



**TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PERSPECTIVES ON  
WAR, PEACE, AND HUMAN CONFLICT**

# Adaptive Peacebuilding

## A New Approach to Sustaining Peace in the 21st Century

*Edited by*  
Cedric de Coning  
Rui Saraiva  
Ako Muto

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## FOREWORD

In today's world, violent armed conflicts are becoming more complex, protracted, and often involve non-state groups as well as regional and international actors. The twenty-first century has also seen the emergence of additional global challenges such as climate change, significant advances in information technology, the negative aspects of globalization, the COVID-19 pandemic, and major shifts in the geopolitical balance of power. From a human security perspective, these threats to our survival can be further subdivided into threats from physical, living, and social systems. Physical threats originate in physical system, most commonly natural disasters. The second type of threats comes from living systems and include diseases, famine, and so on. The third type of threats arises from social system, such as intended or unintended violence and structural poverty. All these trends and developments, respectively or in a combined and cascading manner, have increased the risk of violent conflict and made its prevention and resolution more complex.

As determined-designed peacebuilding models no longer work in many cases, this book discusses how to deal with the complexity and uncertainty described above. The old peacebuilding model, as set out in the United Nations' document "An Agenda for Peace" issued in 1992, divides a conflict cycle into three stages—pre-conflict, during the conflict, and post-conflict—with different peace actions responding differently to each stage. In contrast, contemporary armed conflicts rarely follow such a linear path. In prolonged conflicts, hostilities persist, and often it is not possible to reach a peace agreement. Moreover, conflicts recur more frequently,

resulting in a reversion to violence following an uneasy post-conflict period. In addition, when it comes to post-conflict state reconstruction, liberal peacebuilding, involving rule of law, liberalism, and market economy, has been predominant, and it has been criticized in the literature as being deterministic and imposing, despite its valuable principles. As a result of the current ineffectiveness of liberal peace efforts, peacebuilding now faces major challenges, and an alternative approach is urgently needed.

In this context, this edited volume introduces the Sustaining Peace Agenda, a new approach to peacebuilding launched by the United Nations in 2016, and assesses one of the new methods to pursue it, adaptive peacebuilding. Adaptive peacebuilding is considered as a context-specific approach and an emerging alternative to determined-designed peacebuilding approaches. Its theory is based on the notion that conflicts are inherently complex, and their resolution therefore requires context-specific measures in line with the resilience and ownership of the local society. It lies on the assumption that unlike imposed peacebuilding projects planned according to the norms and beliefs of external peacebuilders, adaptive peacebuilding responds to a society's intrinsic desire for change and aims to develop its own institutions, political and judicial systems, in line with its own history, culture, and context. In other words, adaptive peacebuilding supports social systems that prevent conflict, helps to develop resilient social institutions, and stimulates processes conducive to self-sustaining peace.

This book balances the theory of adaptive peacebuilding and the conceptualization of sustaining peace with case studies demonstrating the application of the adaptive approach on the ground. The book's wealth of case studies is its outstanding character and highlights the usefulness of context-specific peacebuilding. The peacebuilding programs examined here address diverse perspectives related to adaptive peacebuilding and sustaining peace: global, national, regional, public and private, community, faith-based, developmental, and political perspectives. Specifically, it assesses the application of alternative context-specific approaches in five conflict cases—Colombia, Mozambique, Palestine, Syria, and Timor-Leste—representing diverse and complex situations in different regions. In several cases, adaptive peacebuilding contributed significantly to ending the conflict and sustaining peace thereafter. Even where conflicts have not necessarily ended, adaptive peacebuilding has made meaningful contributions to reducing the impact of conflict and building civilian networks. Furthermore, this publication examines examples of peacebuilding by two

non-Western countries, China and Japan. The results confirm that peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan by China and in the Philippines by Japan have changed over time to a more adaptive approach. In other words, the cases in this book call into question peacebuilding practices that have been dominant since the post-Cold War period, namely the deterministic approaches and their prescriptive orientation.

As such, the insights gained from this book encourage a paradigm shift from determined-designed to adaptive peacebuilding. International actors are urged to become facilitators of locally led peacebuilding processes rather than imposing external solutions. In other words, to “facilitate” self-sustainable peace, the international actors should actively support implementing, learning from, and adapting various measures taken under the initiative of national and local actors, while understanding the context and complexity of each conflict-affected situation, rather than focusing on interference.

These findings in search of contextualized solutions will help us respond to the new crises of the 2020s, for example, in Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Ukraine. Therefore, in the current uncertain and volatile environment, this book is timely. It offers peacebuilding scholars and practitioners with a pragmatic and problem-solving perspective on sustaining peace in the twenty-first century.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This edited volume is the final output of the research project, *Contextualizing International Cooperation for Sustaining Peace: Adaptive Peacebuilding Pathways*, organized by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development. Several people have given valuable guidance and great inspiration to this book project. We would like to express our gratitude to Prof. Izumi Ohno, former Director of the JICA Ogata Research institute, and to former Deputy Directors Mr. Yasuo Fujita and Dr. Megumi Muto for their continued support and encouragement for a research project that started in 2019 and unfolded during the COVID-19 pandemic—a particularly challenging time to proceed with research activities worldwide. We also thank Prof. Akio Takahara, Director of the JICA Ogata Research Institute, and the Deputy Director Mr. Koji Makino for their insightful feedback during our research project implementation.

During four author workshops, we have received insightful comments and feedback from project advisors—Prof. Yasuhiro Takeda (affiliated with the National Defense Academy of Japan during the project, currently with Tokyo International University) and Prof. Akihisa Matsuno (Osaka University)—and from the following project contributors—Prof. Chigumi Kawaguchi (Toyo Gakuen University), Dr. Imai Kohei (Institute of Developing Economies—JETRO), and Prof. Masataka Nakauchi (Sophia University).

We are grateful to all the authors of this edited volume for their patience and skillful revisions to the manuscripts. We are also thankful to all the

experts that directly or indirectly contributed to the discussion and feedback on a wide range of topics related to adaptive peacebuilding and sustaining peace. We are grateful to local interviewees, local researchers, and the staff of JICA offices in each country where the authors have conducted fieldwork. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the professional support provided by the staff of JICA Ogata Research Institute: editorial work and project coordination by research officer Mr. Kaito Takeuchi and coordination of dissemination activities by research officer Mr. Nobuyuki Oyama. Finally, we would like to highlight the valuable contribution of the project research assistants, Ms. Midori Honda, Dr. Udeni Appuhamilage, Ms. Asti Metami Asak, Dr. César Rodrigues, Ms. Marcela Perić, and Ms. Alastair Erfé.

## Praise for *Adaptive Peacebuilding*

“For those committed to the cause of building and sustaining peace—in a way that breathes meaning into all too familiar promises of ‘local ownership’, ‘context-specific local solutions’ and ‘sustainability’—Adaptive Peacebuilding is an invaluable contribution to our thinking and practice. The various cases studied—many of which resonate with our own experience—demonstrate clearly that context specific adaptive peacebuilding approaches help to sustain peace because they stimulate, facilitate, and support local agency and resilience. Thank you, colleagues; through this work we all continue to learn!”

—Elizabeth Spehar, *Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support*

“The 2015 review of the Peacebuilding Architecture had a significant impact on the work of the United Nations, and I was pleased to find that the whole thrust of this book, in both the conceptual chapters and especially the specific case studies, builds on the pioneering work begun in 2015. The concept of adaptive peacebuilding is a good example, as well as the continued insistence on local ownership and adaptation to singular conditions. Happily, the seeds planted in 2015 continue to germinate.”

—Gert Rosenthal, *Chair of the Advisory Group of the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture*

“This is an insightful book. Adaptive peacebuilding is precisely what is needed to explain that conflicts are inherently indigenous and complex requiring society-specific approaches and interactions. To sustain peace, then, we need to empower and interact with local and national leaders who are ready to change their mindsets to adapt what needs to be adopted to achieve the goal of building self-reliant people and society. To build and sustain peace in any society, we also need to change our mindset and transcend the pre-determined prescriptions by recognizing that it is easier to change the mentality of national and local people than to change our own.”

—Sukehiro Hasegawa, *Distinguished Professor, Kyoto University of the Arts and, Former Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Timor-Leste*

“Adaptive Peacebuilding is a very welcome addition to the literature on peacebuilding. It captures the complexities and evolutionary thoughts on different approaches and processes to making peacebuilding work in different contexts. Capturing the

difficulties of the linearity in liberal peacekeeping and its weaknesses and juxtaposing it with the advantages of context-specific approaches, this important addition to the peacebuilding literature recognizes and encourages local agential roles and their contributions to more sustainable peacebuilding endeavours. Adaptive Peacebuilding is a welcome comparative study of different cases studies that brings out the nuances and details of how peacebuilding has been done in different contexts. This is a useful study for students, academics and policymakers.”

—Kwesi Aning, *Professor of Security Studies and Director, Faculty of Academic Affairs and Research, Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre, Accra, Ghana*

“There is real magic in combining powerful conceptual discussion with strong and clear practice, all wrapped in a real-world passion to help build a better future for communities forgotten within never-ending conflicts. This volume sets the standard! It will be on my desk, not on my bookshelf—and will be for practitioners, policy-makers and academics alike.”

—Professor Mike Hardy CMG OBE, *Founding Director of Centre for Trust Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University, Chair, International Leadership Association*

“In an era of uncertainty and compound crises, this book gives us practical guidance on new ways of working for peacebuilding, which are context-specific, participatory, and employ an holistic systems approach. The principles of adaptive peacebuilding introduced in the book encourage diverse actors to apply an iterative process of experimentation, learning and adaptation, and are capable of bringing different actors together to enhance much-needed effective partnerships for the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. They also resonate with our human security approach that emphasizes resilience and trust-building through dialogues within local societies. The analyses in the case studies shed light on how different actors have tried to be adaptive to deal with realities on the ground and conceptualize tacit knowledge from field experience.”

—Ryutaro Murotani, *Senior Director and Head of Office for Peacebuilding, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AAC	Associaaun Antigos Combatentes (Association of Former Combatants)
AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
AGE	Advisory Group of Experts
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
ARMM	Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
ARN	Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización (Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization)
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
AUC	Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia)
BARMM	Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao
BBL	Bangsamoro Basic Law
BDA	Bangsamoro Development Agency
BDP	Bangsamoro Development Plan
BID	Interamerican Bank for Development
BIFF	Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters
BLMI	Bangsamoro Leadership and Management Institute
BOL	Bangsamoro Organic Law
BRAVO	Birth Registration against Oblivion
BTA	Bangsamoro Transition Authority
BTC	Bangsamoro Transition Commission
CAAC	Comissão para os Assuntos dos Antigos Combatentes (Commission for the Issues of Former Combatants)
CAB	Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro
CAQR	Comissão para os Assuntos dos Quadros da Resistência (Commission for Matters of the Cadres of the Resistance)

CAVF	Comissão para os Assuntos dos Veteranos das FALINTIL (Commission for the Issues of FALINTIL Veterans)
CAVR	Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor Leste (Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor)
CCD	Data Consolidation Commission
CCDP	Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bansamoro
CD-CAAM	Capacity Development for Conflict-affected areas of Mindanao
CHSRR	Commission for Tribute, Supervision of Registration, and Appeals
CGS	Community Groups of Savings
CMHA	Cessation of Military Hostilities Agreement
CMI	Crisis Management Initiative
CNRM	Conselho Nacional Resistência Maubere (National Council of Timorese Resistance)
CNRT	Conselho Nacional de Resistência Timorese (National Council of Timorese Resistance)
CNRT	Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor (National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction)
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease
COGAT	Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories
CPC	Community Policing Council (also KPK)
CPD-RDTL	Conselho Popular pela Defesa da República Democrática de Timor-Leste (Popular Council for the defense of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste)
CRNR	Center for Reconciliation, Normalization, and Rehabilitation
CSC	Civil Service Commission
CSE	Community Sant'Egidio
CSI	Common Space Initiative
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSSR	Civil Society Support Room
CSV	Commission on the Study of Violence
CVD	Data Validation Commission
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DDR	Demobilization, disarmament, and reincorporation
DREAM	Disease Relief through Excellent and Advanced Means
EJP	Embassy of Japan in the Philippines
ELN	National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional)
EP	Ejército Popular (People's Army)
EPL	Ejército Popular de Liberación (Popular Liberation Army)
ESI	Estimated Sustainable Income

ERG	Guevarista Revolutionary Army (Ejército Revolucionario Guevarista)
EU	European Union
F-FDTL	FALINTIL-Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste
FAB	Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro
FALINTIL	Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste (Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor)
FARC-EP	Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia—Ejército del Pueblo (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)
FDTL	Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste (Timor-Leste Defense Force)
FPA	Final Peace Agreement
FRAP	FALINTIL Reinsertion Assistance Program
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (Mozambique Liberation Front)
FRETILIN	Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente (Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor)
GPA	General Peace Agreement
GPH	Government of the Philippines
H-1	Hebron 1
H-2	Hebron 2
HAKOHAK	Hametin Koperasaun Hamutuk Polisia ho Komunidade (Conflict Mitigation Through Community Oriented Policing)
HIV/ AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome caused by the human immunodeficiency virus
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICG	International Contact Group
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDP	Internally displaced persons
IEP	Institute for Economics and Peace
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IGAD-PLUS	the IGAD members, the African Union, the UN, the EU, the Troika (US, UK, and Norway), China, and the IGAD Partner's Forum
IHL	International humanitarian law
IMT	International Monitoring Team
INGO	International NGOs
INTERFET	International Force for East Timor
IO	International organizations
IPI	International Peace Institute
ISIL/ISIS	The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant
J-BiRD	Japan–Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development

JBIC	Japan Bank for International Cooperation
JCCCCH	Joint Coordinating Committee on the Cessation of Hostilities
JEP	Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz (Special Jurisdiction of Peace)
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
JTGMV	Joint Technical Group for Monitoring and Verification
KPK	Konsellu Polisiamentu Komunitária (Community Policing Council)
KRM	Konselho Revolucionário Maubere (Maubere Revolutionary Council)
L-INGOs	“Localized” international non-governmental organizations
LAS	League of the Arab States
LBEs	Linkage-building events
LCs	Local councils
LGUs	Local government units
LMTs	Local monitoring teams
M-19	April 19th Movement
MAGS	Martial arts groups
MAPR	Maputo Accord for Peace and Reconciliation
MAQL	Quintin Lame Armed Movement
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MDM	Movimento Democrático de Moçambique (Democratic Movement of Mozambique)
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
MINUSMA	UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MNLF	Moro National Liberation Front
MTF	Mindanao Task Force
MOA-AD	Memorandum of Agreement on Ancestral Domain
MOD	Ministry of Defense
NAFS	National Agenda for the Future of Syria
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NIP	National Implementation Policy
NOREF	Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre
NSAGs	Non-state armed groups
OCHA	UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official development assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
ONUMOZ	United Nations Operation in Mozambique
OPMT	Organização Popular da Mulher de Timor (Timor Popular Organization of Women)
OPS	Ofisul Polisu Suku
P5	Five permanent members of the UNSC—China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States

PDET	Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial (Development Programs with Territorial Focus)
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
PLP	Partidu Libertasaun Popular
PKO	UN Peacekeeping Operation
PNTL	Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste (National Police of East Timor)
POC	UN Protection of Civilian
PPS	Peace Process Secretariat
R-ARCSS	Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
RENAMO	Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (Mozambican National Resistance)
RESPECT	Recovery, Employment and Stability Programme for Ex- combatants and Communities in Timor-Leste
RJMEC	Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission
RTGoNU	Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity
SARS-CoV-2	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2
SASAC	State-owned Assets Supervision and Administrative Commission of the State Council
SDF	Japanese Self-Defense Forces
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SERD-CAAM	Socio-Economic Reconstruction and Development of Conflict- Affected Areas in Mindanao
SI	Syria Initiative
SOC	Syrian Opposition Coalition
SSR	Security sector reform
TICAD	Tokyo International Conferences on African Development
TIPH	Temporary International Presence in Hebron
TLCPP	Timor-Leste Community Policing Programme
TLPDP	Timor-Leste Police Development Program
TPMT	Third-Party Monitoring Team
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UN-PESGM	Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Mozambique
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNMISSET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan

UNMIT	United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste
UNOTIL	United Nations Office in Timor-Leste
UNRC	UN Resident Coordinator
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNSMIS	UN Supervision Mission in Syria
UNTAC	UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
US/USA	United States of America
VDOs	Village Development Organizations
WFP	World Food Programme



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# Introduction. Exploring Alternative Approaches to Peacebuilding

*Cedric de Coning, Rui Saraiva, and Ako Muto*

The post-Cold War period has been one of the most peaceful and prosperous eras in human history. However, a number of developments disrupted this relative calm in the early twenty-first century, including the effects of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic, major shifts in the geopolitical power balance, significant advances in information technology, and the negative side-effects of globalization (de Coning 2022). All these trends and developments, separately and even more so when compounded, have increased the risk of violent conflict and have made preventing and resolving it more complex.

Since 2010, there has been a relevant increase in the number of violent conflict incidents and conflict-related deaths, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons, and the number of natural disasters and

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complex human-made emergencies (ACLED 2022; PRIO 2022; UCDP 2022). Current trends also demonstrate that violent armed conflicts are changing in nature: they have become protracted, more complex, and recur more often (United Nations and World Bank 2018; Strand and Hegre 2021). In this context, international peacebuilding actors, such as multilateral organizations like the United Nations, bilateral donor agencies like the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and national and local actors, have been seeking for new and more effective ways to prevent, manage, and resolve contemporary violent armed conflicts.

Driven by the need to reverse these alarming trends amid increasing uncertainty, risks, and complexity, scholars and practitioners have revisited the concepts, theories, and applications of international conflict resolution, and this has resulted in an emergence of a number of new approaches to peacebuilding that are transforming how we understand and practice peace in the twenty-first century. This edited volume introduces and assesses a new approach to peacebuilding initiated by the United Nations in 2016, namely *sustaining peace*, and one new method to pursue it, namely *adaptive peacebuilding*.

## THE EMERGENCE OF THE SUSTAINING PEACE AGENDA

Since its inception, the United Nations has been a key actor in peacebuilding and conflict resolution, and the UN Charter continues to embody the principles and mechanisms for collectively achieving peace. However, the UN's capacity to respond to and prevent crises has frequently been limited by systemic constraints. In particular, the capacity to act has been strongly conditioned by the interests of the member-states with a permanent seat in the security council. During the Cold War, its focus was to respond to armed conflicts related to the waves of decolonization and to interstate conflicts that were outside the orbit of Cold War dynamics. It was only during the post-Cold War period that the concept of peacebuilding gained prominence, after its inclusion in the 1992 UN Agenda for Peace by the then Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, which presented a sectorial approach based on four types of interventions: "preventive diplomacy," "peacemaking," "peacekeeping," and "post-conflict peacebuilding."

