

Peace, Security and Development in Post-Conflict Environments

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This article presents a critical overview of the contemporary practice of post-conflict peacebuilding (PCPB), arguing that contemporary post-conflict operations rest upon the assumption that a sophisticated social engineering approach could replace, or accelerate, a process of state formation that occurs rather more organically. Yet, PCPB is subject to the same tensions and dilemmas as the process of state formation. Many recent post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes have been conducted with little critical self-reflection on the underlying assumptions or structural biases of PCPB efforts. One major reason for this is the missing connection, in the minds of policymakers and practitioners, between security and development concerns. The concept of human security can help bridge this gap and is also compatible with a form of Popperian 'piecemeal' social engineering that is more consistent with a critical approach to PCPB.

Keywords Peacebuilding • post-conflict operations • human security • development • social engineering

Introduction

POST-CONFLICT PEACEBUILDING (PCPB) has become in some ways the 'core business' of the international humanitarian and development community. Although forceful and non-coercive interventions during the violent phases of conflicts occupy most headlines, the crucial subsequent work of demobilizing ex-combatants, (re)building civil society institutions, creating conditions for economic and social development, or establishing political institutions to resolve and manage societal conflicts has become the mainstay of a large array of development and humanitarian nongovernmental actors, international institutions and national bodies.

This point has been made forcefully by the UN Secretary-General in his recent report *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All* (Annan, 2005) and in the 2004 report of the High-Level Panel on

Threats, Challenges and Change, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility* (HLP, 2004). In both these reports, there is a strong emphasis on the need to deal effectively and comprehensively with the changed nature of contemporary violent conflicts. The former report, in particular, proposes to create a 'peacebuilding commission' to fill the institutional gap created by a UN system originally designed to deal with interstate war, and in which PCPB activities are conducted in a disparate and not always coherent fashion.

This article does not examine the challenges, dilemmas and details of recent post-conflict operations, but rather steps back to take a critical look at the contemporary practice of PCPB. We first examine the underpinnings of this practice, arguing that most recent post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes have been conducted in an ad hoc and unsystematic way, with little critical self-reflection on the underlying assumptions or structural biases of PCPB efforts. They rest upon an assumption that a sophisticated, yet still utopian, 'social engineering' approach could replace, or accelerate, a process of state formation that occurs rather more organically. We then focus specifically on the connection, usually missing in the institutional practices of PCPB, between security and development, in order to illustrate some of the structural biases of peacebuilding efforts. Since critical scholarship must go beyond critique, we finally argue that a practical rethinking of existing practices and programmes can be catalyzed by examining post-conflict challenges through the lens of human security. Finally, relying on Karl Popper's distinction between 'utopian' and 'piecemeal' social engineering, we conclude by outlining the central tenets of a critical approach to PCPB.¹

The Track Record of PCPB

As United Nations Under-Secretary Jacques-Paul Klein has pointed out, it is necessary to recognize that the track record of PCPB is mixed, and perhaps even negative on balance.² Not only do about half of all peace support operations (including both peacekeeping and more expansive peacebuilding operations) fail after around five years, but there also seems to be no clear idea of what 'success' or 'failure' actually mean, nor of what an appropriate timeframe for measuring success might be.

¹ See Karl Popper ([1945] 2002; [1957] 2002). We do not, however, enter into the debates around Popper and his concepts, but are using the distinction between piecemeal and utopian social engineering more for heuristic purposes.

² In 2003–04, Klein was Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Coordinator of United Nations Operations in Liberia. His view, expressed at the conference on 'Post-Conflict Peace Building: Lessons Learnt and Future Strategies' at which this article was presented, echoes that of *In Larger Freedom* (Annan, 2005: Addendum 2).

Much of the debate between those who argue that peace operations have succeeded or failed obviously depends on how success is defined.³ Some argue that peace operations overall 'make a positive difference' (Doyle & Sambanis, 2000: 779) or represent 'an important contribution to the stability of peace' (Fortna, 2004: 269; also Diehl, Druckman & Wall, 1998; Stedman, Rothchild & Cousens, 2002). But, if one adopts a larger understanding of peace operations, focusing on the attempt by peacebuilders 'to bring war-shattered states into conformity with the international system's prevailing standards of domestic governance' (Paris, 2002: 638), the balance sheet is less positive. Despite some possible successes in places such as Mozambique, Cambodia or El Salvador, the track record of PCPB is littered with states (Afghanistan, Somalia, Liberia, Angola, Haiti and even Cambodia) in which domestic governance is weak, armed violence remains high, and respect for human rights and the rule of law is questionable.

