decade before 9/11, the UN Secretariat, along with the remaining European junior powers, naively hoped that the UN Charter and role in the world could dovetail with the imperial interests of the US. The liberal vision entailed a US foreign policy subject to multilateral conditioning sharing the benefits of unipolarity with the UN, other multilateral bodies, consulting with its allies, and in the best of all possible worlds, tackling the global maldistribution of wealth. Conflict in this context, or peacebuilding, was a way of making the world safe for a nobler definition of US interests. In this way, the world (including the US) would be safe from the more military, unilateralist historical patterns of US international behavior.

In practice, analysts including peacebuilding advocates should not have had to wait till the 9/11 aftermath in order to contest the more optimistic assumptions about the US and the UN. It was sufficient to review the course of the Arab-Israeli “peace” process to witness just one example of the imperial checks placed on any courageous pursuit of true peace with justice (self-determination) in that region of the world, let alone the diplomatic “peace processes” heavily slanted or conditioned by the US interests and support for Israel. Nor would anyone seriously argue that post-1992 multilateral peacebuilding could substitute the US and Western “spirit of commonality” when it came to securing control and access over vital resources. Let alone that peacebuilding in theory or in practice be effectively allowed to explore and support the virtues of non-market or non-liberal paths to development (and peace). As if this battle were not enough, following 9/11 US and NATO, along with key ideologues, now question the virtues of peace while reinvoking the values of battle. Just as their “growth” produces poverty, their “peace” means violence.

There is no hope for dialogue among peacebuilders North and South if the field continues to be perceived as a Western ideological market-oriented violent construct. Peacebuilding would begin with the recognition that corporate-driven globalization is perhaps the major driving force behind violence, despair and poverty within and among nations. Attempts by peacebuilders and conflict

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<sup>55</sup> The publishing of Negri’s *Empire* sparked an important debate asserting the decline of the nation or imperial state to give way to a stateless “Empire” as a post-imperialist phenomenon in which power is dispersed and no single nation can control the market-led “Empire”. As with other writings about the demise of the state, it is greatly exaggerated. Michael Hart and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2000).

management-inclined donors to coexist and even defend globalization may help explain the limited effectiveness of "international" post-conflict peacebuilding over the course of the last decade, as well the difficulties in getting a grip on the concept and practice, let alone generating non-North enthusiasm for the debate.

The future of peacebuilding, that is, the possibility of arriving at the overarching universal framework for action, education and analysis, has to begin with the recognition that the field is, at present, heavily influenced by liberal/North attitudes and values on the one hand, which in turn are not entirely separable — and indeed may reflect — big power strategic and economic interests on the other. Nowhere is this most apparent than in donor policy statements. To the degree that government agencies considerably influence the framing of the debate (and the funding of an ensuing research agenda), the ambiguity will also be reflected in the conceptualizations of peacebuilding action. The more nuances in international approaches to peacebuilding and actual policy, the better? The merits of intellectual diversity aside, policy has to be valued not in terms of intentions but of actual results and inconsistencies, particularly when they are so palpable from many South perspectives. Where those "nuances" posit the indispensability of liberal business-friendly open market frameworks and macro-economic policy "fundamentals", they become impossible to reconcile with process-minded peacebuilding closely associated with social justice and the autonomous political capacities (power) to protect the formation of national and local democratic spaces based on inclusiveness and greater equity.

Witnessing the plight of his own people in the light of commentator attempts to be "evenhanded", the Palestinian-US commentator Edward Said criticized,

"This sort of moral blindness, this inability to evaluate and weigh the comparative evidence of sinner and sinned against.... Is very much the order of the day, and it must be the critical intellectual's job not to fall into — indeed, actively to campaign falling into—the trap. It is not enough to say blandly that all human suffering is equal, then to go on basically bewailing one's miseries: it is far more important to see what the strongest party does, and to question, rather than justify, that. The intellectual's is a voice in opposition to, and critical of, greater power, which is consistently in need of restraining and clarifying conscience and a comparative perspective, so that the victim will not, as is of the case, be blamed and real power encouraged to do its will."<sup>56</sup>

Perhaps a parallel call has to be made for the field to be sensitive to another category of victims taking the form of sympathetic officials in rich country governments. A step toward greater understanding to which researchers can contribute would be to transcend the rather tiresome arguments around policy

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<sup>56</sup> Edward Said "Thoughts about America", *Al-Ahram Weekly* (Cairo). [www.ahram.org.eg/weekly](http://www.ahram.org.eg/weekly). See also his article by the same title in *Green Left Weekly*, March 20, 2002, p.12.

coherence, between words (human security, peacebuilding) and action (NATO, WTO, IMF). The problem is not of policy coherence but of finding and defending a politically coherent basis for peacebuilding. Here lies a task for researchers if peacebuilding is to escape its current definitional/existential crisis. Otherwise we may witness the death of a promising endeavor before it was really born.