After several attempts to reform the UN system starting with the 2000 Brahimi Report, the establishment of the 2005 peacebuilding architecture, and the development of the 2008 Capstone Doctrine, the Report of

the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) introduced the concept of *sustaining peace* in June 2015, leading to concrete actions to review and strengthen the UN's approach to peacebuilding. However, it was only with the 2016 resolutions on sustaining peace, adopted by the Security Council (S/RES/2282) and General Assembly (A/RES/70/262), that the UN sealed its intention to redirect the collective efforts of the international community to respond to today's complex crises, moving away from linear understandings and sectoral-based responses to armed conflicts. The resolutions define sustaining peace as "both a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account" (UNSC 2016, 2). Thus, the "sustaining peace" concept emerges as an umbrella policy framework that encompasses all activities aimed at "preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation, and recurrence of conflict" (UNSC 2016, 2)—that is, incorporating in a "whole-of-system" approach the elements of humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, peace mediation, peacebuilding, and development assistance.

The original concept of sustaining peace can also be traced back to Johan Galtung's *positive peace*. In contrast to *negative peace*, which is simply the absence of violence, *positive peace* emerges from the attitudes, institutions, and structures that generate and sustain peaceful communities (Galtung 1969). Accordingly, the sustaining peace agenda seeks to move beyond sectoral conflict resolution mechanisms and provides a clear roadmap for the UN and its member-states to synchronize their efforts toward a culture of prevention. The new narrative that the sustaining concept promotes also emphasizes the implementation of peacebuilding at all phases of the conflict cycle, emphasizing the importance of supplementary actions in situations where peace threats are high and where risk factors may lead to violence. Enhanced coordination and coherence across humanitarian, development, and peace actions provide an opportunity for risk mitigation and the promotion of more successful and long-term outcomes in international peacebuilding (UNESCO 2018). For example, peacekeeping operations under the sustaining peace agenda will contribute to peace efforts by serving as a security umbrella for other partners undertaking peacebuilding actions. Early peacebuilding activities will be carried out by peacekeepers, generating momentum and laying the foundation for broader peacebuilding and development activities to be effectively implemented at a later stage (Guterres 2018; UN 2022). As peace interventions based on negative definitions of peace are geared only

toward neutralizing conflict, positive peace orientations are inherently guided by maintaining and fostering peace even after violence ceases to occur. Accordingly, the concept of sustaining peace encourages peace practitioners to learn what works best on the ground and to establish the type of leadership that can promote and facilitate inclusive processes that holistically sustain peace (Mahmoud 2019). Admittedly, such multidisciplinary ethos also suggest the utility of a complexity-oriented understanding of conflict where peace tends to remain elusive despite recurring interventions (see Coleman et al. 2021).

In summary, the sustaining peace concept unfolds across four dimensions: (1) it shifts the primary agency from the international to the national and local levels; (2) it leverages all functional areas of the UN (human rights, humanitarian, women, development, peacebuilding, peace operations, and political) to generate sustaining peace outcomes; (3) it broadens the institutional responsibility for peace from the UN secretariat to the whole UN system, that is, the whole UN system contributes to one overarching goal—to sustain peace; and (4) it broadens the instrumental focus of the UN beyond its current emphasis on a just-in-time capacity to respond rapidly to emerging violent conflict (de Coning 2018b). However, despite the innovations presented by the sustaining peace concept, the reality and practice of peacebuilding today encompass a wide range of different approaches and understandings. The operationalization of the UN sustaining peace agenda remains largely untried, and the full variety of peacebuilding interactions between international, national, and local actors in complex conflict-affected situations remain unrevealed and require further research, and these are some of the reasons why we have written this edited volume.

Sustaining peace and peacebuilding are evolving concepts in continuous transformation and depend on the interpretation of both external and domestic stakeholders. The adoption and operationalization of the new sustaining peace agenda has been slow, even within the UN, and peacebuilding practices today are still largely dominated by determined-designed approaches focused on exporting liberal peace solutions that have been proven to be ineffective in non-Western societies. On the one hand, as the world order shifts away from a unipolar order centered in the Atlantic to a multipolar order, where one of the poles is the Asia-Pacific region, it has become more relevant to analyze how non-Western countries will reshape the practices and understandings of peacebuilding and which new approaches to peace these major countries will bring to the future of global

governance. On the other hand, it is important to gather more empirical evidence on the ineffectiveness of determined-designed approaches and the effectiveness of context-specific approaches—in particular, *adaptive peacebuilding*—which by its very nature has the potential to realize sustaining peace amid increasing complexity and uncertainty.

## THE SHIFT TOWARD CONTEXT-SPECIFIC PEACEBUILDING APPROACHES

The core question we explore in this book is whether context-specific and adaptive approaches are more effective than determined-designed approaches to sustain peace in complex, protracted, and recurrent conflicts. Determined-designed approaches are synonymous with linear models of peacebuilding in which foreign experts analyze armed conflicts to diagnose their root causes and address them through prescriptive programmatic interventions undertaken by several international actors. This is the style of liberal peacebuilding and its top-down interventionism. Whether influenced by liberal norms or other political values, determined-designed and prescriptive peacebuilding interventions are guided by a theory of change that assumes a linear causal relationship between intervention and its intended peacebuilding outcomes. During the latter half of the twentieth century, peacebuilding discourses in academia and practice have been dominated by determined-designed and top-down approaches to conflict resolution, in which “liberal peacebuilding” has become the Western-influenced dominant paradigm.

This approach to peacebuilding has been criticized for attempting to universally apply “liberal peace theory”—which emerged from the Western history of state formation—without adequately taking other contexts into account, and for implementing this approach in a top-down expert-driven fashion. Too linear in its planning assumptions, it has failed to sufficiently involve national and local stakeholders, including former belligerents. Various alternative context-specific approaches have been explored as part of the critical peacebuilding literature. However, despite the weaknesses exposed and new insights introduced by the “local turn” debates, peacebuilding practice has been slow to adapt, and a number of major conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and Syria have exposed the ineffectiveness of the liberal peacebuilding model to prevent, manage, and resolve the major conflicts of the early twenty-first century. While liberal peacebuilding is



only one example of a deterministic approach to peacebuilding, it deserves special attention in this edited volume as it has been the most influential in shaping how most multilateral and bilateral agencies have practiced peacebuilding over the past few decades.

The basic assumption behind liberal peacebuilding is that liberal democratic institutions and global market-oriented policies can effectively contribute to sustainable peace. Therefore, liberal peacebuilding has as its fundamental goal building a liberal democratic state after a conflict has ceased (Newman et al. 2009). As Roland Paris (1997, 56) underlined, liberal peacebuilding is therefore an experiment that involves transplanting Western models of social, political, and economic organization to non-Western regions to achieve “peace.” In the post-Cold War period, liberal peacebuilding has been the compass guiding Western governments’ peacebuilding interventions in non-Western regions. The assumption was that liberalism is universally attractive, and it offers a linear path to peace and development (Doyle 1983, 2005). However, promoting neoliberal economic agendas has often worsened social or economic tensions or even obstructed the reintegration of displaced populations and former combatants.

At other times, enforcing a top-down implementation of liberal democracy—instead of letting it emerge from within—may promote further political instability and sectarian divisions in certain conflict-affected societies (Newman et al. 2009, 12). Despite the admirable values promoted by liberal peacebuilders, the reality on the ground is that rather than creating liberal and democratic societies, liberal peacebuilding has led, time and again, to a situation where political and social institutions that are only superficially democratic, accountable, and effective end up being perceived as illegitimate and constraining by the local communities experiencing them. Both international and domestic actors often develop policies that may project the appearance of change but leave out all considerations related to the context, that is, preexisting political, economic, and social conditions. Rather than establishing liberal peace, determined-designed interventions have often created a context where liberal, illiberal, democratic, and undemocratic elements coexist. In this context, the absence of a full-scale war resembles a temporary truce rather than a substantive version of peace (Belloni 2012, 21).

Alternatively, context-specific approaches are synonymous with nonlinear models of peacebuilding that underline the importance of local agency for a peace process to become sustainable. These approaches are guided by

the theory of complexity, which refers to the self-organization capabilities of systems affected by conflict, demonstrating that peace needs to emerge from within and consider local agents, local cultures, and local socioeconomic contexts first. In this line of thought, John Paul Lederach (1997) introduced bottom-up peacebuilding, an approach focused on cultural and societal factors as vectors of sustainable peace, highlighting the importance of local contexts and local needs in peacebuilding. Lederach's (2003) model was based on the view that in people resides the potential for peace, and it placed a great deal of attention on indigenous resources. The *local turn* in peacebuilding represented a substantial shift from state-centric to multi-track approaches to peacebuilding, as demonstrated by Lederach's pyramidal conceptual model. The logic behind bottom-up peacebuilding is that peace should reflect the interests, identities, and needs of all actors affected by conflict, particularly those that are not at the top of the pyramid, that is, the middle, and the grassroots (Lederach 1997; Paffenholz 2014). Ramsbotham et al. (2005) further developed Lederach's pyramid model by identifying track-one actors—the UN, international and regional organizations, governments, and international financial institutions; middle-level or track-two actors—international NGOs, religious institutions and leaders, academics, and private businesses; and track-three actors—indigenous resources and local actors. In this pyramidal context, the importance of addressing armed conflicts through vertical and horizontal relationships is likely to result in more effective peacebuilding programs.

Following the *local turn* in peacebuilding, the next debate advanced the concept of *hybrid peace*, describing the coexistence and interplay between international and local actors in peacebuilding contexts (Mac Ginty 2010; Richmond and Mitchell 2011). Hybrid peacebuilding involves both determined-designed and context-specific practices, with external and domestic norms and actors existing alongside each other and interacting (Belloni 2012). Hybridity is understood as the composite forms of practice, norms, and thinking that emerged from the interaction between different groups, worldviews, and activities (Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012). Hybridity also reflects the interaction between top-down and bottom-up forces and considers the levels and dynamics between top and bottom. These dynamics stretch from international elites to national elites, and to the local communities and individuals. Hybridity is embedded in the structures and institutions that shape how society is organized and can be found in everyday life (Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012, 4).

Mac Ginty (2010) proposed a model of hybridization based on four pillars: (1) the ability of international actors to impose their version of peace and development on local actors; (2) the ability of international actors to incentivize their version of peace and development among local actors; (3) the ability of local actors to resist, delay, negotiate, subvert, and modify peacebuilding interventions; and (4) the ability of local actors to construct and maintain alternative versions of peace and development. Millar (2014) further suggested a disaggregated hybrid theory divided in four levels—institutional, practical, ritual, and conceptual—each level open to different degrees of determinism and different levels of local resistance, adding the notion of pragmatism to hybrid endeavors. The concept of hybridity is useful for peacebuilding analysis as it focuses on the interplay between actors, it recognizes the fluidity within groups, it considers seriously non-elites analysis, and it concentrates on the dynamic nature of societies in change (Mac Ginty and Sanghera 2012, 4–5). However, it is also important to note that hybrid forms of peacebuilding do not always produce peaceful outcomes, causing instead a negative hybrid peace, where local actors might be fragmented, or local involvement might be exclusive or superficial (Simangan 2017).

In summary, the liberal peacebuilding critique emphasized, first, *bottom-up approaches* focusing on the importance of including civil society actors and local communities in the peacebuilding process and, second, *hybrid approaches* underlining the understanding that bottom-up mechanisms may coexist with top-down intervention. Adaptive peacebuilding emerges from the recognition that social systems are ontologically complex. It is thus not possible to predetermine what kind of societal arrangement will generate self-sustainable peace, nor is it possible to pre-plan a series of steps that can lead to such a societal arrangement. Peacebuilders thus have to work with the societies in question to try to help them to sustain peace and to further strengthen their resilience to do so in future, by doing while learning and by learning while doing. Epistemologically, this is an inductive iterative process of probing, exploration, and experimentation, together with the communities and societies in question, to find out which interventions are more effective than others, and this requires a continuous process of adaptation and evolution. It is thus a direct contrast to the deductive epistemology of determined-designed approaches to peacebuilding, including the liberal peace approach.

Adaptive peacebuilding thus shares with the hybrid peacebuilding tradition a rejection of imposed determined-design, expert knowledge, and

top-down approaches to peacebuilding. Adaptive peacebuilding contributes to the scholarship on local turn by providing a theoretical framework, grounded in complexity theory, that explains why local ownership is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for self-sustainable peace by introducing and explaining the role of self-organization in the ordering of social systems.

## ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING

In line with the current peacebuilding challenges and with contemporary armed conflict trends, Cedric de Coning (2018a) developed the adaptive peacebuilding approach, informed by concepts deriving from complexity theory, resilience, and local ownership. Adaptive peacebuilding is a pragmatic and complexity-informed approach where peacebuilders and communities affected by conflict actively engage in a structured process to sustain peace. This framework relies on an iterative peacebuilding process of experimentation, learning, and adaptation. Contrary to imposed liberal peacebuilding projects planned according to the norms and beliefs of external peacebuilders, adaptive peacebuilding is aimed at enabling local societies to develop their own institutions, that is, political and judicial systems aligned with their own history, culture, and context. Therefore, adaptive peacebuilding approaches highlight context-specific local solutions, although international actors may have a role, if requested, in process facilitation (de Coning 2013, 2018a, 2019a, 2020).

Adaptive approaches are also reflected in other peace-related interventions, such as peace mediation or peacemaking. Adaptive mediation reflects a set of strategies and practices to deal with mediation processes in complex environments. The focus is again on resilience, self-organization capacities of the conflict parties, and pragmatism, that is, the context-specific peacemaking process matters more than preexisting international standards, and mediators will act as process facilitators instead of full-fledged stakeholders. To effectively implement adaptive mediation, it is crucial to find a balance between external facilitation and self-organization. Adaptive mediation emerges then as an alternative to traditional determined-designed approaches to peace mediation, with the potential for peacemaking effectiveness in complex conflict systems (de Coning et al. 2022).

An adaptive approach implies a change in the peacebuilders' mindset. It promotes transformation in the culture of peace organizations, partners,

and funders. It facilitates horizontal and vertical participation in the peacebuilding process and focuses on results and allocation of resources to where it is more effective on the ground. To attain its objectives more effectively, adaptive peacebuilding relies not only on an adaptive organizational culture but also on continuous conflict analysis and evaluation and monitoring, as it recognizes the changing nature of complex situations affected by conflict (de Coning 2019b). Determined-designed peacebuilding attempts to avoid duplication and reduces excess capacity, while adaptive peacebuilding focuses on variation for evolution and adaptation, encouraging robustness and resilience in conflict-affected systems. While in determined-designed approaches, cost-effectiveness is achieved by eliminating what was not needed in the past, in adaptive approaches, cost-effectiveness is measured by the cost of adapting to possible futures (de Coning 2019b). In sum, the effectiveness of peacebuilding programs is measured by the ability to adapt to a complex environment (organizational learning) and the ability to sustain peace gains, rather than checking results against predetermined objectives and specifications.

Adaptive peacebuilding is a fundamentally different approach when compared with determined-designed methods. It is agnostic about content, it is focused on process, and its aim is to generate a self-sustainable peace. The content will be determined by the society's history, culture, political context, and so on, and will emerge from the peacebuilding process itself. The self-sustainability is a product of the participatory process, of the self-organized social institutions that emerge as a result of the participatory process and that give the society the adaptive capacity and resilience needed to manage future shocks and setbacks. In addition, adaptive peacebuilding encourages international peacebuilders—such as multilateral and bilateral agencies and international nongovernmental organizations—to actively support and facilitate self-sustainable peace processes through the active participation of affected people in peace mediation, humanitarian assistance, demobilization disarmament reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR), governance, the reconstruction of economic and social foundations, post-conflict development, and a myriad of other peacebuilding actions. Adaptation thus serves completely different purposes in the determined-designed versus the adaptive peacebuilding approaches. In the determined-designed approach, the destination is predetermined, and adaptation amounts to course-corrections and navigational tactics to accommodate “the weather” along the journey to this end-state. In the adaptive peacebuilding approach, adaptation is the

method that perpetually generates the destination, with the note that sustaining peace has no endpoint, so the “destination” is peace attained in the present and immediate future and requires continuous and indefinite adaptation to sustain it.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

Considering the current paradigm shift in peacebuilding policy discourses and in the scholarly debates, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development embarked on a three-year research project that has now culminated in this book. Given the urgency and complexity of current armed conflict trends and the lack of effectiveness on the ground of determined-designed peacebuilding interventions in several regions, this book has three main objectives:

1. To explore the UN’s sustaining peace approach as well as one new emerging method for pursuing it, namely adaptive peacebuilding. We intend to make policy audiences aware of alternative peacebuilding approaches in addressing the current challenges related to violent armed conflicts;
2. To assess the potential of adaptive peacebuilding versus determined-designed approaches by considering evidence-based research from seven case studies in four regional contexts—Africa, Asia, the Middle East, and Latin America—on how international peacebuilders design, implement, and evaluate peacebuilding programs in contemporary conflict-affected situations. Through empirical research, this study verifies various peacebuilding interactions between external and local actors and how they have facilitated or hindered the peacebuilding process in each case study. The researchers placed particular emphasis on issues related to the complexity of armed conflicts and the adaptiveness of respective peacebuilding interventions; and
3. To shed light on the peacebuilding contributions of two major Asia-Pacific countries supporting peacebuilding actions in complex, protracted, and recurring conflicts. Our aim here is to provide a structured analysis on recent peacebuilding initiatives by relevant non-Western peacebuilding countries, taking China and Japan as case studies, to identify if there has been an evident shift in their

peacebuilding approaches and how determined-designed or adaptive their approaches are.

To explore if and how adaptive approaches present an effective alternative pathway to determined-designed approaches to peacebuilding and contribute to sustaining peace in contemporary conflict-affected societies, this edited volume uses two sets of diverse case studies to compare adaptive and determined-designed approaches across a variety of country cases and policy environments. In the first set, the book compares five country cases (Colombia, Mozambique, Palestine, Syria, and Timor-Leste) representative of conflicts in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, covering a diverse range of peace and conflict contexts and peacebuilding actors. In the second set, the book considers the policy approaches of China and Japan and links the policies of these countries to South Sudan in the case of China and the Philippines in the case of Japan. In each case, the authors conducted their research using qualitative methods appropriate to each context but asking the same research questions and following a common research framework (Table 1.1) to generate comparable data.

In practice, adaptive peacebuilding is likely to be more abductive than inductive because peacebuilders, or their sending institutions, are likely to have certain guiding principles and values, or they may have to act within certain mandates, while the societies in question also have their own histories, values, customs, and so on. Overall, however, what adaptive peacebuilding approaches have in common is rejection of imposed and predetermined solutions and a commitment to the emergence of context-specific solutions through a process of iterative adaptive learning.

When we set out to look at specific cases, we were conscious that none of them were examples of applied adaptive peacebuilding. Neither the peacebuilders nor the communities in these cases tried to use adaptive peacebuilding. What we needed to identify instead was whether we could find trends and developments that were similar to those that characterize adaptive peacebuilding, and, if so, determine if studying these could tell us something about the effect of context-specific and adaptive approaches on the sustainability of peace processes.