Perhaps this is a function of the difficulty of the task of PCPB: a 30–50% success rate might actually be considered high. The recently published *Human Security Report* (Human Security Centre, 2005) argues that although it may only be around 30%, over time this rate of success is an important factor contributing to a diminution of violent conflicts in recent years. Though one might not get it right in Liberia, East Timor or Sierra Leone the first or the second time, the cumulative effect of repeated efforts still guarantees eventual success in breaking the vicious cycle of endemic conflicts, and in setting states on the path of sustainable security, development and state-building.

Although there may be some truth to this, repeated failure is costly in human, political and economic terms, and it ought to make us reflect on the underlying reasons for why PCPB is so difficult. One reason is that PCPB interventions, whatever their nature, represent a profound rupture in the domestic process of state-building or state formation. Post-conflict operations are not minor 'insertions' of another actor into a complicated field of forces, but represent major breaks in state formation, often attempting to redistribute political, economic or social power and reshape the institutional terrain on which political competition occurs. Moreover, these ruptures occur in situations of often extreme violence and insecurity, human deprivation and institutional collapse. Once a PCPB intervention (in the broadest sense of the term) is under way, we are thus no longer in a situation in which the process of state-building can unfold along whatever paths it might have followed before the slide into violent conflict. This does not render peace-building somehow illegitimate – it may help a state and society break out of

³ One should note here the distinction between *peacekeeping* and *peacebuilding*. Whereas the track record may be more positive if the criterion is simply the success rate of preventing the (re)eruption of large-scale violent conflict or the implementation of peace agreements, peacebuilding missions represent a more ambitious endeavour entailing the reform of domestic institutions; see Paris (2003).

a pathological cycle of violence and disintegration – but it does highlight the ambitious nature of the project. In particular, it implies that whatever the sources of the difficulties or the challenges of PCPB are, they cannot be resolved simply by technical or operational solutions, such as improving command and control systems, having better or more resources, and increasing coordination between different UN agencies. Arguably, such proposals have been the main thrust of efforts to reform or enhance the capacity of the UN system.

It should also be noted that intervention for *state-building* – understood as external actors participating actively in, or attempting to reshape, the politics of another country – has a long pedigree. Most often, however, such activities have been conducted unilaterally, and not in situations of state collapse. The majority of these state-building interventions throughout the Cold War (including, in particular, French interventions in Africa or US actions in Latin America and elsewhere) were also conducted hand in hand with existing state elites, to maintain them in, or restore them to, power. Although there may have been, in recent years, a change in the *nature* of these operations (a focus on elections, for example) and whose interests are supported by such interventions (unilateral versus multilateral), their fundamental *logic* has not changed. External actors – from the colonial era forward – have intervened in the internal affairs of states in the interests of promoting state-building.

Domestic Security and State Formation

The idea of PCPB leading to a stable domestic order goes to the heart of the contract between states and their citizens that is the basis of the modern state. The discourse of statehood, which developed out of the process of modern state formation, revolves around three intertwined narratives of the state that encapsulate its core functions of providing security, welfare and representation (elaborated in Milliken & Krause, 2002; see also the contribution by Rolf Schwarz in this issue of *Security Dialogue*). Arguably, the first of these, providing security, is the primary duty that a state owes to its citizens. It is the basic bargain evoked by Max Weber in his definition of the state as an organization that has the monopoly on the legitimate use of violence, with this monopoly being obtained by offering security to its citizens. Providing security is also at the heart of Thomas Hobbes's vision of a political Leviathan as an institution created out of the war of all against all; and, as we move into a so-called civil state (to use Hobbes's term), economic, social and political life can evolve normally.