The problem, in our opinion, is not one of policy (which is always subject to reform) but one of politics and power. If peacebuilding is about achieving fundamental changes in the structures and relations of power, from international to intergender, then there are foregone limits to what policy makers and donors can contribute to peacebuilding. Or to put it less charitably, those who benefit from holding superior military and economic power are interested in upholding it—and many times policy reform is a means of upholding and legitimizing the structures of oppression. When “crunch time” appeared in post-war Central America, as elsewhere, most donors followed and upheld the IMF’s power to issue an indispensable green light for cooperation to proceed. Governments complied and social reconstruction suffered, leading even to episodes of rearmament and the shrugging off of key “unaffordable” components of the peace accords.<sup>57</sup> Central American social scientists refer to their region’s unfinished agenda”—root causes of war including fundamental social aspirations that remain essentially unattended.<sup>58</sup>

Is it understandable then that, in the absence of substantive political-policy-power shifts in the North that their recommendations on peacebuilding can be regarded as forming part of an ideological project that excludes addressing international power structures. This propitiates exclusion in the South, independently of the alleviation measures taken (or indeed seen to be necessary in order to keep the global ship afloat and public opinion confused?). A worrisome trend among Southern social scientists is to expose the ideological paradigm that purportedly informs or deforms peacebuilding. Caught between two fires, the future of the field does not look promising. On the other hand, liberal peacebuilding is also under attack as the result of 9/11. Can there be a post-9/11 basis for new intellectual collaboration? Research parameters cannot be separated from political ones, be they personal or conjunctural. If we are speaking of a transnational peacebuilding community, it behooves us to recognize and face the full force of the new imperial onslaught. Can practitioners of concept one arrive at a strategy shared with the followers of concept two?

The terms of a new partnership must be equitably arrived at. On a research basis it can begin by insuring capacities and information from the South to come to the table on equal terms. Important efforts have to elicit non-northern research perspectives and should not be minimized. The mere recollection of “what is out

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<sup>57</sup> See Alejandro Bendaña, *Demobilization and Reintegration in Central America: A Peacebuilding Perspective*, (Centro de Estudios Internacionales, Managua, 1994).

<sup>58</sup> IDRC, *Diagnóstico de la Paz en América Central*, Working Paper No. 4, November 2000.

there” seems like a Herculean task, but it is a revealing and promising one, in terms of defining not only the parameters and impact of research but of pointing to alternatives along with possibilities for policy reform at the regional level.

An IDRC-sponsored review of research efforts in Central America over the course of the past decade found that while some of the work had practical effects, the report’s authors (one from each country) felt that political impact was minimal. Researchers claimed that donors tended to reduce research to operational projects and consultancies, with attending limitations for the construction of social knowledge. Then, too, there was the weakness of the researchers themselves including the difficulty of linking research to policy/practical processes.

*Together the authors generated a **long list of issues which they saw as requiring further research**, ranging from the gender dimensions of long-term peacebuilding, inter-ethnic relations and the regional dimensions of citizen security to the role of international donors. Many workshop participants agreed that the **main issue area requiring increased research is what some called the “structural dimensions of peacebuilding”, especially the economic and social policies that should adequately address the root causes of violent conflict in Central America**. Yet it is striking that the challenge of identifying research priorities in terms of knowledge gaps AND opportunities for practical impact remains largely unanswered.”<sup>59</sup> (emphasis in the original)*

In the best of all possible worlds the development of alternatives can form part of sustained research that can both influence current policy and practice, and at the same time challenge them in their essence and effects, visualizing both alternative policy and an alternative world. However the sense of time and urgency in the South, dictated by levels of misery and violence, provides no such space. Nor will the ideological divides, let alone gender and cultural ones, be easily overcome. Research and education of course are bridges, but as the great Brazilian Pedagogue Paolo Freire once wrote: “I do not believe in any effort called peace education, if instead of revealing the world of injustice, it tends to cloud it and blind its victims...Reflection, if it is true reflection, leads to practice”.

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<sup>59</sup> IDRC, *Diagnóstico*. iii.

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