Thus, our question was, “Do context-specific and adaptive approaches (understood as learning from experience) have a more sustainable effect than determined-design approaches?” To pursue this line of enquiry, we asked each of the chapter contributors to attempt to answer the following four questions:

**Table 1.1** Common research framework

<i>Main research question</i>	<i>How effective are adaptive peacebuilding approaches in contemporary armed conflicts when compared with determined-designed approaches?</i>
<i>Case study research guidance</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Can you identify local, national, or international peacebuilding actors that have implemented (a) deterministic (top-down, based on imported theories, models, or best practices) or (b) context-specific (informed by local, cultural, historical, political contexts) approaches to peacebuilding in your case study? Identify, discuss, map, analyze one or more examples of (a) and (b) in your case study.</li> <li>(2) Compare these two approaches (deterministic and context-specific) and analyze how effective or not each approach has been in terms of their contribution to sustaining peace. The question we aim to answer is whether context-specific approaches are more conducive to self-sustaining peace? And if so, why (in the context of your specific case study)?</li> <li>(3) Can you identify local, national, or international peacebuilding actors that have made adaptations to the way in which they approached and practiced peacebuilding over the period covered in your case study? If so, identify, discuss, and analyze one or more examples of adaptations in your case study. How have they adapted—how are their approaches and practices different from after the adaptation from before the adaptation? Why have they made these adaptations? In response to what? What was the effect of these adaptations? Has their approach or practice to peacebuilding improved—were their approaches more effective in supporting self-sustaining peace as a result of these adaptations?</li> <li>(4) Can you identify any interlinkages between context-specific and adaptive approaches to peacebuilding? Does a context-specific approach to peacebuilding result in more effective adaptations, or vice versa?</li> </ol>

We did not ask contributors to be advocates for adaptive peacebuilding, nor to discuss adaptive peacebuilding per se, as this is not a concept or approach that necessarily informed how peacebuilding was undertaken in their case studies. Rather, we asked them to answer the questions highlighted above that are aimed at understanding the following: (1) if context-specific versus imported determined-designed approaches had more sustainable effects, and (2) if inductive adaptive (learning from experience) versus deductive imported determined-designed approaches had more sustainable effects. (1) and (2) were thus used as proxies for the approach that adaptive peacebuilding advocates, and if they were found to be more effective, this would be an indication that peacebuilding



approaches, like adaptive peacebuilding, that are context-specific and adaptive may lead to more sustainable peace outcomes than those that use predetermined imposed solutions.

The primary distinction in the volume, as exemplified in the four questions that all the case studies attempted to grapple with, is between deterministic (top-down, based on imported theories, models, or best practices) or context-specific (bottom-up, informed by local cultural, historic, political context) approaches to peacebuilding. Second, it introduces an alternative approach to the dominant liberal peacebuilding paradigm, namely adaptive peacebuilding, including its foundation in complexity theory, its interlinkage with the concept of resilience, and its relationship with the principle of local ownership. Third, it situates adaptive peacebuilding in the broader sustaining peace concept that has the potential to serve as an overarching, transdisciplinary framework for collective action toward a more comprehensive and enduring approach to peace. Fourth, it compares the effectiveness of determined-designed and adaptive approaches to peace—and especially their capacity to sustain peace—across five diverse conflict-affected situations, namely, Colombia, Mozambique, Palestine, Syria, and Timor-Leste. Fifth, it analyzes the evolving peacebuilding policies of two major East Asian countries, namely, China and Japan, to explore the extent to which their respective approaches to peacebuilding are informed by determined-designed or adaptive approaches or other alternative approaches to peace. In addition, their respective peacebuilding policies are analyzed in two specific country cases, namely South Sudan and in the Southern Philippines, to illustrate the practical application of their policies in a specific context. Sixth, the editors synthesize the findings from the two groups of case study chapters, answer the research question, explore its implications for future peacebuilding policy and practice, and offer recommendations for further research and policy development (Table 1.2).

In Chap. 2, Cedric de Coning introduces adaptive peacebuilding, its foundation in complexity theory, and explores the implications of complexity thinking for peacebuilding. This chapter discusses the three core characteristics of complexity, namely a holistic systems approach, nonlinearity, and self-organization, while also addressing concepts such as feedback and emergence. In this context, it highlights that international peacebuilding interventions should not interfere in complex social systems with the goal of engineering specific predetermined outcomes. Alternatively, a complexity-informed approach to peacebuilding should

**Table 1.2** The book structure

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<b>Research problem:</b> Effectiveness of adaptive vs. determined-designed approaches to peacebuilding.	
<b>Theoretical and conceptual frameworks:</b> The adaptive peacebuilding approach and the sustaining peace concept.	
<b>Colombia:</b> Adaptive peacebuilding practices in local communities under the “National Reincorporation Policy.”	<b>China’s</b> peacebuilding approach in South Sudan—top-down adaptation and its effectiveness.
<b>Mozambique:</b> Adaptive peacebuilding by “localized international non-governmental organizations”: the cases of the “Community Sant’Egidio” (CSE) and the “Aga Khan Development Network” (AKDN).	
<b>Palestine:</b> Impartiality and adaptive peacebuilding in structural asymmetry: the case of the “Temporary International Presence in Hebron” (TIPH).	<b>Japan’s</b> peacebuilding approach in the Southern Philippines—adaptive peacebuilding and the role of JICA.
<b>Syria:</b> Locally driven peacebuilding through the cases of “the Civil Society Support Room” (CSSR) and the “National Agenda for the Future of Syria” (NAFS).	
<b>Timor-Leste:</b> Reviewing an incomplete DDR process and the veterans’ issue: examples of self-organization and adaptiveness through the <i>Suco</i> dispute resolution system.	
<b>Research findings and policy recommendations</b>	

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safeguard, stimulate, facilitate, and create the space for societies to develop robust and resilient capacities for self-organization. Thus, in contrast with top-down or deterministic approaches to peacebuilding, adaptive peacebuilding is introduced in this chapter as a more effective alternative pathway to sustain peace and resolve conflicts.

In Chap. 3, Youssef Mahmoud argues that the rebranding of various existing UN peacebuilding activities under the new nomenclature of sustaining peace may have contributed to a conceptual muddle, both for member-states and for practitioners. This is largely due to organizations being unable to loosen the choke of the state-centric, liberal moorings that tie the fortunes of peace to the presence or absence of violent conflict. The author calls for a meaningful normative shift by exploring adaptive approaches to peacebuilding that treat peace as a complex dynamic process of becoming rather than an exogenously driven end-state. This chapter unleashes the transformative potential of such approaches and highlights that the UN should deliberately promote system leadership that enables indigenous, self-organizing capacities for peace to emerge and

flourish even amid the devastation. The author underlines that marginalized groups—including women and youth—experience peace and conflict differently and that their unique leadership perspectives and roles in sustaining peace are fundamental. The chapter also calls attention to recent advances in thought and practice by the UN around the issue of leadership and brings to the fore alternative peacebuilding narratives that have emerged as part of the paradigmatic breakdowns occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic.

In Chap. 4, Lina Penagos explores the impact of the historic peace agreement signed in 2016 by the Colombian government and the revolutionary armed forces of Colombia, the FARC-EP. The signature of the peace agreement led to a complex peacebuilding architecture, as almost 13,000 former combatants participated in the reincorporation process, and roughly half of the Colombian inhabitants accepted the agreement according to the referendum of 2016. The author characterizes various peacebuilding practices and adaptations in local communities under the National Reincorporation Policy, stressing that peacebuilding—commonly associated with sustaining economies, justice, the absence of violence, and resilience—requires a significant effort to understand local dynamics between community leaders, government institutions, cooperation agencies, and religious actors. The author highlights that the Colombian case study indicates that although competitive authoritarianism had gained ground by using violence as a means for social control in some local territories, the National Reincorporation Policy has effectively adapted its orientations to boost its peacebuilding initiatives.

In Chap. 5, Rui Saraiva examines how adaptive peacebuilding has been implemented in Mozambique by “localized” international nongovernmental organizations (L-INGOs), such as the Community of Sant’Egidio and the Aga Khan Development Network. Their respective peacebuilding approaches are introduced as key examples of how peacebuilders may contribute to sustaining peace through adaptive peacebuilding amid increasing complexity and uncertainty. Both organizations have been active in many conflict-affected or fragile situations and were able to design and implement effective programs based on institutional learning and context-specific methods. These organizations are fully localized, relying mainly on the contributions of local staff, the key interlocutors to fostering dialogue with local communities, as their presence on the ground is fundamental to the effectiveness of their programs. Due to their long-term commitment to Mozambique, they are able to build contextualized

knowledge and build trust with the local population, the Mozambican government, and international donors. They are focused by nature on a context-specific and people-centered approach, adaptive to a constantly changing environment. Following these two examples, the author argues that domestic and international peacebuilders will be able to adapt to an uncertain and complex Mozambican context more effectively if they focus on the facilitation of a process that allows for peace to emerge from within, and if the design, implementation, and evaluation of related peacebuilding programs stimulate the self-organization and resilience necessary in the Mozambican society to manage its own tensions without relapsing into violent conflict.

In Chap. 6, Ryoji Tateyama explores the case of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH) as the only international peacekeeping mission deployed inside the occupied Palestinian territories with Israel's consent. The TIPH withdrew in January 2019 after twenty-two years of operation because Israel did not renew its mandate. The author highlighted that the TIPH stands out as a unique peacekeeping intervention, with a mandate focused on promoting a feeling of security among the Palestinians and with no authority to interfere in any disputes or incidents. Despite its very limited mandate, the TIPH succeeded in deterring violence against Palestinians. Therefore, the chapter analyzes the TIPH's effectiveness in a context of structural asymmetry from two theoretical perspectives: impartiality and adaptive peacebuilding. The TIPH operated based on the principle of impartiality by trying to deter violence against the weaker side or the most vulnerable in the conflict. In addition, it succeeded in adapting its operations according to the local context by developing broad interactions and cooperation with the local Palestinian communities and societies. The author argues that the TIPH could transform impartiality into an operational principle by taking an adaptive peacebuilding approach and through employing interactive processes with local Palestinians, effectively deterring violence against Palestinian residents, and promoting a feeling of security among them.

In Chap. 7, Ako Muto examines the differences, relations, limitations, and potentials of both determined-designed and locally driven adaptive peacebuilding initiatives in Syria. Amid a myriad of externally driven interventions, the author highlights some examples of locally driven approaches that are contextualized and adaptive to the conflict context: the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR), initiated by the UN's third Special Envoy and serving as a political channel for Syrian citizens to provide direct

inputs to the peace process; and the National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS), established by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UNESCWA), stand as valuable examples of Syrian-led approaches geared toward post-conflict peacebuilding. The author highlights that both programs connect Syrians beyond the location where they are based and beyond their different political positions, and that these programs are able to foster the feeling of solidarity and trust. However, these initiatives also faced considerable challenges in the process of fulfilling their objectives, often affected by the impact of determined-designed interventions and the complex situation on the ground.

In Chap. 8, Yukako Tanaka-Sakabe examines the case of Timor-Leste, a context that has faced emerging social conflicts following its independence in 2002, which also resulted from the top-down-style process of democratization and state-building. The author examined the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration process and the veterans' issues, exploring how both Timorese and external actors have developed peacebuilding interventions to address emerging instability. In this context, the author focuses on the importance of conflict prevention initiatives at the community level by incorporating traditional conflict resolution practices that aim to mitigate local tensions through mediation and patrolling. The chapter highlights the interactions between peacebuilding stakeholders through the *suco* (village), which emerge as spaces for self-organization and adaptiveness. This case study demonstrates that peacebuilding efforts in Timor-Leste are essentially adaptive, in a context where the state and society struggle to balance between veterans' demands, the views of local communities, and the creation of efficient state institutions.

In Chap. 9, Miwa Hirono explores how Chinese peacebuilding actors adapted their peacebuilding approaches and practices in South Sudan and how effective those adaptations have been in sustaining peace. First, the chapter argues that Chinese peacebuilding actors adapted more to the local South Sudanese situation in the late 2010s than a decade ago. Such adaptation, however, was introduced in a "top-down" manner—not necessarily deriving from China's experimentation and learning in South Sudan. Rather, it emerged due to the Chinese government's global policy shift from a sovereignty-centered and hands-off approach to an approach based on a more flexible interpretation of sovereignty. The author also underlines that while the Chinese government's approach to peacebuilding allowed for context-specificity, it was extended only to the South Sudanese government. On the other hand, regarding the vulnerable

populations in South Sudan, China's peacebuilding approach remained deterministic or indifferent, ultimately affecting the effectiveness of China's peacebuilding initiatives in the country.

In Chap. 10, Miyoko Taniguchi examines the impact of violence and multilayered armed conflicts that have prevailed over the last four decades in Mindanao (now Bangsamoro), despite the signing of ceasefire and peace agreements between the government of the Philippines and the Islamic insurgents, and the respective peacebuilding activities on the ground. In this context, the author explores Japan's peacebuilding approach and its aid principles of request-based assistance, self-reliance, ownership, and capacity development. With the growing recognition of the failure of liberal peacebuilding, this chapter argues how the Japanese assistance to "peacebuilding" in Bangsamoro since the late 1990s has incrementally contributed to sustainable peace, synchronizing all efforts around development, diplomacy, and security from a non-Western perspective. The chapter also examines the contributions of multilayered stakeholders and respective vertical and horizontal links, describing the Japanese intermediary role in all aspects of the peacebuilding process. This intermediary role underpinning aid norms with diverse stakeholders can be expressed as "process facilitation" in the adaptive peacebuilding discourse, and it emerges as an example of adaptive practices in any contemporary conflict-affected situations.

## CONCLUSIONS

This edited volume is designed to speak directly to the policy, practitioner, and research communities engaged in peacebuilding by providing a critical analysis of the strengths and limits of contemporary peacebuilding practices. It questions the dominant determined-designed peacebuilding paradigm—that is, liberal peacebuilding—and its respective practices and introduces and explores the effectiveness of alternative approaches such as adaptive peacebuilding and sustaining peace that are designed for coping with uncertainty and the increasing complexity of contemporary armed conflicts.

The book assesses the application of the adaptive approach and the sustaining peace concept using seven empirical case studies, which represent a diverse range of complex conflict situations, at different stages of the peace process, and with a variety of peacebuilding programs being implemented by a diverse range of peacebuilding actors (global, national, and local; public and private; community, religious, development, and

political) to test, contextualize, and further explore the theoretical and conceptual arguments of both adaptive peacebuilding and sustaining peace. Moreover, as peacebuilding has until recently been dominated by the West and the liberal peace ideology, this book explores the peacebuilding approaches of two major countries in the Asia-Pacific region, China and Japan, and considers how geopolitical shifts will influence the future of peacebuilding. Finally, in the context of the current peacebuilding debates, this book analyzes the key role of national and local actors in the peacebuilding process and highlights the role of these actors in making adaptive peacebuilding approaches work on the ground.

In this introductory chapter, we highlighted the fact that determined-designed peacebuilding approaches have been dominant in the post-Cold War period, and that international peacebuilders have often addressed the root causes of armed conflict by designing interventions that are unable to adapt to complex and fast-changing environments. Liberal peacebuilding and its top-down interventionism have failed to effectively address the complexity of contemporary armed conflicts, and its prescriptive peacebuilding interventions have been measuring progress against the degree to which a society has been transformed based on prescribed external values. Alternatively, context-specific peacebuilding approaches have been emerging as a viable alternative to determined-designed interventions. Context-specific approaches highlight the importance of local agencies for peacebuilding to become more sustainable within the broader spectrum of the peace process. In particular, adaptive peacebuilding encourages external peacebuilders to act as process facilitators rather than fully-fledged stakeholders of the peace process. Adaptive peacebuilding does not put forward a prescriptive recipe for peace, and results are assessed considering the degree to which a society can self-sustain peace. Thus, peacebuilding initiatives in the twenty-first century have more potential for effectiveness if they are implemented based on the balance between discreet process facilitation by international partners and promoting the self-organization capabilities of systems affected by conflict.

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## CHAPTER 2

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# Adaptive Peacebuilding: Leveraging the Context-specific and Participatory Dimensions of Self-sustainable Peace

*Cedric de Coning*

### INTRODUCTION

In the context of the poor performance of many existing approaches to peacebuilding, the aim of this volume is to explore alternatives that may be potentially more effective. One alternative that has emerged prominently in the critical peacebuilding literature—as discussed in the Introduction to this book—is context-specific approaches to peacebuilding. This volume provides several contemporary cases of protracted, recurring, and complex armed conflicts to identify, compare, and analyze examples of

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context-specific approaches with more traditional deterministic approaches. The aim is to better understand if context-specific approaches have any performance advantages over deterministic approaches, and if so, what those are.

In short, context-specific peacebuilding is based on local or national cultural, historic, and political understanding of what constitutes peace and bottom-up or home-grown approaches to achieving and sustaining that peace. The context determines the ideas or content, priorities, and values, and the peacebuilding process is aimed at facilitating a participatory self-sustaining peace with local and national ownership and leadership. Deterministic peacebuilding is based on international or external ideas of what constitutes peace, external efforts to achieve peace, and external standards or values that are used to assess whether peace has been attained. It is thus seen as top-down, where the content and end-state are predetermined by external actors, and peacebuilding is about facilitating the process of adopting and integrating these external values into local and national social institutions. One of the context-specific approaches that has stimulated this discussion is *Adaptive Peacebuilding*. This chapter explains the adaptive approach and related concepts, as well as its theoretical foundation in complexity theory.

In the process of identifying and comparing context-specific and deterministic approaches in the case studies covered by this volume, the authors were asked to identify local, national, or international peacebuilding actors that have made adaptations to the way in which they approached and practiced peacebuilding over the periods covered by those case studies. The aim was to identify, discuss, and analyze examples that can help us improve our understanding of what kind of adaptations have been made, that is, how was the approach to peacebuilding different as a result of these adaptations. We also want to understand why peacebuilders make these adaptations, that is, what problems or challenges did they experience that stimulated them to adapt. Importantly, we also wanted to understand what effect these adaptations have had? Have the effects or outcomes of the peacebuilding initiatives improved as a result of the adaptations? These questions were aimed at helping the authors to identify and analyze examples of adaptive approaches to context-specific peacebuilding. The next section of this chapter introduces the concept of Adaptive Peacebuilding and explains its main principles and functions.

## ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING

As discussed in the Introduction, peacebuilding is about influencing the behavior of social systems that have been or are at risk of being affected by violent conflict. Peacebuilding attempts to assist such societies to prevent and mitigate these risks. For peace to be self-sustainable, a society needs to have sufficiently strong national and local social institutions to identify, channel, and manage disputes peacefully. A society successfully sustains its own peace when its social institutions are able to ensure that political, social, and economic competition is managed peacefully and that no significant social or political groups use violence to pursue their interests.

If a society at any of these levels is vulnerable to violent conflict, it means that the social institutions that govern its politics, security, justice, and economy lack resilience. Resilience refers to the capacity of social institutions to adapt to sustain their functions, structures, and identity under stress. Resilience is strengthened, and the extent of the vulnerability is gradually reduced as social institutions develop the resilience necessary to cope with the shocks and challenges they are likely to be exposed to (de Coning 2016).

Peacebuilding has a very specific objective, namely, to help social systems prevent violent conflict by assisting them with developing resilient social institutions that can manage and resolve emerging conflicts before they turn violent. Peacebuilding is thus essentially about stimulating processes in a society that enable resilient social institutions to develop that can adequately manage internal and external stressors and shocks. However, there is an inherent tension in the act of promoting a process of self-sustainability from outside the society or community in question. Too much external interference will cause harm and undermine self-organization. Every time an external peacebuilder intervenes to solve a perceived problem, they interrupt the internal feedback process and thus deny the society or community the ability to develop the processes necessary to self-identify and respond to those problems. The result is a missed opportunity to stimulate the development of self-organization and resilience. Instead, such external interruptions build dependency (de Coning 2018).