There are thus some deep historical antecedents to the idea of creating security in a post-conflict environment. When we think about contemporary

operations and their timeframes of two to four years in such places as East Timor or Haiti, we must recognize that the international community is trying to telescope a process that took decades – in some cases even centuries – in more established states. Moreover, the process of creating domestic order and security was not completed without a great deal of violent struggle against predatory elites, the medieval equivalent of contemporary warlords, repressive and authoritarian rulers, and so forth. The magnitude of the task attempted by the international community in places such as Afghanistan, Kosovo and Liberia – entailing the breakup of existing patterns of politics and forcing a reconstruction of social and political relationships into a non-violent or non-coercive mode – is consequently enormous.

The above only makes sense if one accepts that an externally driven ‘social (re)engineering’ project can accelerate or substitute for a more ‘organic’ historical process of state-building that would otherwise be driven by local actors, instrumentally using external alliances and resources to consolidate their power or achieve their goals.⁴ In other words, this social engineering project assumes that the international community can unpack the historical process by which contemporary states were built, determine how a stable and secure domestic order was created, and apply the ‘recipe’ – with appropriate adaptation to local circumstance – to post-conflict environments.

Expressed this way, most analysts would admit that such a project might seem wrong-headed, or at least unlikely to capture the reality of complex political, economic and social circumstances. The term ‘social engineering’, however, is used quite deliberately. Having rejected the historicism of earlier epochs, the *science* of politics – a creation of the 20th century – reacted by conceiving of its subject matter as based on an empirical social technology, thereby engaging in what Karl Popper called Utopian social engineering (see Popper, [1945] 2002: 24–27, 170–182). Rational action, according to this approach, is only possible once its ultimate end is clearly specified, for only then can a plan for practical action be drawn up. Contemporary state-building efforts in post-conflict environments follow precisely this logic: it is what drives the majority of activities of most of the external parties, especially when they arrive with particular blueprints for democracy promotion, the establishment of judicial and legal systems, or economic reform. These are all, consciously or unconsciously, based not only on some idea of what will or will not work in a given environment, but more importantly on what the end product – a stable, participatory, liberal, democratic and capitalist state – should look like.

An important aspect of this social engineering ethos, namely the establishment of a secure domestic order, is particularly important in light of current policies to promote security sector reform. One of the key developments in

⁴ This vision leans heavily on Charles Tilly’s (1985, 1990) account of state formation. For a more contemporary version, see Ayoob (2002).

continental Western European states in the 18th and 19th centuries was the separation of the external and internal dimensions of security. Previously, the same institution – the army or some analogous institution – was responsible for both activities:⁵ it protected the ruler, it protected citizens against threats from within, and it sometimes protected both ruler and citizens from outside threats. Yet, it was also a blunt instrument, used as much for repression as for providing security, and, over the course of the 19th and 20th centuries, states developed a policing or gendarme function, with the armed forces being progressively stripped of their internal security role. Today, we take it for granted – and often it is legally sanctioned – that the armed forces are destined to provide external security, while some other institutional form, with considerably less ‘force’ (in terms of overt uses of violence) secures domestic order. This process, however, took a long time, and in fact still has some vestigial organs in countries such as Spain, Italy and France, where the separation of these two functions is still incomplete.

Although it cannot be developed here, this aspect serves to illustrate that when one discusses establishing domestic security and order in post-conflict contexts, one must think carefully about what sorts of institutions are appropriate. The idea that one should focus on reorienting the armed forces to fulfil this domestic security function (or even to keep an armed force at all), given that they (and non-state armed groups) were often the most involved in the conflict, may create sharp dilemmas later on. External actors are often not sensitive to these micro-dynamics of security at the individual or community level.

External Actors and Domestic Security-Building

Post-conflict interventions always rest upon a problematic relationship between external and local actors, and in some cases reflect what Barnett & Finnemore (1999) have called institutional ‘pathologies’ of international organizations. Some authors have looked at this issue, especially in critical examinations of development studies; less often has the issue been addressed in the context of PCPB (for representative examples from different issue areas, see Fergusson, 1994; Wedel, 1998; Keen, 1994; for UN examples, see Chopra, 2000; Reiff, 2002; Danida/Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1996). This issue is especially important in the security realm, where existential questions of survival for individuals, families or communities may be at stake. Indeed, post-conflict programmes often request people to take on faith what for them are matters of life and death.

One specific example can illustrate the dilemma. In Kosovo, the United

⁵ In this respect, the British historical experience is different; see Krause & Williams (forthcoming).

Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other international actors (UNMIK and KFOR) tried to launch a weapons amnesty and collection programme, designed to reduce the estimated number of between 330,000 and 460,000 weapons circulating in civilian hands. This was to be undertaken in a situation in which the basic political status of Kosovo was unresolved (Khakee & Florquin, 2003). With a bit of reflection, the actors involved should have realized – and public opinion polls pointed to this – that people were unlikely to be willing to surrender their weapons given such political insecurity. The situation in Kosovo was quite different from that of neighbouring Albania, where weapons had flooded into society after the collapse of state institutions in 1997. In Albania, there was a greater willingness among people to surrender their weapons (and about 200,000 of an estimated 600,000 were ultimately collected), because they recognized the threat those weapons posed to their own communities. Yet, it was a mistake to assume that the lessons of Albania might also apply to Kosovo, where only a total of 155 weapons were collected (UNDP, 2003), undoubtedly an indication of failure.

The UNDP, which was ultimately responsible for the project, did learn from the experience, but the example still highlights the gap in perceptions and expectations that exist between external and local actors. In all post-conflict contexts, it is essential to understand why people rely on self-help – at the basic individual, family or community levels – to achieve their own security, and under what circumstances they may have enough trust to pass over the provision of that security to political institutions. This ‘contract’ again goes to the heart of the modern state and highlights the complex conditions under which people will entrust their security to others.

The lack of understanding of the local context, moreover, can take many forms. Another concerns the tendency, present at least in the security realm, for external actors to reify cultural practices, especially around guns and violence, and to treat these as solid and entrenched. References to ‘gun cultures’ reflect, on a micro-social level, the same sort of vision of atavistic ancient hatreds that characterized the essential position in ethnic conflict debates. One example, the case of the Karamajong pastoralist community in north-eastern Uganda, shows that matters are more fluid, constructed and reconstructed, underlining that it is necessary to distinguish between a ‘culture of violence’ and ‘gun culture’. In northern Uganda, the dynamics of traditional cattle rustling included a significant ‘rite of passage’ for adult males, nighttime raids and quiet daytime ‘returns’ of cattle to the other party by community elders, once bravery had been proven. The advent of heavy firearms and a cash economy warped and perverted the practice from its traditional ‘redistribution’ of cows to the consequent terrorizing and massacre of entire villages. This blending of traditional cultural practices and new socio-economic opportunities meant that a general image of a ‘gun culture’ in the

region was facile and misleading. Overall, initiatives that do not take into account the context within which the gun came to be used in the first place are destined to have a lower rate of success (see *Small Arms Survey*, 2001: 225; 2002: 291).

Finally, in addition to the general problems of lack of knowledge and the overall questions of trust in security matters, there is the issue of commitment. The cases of Iraq and Afghanistan amply illustrate that as long as local actors can resort to violence to increase the costs of the outside intervener, it will be difficult to sustain a long-term international commitment. A real dilemma exists here: if an external commitment is linked to a fixed timeframe for exit, the local victor will be the most patient party, willing to sit out the attempts by external actors to reshape the terrain of power and (in)security. If, on the other hand, no exit timetables are set, one risks creating a dynamic of dependence, in which weak and vulnerable social actors owe their security to external parties, more powerful parties manipulate and profit from the international presence, and the external parties become targets for disaffection and violence. This is demonstrated by the mixed success of post-conflict disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes, which are based on an implicit promise that those who took up arms will ultimately be rewarded (with cash, access to training, microcredit) in ways that their victims may not be (see *Small Arms Survey*, 2005: 267–301). How this appears to local populations is obvious.

Linking Security and Development in the Post-Conflict Context

While the link between peacebuilding and the provision of individual security is undoubtedly a vital one, it alone does not do justice to the way in which 'peace' is understood in PCPB. Peacebuilding, as Johan Galtung (1975) pointed out, implies something more positive and dynamic than simply creating stability to prevent violent conflict. Rather, it entails building political, social and economic institutions, and revolves around notions of capacity-building, good governance, inclusion, economic opportunity and individual well-being. Hence, in order to incorporate this comprehensive understanding of peace, we need to add the concept of development into the peacebuilding equation.