National and local social institutions develop resilience through trial and error over generations. Too much filtering and cushioning slows down and inhibits these processes. Understanding this tension—and the constraints it poses—helps us realize why many deterministic

peacebuilding initiatives have made the mistake of interfering so much that they ended up undermining the ability of societies to self-organize, and contributed to perpetuating the conflict. As a result, this kind of intervention sustains the vulnerability of the society to recurring violence and adds to the protracted nature of the conflict.

The Adaptive Peacebuilding approach provides a methodology for navigating this dilemma. In contrast with top-down or deterministic approaches to peacebuilding, Adaptive Peacebuilding is a process where local, national, and international peacebuilders, together with the societies, communities, and people affected by the conflict, actively engage in a structured collaborative process to sustain peace and resolve conflicts by employing an inductive and iterative process of learning and adaptation (de Coning 2018). Adaptive Peacebuilding is a normative and functional approach to peace operations that is aimed at navigating the complexity inherent in trying to nudge societal change processes toward sustaining peace, without causing harm (de Coning 2020).

The core characteristics of the Adaptive Peacebuilding approach can be summarized in the following six principles:

1. The initiatives taken to influence the sustainability of a specific peace process have to be context- and time-specific, and thus emergent from a collaborative process with the people affected by the conflict;
2. Adaptive Peacebuilding is a goal-orientated and problem-solving approach, so it is important to analyze and identify, together with the affected people, what the problems are and what the initiatives for change should aim to achieve;
3. Based on the analysis and intended objectives, multiple initiatives are simultaneously undertaken, assessed, and adapted in a continuous and iterative purposeful learning process;
4. One element of the adaptive approach is variety; as the outcome is uncertain, one must experiment with a variety of initiatives across a spectrum of probabilities, and the theory of change that informs each alternative needs to be clearly articulated;
5. Another element of the adaptive approach is selection; one has to actively monitor and evaluate the effects of the initiatives by paying close attention to feedback. Adaptive Peacebuilding requires an active participatory decision-making process that abandons those initiatives that perform poorly or have negative side effects, while those that show more promise can be further adapted to introduce

more variety or can be scaled up to have greater impact. At a more strategic level, this implies refining problem analysis, reviewing theories of change, and adapting strategic planning in an ongoing process of institutional learning;

6. Lastly, Adaptive Peacebuilding is an iterative process. It has to be repeated continuously because social-ecological systems are highly dynamic and will continuously evolve. Any effect achieved is temporary and subject to new dynamics.

In the Adaptive Peacebuilding approach, the core activity of peacebuilding is people-centered process facilitation. In other words, it is crucial, as captured in the first principle of the Adaptive Peacebuilding approach, that the societies, communities, and people that are intended to benefit from a peacebuilding initiative are fully involved in all aspects of that initiative. The specific arrangements will differ depending on the context, but the principle should be that no decisions are taken about a particular initiative without sufficient participation of the affected community or society.

Sufficiency here implies that the community should be represented in such a way that the diversity and variety of their interests, needs, and concerns informs every step of the adaptive cycle. In other words, as highlighted in the second principle of the Adaptive Peacebuilding approach, a collaborative approach implies that the affected community should be sufficiently represented in the processes that analyze the problem and determine the aims and objectives of the initiative, as well as in all choices related to the analysis, assessment, planning, monitoring of effects, evaluation, and selection processes (Donais 2012).

While international, national, or local peacebuilders can influence complex social systems by enabling and stimulating the processes that enable resilience and inclusiveness to emerge, the prominent role of self-organization in complex systems suggests that it is important that the affected societies and communities have the space and agency to drive their own processes. This is why local adaptation processes are ultimately the critical element when political settlements are seeking to become self-sustaining (Mac Ginty 2011).

The Adaptive Peacebuilding approach thus requires a commitment by peacebuilders to engage in a structured and purposeful learning process, together with the society, community, and people that have been affected by conflict. This commitment to a collaborative approach comes at a cost.

Peacebuilders need to invest in the capabilities necessary to enable and facilitate such a collective learning process; plan to take the time necessary to engage with communities and other stakeholders; and invest resources in monitoring, evaluation, and learning together with communities, and they need to do all of this in an iterative, continuous, and open-ended process (Connolly and Mincieli 2019). If peacebuilders, together with the affected people, make this investment in time, effort, resources, and commitment, the benefit they may derive is a higher likelihood that the process may generate the resilient local social institutions necessary to ensure self-sustainable peace.

Complex systems cope with challenges posed by changes in the environment by co-evolving together with the environment in a never-ending process of adaptation. This iterative adaptive process, captured in the third, fourth, and fifth principles of the Adaptive Peacebuilding approach, utilizes experimentation and feedback to generate knowledge about the environment. The two key factors are variation (the fourth principle) and selection (the fifth principle). There needs to be variation, in other words a variety of multiple parallel initiatives, and there needs to be a conscious and pro-active selection process that replicates and multiplies effective initiatives and discontinues those that do not have the desired effect.

The core analysis-planning-implementation-evaluation project cycle is already well established in most peacebuilding and development initiatives. However, most peacebuilding initiatives are not good at generating sufficient variation. They are also notoriously bad at selection based on effects or results, and they are especially poor at identifying and abandoning underperforming initiatives. To remedy these shortcomings, the Adaptive Peacebuilding approach starts with an assessment of the problem and the objectives that a specific initiative wishes to achieve (second principle). The second step is to generate and implement a number of different initiatives that it can experiment with (fourth principle). It is important that the theories of change behind each option are clearly understood, so that their effects can be assessed and so that lessons can be drawn from the experiment with that particular theory of change. The third step is a structured selection process based on a proactive monitoring and evaluation system (the fifth principle) that helps to inform a decision-making process regarding which initiatives should be abandoned and which should be further developed. This process is repeated iteratively (the sixth principle), and over time, it stimulates institutional learning and resilience.



On the one hand, we can say Adaptive Peacebuilding introduces a new specific method and approach to peacebuilding in the form of the specific principles and methods outlined above. On the other hand, it can be argued that most peacebuilding contexts already employ adaptive approaches. Most peacebuilders and affected people involved in conflict management and resolution—as the various chapters in this volume show—are learning from their experiences and are continuously adapting their approaches based on their assessments of what works and what doesn't. Therefore, we do not always have to follow the specific Adaptive Peacebuilding method outlined above to be adaptive. Adaptive approaches to peacebuilding can be understood to include all approaches and practices that experiment with inductive, collaborative, and iterative approaches to peacebuilding with the aim to enhance effectiveness and self-sustainability. The shared identity of these adaptive approaches lies in the extent to which they fundamentally differ from the determined-designed approach, where the process, roles, and intended outcome of the peacebuilding initiatives are predetermined.

Adaptive Peacebuilding recognizes the role of entropy in any system and cultivates an awareness that those initiatives that appear to be effective today will not continue to be so indefinitely. Any initiative will benefit some, but not necessarily everyone. Some, often influential and powerful actors, may derive benefit from violent conflict. They may gain power and prestige, or material benefits, or both from it. Those that don't gain from the efforts to foster peace are likely to adapt and develop strategies to either undermine such initiatives or position themselves to benefit from them. They are often resilient in their own right as they may occupy positions of influence and power, and they may have accumulated or have access to resources. This usually also means they are able to attract and maintain a network of supporters, and they have the means to influence others through intimidation or reward. Even successful programs need to be monitored for signals that may indicate that an initiative is no longer having the desired effect or is starting to generate negative side effects. One must thus monitor not only for intended results but also for unintended consequences and be ready to take steps to deal with such emerging negative or perverse effects (Aoi et al. 2007).

The Adaptive Peacebuilding approach is scalable at all levels; the same basic method can be applied to programmatic initiatives at the local level

or to strategic frameworks or campaigns at the national, regional, or international levels. The feedback generated by various initiatives at different levels should be shared and modulated as widely as possible throughout the system, so that as broad a spectrum of people or organizations as possible involved in these initiatives can self-adjust and reorganize themselves and their initiatives on the basis of the information generated. The next section discusses complexity theory and explains how it serves as a theoretical foundation for Adaptive Peacebuilding.

### COMPLEXITY

It has become common place to argue that peacebuilding is a complex undertaking, or that contemporary conflict scenarios are complex. Beyond this common-sense use of the term, there is a serious academic project underway across multiple disciplines, to study and theorize complexity.<sup>1</sup> Complexity theory, applied to the social world, offers insights about social behavior and relations that are relevant for peacebuilding (Brusset et al. 2016).

All social systems are complex systems. Peacebuilding is about influencing the behavior of social systems that have been affected by conflict. Insights from complexity theory about influencing the behavior of complex systems, and how such systems respond to pressure, should thus be very instructive for peacebuilding (Meadows 1999). Complexity theory explains that a complex system is a particular type of holistic system that has the ability to adapt, and that demonstrates emergent properties, including self-organizing behavior. Such systems emerge and are maintained, as a result of the dynamic and nonlinear interactions of their elements, based on the information available to them locally, as a result of their interaction with their environment, as well as from the modulated feedback they receive from the other elements in the system (Cilliers 1998, 3; de Coning 2016, 168).

Three of these core characteristics, namely holistic systems, nonlinearity, and self-organization, are unpacked in more detail in the next section. In the process, a number of related concepts that form the basis of our understanding of complexity, including emergence, adaptation, and feedback, are also explored.

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance: Luhmann (1990); Prigogine (1996); and Mitchell (2009).

### *Holistic Systems*

A system can be defined in a very general sense as a collection of interacting elements that together produce, by virtue of their interactions, some form of system-wide behavior (Mitchell 2009). In other words, a system is a community of elements that, as a result of their interconnections, form a whole. In complex systems, the interaction is dynamic, that is to say, a complex system changes with time (Cilliers 1998). Complexity is not, however, interested as much in the agents as nodes in the system, as in the patterns of their interconnections and how that generates meaning or purpose in the system as a whole (Cilliers 1998). In other words, complexity is interested in how the elements interact and how this interaction develops into the system as a whole having new capacities that did not exist within the individual elements.

In complex systems, the whole has properties that cannot be found in the constituent elements or in the sum of their properties. In social systems, for instance, the society as a whole develops and maintains norms and identities that serve the common needs of the community. In some ways, this results in suppressing some of the interests and needs of the individual and of special interest groups in the interest of the general well-being and survival of the society as whole. Morin points out that in social systems not only is the whole more than its elements because new qualities or properties emerge due to the organization of the elements in the whole, but the whole can also be less than the sum of its parts because “a certain number of qualities and properties present in the parts can be inhibited by the organization as a whole” (Morin 2005, 11).

The concepts ‘social’ and ‘society’ conjure up images of systems made up of people that share a common sociocultural, national, or civic bond. When studying people in the context of them being part of a society, as opposed to studying them as individuals, a different side of their being—including aspects related to their role in society as well as aspects related to the restrictions that conforming to the society places on them—is revealed. These are aspects of their being that could not be revealed by studying them in isolation from their place in a social system. By studying the society as a whole made up by the patterns of activity of individuals and the various networks and subsystems, such as family, clan, and tribe, that develop out of these patterns, we reveal insights into the way individuals derive meaning from their roles in a community and how the interactions between these individual roles shape, sustain, and transform both the

society as a whole and the individuals that make up that society. These are insights that could never be identified by studying only the individual.

In moving from the individual to the community and society, we come across organization. Complex systems cannot do without hierarchy and structure, but in complex systems hierarchy is not hard-wired or externally determined and controlled; the hierarchy of a complex system is emergent and self-organized and thus changes with the system over time as it adapts and evolves in response to its environment (Cilliers 2001). The vitality of the system depends on its ability to transform itself, including its structure and hierarchy. Hierarchy is a typical characteristic of complex adaptive systems, but it is important to note that the hierarchies themselves exhibit complex adaptive characteristics (Chapman 2002).

The last aspect of a whole-of-systems approach that should be discussed is the role of boundaries and borders in complex systems. Complex systems are open systems, and this implies that interactions take place across their boundaries (Cilliers 2002). These interactions take place with other systems and the environment, for instance, in social systems there is a flow of information, and between a particular social system and its environment through its boundaries. Systems consist of interrelated subsystems, and some boundaries can thus fall within larger systems or share borders with them (Chapman 2002). Not all subsystems are neighbors physically; some are virtually linked—in social systems agents far away from each other may link up via social media, and collaborate, coordinate and otherwise influence each other's systems, and in this way interpenetrate such systems. We will return to the issue of boundaries and borders when we consider how to distinguish between internal or local and external or international actors in the peacebuilding context.

Complexity thus builds on and is grounded in systems thinking. However, it is concerned with a specific type of system, namely complex adaptive systems, and to gain more understanding of that differentiation we turn to another set of important properties of complexity, namely non-linearity and self-organization.

### *Nonlinearity*

In the previous section, a whole-of-systems perspective was introduced, and it was explained that complexity occurs in the patterns of interconnections among the elements, and how this dynamic interaction generates properties beyond those that exist in its constituent parts. In this section,

a second characteristic of complexity is introduced, namely that in complex systems the causal patterns of these interactions are nonlinear—the outputs are not proportional to the inputs (Hendrick 2009). Jervis (1997) points out that we often intuitively expect linear relationships. For example, if a little foreign aid slightly increases economic growth, it is expected that more aid should produce greater growth. However, complex systems often display behavior that cannot be understood by extrapolating from the units or their relations, and many of the results of actions are unintended (Jervis 1997). Thus, an important characteristic of complex systems is that nonlinear variables may have a disproportionate impact at one end of its range (Byrne 1998). Nonlinearity thus refers to behaviors in which the relationships between variables in a system are dynamic and disproportionate (Kiel 1996).

The first characteristic of nonlinearity is that the outputs it generates are not proportionate to their input; that is, they are asymmetrical. In complex social systems, we often talk of indirect or unintended consequences. For instance, one may organize a training course with the aim of imparting a skill, but then it turns out that the most important benefit that the participants gain from the training is not necessarily the skill, but the team-building and social networking opportunities. The second aspect of nonlinearity is that nonlinear systems do not follow a predetermined, and thus predictable, cause-and-effect path. Nor can such a path, once traced in hindsight, be replicated to generate the same effect. A third aspect of nonlinearity is that it cannot be reduced to something simpler, like a set of laws or rules that can help us to predict the behavior of the system. Cilliers (1998, 4) explains that “a large system of linear elements can usually be collapsed into an equivalent system that is much smaller.” Nonlinear data sequences and nonlinear system processes cannot be reduced to formulae or rules that can compress the amount of information necessary to manage them, or to make them otherwise predictable and controllable.

As these three characteristics have demonstrated, our common-sense understanding of nonlinearity is often closely associated with the concepts of disorder, chaos and randomness because we typically explain nonlinearity as the opposite of the linear, the logical, and the orderly. It is thus important to emphasize that in the context of complexity, nonlinearity is not associated with disorder. In fact, nonlinearity is an essential ingredient in the processes of emergence and self-organization that generate order in complex systems.

Nonlinearity has been presented as the element that distinguishes a complex system from a linear, deterministic or mechanical system. The latter is fully knowable, predictable, and, therefore, controllable in principle. It, therefore, is also unable to do anything that is not pre-programmed or designed if it is a human-made system or new in the sense that we could not know of it in advance if it is a natural system. In contrast, the nonlinearity in complex systems is what makes it possible for these systems to adapt and to evolve, in other words to create something new that goes beyond what is pre-programmed in the parts that make up the system. Nonlinearity is thus an essential part, in fact a pre-condition, for emergence, self-regulation, and adaption in complex systems (Cilliers 1998).

One of the ways in which complex systems use constraints to maintain themselves within certain parameters is through the use of feedback mechanisms. When certain thresholds are crossed, positive or negative feedback is used to correct the system back to within its parameters. While complex systems may thus theoretically be capable of a huge variety or range of actions, their behavior is typically constrained within a fairly limited range of options. While individuals may thus be theoretically free to choose any action, in a given social context their behavior is typically constrained to within a fairly limited range of options by influences such as what would be regarded as legal, moral, and appropriate by an individual's society, family, and friends. When an individual acts outside of these parameters, feedback is applied through a range of social sanctions that, in most cases, serve to direct the individual back to within the social norm.

At this point, the first two complex-systems characteristics have been introduced, namely the whole-of-systems approach and nonlinearity. Let us turn now to the third characteristic, namely self-organization.

### *Self-organization*

Self-organization refers to the ability of a complex system to organize, regulate, and maintain itself without needing an external or internal managing or controlling agent. Take for example the economy of any reasonably open economic system. Such an economic system is a self-organizing system in that it continuously responds to a large number of factors without requiring a controlling agent (Cilliers 1998). It is the cumulative and collective effect of their actions that determines the overall behavior of the system. The state of the economy in any given country or region depends on a large number of dynamic factors. As these conditions vary, the

individuals and organizations in the system continuously adjust their actions so that they can reap the most benefit from the prevailing conditions. Each individual or organization acts in its own interest, but their actions can have significant implications for the system as a whole.

This is especially the case when individual actions aggregate into swarm behavior—where the actions of some trigger behaviors by others that result in large swarm-like fluctuations in the system, in other words when a large number of individual agents respond similarly in what appears to be coordinated behavior. For instance, a large number of people may start fleeing when a rumor spreads that an attacking force may be approaching. Or a large number of investors may start flocking to a certain market or stock as rumors spread of its good prospects. The economy is often discussed as if it were an organism, but as these examples show, we need to think of it more as an ecosystem because it is not the economic system as a whole, but rather the individuals and organizations that constitute the economic system, that individually consider and respond to the factors that matter to them, and it is the cumulative and collective effect of their individual decisions and behavior that result in the emergent behavior of the system as a whole.

There are also some economic agents that are trying to influence the system in what they perceive to be in the best interest of their subsystem or even the system as a whole. Governments, central banks, and multilateral institutions like the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank may, from time to time, try to act in ways that they perceive to be in the interest of the world economy or the economy of a region or a specific country. Their actions, however, only constitute another input into the system, because they do not have control over how the system responds to their inputs. We can thus not regard them as controlling agents. At best, they are some of the more influential agents in the system.

The organization of the economic system as a whole thus comes about as a result of the interaction between the various agents that constitute the system and its environment (Cilliers 1998). There is no single agent or group of agents that controls the economic system, but there are many agents that try to influence the behavior of the system, and there are many more who simply respond in what they regard as their best interest to what they perceive, with the information available to them, to be the current state or future direction of the economy. The overall effect is that the economy self-organizes spontaneously, and this is an emergent process that comes about as a result of the cumulative and collective interaction of

all the agents in the system. As discussed in the previous section, this process is nonlinear and dynamic and thus cannot be predicted or controlled. So many causal reactions are happening simultaneously that no one agent or group of agents working together can control the system.

Although a dynamic system like the economy is too complex to model deterministically (Cilliers 1998), it is possible to influence it at various levels. As mentioned earlier, many organizations, like central banks, exist explicitly for the purpose of trying to influence the economy. Nonlinear causality generates asymmetrical relations, which implies that relatively powerless agents can sometimes have a disproportionate effect on the system. However, the effects of any such interventions, regardless of the relative power of the agents, usually only influence the system in the short to medium term because the rest of the agents in the system will respond to any new developments, and these responses will impact on each other and result in further waves of reactions. The cumulative and collective effect of these responses will result in the system as a whole responding in ways that can sometimes be anticipated, but that is ultimately unpredictable. In response to these developments, those that try to influence the system will engage in an iterative process of corrective interventions, similar perhaps to how one has to steer a ship. Whilst this may have the desired effect at times, such as higher interest rates cooling down the economy, it can never amount to control because the influence cannot be guaranteed to have or sustain the desired effect.

The economy is used as an example here because it is something we seem to be able to identify as a system, as if it has an existence apart from ourselves, even though we are constituent agents in it. It can be much harder to identify our, or other, communities and societies as similar self-organizing systems, whose behavior, identity, culture, and values come about as the result of the cumulative and collective actions of all the individual agents in the system. In this context, peacebuilding is thus a conscious attempt to influence the attitudes and behavior of a specific community or society. The point is that just as it is impossible for even relatively powerful institutions like a central bank to control the economy, it is equally impossible for peacebuilders, even a relatively powerful institution like a big peacekeeping operation in a small country, to control any given society. At best it can be one of the more influential agents in the system that manage to nudge a sufficient number of other influential agents in the desired—peace rather than violent conflict—direction. And as argued earlier, for any society to become self-sustainably peaceful, it



would need to develop its own internal social institutions that can continue to exert enough of an influence on the society to maintain and sustain peace.

Another important property of complexity in general, and self-organization in particular, that has been referred to several times before is known as emergence. Emergence is important because it explains how the elements in the system are not just merely interacting with each other to maintain themselves. In complex systems, interactions among elements also generate new collective effects that would not have occurred if the different agents had acted on their own. For the purposes of this chapter, we need to focus on how emergence contributes to ordering a complex system. In physics, disorder is understood as entropy, namely as the loss of energy in a system that, if unchecked, will result in the gradual collapse of the system into disorder. For example, the way a machine like a watch or an airplane will stop functioning if not maintained. In contrast, nonlinearity plays a critical role in creating and sustaining order in complex systems, including social systems, that is to say in enabling order to emerge (Cilliers 1998). This change over time—the way in which a system adapts on the basis of its own internal processes as well as its interaction with its environment and the way in which it generates new structures, forms, and functions—is what is meant by emergence. The French Revolution is a dramatic example of how a society reordered itself in response to its own increasing dysfunction, and how, out of seeming chaos and disorder, a totally new way of organizing itself emerged. A key characteristic of complex systems is thus that they emerge and maintain themselves spontaneously, without the intervention of an external designer or the presence of some form of internal or external controlling agent (Cilliers 1998).

Three of the core characteristics of complexity, namely a whole-of-systems approach, nonlinearity, and self-organization, have now been introduced, and key concepts such as feedback and emergence have also been discussed. In the next sections, the focus is on the implications that nonlinearity, self-organization, and emergence have for peacebuilding.

### *Implications of Complexity for Peacebuilding*

What insights can be gained from applying complexity to peacebuilding? At the epistemological level, complexity implies that the nonlinear and highly dynamic nature of complex systems place inherent limitations on our ability to know, predict, and control them, including social systems. It

also limits our ability to generate knowledge that is transferable from one context to another (Ramalingam 2013). Complexity thus reminds us to be skeptical, in principle, of results and findings that claim to be universally applicable or transferable, regardless of the method used to obtain them, because all methods are limited when considering highly dynamic and nonlinear phenomena.

In international peacebuilding, the traditional problem-solving approach is still widely practiced, namely where an objective international peacebuilding expert definitively analyzes a conflict to isolate the problem, on the basis of which a ‘solution’ is then designed and administered via a donor-funded programmatic intervention, all on behalf of a passive local society that needs to be empowered by the peacebuilders to participate in their own peace process. Concepts like state-building and peacebuilding convey the assumption that external actors like the United Nations have the knowledge and agency to ‘build’ the state and design peace processes, in the same way we can design and build a bridge or a tunnel.

The insights we have gained from complexity, and especially from the processes of emergence and self-organization, inform us, however, that social systems build themselves. External actors like the United Nations or international NGOs can only influence the process. An approach informed by insights from complexity would thus have peacebuilders facilitate inductive processes that assist knowledge to emerge from the local context, where such knowledge is understood as provisional and subject to a continuous process of refinement and adaptation. External interventions can inhibit, interfere, or even disrupt the self-organizing process in a social system, or they can nurture, enable, and stimulate self-organization. Adaptive Peacebuilding is an approach designed to follow the latter approach.

Complexity informs us that in complex systems, including social systems, change processes are emergent from the local system and evolutionary in nature; in other words, the local system adapts to its environment and learns from its own emergent behavior through a continuous process of inductive adaptation, regulated by its own self-organizing processes. Local in this context thus refers to those processes that are emergent from the local experience, while the external refers to the external environment with which the elements in the local system are interacting or to processes that are emergent from external experience. The local social system adapts and evolves in response to the stimulation of both the external environment and its own internal feedback in an ongoing iterative process. To

apply the complexity approach to peacebuilding, we thus need to think in terms of local systems and the external influences in their environment, but at the same time we need to be aware that the boundaries we utilize in the process have emerged as a result of the choices we have made in our analysis. This does not mean that our choices are completely arbitrary, as our analysis is based on features and factors that can be verified empirically, but we need to be aware of the degree to which our own choices influence our boundary analysis.

When a closed-system like a machine is stressed, it breaks down and needs to be repaired. International peacebuilders tend to apply this analogy to social systems and often approach peacebuilding as if it is a tool to fix fragile states (Ghani and Lockhart 2009). In complex systems, the elements react to stimuli in nonlinear ways, and this enables the system to evolve, so that it can find new ways to pursue its goals and reach its objectives, despite obstacles, stressors, and constraints. In fact, complex systems need to be under a certain degree of stress to adapt and evolve, and the systems that thrive are those that are able to maintain a high degree of innovation without losing their basic integrity and stability in the process (Taleb 2012). In other words, these systems are not fixed through outside intervention—they ‘fix’ themselves. Trying to ‘fix’ them from the outside may, in fact, undermine and interfere in the self-organizing process. Fragility can thus be understood as a complexity deficit, as a system that has insufficient or limited capacity to self-organize. In this context, a lapse into violent conflict can be thought of as a social system collapsing as a result of a loss of complexity (Tainter 1988).

Another concept that has emerged in this regard and that has related meanings is resilience (Chandler 2014). As discussed earlier, if a society is fragile, it means that the social institutions that govern its politics, security, justice, and economy lack resilience. Resilience refers here to the ability of these social institutions to absorb and adapt to the shocks and setbacks they are likely to face. Resilience is increased when social institutions and networks become more diverse and interconnected, so that they can share and process more information. Robust self-organized networks distribute vulnerability across their social networks. If one node fails under pressure, others can carry the load, thus preventing system collapse (de Coning 2020). The risk is gradually reduced as social institutions develop more resilience. From this perspective, peacebuilding should be about stimulating and facilitating the capacity of societies to self-organize, so that they can develop their own resilience and internal complexity (de Coning 2016).

Peacebuilding is about peace consolidation, and while avoiding a lapse into violent conflict is important, it should be recognized that preoccupation with controlling the political and social space to ensure security and stability is likely to constrain the space and pace for the emergence of self-organization. The ‘normal’ and, in fact, optimal state of a society is for its constituent parts to be in competition with each other, for instance over access to limited resources. An international intervention cannot aim to achieve self-sustainable peace and stability and suppress such internal competition at the same time. The best way to ensure sustainable peace consolidation is to encourage and facilitate the capacity of a society to organize itself so that it develops the resilient institutions necessary to manage its internal tensions. A complex-systems approach needs to be sensitive to the need for societies to self-evolve, including through constructive conflict and competition. If we accept that in complex systems change is normal, even optimal, then it would make sense to invest in developing improved capacities to facilitate and cope with change. This approach requires peacebuilders to shift their focus from trying to manage change in order to ensure that the local system arrives at a predetermined end-state. Instead, they should limit their own role to stimulating the local system so that it develops the robustness and resilience necessary to manage itself without lapsing into violent conflict.

A complex-systems approach suggests that peacebuilders need to understand peacebuilding as essentially a local process. The role of the external actors may be helpful, for instance, to restore stability after an outbreak of violent conflict and to act as a catalyst by stimulating and facilitating the processes necessary for social regeneration. However, peacebuilders need to recognize that external intervention is not sufficient to achieve self-sustainable peace. The essential ingredient for self-sustainable peace is local emergent self-organized complexity. It is possible for a society to become peaceful on its own, but it is not possible to make or build peace on behalf of a society from the outside. International peacebuilders thus have to come to terms with what it really means when they say that something is context-specific. It means that a sustainable social-political order can only emerge from that context (de Coning 2013). It means that they cannot import a model, such as the liberal peace model, and simply make a few adjustments for the local culture and context (Richmond 2011; Mac Ginty 2011).

The key to effective peacebuilding lies in finding the appropriate balance between the extent to which external security guarantees, resources,

and facilitation are needed, on the one hand, and the degree to which the local system has the freedom to develop its own self-organization, on the other. What is appropriate has to be determined in each specific context, but if the level of intervention has a negative impact on the ability of the society to self-organize, then it has crossed the threshold. If the effect of the intervention is that it undermines the ability of the local system to self-organize, then the level of external support has become deterministic and inappropriate. As these processes are dynamic and nonlinear, what is appropriate will depend on an analysis of the context.

With the help of these insights gained from applying complexity to peacebuilding, we can conclude that self-sustainable peace is directly linked to, and influenced by, the extent to which a society has the capacity and space to self-organize. For peace consolidation to be self-sustainable, it has to be the result of a home-grown, bottom-up, and context-specific process. The robustness and resilience of the self-organizing capacity of a society determine the extent to which it can withstand pressures and shocks that risk a (re)lapse into violent conflict. Peacebuilding should thus be about safeguarding, stimulating, facilitating, and creating the space for societies to develop robust and resilient capacities for self-organization. That is why peacebuilding has to be understood as essentially local (de Coning 2013).

The implication is that for peacebuilding to be sustainable, we need to shift the agency from the international to the local. International peacebuilding interventions should provide security guarantees and maintain the outer parameters of acceptable state behavior in the international system. Peacebuilding should stimulate, facilitate, and create the space for the emergence of robust and resilient self-organized systems. However, external peacebuilders should not interfere in the local social processes with the goal of engineering specific outcomes. Trying to control the outcomes of these processes produces the opposite of what peacebuilding aims to achieve; it generates ongoing instability, dependence, and fragility because it undermines self-organization.

## CONCLUSIONS

This chapter introduced Adaptive Peacebuilding, discussed its theoretical foundations in complexity theory, and explored some of the implications of complexity thinking for peacebuilding. Complexity was introduced by discussing three of its core characteristics, namely a holistic systems

approach, nonlinearity, and self-organization. In the process, the chapter also touched on key concepts such as feedback and emergence.

The discussion then considered some of the implications of complexity for peacebuilding policy and practice. The most fundamental implication of complexity for how we understand and approach peacebuilding is probably the realization that the ability of external agents to gain knowledge of the complex social systems we are dealing with in the peacebuilding context is inherently limited. In other words, we need to recognize that international actors do not have the agency to analyze a conflict, design a solution, and apply that solution with a reasonable likelihood that such an externally designed intervention can result in a self-sustainable peace.

In complex systems, there is no one definitive problem that can be solved. Second, for a peace process to be self-sustainable, any complex social system will need to develop its own institutions to manage its own conflicts peacefully, and for that to happen it needs enough space and time to allow its own self-organizing processes to emerge and evolve. International peacebuilders can assist and facilitate this process, but if they interfere too much they will undermine and delay this crucial self-organizing process. The key to successful peacebuilding thus lies in finding the appropriate balance between international support and local self-organization, and this will differ from context to context.

The implications for peacebuilding practice are derived from our understanding of how complex systems function. Most of the technical models we rely on for conflict analysis, planning, management, and evaluation are based on linear cause-and-effect assumptions that do not fit with our experiences and knowledge of how complex social systems function. The core finding of this chapter is that international peacebuilding interventions should not interfere in complex social systems with the goal of engineering specific predetermined outcomes. Trying to control the outcome produces the opposite of what peacebuilding aims to achieve; it generates ongoing instability, dependence, and fragility because it undermines self-organization. The primary directive that should guide all conflict resolution and peacebuilding initiatives is, above all, to do no harm.

A complexity informed approach to peacebuilding should be about safeguarding, stimulating, facilitating, and creating the space for societies to develop robust and resilient capacities for self-organization. Adaptive Peacebuilding is thus a conscious normative and functional approach to

peacebuilding that is aimed at navigating the complexity inherent in trying to nudge societal change processes toward sustaining peace, without interfering so much that it ends up causing harm by inadvertently disrupting the very feedback loops critical for self-organization to emerge and to be sustained.

Adaptive Peacebuilding thus offers an alternative pathway. In contrast with top-down or deterministic approaches to peacebuilding, Adaptive Peacebuilding is a process where local, national, and international peacebuilders, together with the societies, communities, and people affected by a conflict, actively engage in a structured and collaborative process to sustain peace and resolve conflicts by employing an inductive, collaborative, and iterative process of learning and adaptation.

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## CHAPTER 3

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# How Can the UN Sustaining Peace Agenda Live Up to Its Potential?

*Youssef Mahmoud*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter is being written at a time when our global social and economic systems are breaking down (Schwab 2019). Many of them were designed to concentrate power and benefits in a few hands while distributing the damage from wanton exploitation to the many. Over 4 billion poor people cannot use the law to improve their lives (WJP 2019). They only experience it as a punishment for something.

Democracy with all its virtues and deficits is not faring well. It is crumbling before our eyes, even in countries judged to be its exemplars and ferocious defenders. This is shifting the international balance in favor of tyranny (Repucci and Slipowitz 2021). The latest democracy index

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(Verschraegen and Schiltz 2007) found that just 8.4% of the world's population live in a full democracy, while more than a third live under authoritarian rule.

Our climate is nearing multiple tipping points (Carrington 2021) with irreversible impacts. The earth is heating up everywhere, and temperatures are expected to rise over the 1.5°C threshold (UNFCCC 2021) by 2040, no matter what mitigation efforts are adopted now. Absent successful planetary climate action, global temperatures could increase by 4.4°C (Grunstein 2021) by the end of the century.

We also live in a time when wars and other forms of organized violence are becoming increasingly normalized as the first recourse, with diplomacy often taking a back seat. In our highly interconnected, complex, and unpredictable world, rising powers are challenging the international rules-based order they believe was designed by older powers for a different era. Fractious geopolitics and the ongoing war in Ukraine are affecting the proper functioning of multilateral security institutions such as the UN Security Council (Gowan 2021).

In addition to upending our sense of what is normal, the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its variants have amplified these global imbalances and challenged the reach and relevance of existing institutions and their hierarchical structures (Samur 2019). It has ushered in a paradigm shift in the way we conceive and enact leadership (Mahmoud 2021), particularly in times of crisis. The reader might then wonder what this cursory description of a world that seems to be unmoored has to do with building and sustaining peace. However, sustaining peace is not the sole preserve of experts, diplomats, or a transactional enterprise that can be pursued without due consideration of these global mega trends. Without peace, it will not be possible to foster the level of trust, cooperation, and solidarity needed to address these trends and their deleterious consequences. Nor is peace possible without justice, regenerative development (Gabel 2015), or shared security (AFSC 2015).

What this chapter argues is that the UN sustaining peace agenda (UN 2016), if properly framed, understood, and implemented in an integral manner, has the potential to serve, as an overarching, transdisciplinary framework for collective action, toward a more comprehensive and enduring peace. For this potential to be unleashed, the chapter calls for freeing the sustaining peace agenda from the international peacebuilding hegemonic templates that tie its fortunes to the presence or absence of violent conflict. Despite decades of research, there is still only a cursory

understanding of peace as a complex phenomenon distinct from violent conflict. As a contribution to filling this gap, the paper will provide a brief overview of the dominant conceptual approaches to peace and the powerful assumptions that continue to inform the theory and practices of peacebuilding and sustaining peace.

Decoupling the sustaining of peace from peacebuilding would attenuate the conceptual muddle its binary relationship with conflict has created within and outside the UN. Such a separation would open the doors to innovative, empirically based approaches that broaden our understanding of peace, how it should be built, sustained and by whom (Mahmoud and Mbiatem 2021). This chapter examines some of these approaches with a particular focus on the emerging paradigm of adaptive peacebuilding (de Coning 2018). Tunisia, which is currently undergoing political turmoil and systemic breakdown, is explored as a case study where the application of such a paradigm by the UN system on the ground could have a positive impact.

The chapter finally argues that to fully unleash the potential of the sustaining peace agenda, the UN should deliberately promote integral leadership (Campbell 2021) that uncovers and harnesses endogenous, regenerative peace capacities from the inside out. Leveraging women's leadership and unleashing the power of intergenerational co-leadership, among other key societal capacities, will be critical to the success of this endeavor. Although broad constellations of actors engage in peacebuilding/sustaining peace, this chapter, as intimated above, focuses mostly on interventions relevant to the UN system.

### WHAT PEACE AND WHOSE PEACE ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

Before delving into what it would take to unleash the potential of the UN sustaining peace agenda, there is a need to first understand the various conceptual approaches to peace and examine how some of them circumscribe the meaning of "peace" in peacebuilding. Many of them have been devised to accommodate a system of largely implicit beliefs (Funk 2002) about how the world is ordered, how power is exercised, and how societies in or emerging from conflict should govern themselves. After all, the language and the terms we use, as argued later, influence the approaches to the challenges we face.

There is no one way to define peace (Hadžić 2018) and many ways to work for it. For decades, peace and conflict studies have devoted more

attention to conflict than to peace (KIIPS 2021), with the meaning of one depending on how we understand the other. These studies tend to focus on how to prevent violence rather than on efforts needed to lay the foundations for self-sustainable peace. As a result, despite its centrality, peace remains under-conceptualized. One of the reasons for this is that peace is intangible, with nonlinear dynamical properties, and is often taken for granted until it is lost. Attempts to define peace tend to ascribe to it the qualities of an ideal end state, that is hard to achieve, when in fact it is an ongoing quest, constantly in the making, always arriving, and never arrives (Ricigliano 2012). In Paffenholtz's words (2021), "the achievement of peace is unending, and societies can only ever reach an approximation of it. Moreover, it is the ever-changing pathway to peace that defines how societies understand the peace towards which they are striving."

To make it more palpable, some scholars and practitioners have prefaced peace by an adjective focusing on either the character or the quality of peace. Positive and negative peace (Galtung and Fischer 2013), quality peace (Wallensteen 2015), constitutional and institutional peace (Richmond 2014), hybrid peace (Mac Ginty 2010), and adaptive peace are just a few examples among many (de Coning 2022).