Institutionally, security and development concerns have seldom been linked.⁶ Although arguably the two main pillars of multilateral action, for almost four decades ideas about development and security were pursued in

⁶ Many of the ideas expressed in this section are taken from Krause (2005).

parallel but disconnected institutional and political structures. Entire institutions were built up to promote either security or development, and people working in the British, Canadian, Swiss, Swedish, Dutch or German development cooperation agencies hardly spoke to their counterparts in foreign and defence ministries. To this day, the gap in institutional cultures remains enormous, and, save for a few exceptions, debates on how to achieve development continue to be insulated from any consideration of security issues.

Bar the obvious challenges posed by the bureaucratic division of labour among agencies and ministries, the reasons for this isolation are relatively clear. First, throughout the Cold War, security policy was deemed an issue of national sovereignty, and thus matters such as military spending were outside the scrutiny of aid donors or international financial institutions. Second, security policies were often caught up in Cold War conflicts and alliances, and consequently a taboo subject for development agencies or institutions. Third, external scrutiny of a state's policies and practices towards its own citizens was deemed to be interference in the internal affairs of a state. The result was that development agencies and international financial institutions, at least until the early 1990s, excluded national security concerns from their mandates.

On the ground, however, ideas of security and development could not be so easily separated, as economic development alone turned out not to be a recipe for eliminating or reducing conflict and violence in societies. For the international development community in the early 1990s, for example, Rwanda was a success story, with high levels of multilateral overseas development aid being coupled with rapid progress in a variety of economic and social indicators. But the 1994 genocide starkly demonstrated that something was terribly wrong with this picture, and that a focus on national economic development, without attention to basic security concerns and needs, would not by itself resolve underlying conflicts and insecurities, and might in some circumstances exacerbate them (see Uvin, 1998). The commonly held view in economic and development circles that development was a *precondition* for security and that increased economic development would almost automatically reduce the incidence of conflict within – and potentially even between – states was increasingly put in doubt: in a situation of scarcity, development assistance and relief are precious commodities. If wrongly distributed, they may reinforce social cleavages and, paradoxically, sow the seeds of conflict and insecurity, rather than alleviate them (Boyce, 2002; Maresko, 2004).

The development–security link has thus increasingly been reversed, via recognition that the provision of basic security is a *precondition* for political, social and economic development (and well-being).⁷ Some noteworthy

⁷ For further elaboration of this development, see the contribution by Rolf Schwarz in this issue of *Security Dialogue*.

examples of this shift in thinking include the concept of 'security first',⁸ the idea of 'sustainable disarmament for sustainable development', and the focus on 'security sector reform' by major aid donors and international financial institutions. These kinds of efforts represent a sea change in thinking in the international post-conflict development community, and reflect growing awareness to close the 'planning gap' between security and development efforts. The United Kingdom is currently setting up a Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit for precisely this purpose, and even the World Bank, at first a reluctant participant in any activity that included a security dimension, has developed and taken the lead on some major demobilization and reintegration programmes.⁹

Towards Human Security

A major catalyst for the reframing of the parallel discourses of security and development was the introduction of the concept of human security. Born in the policy world, it was first used in a serious way in the 1994 UNDP *Human Development Report*. The UNDP vision of human security was broad, encompassing seven different dimensions, including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political security. The overall goal was to expand the concept of security, which had 'for too long been interpreted narrowly: as security of territory from external aggression, or as protection of national interests in foreign policy or as global security from the threat of nuclear holocaust'. Human security was thus meant to change the referent object of security 'from an exclusive stress on territorial security to a much greater stress on people's security', and, somewhat more problematically in the light of the reasons discussed above, to advocate 'security through sustainable human development' (UNDP, 1994: 22, 24). The idea was that by putting an emphasis on human security, it would make it possible to capture the so-called peace dividend, and to ensure that the resources devoted to the military during the Cold War were channelled towards more productive ends. From the outset, the concept of human security was a practical one with clear strategic goals.

⁸ The 'security first' approach has been promoted by the European Union in the context of the small-arms debate; it was also the title of a major international conference sponsored in October 1998 by the Belgian Ministry of Development Cooperation, and has been the focus of numerous efforts, including that of the British Department for International Development (DFID) and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD.