In international relations, it is pointed out (Richmond 2020) that peace has rarely been approached as an area of study. Intellectual energy tends to be focused upon problem-solving and the perspective of achieving a minimalist version of peace in the short term, based on predetermined givens. Until recently, we knew very little about how peaceful societies sustain peace (Coleman and Fry 2021) simply because these societies are rarely studied, and also because humans tend to study the things they fear or that pose a threat to them: diseases, disasters, wars. When we manage to prevent them or address their devastating impact, the most that is achieved is half of the peace (Coleman 2018b). While such peace offers a modicum of security and stability, it is highly unstable and thus unsustainable.

### *Peace in International Peacebuilding*

With respect to the international peacebuilding agenda, there are at least three dominant approaches (Funk 2002) that have shaped our understanding of how peace is conceived and built in conflict and post-conflict contexts. The first is premised on the exercise of coercive power (power politics), where war is erroneously conceived (Ferguson 2018) as part of human nature, and where peace is largely understood as the absence of

war. Such peace is thought to be best secured through the forceful imposition of order, often referred to as peace through strength (Kiernan 1981). In some post-conflict contexts, this type of peace when secured through military power is often called victor's peace, a highly reversible outcome usually requiring massive efforts to stabilize it. Such efforts are often led by international presences referred to as stabilization missions which tend to focus on maintaining security and promoting a particular type of state accompanied by externally driven societal engineering. The situation in Afghanistan (Chotiner 2021) and Iraq (Cordesman 2021) are testaments to the failure of pursuing such a securitized approach.

The second paradigm contends that peace is achieved through international law and institutions where governments pool their sovereignty in international institutions such as the UN and cooperate to build peace and address global problems for which the competitive framework of power politics is not suited. Such a cooperative, institutional approach (Richmond 2005) is guided by certain norms and values that have been collectively minted over the years, buttressed by the powerful, hegemonic assumption, similar to the one underpinning the earlier perspective, that a viable central state is the primary building block for building and sustaining peace, a highly questionable proposition (Balthasar 2017).

The third approach conceives of conflict as natural (UKEssays 2018) at all levels of human interaction, and peace is the result of skillfully applying various processes to prevent conflict from turning violent and when violence occurs, managing it through peaceful means. These processes often come under the rubrics of conflict resolution, state-building, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, peacemaking, and so on. They often adopt various spatial orientations ranging from top-down, problem-solving approaches, to bottom-up, to hybrid approaches. Narrowly interpreted, these transactional processes take the form of time-bound, centrally coordinated packages of programmatic interventions designed to prevent conflict through fixing broken institutions and promoting electoral democracy, the rule of law, human rights, and market economy, among other liberal prescriptions. These prescriptions were judged to be relevant solely to unstable environments or where conflict is manifest or proximate.

It is these three approaches inspired by Western experiences (Funk 2002) that continue to shape UN peacebuilding, largely designed to achieve a version of peace acceptable to the hegemonic few (Richmond 2005). They are all wedded to the notion that if you understand the pathology of war or address the root causes of conflict, peace would ensue,

despite studies pointing to the opposite (Diehl 2016) and to the faulty linear assumptions (Chandler 2013) informing such approaches. They also adhere to the theory that a strong centralized state is key for preventing conflict and establishing peace, broadly discounting the role and agency of individuals and societies as well as traditional governance structures in its construction and sustainability. Empirical research has shown (PSD 2019) that in sub-Saharan Africa, local chiefs, kings, and other forms of order beyond the state can play a powerful role in rendering services to citizen as well as preventing conflict and maintaining peace. Ghana (Meagher et al. 2014) and Malawi (Eggen 2011), among other countries, are excellent examples of what is called institutional hybridity where the traditional forms of governance have been integrated within the public administration of the state. This means that approaches aimed at increasing the capacity, authority, and legitimacy of national governments and excluding traditional governance structures may not yield the expected peace dividends (IPI 2017).

Even though, as discussed below, the relevance of these three Eurocentric and linear approaches has been seriously eroded over the past decade, they continue to influence international peacebuilding policies and practices, many of which feature prominently in the mandates of peacekeeping operations, despite advice to the contrary as reflected in some of the recommendations contained in the 2015 report (UNSC 2015) of the High-level Panel on Peace Operations.

### *Peacebuilding Does Not Build Peace*

In the face of the above shortcomings, many scholars have voiced critical views (Lemay-Hébert 2013) on liberal peacebuilding. They all have called for the need to reorient the peacebuilding discourse toward the promotion of more inclusive and contextualized systems of governance that account for local agency and decision-making. Some of them have argued that peacebuilding, as currently conceived and implemented by international actors, does not build peace (Denskus 2007). Declaring the end of the liberal world order, one study (Cassin and Zyla 2021) called for abandoning the linear conceptions of causality these peacebuilding methodologies espouse. They were deemed incongruent with the complex, relational, and systemic nature of conflict and peace. One scholar (Kuchling 2020) cautioned, however, that dispensing with liberal peacebuilding altogether is unwise at a time when authoritarianism and illiberal policies are on the rise, including in the West itself.

As a result of this critical debate, peace scholarship and practice have witnessed, over the past few years, the emergence of a number of alternative approaches for capturing, building, and sustaining peace. Some of them are hybrid (Uesugi et al. 2021) in the sense that they try to strike a balance between what the local contexts dictate and what international peacebuilding norms prescribe. Such an approach is not without its critics (Richmond 2012). Others, like adaptive peacebuilding, informed by empirical peace research, and by systems thinking and complexity theory, have called for an overhaul of peacebuilding altogether. They advance rather cogently the idea that peace has a better chance of enduring if it is built on the inherently resilient and self-organizing capacities (de Coning 2020) that societies exhibit when under stress.

### *Alternative Approaches for Capturing and Building Peace*

What follows is an overview of some of these alternative approaches. The purpose of such an overview is to buttress the argument that the sustaining peace agenda will stand a better chance of living up to its full potential if a broadened understanding of the dynamics of enduring peace (Vallacher et al. 2013) is factored into the ways sustaining peace is pursued.

#### *Tri-dimensional Framework for Capturing Peace*

One alternative approach to capturing peace is contained in a recent study (Jarstad et al. 2019) in which the authors propose a framework which conceives of peace as a complex process of becoming rather than an end state, not unlike other scholars mentioned above. Under this framework, peace is captured through three lenses.

The first is that peace can be described as a situation or a condition in a society where people “enjoy security and where there are institutions and norms for managing conflicts without resorting to violence, that allows people to participate on an equal and just basis and exert influence in decision-making” (Jarstad et al. 2019, 6). The second analyzes peace in terms of the relationships between actors or groups in a particular context. It is based on the recognition “that societies are made up of a web of relationships, and that each one of these relationships can be studied in terms of their peace characteristics” (Jarstad et al. 2019, 10). The third strand of the framework takes an ideational approach to peace—ideas about what peace tends to shape policy, build institutions, and inform political decision-making. “An ideational approach to peace can also critically



examine how the concept of peace is employed as a political tool to legitimize certain agendas, pursue particular forms of change or stability, and reshape or reify existing relations of power” (Jarstad et al. 2019, 13).

Such a tripartite approach—situational, relational, and ideational—is meant to usher in a more holistic understanding of how peace manifests, is experienced and understood and how the complexity of the phenomenon can be more adequately captured.

### *Disobedient Peace*

Another alternative conceptual approach to peace that has witnessed a robust revival in the wake of the recent global protest movement (CEIP 2021) is what some call nonviolence through willpower (Funk 2002). The nonviolent (which does not mean passivity) paradigm posits that genuine peace can only be attained through peaceful means (USIP 2021). Violence undermines communities and sows the seeds of their destruction. In some contexts, such an approach is called disobedient peace (PSD 2020a), a form of civil disobedience (Lefkowitz 2012) engaged in noncooperation with an inhumane social order. Its proponents wish to reappropriate the concept of peace as a viable process for nonviolent societal change toward justice and equality and away from violence and militarism. In their views, acts of disobedience, defiance, and noncooperation can build peace by calling attention to injustice and inhumane social order. Studies (Bartleby Research 2021) focusing on nonviolent civil disobedience or disobedient peace argue that civil disobedience acts as a force for evolutionary change, to preempt a revolution. It is an internal “safety valve” that serves as a stabilizing mechanism when society is railing against injustice and experiencing a boiling point, or a “pressure cooker” situation. It is this societal, peaceful, self-regulating, corrective mechanism that Cedric de Coning, in his adaptive peacebuilding framework (2018), enjoins peacebuilders to uncover and strengthen (see below).

In Sudan, the sustained 2019 nation-wide civil disobedience campaign was credited for the relatively peaceful post-authoritarian transition (Zunes 2020) that the country is currently experiencing, despite challenges (Zaidan 2021), and how women leaders played a critical role (Hagenah 2019). However, it is possible to argue that in the case of Tunisia (presented below), it is this very “disobedient peace” waged in the summer of 2021 and largely led by young people that the president of Tunisia captured to peacefully pull the country back from the edge of the precipice. A move that is not without its critics.

### *Ecological Peace*

As alluded to in the introduction, climate change and ecological collapse (IEP 2020b) are becoming devastatingly evident by the day. They are exacerbating inequalities, creating tensions, and shifting power balances between and within states and transforming humans and the earth they inhabit into endangered species (Simpson 2017). Several studies have called for exploring environmental opportunities for building and sustaining peace (Krampe 2019), through reenvisioning climate action (Wong et al. 2020) and taking steps to make peace with nature (UNEP 2021) that combine efforts to build peace with ecological regenerative strategies (Gomes 2018).

Others echoing the call have advocated moving from the current, individualistic, scarcity-conflict paradigm to one of cooperative resource management and, ultimately, toward peace ecology (Amster 2015). In this connection, the example often cited is EcoPeace (1994), an initiative through which Jordan, Palestine, and Israel, otherwise divided along political and religious lines, found themselves united in the face of a common environmental risk: water scarcity. The EcoPeace initiative aims to address the alarmingly shrinking levels of water in the lower Jordan River and the Dead Sea. The urgency of saving this shared environmental heritage enabled them to rise above what divides them and co-develop regenerative pathways to environmental peace.

### *Peace as a Sustainable Development Goal*

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), unlike the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), are to be pursued by developed, developing, and least developed countries alike. Among the 17 goals, SDG 16 in particular aims “to promote, peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.” Because of its universal character, this goal, according to Arifeen and Semul (2019), acknowledges that peace is no longer solely relevant to unstable environments. Peace should be viewed as a necessity for all societies suffering from deficits in justice, inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability.

Yet the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development nowhere explicitly mentions “peacebuilding” as a means to achieve peace-related development targets for all societies. This is because, the authors note, peacebuilding conjures up a treatment reserved for fixing non-Western, war-torn societies, judged unsuitable for seemingly peaceful societies. Because of

the changing nature of violent conflict, Western countries, including the illiberal democracies, also suffer from racial, ethnic, and religious strife; rising populism; and their own home-grown violent extremism. Therefore, “failed and fragile states located in the developing South, are not the only threat to global peace.”

For many member-states fearful of the politicization and securitization of the SDGs, the above analysis is aspirational and will not be translated into policy anytime soon. However, as will be argued below, without making sustaining peace applicable to all countries, the agenda will remain an appendage to peacebuilding.

### COMPLEXITY-INFORMED PARADIGMS FOR MEASURING, BUILDING, AND SUSTAINING PEACE

As intimated above, we have seen over the past decade that complex, adaptive system thinking (Gallo and Bartolucci 2008) is gradually replacing the linear, top-down strategies advocated by the dominant liberal peace paradigms. What is emerging are approaches that seek to draw attention to the interdependencies, relationality, and uncertainties which characterize societies as complex systems (Flaherty 2019). This has led several scholars and peace entrepreneurs and peacebuilding practitioners to also conceptualize peace as a complex system (IEP 2020b). This work has defined and measured its constituent elements to demonstrate that when these elements operate in a relationship of mutual dependence, they create a better foundation for self-sustainable peace. Complexity theory (de Coning 2020) facilitated by system thinking (McNamara 2005) has unlocked new insights for peace and conflict studies and proved a useful theoretical foundation for social scientists who study peace directly (SPP 2021).

#### *Measuring Positive Peace*

The Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) was one of the early pioneers attempting to define and measure Galtung’s inspired notion of positive peace (B. S. Grewal 2003). For the Institute, positive peace is defined as the attitudes, institutions, and structures that underpin and sustain peaceful societies.

To facilitate its measurement, the IEP has developed a conceptual framework, known as the eight pillars of peace (IEP 2013), that outlines a

system of eight factors that work together to build positive peace and enhances the effectiveness of peacebuilding (Vernon 2020). Among the eight pillars that underpin the framework, the following are often cited: well-functioning government, equitable distribution of resources, acceptance of the rights of others, good relations with neighbors, and free flow of information. The eight factors constitute an integrated system where change in one affects each of the others and the whole system. Countries who score highly across these pillars are more likely to maintain their stability and recover more easily from internal and external shocks (the case of Tunisia below). For the past several years, IEP has produced a yearly index of positive peace (IEP 2020a) that measures countries' peacefulness against the eight pillars and their related indicators. Despite its shortcomings, the index, together with another IEP product called the Global Peace Index (IEP 2021), measuring negative peace, is making a meaningful contribution to the UN and non-UN entities involved in early warning (UNV 2018) and conflict prevention.

### *The Science of Sustaining Peace*

A multidisciplinary team of researchers (Ashraf 2018) at Columbia University set out to study the dynamics of sustainably peaceful societies (Coleman et al. 2021) using the models and methods informed by complexity science (Coleman et al. 2019). They are among the few who have ventured into studying peace directly without transiting through conflict. Their findings validate existing peace theories and practices suggested by various critical scholars of the liberal approach. For example, through their research (Fry et al. 2021), they were able to determine that war and peace are not two ends of one continuum (Liebovitch et al. 2018); the drivers and inhibitors of peaceful relations are often categorically different from those of violence and war. They also affirmed that peace, like a tree, grows from the bottom-up. In situations of insecurity, violence, and conflict, it is people within everyday community-based structures who mobilize and act to minimize risk, foster relationships, and promote practices of peace. The research also found (Coleman et al. 2021) that countries with a well-articulated and shared vision for peace tend to be peaceful. A shared vision of peace entails strong mutuality and commitment to see through peace processes.

To test these findings, the researcher undertook ground-truthing field trips to Mauritius (Aumeerally et al. 2021) and Costa Rica (Coleman and

Donahue 2018) that yielded a number of insightful lessons about what it takes to live in peace and what needs to be done to sustain it despite internal contradictions and external pressures.

### *Adaptive Peacebuilding*

As noted above, one of the promising emerging paradigms for building peace is what Cedric de Coning calls adaptive peacebuilding (de Coning 2018). Adaptive peacebuilding also finds its theoretical foundation in complex system theory. The main characteristics of a complex system are its holistic nature, nonlinearity, and self-organization. For the purpose of this chapter, it is the latter that this study focuses on. Self-organization is “the ability of the system, to organize, regulate and maintain itself without needing an external or internal managing or controlling agent.” When under stress, a complex system uses these self-organizing capacities to adapt and evolve without losing “its basic integrity and stability in the process.” It draws on its resilient capacities to “fix itself.” Resilience, as explained by de Coning, refers to the ability of social institutions to “absorb and adapt to the shocks and setbacks they are likely to face.”

Adaptive peacebuilding therefore aims at facilitating and supporting the “emergence, consolidation and adaptation of local self-organizing social institutions that can manage tensions among its constituent elements, as well as between them and others in their broader environment, without lapsing into violent conflict.” Adaptive peacebuilding does not set out to achieve predetermined end states such as a specific democratic or judicial system.

To unleash the full potential of this innovative paradigm, this study recommends that, going forward, the adaptive framework should give the concept of “peacebuilding” a wide berth. Thus, it should be called the “adaptive/regenerative approach to building or sustaining peace.” Of course, what is proposed is not as succinct as “adaptive peacebuilding.” However, in prefacing peacebuilding by “adaptive,” there is a risk that this qualifier may be used as a subterfuge to make more palatable the hegemonic system of beliefs and values underpinning a contested paradigm. Or, as Paffenholtz commented in a recent article on perpetual peacebuilding (2021), adaptive peacebuilding could be “misused as an escape route leading to cosmetic adaptation rather than to transformative change.”

In this connection, the author would offer the same suggestion to Paffenholtz, citing the same risk. As explained here, the UN sustaining

peace agenda has unfortunately given a lease on life to the very flawed peacebuilding enterprise that has hampered it from realizing its potential.

### *UN Sustaining Peace Agenda: The Norm and the Conceptual Muddle*

So far it has been argued that to assess the transformative potential of the UN sustaining peace agenda, there is a need to first map the epistemological and conceptual mental frames and practices that have informed the ways this agenda has been conceived and interpreted and implemented. This discussion focused in particular on the three dominant approaches that have shaped the theory and practice of peacebuilding in conflict and post-conflict contexts. Because these approaches are dictated by a top-down, liberal system of implicit beliefs and values that are out of touch with everyday realities, the resulting international peacebuilding architecture has not built peace. In fact, the critical literature of the liberal peacebuilding enterprise, which was briefly reviewed, has facilitated the emergence of alternative approaches for capturing and building peace. Those approaches that highlighted complexity theory and systems thinking were deemed more likely, if properly harnessed, to lay a better foundation for sustaining peace from the inside-out.

It is against this background that the discussion now turns to an explanation of the letter and spirit of the UN sustaining peace agenda and the conceptual muddle the differing interpretations to which this new norm has given rise.

#### *The Norm*

Sustaining peace, as a new conceptual framework for building peace, was first articulated in the substantively identical resolutions adopted (UNSC 2016) by the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly in April 2016. It was defined as “a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account.” It encompasses “activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict, addressing root causes, assisting parties to conflict to end hostilities, ensuring national reconciliation, and moving towards recovery, reconstruction and development.” The concept of sustaining peace (Caparini and Milante 2016) calls for better linkages between the UN’s three foundational pillars of peace and security, development, and human rights, in addition to humanitarian

action. It replaces what until now has been viewed as a sequential approach to conflict that often resulted in silos—notably silos of prevention, humanitarian action, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, and development—and calls for better linkages and sharing of instruments across these different sets of responses among the key pillars of the UN’s work to overcome institutional and sectoral silos.

Sustaining peace encompasses a number of peacebuilding interventions, including strengthening the rule of law, promoting sustainable economic growth, poverty eradication, social development, sustainable development, and national reconciliation. Some of the means and principles by which these interventions are pursued are inclusive dialogue and mediation, access to justice and transitional justice, accountability, good governance, democracy, accountable institutions, respect for human rights and gender equality, and sustainable development. The resolutions recognize that sustaining peace is “the primary responsibility of national governments and authorities in identifying, driving and directing priorities, strategies and activities” and highlights the importance of “inclusivity in national peacebuilding processes and objectives,” with particular emphasis on the need to increase women’s role “in decision making with regard to conflict prevention and resolution and peacebuilding.”

In addition to this panoply of liberal prescriptions, the resolutions include an array of activities and processes, including those relating to the coordination of the UN system activities on the ground under the banner of sustaining peace. While they are too long to detail here, many have been taken up by subsequent resolutions (UNSC 2020) and amply commented on elsewhere (Mahmoud and Súilleabháin 2016).

### *The Conceptual Muddle*

Even though these resolutions were passed unanimously by the UN membership and judged (Mahmoud and Súilleabháin 2016) in many circles as a potentially transformative addition to the UN peacebuilding architecture, differing interpretations of what the concept of sustaining peace means in practice have activated minds within and outside the UN circles. Even the creation of a group of friends for sustaining peace (QUNO 2016) by the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN has not fully addressed these interpretations.

According to the former chair of the Advisory Group of Experts who led the 2015 review (UN 2015) of the peacebuilding architecture that introduced the concept of sustaining peace, there are two lingering

concerns (Rosenthal 2017) in the minds of some member-states that may account for some of these differing interpretations. The first relates to suspicions that the sustaining peace framework is a normative trojan horse to justify further inroads in matters judged eminently internal to a country. The argument advanced by some (Caparini and Milante 2016) that the language around sustaining peace should be understood as a peace to be sustained rather than a peace to be built did not go far enough to assuage this concern. The other point of contention arises from the advocacy by influential stakeholders of the universal character of the sustaining peace framework. These stakeholders maintain that like the SDGs, the framework should be applicable to all countries, including seemingly peaceful countries, regardless of their level of development or degree of peacefulness, a point cogently made by Arifeen and Semul (2019) and cited above.

Furthermore, there are some who are of the view that the rebranding of various existing peacebuilding activities under the new nomenclature of sustaining peace risks contributing to conceptual muddle and confusion (Caparini and Milante 2016). This study suggests that this risk is unavoidable. The resolutions after strategically and loftily defining sustaining peace as a “goal and a process to build a vision” of an inclusive society suddenly drop it amid a concatenation of activities that routinely come under the intrusive liberal peacebuilding framework, however well-coordinated and integrated across the UN system these activities may be. This unhappy association with peacebuilding maintains the fallacy that anyone and everyone dedicated to deescalating violence and preventing its recurrence can be working for sustaining peace. While this is a critical endeavor, particularly in contexts under stress, it should be complemented by the equally important task of proactively identifying and strengthening the resilient endogenous capacities of peace. Prevention, as argued elsewhere (Mahmoud 2016), has greater chance of sustaining peace if it is freed from the negative attributes of its nemesis: conflict.

For the UN Peacebuilding Support Office, sustaining peace should not be viewed as rebranding (UNPSO 2017) existing work, but “rather a more practice-oriented comprehensive concept to prevent violent conflict, by addressing the drivers of conflict.” This is an explanation that conveys the misguided notion that peacebuilding can perform better (Mahmoud and Makoond 2018) if it is carried out under the umbrella of sustaining peace and that improved prevention would result in durable positive peace.



The International Peace Institute (IPI), in a paper published on the first anniversary of the sustaining peace resolutions, offered another interpretation of what sustaining peace should mean in practice (Mahmoud and Makoond 2017). It argues that sustaining peace, as indicated above, applies to all societies and is not necessarily confined to unstable environments or designed to calm the ravages of violent conflict. It is a multi-sectoral, endogenous, ongoing process that is the shared responsibility of states and all citizens. Peace needs to be made an objective policy of the state. This means that core government ministries, in addition to fulfilling their intrinsic functions, must explicitly address challenges to peace and contribute to laying the foundations for its sustainability.

This chapter further argues that the overarching mandate to sustain peace should be housed at the apex of national and local government structures. Ghana (Ministry of the Interior Republic of Ghana 2021) and Costa Rica (Redacción Chile 2009) were mentioned as examples of countries that have made resolving conflict amicably and sustaining peace as deliberate policy objectives. As the UN resolutions intimated, given that peace is the enabler and outcome of sustainable development, the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets can be used as a vehicle for sustaining peace.

### OUT OF THE MUDDLE: SUSTAINING PEACE THROUGH AN ADAPTIVE APPROACH

Notwithstanding the lack of consensus in some circles on what the resolutions on sustaining peace may mean in practice, they constitute a valuable framework for the recently empowered UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) system (UNDS 2018) at the country level. They provide them with a political tool for enhancing coordination and system-wide coherence across the UN pillars as called for by the recently enacted reforms of the UN development system (UN 2021). More importantly, they afford those more entrepreneurial UN Resident Coordinators (UNRCs) the opportunity to steer the sustaining peace agenda away from the paternalistic, templated peacebuilding paradigms where conflict prevention is treated as the sure pathway for building sustainable peace (United Nations and World Bank 2018).

In this connection, it is argued that the approaches informed by complexity theory and the science of sustaining peace (Coleman 2018a) could

be particularly helpful in this endeavor. They offer less intrusive and politically sensitive entry points for helping build peace from the inside out (IPI 2019), where ownership and agency for peace recovery rest with the local actors, with the UN playing only a catalytic role. Should this and similar approaches find their way to the UN system, they could also go a long way in mitigating the conceptual muddle the resolutions introduced. More importantly, they could help elevate the sustaining peace agenda to a transdisciplinary, strategic framework, moving it away from the obsession of making peacebuilding more effective for conflict contexts.

For example, if one were to explore the adaptive/regenerative engagement for building peace advocated by Cedric de Coning, the challenges facing countries in or emerging from crisis or conflict would be framed in terms of inadequate self-organizing societal capacity (de Coning 2016) to anticipate, manage, and resolve their own conflicts. Seen through this lens, the search for underlying causes of conflict so ingrained in the peacebuilding orthodoxy becomes a search for why this capacity is absent or inadequate and where it exists, how it can be reinforced. This analytical shift takes the UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) system away from the obsessive examination of what is wrong (Vernon 2018) with the host country and offers national stakeholders, including youth and women thought leaders, an opportunity to articulate what is still going strong in their societies. Through this strength-based rather than a deficit-based approach, the uncovered resilience (Interpeace 2016) is treated as a resource not only to prevent conflict but also to lay the foundations for self-sustaining peace.

Despite the refreshing lens the adaptive approach offers, what is witnessed is that the hierarchical structures in some UN country offices and the power differential between local and international staff militate against exploring such alternative paths for building peace. The power differential may also prove challenging when it comes to harnessing local knowledge and disseminating it for the purpose of fostering sustainable peace. Recent research (PSD 2020b) has revealed that the knowledge that is valued and incentivized in peacebuilding is one that tends to promote Eurocentric liberal ideals of leadership and governance. For national NGOs that heavily depend on the financial contributions of international donors, these ideals tend to be promoted or perpetuated through the templated projects these NGOs design and implement on the ground and through the country analyses they send to the capitals of the donors. Such analyses tend to kowtow to a certain hierarchy of knowledge (PSD 2020b).

The above notwithstanding, the next section explores how the self-organizing component of the adaptive/regenerative approach to sustaining peace could, nonetheless, help in the case of Tunisia to overcome the above impediments and serve as a framework for determining the appropriate support to the country as it grapples with the unfolding crisis gripping it.

## THE TUNISIA CASE STUDY

### *Overview of the Unfolding Situation*

On 25 July 2021, Tunisia's Republic Day, President Kais Saied, invoking Article 80 of the Tunisian constitution (Parker 2021), fired the prime minister, dismissed the government, and froze the work of the parliament for a period of 30 days. He also lifted immunity from members of parliament and took over the duties of the public prosecutor. The president's actions were greeted with jubilation by an overwhelming majority of the population whose earlier vociferous, disobedient peace (PSD 2020a) rallies amid stringent Covid-19 restrictions served as a backdrop. Since then, he has taken a number of initiatives that further endeared him to the masses. This included the mobilization of the army and hundreds of volunteers to accelerate vaccinations against Covid-19 that in one day benefited over 4% of the population of 11 million (France 24 2021). If sustained, and it seems to be (M. Saleh 2022), Tunisia will have stemmed the catastrophic spread of the pandemic that made it the second-most infected country in Africa.

Reactions to this extraordinary event of 25 July poured in from within and without the country, with only a few qualifying the president's decision as a coup (Lee 2021) or as an affront to Tunisia's democratic gains. Most of the others, seeing the popular support he received, adopted a wait-and-see attitude, calling for the respect of human rights (USDS 2021), for dialogue, and for the need for a road map to restore constitutional order. Yet others felt that the president's action was salutary as the country was fast moving toward a precipice, following a decade of successive inept and corrupt governments (H. Saleh 2021) in the hands of a political elite that had hijacked electoral democracy and the state to enrich themselves.

A number of foreign so-called experts (Kirby 2021), some of whom are living in illiberal or flawed democracies, through their distorted analyses

(Chettaoui 2021) stripped Tunisia from the complexity of its internal politics (Cook 2021) and glossed over the uncertainties that characterize transitions to democracy. Most importantly, they underplayed the resilient capacities Tunisians have leveraged over the past decade to weather equally serious crises and come out of them stronger. At the time of writing, the situation nevertheless remains quite fluid. On 25 August 2021, because of new internal and external factors, the president extended the emergency powers (The Arab Weekly 2021) until further notice, to the consternation of some. He is, however, still enjoying overwhelming popular support, despite a very difficult economic and social situation, made worse by the deleterious impact the war in Ukraine has had on energy and food supplies worldwide.

### *Applying the Self-organization Lens to Tunisia*

As a former UN Resident Coordinator (UNRC) and knowing what is now known about the various approaches to building peace, the author asks what should be done if the UN were asked for support in the management of this critical phase of Tunisia's democratic transition. The answer should be to use the adaptive/regenerative approach with a view to making the appropriate context-sensitive decisions about how the UN system should position itself vis-à-vis the unfolding situation described above. In particular, it is very important to listen to Tunisians with the intent to understand and not with the intent to help or solve. A safe and structured space for them to uncover the self-correction, self-organizing capacities they had leveraged to peacefully manage present and past turbulent period should be created.

Some of those who analyzed developments soon after the president had taken those exceptional measures pointed to a number of these self-organizing capacities (Chettaoui 2021). One is the strength of ordinary citizens imbued with a sense of solidarity in times of national stress, while the other is a vibrant civil society that does not sit idly by as events unfold. Examples of actions taken by the latter are statements issued by influential women organizations (AFTD 2021), the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists, and other organizations, who pointed to the unconstitutionality (Al Bawsala 2021) of some of these measures. In the absence of a constitutional court, a parliament, and other checks and balances, some of these organizations vowed to remain vigilant and make known their views (M.B.Z. 2021) as the situation evolves.

During the 2013 acute political crisis, two prominent political figures were assassinated; the national labor union, together with three other mass membership organizations, brought together the main protagonists around the same table and brokered an agreement that put an end to the crisis. Their effort was hailed as salutary. In 2015, the quartet were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize (2015). Regrettably, the dialogue process used to pacify the nation in 2013 is now discredited because it had, in the eyes of the population, given a lease on life to the same discredited and rapacious political elite that was at the origin of the crisis. The above notwithstanding, some form of a national consultation will be needed to vet the president's vision of decentralized democracy (Jaidi 2021).

In addition to the above resilient capacities, the 2014 constitution (Tunisia 2014), flawed as it may be, has served as a bulwark in times of turmoil and enabled Tunisians to refer to it whenever their rights are infringed. It has also facilitated the passage of pioneering laws such as those criminalizing racial segregation and violence against women. And it is this very constitution that made it possible for the president to act as a "safety valve" and diffuse a severe crisis that could have pushed the country over the edge. Among other self-organizing institutional capacities, one could mention a weakened but resilient public administration (Abdellaoui 2021), women's strong voice and leadership (Yerkes and McKeown 2018), the mostly free flow of information (Freedom House 2020), and, oddly enough, the military (S. Grewal 2019).

The main point that is conveyed through this case study is that Tunisia, from a complexity-informed approach to peace, has enough self-organizing assets and agency to "fix" its own problems (Ghani and Lockhart 2009). To avoid falling into the hierarchy of knowledge traps mentioned above, international actors should draw on the strength of their ignorance (Mahmoud 2021), which gives them the permission to ask probing questions and allows answers to emerge from the inside out, from those closest to the problem. They should also resist engineering specific outcomes (de Coning 2016) that would produce, to quote de Coning again, "the opposite effect of that which sustaining peace aims to achieve." Their efforts should be limited to "safeguarding, stimulating, facilitating and creating a space" for the country to develop and strengthen its resilient capacities for self-organization and self-reliance. Whatever additional support the country might require should not unwittingly undermine these capacities (Mahmoud 2019), however insignificant they may appear in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.

The complexity-informed practices of doing-no-harm (Massabni 2018) on the part of outside actors and the elicitive approaches of co-creating knowledge about peace, outlined above, are the hallmark of what is called integral leadership. Such leadership, if mindfully applied, would facilitate the internalization of the conceptual and attitudinal shifts advocated by emerging peace paradigms such as the adaptive approach. It would also serve as a catalyst for actualizing the promise of the sustaining peace agenda.

### WHAT IS INTEGRAL LEADERSHIP?

Classical leadership paradigms that focus on the development of a set of individual skills or behaviors are now judged inadequate for the volatile, unpredictable, complex, and interdependent world sketched in the introductory part of this paper. As a consequence, new forms and concepts of leadership have emerged: shared leadership, collective/system leadership (Mahmoud 2021), compassionate leadership, process leadership (Mahmoud 2020), and so on. They all consider leadership as a relational process, an ever-evolving practice rather than a position or series of attributes or actions associated with an individual person.

Over the past few years, the UN system has made commendable efforts in elevating leadership to the strategic level that the recent internal reforms in the peace, security, and development pillars require. It has developed several frameworks (UN 2017) and principles that promote and incentivize some aspects of the relational dimension of leadership, including systems thinking and collective leadership. This is in addition to other frameworks (DHF 2020) and standard templates (UNSDG 2020) that were developed to facilitate the implementation of the new resident coordinator system (UNDOCO 2016). They largely focus on the values, attributes, and practices that are needed for the newly empowered and independent RC (UNGA and UNSC 2020) to support countries in preventing and resolving violent conflict and building sustainable peace. It is, however, recognized in some circles (DHF 2021) that because the RCs do not have the range of experience, skills, and capacities needed to fulfill their multidimensional roles with which they are entrusted, co-leadership or collective leadership is essential.

For the purpose of this chapter and as alluded above, it is this type of collective, integral leadership that this chapter now focuses on as an additional catalytic component toward unleashing the full potential of the sustaining peace agenda. Without delving into the theoretical moorings

(Reams 2005) of integral leadership and its potential for managing complexity (Bililies 2015), or into what peace leadership (Amaladas and Byrne 2018) looks like from an integral perspective (Miller and Green 2015), a brief overview of what integral leadership is, followed by how it could be applied for the purposes of sustaining peace (Mahmoud 2019), is offered below.

What does integral mean? Integral means everything that is necessary to make a whole complete. It is something undivided where all the parts are interconnected. Integral leadership seeks completeness, allowing disciplines to connect functionally. It is not a place to be or something to achieve, and it is not a stage to be reached. It is an ever-evolving journey, an ongoing developmental becoming. It is a transdisciplinary approach. It includes all aspects of a living human system: from community, to society, to nature, culture, and spirituality, to science and technology, to enterprise and economics. Integral leadership holds the view that everybody has a piece of the truth (Wilber 2021). Integrating those truths ushers in a new level of wisdom for tackling complex problems that could not be solved by those partial, competing worldviews and taking the best of each. That is why integral leadership integrates perspectives from other leadership frameworks, such as systems leadership (Dreier et al. 2019). It also shuns linear problem-solving and uncovers and harnesses existing local knowledge systems (USAID 2014) for sustainable solutions to problems. This type of leadership is aptly summarized by Peter Senge (2021), a prominent expert on systems thinking, as “the capacity of the human community to shape its future.”

### *Integral Leadership for Sustaining Peace*

For the purposes of sustaining peace, integral leadership as defined above should serve as a transformative framework for co-creating the catalytic conditions (Mahmoud 2020) that would enable the UN system and the RC in particular to unleash the potential of the UN sustaining peace agenda. To succeed in this endeavor, it should minimally reframe the sustaining peace narrative from a holistic perspective, simultaneously unleashing the feminine<sup>1</sup> leadership power of women and harnessing the leadership peace capacity of youth (SCG 2014).

<sup>1</sup>Feminine leadership is more than women in leadership positions, nor is feminine leadership the sole preserve of women. It is gender diverse. However, for the purposes of this chapter, the discussion focuses on this style of leadership as exercised by women who are able to overcome masculine-dominated systems and structures and lead in interconnected, integral ways.

*Start with Reframing the Norm from an Integral Perspective*

The sustaining peace narrative, as enshrined in UN resolutions and as enriched by the other perspectives presented in this chapter, should be interpreted as the existence of an attitudinal, institutional, relational, and transactional ecosystem (Ricigliano 2012) that can prevent the outbreak of violent conflict, and simultaneously and proactively identify and strengthen the endogenous conditions for self-sustaining peace. As can be noted, *sustaining* peace appears in the resolutions as a gerund. It conveys the sense that the pursuit of peace, as alluded earlier, is an unfinished, ongoing process of **becoming** rather than an end-state, often understood as the durable absence of conflict. From an integral leadership perspective, sustaining peace should be conceived as an organizing meta-theory, where the plurality of paradigms (Funk 2002) about how peace is conceived and enacted would find a home. Its application would entail examining the assumptions, the mental models (Clear 2021) informing each paradigm and taking the best peace promotive practices, which when put together form a basis for effective, transdisciplinary action.

Sustaining peace, thus reframed, would fail its transdisciplinary mission if it were to exclude from its remit peace with nature, as enshrined in the Paris Climate Agreement and the SDGs, which, notwithstanding serious implementation deficits and setbacks, remain an integrated blueprint for peace, people, and planet. Sustaining peace as a holistic framework cannot exclude either the nurturing of just, effective, and inclusive institutions, or the promotion of gender equality and women's leadership, drawing on relevant normative frameworks, including the Women, Peace and Security agenda, despite its limitations (Mahmoud 2018b). Nor can it ignore the multifaceted interlinkages between health and peace (WHO 2020).

Because Africa has had a critical impact in defining the limitations of international peacebuilding, an overarching framework for sustaining peace should also draw on the rich repertoire of indigenous African infrastructures of peace (Murithi 2006), some of which have Africanized integral leadership through an Ubuntu lens (Matupire 2019). Such a framework should also integrate the insights arising from epistemological advances led by African (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2018) and Latin American (Cruz 2021) scholars toward decolonial peace (Zondi 2017), which has



emerged as a result of efforts to interrogate the dominant geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo 2002) that presided over the dissemination of a single valid concept of peace.

The above integral conceptual reframing of sustaining peace, while appearing as a matter of common sense, is hard to promote within the UN without the exercise of system thinking and great deal of humility and presence, let alone resources. As experience in Burundi attests (Mahmoud and Mbiatem 2021), it is a challenging undertaking both at the individual and collective levels. This is largely due to the long-standing systemic barriers (Alliance for Peacebuilding 2017) that prevent the UN country team from seeing the larger system and forcing it to concentrate only on the parts that are most visible (Reed 2006) from their own vantage point. Another systemic barrier is the state-centric UN architecture that militates against a people-centered (Mahmoud 2018a) and inclusive approach to building peace. An adaptive approach to peace implemented from an integral perspective may help overcome this additional impediment.