⁹ It has done so in the African Great Lakes region under the auspices of the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program; see <http://www.mdrp.org> and World Bank (2002). Noteworthy is that the Bank's initial institutional orientation towards post-conflict reconstruction was to borrow from its emergency and disaster relief 'model' to adapt it to the post-conflict context: clearly an inadequate response to a radically different problematique; see World Bank Operations Evaluation Department (1998).

Over the past decade, the concept of human security has been used by a vast array of nongovernmental and international organizations. It was obviously a nice slogan, but it was also a lens through which a number of disparate policy initiatives could be linked – and given greater coherence. On the practical level, the concept of human security was used to give a new dynamism and emphasis to projects at the grass-roots level. A focus on human security meant – in the words of one advocate – ‘putting people first’.¹⁰ It meant adopting a bottom-up or local approach to security that focused on the relationship between states and their populations, and that moved away from equating the security of a state or regime with the economic, political and social well-being of the citizens. In most parts of the world, the state or regime continues to be secured at the expense of the needs of its citizens – and it is precisely this issue that the concept of human security brings to the fore, thus also providing the fulcrum for a concept of security that can be applied to PCPB (Cockell, 2000).

Inevitably, there are broad and narrow definitions of the concept of human security.¹¹ The broad, ‘Japanese’ vision drew upon the original UNDP formulation, and could be summarized by the phrase ‘freedom from want’ – human security was about ensuring basic human needs in economic, health, food, social and environmental terms. It was directly reflected in the 2003 report of the Commission on Human Security, as well as in the funding activities of the Japanese Trust Fund for Human Security. The second vision, linked more closely to the activities of the Human Security Network, is more tightly focused on ‘freedom from fear’: on removing the use, or threat, of force and violence from people’s everyday lives.¹²

This latter vision of human security can be directly and practically linked to PCPB, and to a coherent practical and intellectual agenda that is embedded in a particular understanding of liberal state-building. In practical terms, it leads us to ask some basic questions about how to make people safe and secure in their daily lives – in their homes and streets, within their communities, and in their regions. In programmatic terms, human security gives coherence to a set of policy issues that urgently need to be addressed, including such issues as the challenge of post-conflict DDR; the situation of vulnerable groups in conflicts; the role of small arms and light weapons in armed violence; and effective security sector governance. Finally, in conceptual terms, the question of controlling the institutions of organized violence

¹⁰ This phrase has been used to describe the small arms-related activities of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue.

¹¹ For a more in-depth discussion, see the contributions in the special section of *Security Dialogue* on human security, edited by J. Peter Burgess & Taylor Owen (2004).

¹² Established in 1999 as a loose grouping of states led by Canada, Norway and Switzerland, and including Chile, Jordan, Austria, Ireland, Mali, Greece, Slovakia, Thailand, South Africa (as an observer) and the Netherlands, the Human Security Network pursues common policies on human security in a variety of international and regional institutions.

and evacuating force from political, economic and social life has been central to the whole modern understanding of politics and the struggle to establish legitimate and representative political institutions. The concept of human security – broadly and narrowly understood – shines a spotlight on the links between violence and insecurity, on the one hand, and underdevelopment and poverty, on the other.¹³

An Outline of a Critical Approach: PCPB as Piecemeal Social Engineering

How can we link these reflections on human security and development into a coherent agenda for PCPB? To begin, the people-centred concept of human security highlights the fallacies involved in embarking upon PCPB armed with blueprints drawn from the teleological end point of the liberal (secure) state, or from the institutional and bureaucratic imperatives of external actors. Asserting that a country is to be placed on the path towards liberal statehood does not help people in the street solve their daily existential dilemmas and will not be taken seriously by them (as we have seen in Iraq since 2003). Yet, acknowledging these challenges should not lead one to slide back into the historicist fatalism of ‘immutable historical tendencies’ or culturalist accounts of ‘violent places’. Nor should it lead – as critical scholarship sadly too often does – into a politics of withdrawal.

What is required might rather resemble what Karl Popper calls piecemeal engineering. It is worth quoting him here at length:

The politician who adopts this method [of piecemeal social engineering] may or may not have a blueprint of society before his mind, he may or may not hope that mankind will one day realize an ideal state, and achieve happiness and perfection on earth. But he will be aware that perfection, if at all attainable, is far distant, and that every generation of men, and therefore also the living, have a claim . . . not to be made unhappy, where it can be avoided . . . [and] to be given all possible help, if they suffer. The piecemeal engineer will, accordingly, adopt the method of searching for, and fighting against, the greatest and most urgent evils of society, rather than searching for, and fighting for, its greatest ultimate good’ (Popper, [1945] 2002: 171).

This could also be claimed to be what is at the heart of the concept of human security as ‘freedom from fear’. The promotion of human security can be seen as the culmination of the liberal project of building strong, legitimate and representative political institutions. It has its roots in Enlightenment

¹³ For an interesting attempt to tackle the links between poverty and armed violence, see the papers and reports of the Armed Violence and Poverty Initiative (AVPI) of the Centre for International Cooperation and Security (CICS) at Bradford University, available at <http://www.brad.ac.uk/acad/cics/projects/avpi/>.

ideas of the importance of individual rights and personal freedoms. It also underlines the need to frame security in a way that privileges the needs of individuals and communities. Peacekeeping, foreign aid, DDR, state and society reconstruction – these are all activities that will not work on the benevolence of donors alone. If local dynamics are not taken into account, if practices and approaches are not contextualized to meet the requirements of a particular case, PCPB efforts will continue to remain a frustrating, and often seemingly hopeless, enterprise.

Human security thus opens up new avenues for a critical rethinking of PCPB, the outlines of which would include the following basic claims:

1. Armed conflict is understood in its most general terms – following the definition of the World Health Organization – as ‘the instrumental use of violence by people who identify themselves as members of a group against another group or set of individuals, in order to achieve political, economic or social objectives’.¹⁴
2. Such conflicts have no trans-historical set of root causes, and are usually refracted through what are often highly local or idiosyncratic meanings and contexts. A deeper understanding of the causes, consequences and means of resolution of any specific conflict entails an appreciation of the complex dynamics and motivations of local actors (Kalyvas, 2003). This implies that there is also no ‘cycle of conflict’, a linear sequence that moves from war, to peace enforcement, to peacebuilding, to state reconstruction.
3. Most PCPB interventions, however, follow a donor-driven, bureaucratic-institutional logic that conjures into existence a social field on which policies can be imposed by experts defined not by their local knowledge but by their grasp of institutional imperatives and pseudo-scientific models of society and social change. These can in some circumstances have unintended or perverse outcomes, beyond just representing a waste of energy and resources.
4. Power – its analysis, understanding and ultimately subversion – rests at the core of critical analysis. By conceiving of groups in conflict as arenas for the pursuit of power (following Max Weber), such an analysis would emphasize the identification of actors who hold power, and the way they use it. A critical approach would highlight the ways in which humanitarian organizations and foreign actors represent a significant economic and political stake for local actors, often simultaneously empowering certain groups (warlords, organized political groups) and disempowering others (marginal populations, women, indigenous groups).
5. A critical approach to PCPB also broadens the referent object of insecurity.

¹⁴ See http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/en/collectiveviolfacts.pdf.

ties to include social groups as well as individuals. Following the logic of piecemeal engineering, such a move away from state-centred approaches also entails opening up the concept of sovereignty (see Schwarz & Jütersonke, 2005; ICISS, 2001).

6. External programming should not assume external actors are the most important agents of or catalysts for change. Relatedly, most of the problems encountered by post-conflict interventions cannot be overcome by better planning and coordination, or via more training of local collaborators, or more international experts, or better funding. This downplays or devalues local knowledge, and ignores local power dynamics.
7. The broadening of the category of 'actor' also allows the incorporation of a gender perspective on security studies, a perspective that traditional approaches lack. In particular, it highlights the gendered nature of most PCPB processes (which often implicitly or explicitly reward the men with guns with political, economic and social power in the post-conflict world) and the way in which gender relations within society play a significant role in shaping the terrain on which peace is built.

This list, while not exhaustive, represents a starting point for practical reflections on the links between peace, security and development, through the lens of human security. It emphasizes the need for a critical appraisal of the presuppositions inherent in contemporary practices of PCPB, and denotes a useful and potentially powerful tool for better understanding what is required to improve such undertakings.

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