### *Unleash Feminine Leadership*

Integral leadership for sustaining peace cannot succeed as an overarching collective capacity without harnessing the power of feminine leadership (Menard 2019), particularly in times of adversity. In addition to exacting a high toll on humanity, and on women in particular, the Covid-19 pandemic has had many silver linings, particularly with respect to feminine leadership. In many societies, it has unleashed women's leadership potential in visible and unprecedented ways (Hamilton 2011), beyond victimhood or the celebration of frontline heroism (Costello and Boswell 2020) that glosses over the systemic failures that jeopardize their lives and well-being. In countries (Wilson 2020) where responses to the virus and its related crises have produced sustainable outcomes, effective feminine leadership was on full display. Throughout the crisis, women in leadership position (Zenger and Folkman 2020) were able to mobilize collective sense-making, foster a shared purpose (Hamilton 2011), and take decisions that were both decisive and compassionate.

Research (Zenger and Folkman 2020) has shown that in the darkest hours of human need, women lead in integral ways. They know how to mobilize their inner knowing to leapfrog over barriers and assume a leadership role that seamlessly marries the resources of the head, the heart, and the hands in the service of their family, community, and society. Integral leadership for sustaining peace would want to create the necessary policies

and structures that would enable this feminine leadership potential to flourish at all times as a strategic resource for societal transformation and change. This is all the more important at a moment when peace and security paradigms are breaking down and new ones are emerging (Bressan 2017), a moment that could benefit from freeing the feminine wing of the mythical bird of humanity (Vetter et al. 2018), without falling prey to gender essentialism stereotypes (Powell 2017). An integral perspective of peace leadership (Miller and Green 2015) will help uncover women's understanding of peace through the multiple identities they inhabit. Such understanding would in turn help inform the work of men and women (Cook-Huffman and Snyder 2017) in co-creating a propitious environment for self-enduring peace to take root. The emerging scholarship on and practice of integral African feminine leadership (Naicker 2020), among other examples of women's leadership in African contexts (Poltera 2019), can make a meaningful contribution in this regard. As can girls and young women's grassroots activism that is increasingly viewed as a source of innovative, intergenerational policy-making (Luttrell-Rowland et al. 2021), despite the multiple challenges faced by these women, often in inhospitable environments.

#### *Beyond Inclusion: Intergenerational Co-leadership for Peace*

It has been a common narrative to state that peace will not be sustainable if the voices of youth are not included. However, young people no longer buy into this shallow discourse. They are tired of being included (Sharief 2020) in peace engineering processes that are not designed for them and where the older generation has the upper hand in decision-making. They are now calling for an intergenerational co-leadership approach (Chebbi 2020) that enables different generations to co-create and co-produce solutions (AFLI 2020) that are aligned with young people's perspectives about the future (Chebbi 2020) and about the place of peace in it.

An integral leadership approach to sustaining peace should minimally aim at strengthening institutional capacities to support young people's agency, voice, and leadership so they can co-design pathways (African Union 2020) toward more just and peaceful societies. Reframing the sustaining peace agenda as a holistic meta-framework, unleashing the feminine leadership power of women, and leveraging intergenerational co-leadership for peace are just illustrative ways of how integral leadership can be exercised to help shift patterns of thinking, knowing, and doing in the face of dominant beliefs about how peace should be built and

sustained. And in so doing, such leadership can play a catalytic role in helping the UN sustaining peace agenda live up to its potential. In this regard, the leadership templates that have been developed to enhance the performance of UNRCs could benefit from exploring the above and other holistic practices of integral leadership.

## CONCLUSIONS

We live in a world in constant flux, with seemingly intractable challenges that have laid bare the inadequacy of existing solutions. In the area of peace and security, the crisis of multilateralism and the changing nature of violent conflict, as painfully evidenced by the unfolding war in Ukraine, have accelerated the breakdown of many of the paradigms, whose relevance we have long taken for granted. This is the case of the peacebuilding paradigm. The main question that this paper has attempted to address is how to ensure that the promises of the UN sustaining peace agenda are not used as a noble disguise for the maintenance of a hegemonic norm that is no longer equal to the peace challenges we face.

This chapter has offered elements of an answer to this question. In the first part, it unpacked some of the powerful liberal assumptions that have implicitly informed our understanding of “peace” and of the theory and practice underpinning the UN peacebuilding enterprise. Some alternative conceptions of peace and related approaches on how it should be built were then presented. These approaches have emerged mainly as the result of the critical literature that documented the failures of the traditional peacebuilding paradigm. Those approaches that were informed by complexity theory and systems thinking, with a critical look at the adaptive approach to building peace, were particularly highlighted.

In the second part of the chapter, the letter and spirit of the UN sustaining peace agenda were presented. The author lamented the conceptual muddle that its association with peacebuilding had created, casting a long shadow on the transformative potential its framers had ascribed to it. Four strategies for helping liberate the agenda from the clutches of peacebuilding and unleashing the promises it still holds were suggested. The first is to recommend that the UN system internalize the innovative, empirically based, conceptual, and practical shifts underpinning the new thinking about peace, whether it is a measurable global commons, a social contract with nature, or a discrete SDG. The second is to encourage the UNRCs on the ground to explore the implementation of the complexity-based

adaptive approach to building peace, despite the state-constraints imposed by UN state-centric architectures. To facilitate such an exploration, Tunisia was used as a case study to demonstrate how its broad methodology could make a positive contribution to the country as it grappled with a severe, multidimensional crisis. Third, it is contended that in order to actualize the first two suggested actions, a special kind of a catalytic leadership is needed. The case for integral leadership as a collective capacity for harnessing societal strengths and co-creating positive change was then made. Under the impulse of this leadership, sustaining peace would be reframed as an overarching, transdisciplinary framework where the best of existing peace paradigms could find a home. Fourth, it is argued that for integral leadership to succeed, it must create the normative and policy environment that would unleash the formidable power of feminine leadership and youth agency, among other national capacities, for peace.

The above strategies if fully implemented could go a long way toward unleashing the potential of the sustaining peace agenda. However, as the chapter intimated, this will not have the desired impact if it continues to be viewed as solely relevant to conflict countries and not as a global public good to be pursued by all societies regardless of their level of development or degree of peacefulness.

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# Experiencing Adaptive Actions Within a Complex Peacebuilding Framework: The Colombian Case

*Lina Penagos*

## INTRODUCTION

The present chapter proposes a characterization of the adaptive peacebuilding approach based on the experiences of institutions and local communities in Colombia, through different peace processes. The research for this chapter found evidence of adaptive peacebuilding practices in the country's National Reincorporation Policy and particularly in the *Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace*, signed with the FARC-EP in 2016, with significant evolutions and

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improvements if compared with former agreements signed from 1990. As result, the chapter focuses on this retroactive experience of adaptiveness to achieve the 2016 Peace Agreement and not on evaluating its implementation, although some examples are mentioned. The study looks mainly at the achievement of Colombia's 2016 comprehensive peace agreement to contribute to the structural analysis proposed by the book's editors regarding recent peacebuilding initiatives after the launching of the *UN Sustaining Peace Agenda*. In addition, it considers the evolution of the peace talks in Colombia, the National Implementation Policy, and recent trends in the conflicts that challenge the implementation of a sustainable peace.

The evolution experiences and practices in this framework were analyzed from the perspective and core characteristics of adaptive peacebuilding as a pragmatic and problem-solving approach. Previous studies have stressed that the concept of peacebuilding is commonly associated with sustaining economies, justice, absence of violence, and resilience. A significant effort is then required to understand the local dynamics between community leaders, government institutions, cooperation agencies, and the Catholic Church working toward peacebuilding in Colombia. Thus, the information gathered during fieldwork allowed us to identify three main contexts of within the adaptive peacebuilding approach: a retroactive experience gathered in the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN—*Agencia para la Reincorporación y la Normalización*); a new and genuine experience on adaptiveness within the Development Programs with Territorial Focus (PDET—*Programas de Desarrollo con Enfoque Territorial*), and the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP—*Jurisdicción Especial para la Paz*).

The chapter was written in the middle of the first pandemic of the twenty-first century. However, through remote and on-the-ground fieldwork in Colombia, 41 meetings were carried out, including 7 videoconferences<sup>1</sup> and 8 full working days with peacebuilders<sup>2</sup> to see the operationalization of sustaining peace largely from the perspective of a long-term comprehensive vision of development and inclusive peacebuilding activities (see Chap. 2). The method of research was focused on semi-structured interviews. Thus, a set of questions was prepared for the

<sup>1</sup>With the Colombian cities of Cesar, Meta, Cauca and Caquetá.

<sup>2</sup>The interviews took place in Colombian cities of Bogota, Ibagué, Medellín, Cali, Cartagena, and Paris (France).

head of each team at the ARN and for former combatants. In addition, insights from live and online interviews, literature review, process tracing of actions engaged by peacebuilders, and comparative analysis were used to study peacebuilding interactions and extract context-specific peacebuilding approaches.<sup>3</sup>

The writing ended by September 2021, reviewing the information inputs gathered in Colombia in early 2020, just before the COVID outbreak. In that sense, significant aspects related to the actions of the groundbreaking Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), and the recognition of responsibility in the three first macro-cases within the public audiences,<sup>4</sup> are not mentioned as they began in April 2022. This also applies to the Colombian Truth Commission's final report released on June 28, 2022.

Several questions were raised to elaborate on the analytical framework: To what extent does Colombia's implementation process of the 2016 peace agreement correspond to an adaptive peacebuilding approach? Can adaptive peacebuilding practices contribute to the reconstruction of

<sup>3</sup>This research was possible thanks to the funding provided by the JICA Ogata Sadako Research Institute for Peace and Development. Special thanks to Pr. Stephen Launay—Université Gustave Eiffel (France), Pr. Miguel Angel Martinez Meucci—Austral University (Chile), Oscar Calderon (Jesuit Refugees Service for Latin America), and Carlos Duran (UN-OIM Colombia) for participating in the interviews. A special acknowledgment to Emilio Archila—Former High Commissioner for Reintegration in Colombia and the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN) for their insightful cooperation and significant contribution to sustaining peace in Colombia. Many thanks to the Delegation of the European Commission in Colombia as well as the cooperation agencies: Japan International Cooperation Agency—JICA (Colombia Division), the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency—TIKA (Colombia Division), the Colombian Presidential Agency of International Cooperation—APC, and the former NGO Fundación Reconciliación Colombia. Their important contributions revealed the importance of examining context-specific peacebuilding approaches to foster sustaining peace in Colombia.

<sup>4</sup>Macro-case 01: Taking of hostages, severe deprivation of liberty, and other concurrent crimes.

Macro-case 02: Territorial Situation of the Tumaco, Ricaurte, and Barbacoas Municipalities (Nariño).

Macro-case 03: Murders and enforced disappearances presented as casualties in combat by State agents.

Macro-case 04: Territorial Situation in the Urabá Region.

Macro-case 05: Territorial Situation of the Northern Cauca and Southern Cauca Valley Regions.

Macro-case 06: Victimization of Patriotic Union (UP) Members.

Macro-case 07: Recruitment of Children in the Armed Conflict.

social linkages in scenarios of mistrust, institutional weakness associated with corruption, and protracted conflicts? Finally, can peacebuilders contribute to stabilization under a “conflict order” that nonconventional actors within the international humanitarian law (IHL) had created? The Colombian case indicates that although competitive authoritarianism had gained ground by using violence as a means of social control in some local territories, the National Implementation Policy has effectively adapted its orientations in some cases to boost effective peacebuilding outcomes in some of the territories.

### CHARACTERIZING PEACEBUILDING IN COLOMBIA: SIXTY YEARS OF WAR ENDED BY THE 2016 PEACE AGREEMENT

In 2016, the Colombian government signed a historic peace agreement with the *Revolutionary armed forces of Colombia FARC-EP* (EP for “people’s army,” Spanish acronym for *Ejército Popular*). Under the supervision of the international community, the oldest Latin-American guerrilla campaign ended after a sixty-year conflict. As expected, the rate of violence decreased, but inflexible domestic political tension continued in the country. The signing of the peace agreement led to complex institutional architecture. This section explains the characteristics and impact of selected context-specific peacebuilding interventions in this case study, presenting national and local actors interacting in a complex conflict situation.

Scholars have made significant efforts to explain the root causes of the armed conflict in Colombia. However, one can say that the Colombian case is overdiagnosed but has no findings leading to concrete solutions to stop violence and political confrontation. Notwithstanding this, the way armed conflict, violence, political confrontation, and drugs have been determinants in the incessant search for peace in Colombia makes this case study a compelling reference for peacebuilders. The singularity of the Colombian experience contributes to many variables that play a determinant role in how the state, the institutions, the armed groups, and the societies interact when seeking to sustain peace.

The civil war in Colombia has been the object of many studies; a large and important volume of papers, books, and nonacademic literature has been published to explain the roots of the civil conflict. In this respect, the Colombian case is overdiagnosed in relation to its causes and misdiagnosed in the scope of the reintegration process for peacebuilding. This

chapter does not attempt to find the roots of these conflicts (a theme strongly explored in many scholarly papers) but to show how the Colombian experiences in peacebuilding make the country a primary reference for adaptive peacebuilding within protracted conflicts.<sup>5</sup>

### *A Brief Context of the Conflicts*

Armed conflict, political confrontation, drugs, internal displacement, and lately migrations are at the heart of knowledge about Colombia, particularly within the second half of the twentieth century. For many scholars, *La Violencia* (1948-1958)—a ten-year civil war in Colombia—is seen as the starting point for armed conflicts and overwhelming violence. However, research by interdisciplinary scholars such as Jorge Orlando Melo, Eduardo Posada Carbó, David Bushnell, and Malcolm Deas identify *La Violencia* as a singular period with a substantial historiographic value that is considered a benchmark of the institutionalization of political confrontation.

After years of violent contestations between liberal and conservative parties—mainly occurring in the countryside—binary visions of society amid order, centralized authority and liberty, and social reforms absorbed Colombian history from 1886 to 2016, triggering several civil wars, thousands of deaths, and escalating violence. The history of Colombia during that period can be understood from a succession of civil wars between armed groups, which was followed each time by formal and informal agreements concerning peace that lasted ten to fifteen years without violence, preceding the return to civil war (Proenza 2019, 57).

The historian and philosopher Jorge Orlando Melo stresses that political confrontations throughout the nineteenth-century grasp began from a confrontation between the central government in Bogota and local governments in the regions. Notwithstanding the absence of a formal political centralized system, the state imposed centralized practices that resorted to

<sup>5</sup>The chapter addresses the reintegration and reincorporation processes. However, it is worth noting that—and as explained by the ARN—in Colombia *reintegration* is a term applied to former combatants of the United Self-Defence Forces of Colombia (AUC). In contrast, *reincorporation* is a term used to former combatants of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP). Notwithstanding, both terms imply the same process of assimilation to civil life, the words are different to keep a distance between the factions.



violence and increased regional tensions in the overall national territory. On the other hand, the significant power of the Catholic Church was mingled with the traditional political confrontation between parties<sup>6</sup>(Proenza 2019, 58).

A comprehensive study of the first half of the twenty century calls attention to the fact that Venezuela, Mexico, Argentina, and Colombia have had more periods of peace than war. On the other hand, all these countries except Colombia faced more high-intensity warfare in the same period. However, contemporary history pays particular attention to what happened from the second half of twenty century until 2016. This period can be divided into three key subperiods (Melo 2019):

- 1) From 1948 to 1958 (*La Violencia*), at least 100,000 deaths are registered in different reports;
- 2) From 1985 to 2002, a very violent period under the Democratic Security and Defense Policy, when 500,000 people were killed due to the civil war, which also resulted in more than 720,000 internal displaced persons (IDPs)<sup>7</sup>(Ombudsman's Office of Colombia 2002). In early 2021, the magistrates of the JEP reported after investigations that 6402 people were murdered and presented as casualties in combat by State agents, that is, 4154 more people

<sup>6</sup>Liberal and Conservative parties in Colombia are still crucial political choices for voters in the country. Nevertheless, many new political options with roots in both traditional parties have emerged after the Constitution of 1991. Melo (2017, 270) looked upon the respect of human rights, the capacity to represent political institutions, and the instauration of local governments. After 105 years of the latest conservative constitution, the new one embodied democracy in Colombia with national elections for the Senate with proportional representation of different political parties (not just liberal or conservative); city councils, and governorates. Thus, the constitution of 1991 is seen as one of the most progressive legal texts in Latin America.

<sup>7</sup>The 2002 report of the Ombudsman's Office of Colombia provides details of the internal displacement situation. The report stresses a salient augmentation of IDP in 2001. Compared to 2000, IDPs increased in 2001 to 190,454 displaced people, 50% more than in 2002 (Ombudsman's Office of Colombia 2002). According to the Single Registry of Victims (RUV), a historical accumulation of almost 8,219,403 victims of forced displacement has been registered from 1985 to December 31, 2021 (Unidad de Víctimas 2022). An insightful report on forced displacement in Colombia from 1948 to 2016 was elaborate in 2015, by the National Center for Historical Memory under the direction of Gonzalo Sánchez Gomez (CNMH-UARIV 2015). The complete reference is at the end of the chapter. Also, the Colombian newspaper El Espectador (2022) presents a meaningful analysis about the new trends of displacement in Colombia from 2021.

compared with the initial report of Colombia's General Attorney Office (Unidad de Víctimas. 2022);

- 3) From 2002 to 2012, the upsurge in violence was brought about by many armed actors other than guerrillas, for example, self-defense groups. This violence cannot be easily assigned to a single group and was not even related exclusively to political parties. In this third subperiod, the de-escalation of conflict was determinant in concluding the peace agreement of 2016. Secret negotiations with the FARC-EP began in 2012.

The second half of the twentieth century displayed a dynamic of increasing violence and degradation of the conflict that illustrated the relationships between society and government. Both trends took place in distinct geographical areas in which divergent armed groups gained control over different regions. The violence of the 1950s was mainly concentrated in the central regions of the country.<sup>8</sup> From 1985, the violence spread to departments such as La Guajira, Urabá, and the Caribbean coast (Proenza 2019, 60). This expansion was due to the dynamics resulting from drug trafficking markets. These three departments were geographically strategic in bringing out cocaine to the USA and Europe.

A political conflict that was already complex became protracted when drug trafficking was used either as a funding source or as a meaningful source of employment (Penagos [forthcoming](#)). A large diversity of actors fought each other in the field: guerrillas, self-defense groups, and traffickers within their own security structures. According to Jorge Orlando Melo, the combination of drugs and guerrillas was dreadful. Until 1970, Colombia was a democratic country compared to the rest of Latin America. Communists had a place in the Congress, but left-wing intellectuals were, however, divided. A part of them thought democracy was not developed enough in Colombia, so that armed conflict was necessary to achieve power. The other side of the debate considered that the fight should be democratic through elections. That said, left-wing parties subsequently used all forms of coercive means to achieve their objectives.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Colombia is divided into 32 departments, 1,123 municipalities, and 5 districts.

<sup>9</sup> Paraphrasing Jorge Orlando Melo (2019).

The situation radically changed when Colombia became a producer of cocaine in the 1980s.<sup>10</sup> The country was deeply impacted by the violence that forced peasants to be displaced from rural areas to the big cities, but it did not endure the financial crisis as other countries in Latin America did. In this respect, David Bushnell, an American academic and Latin American historian, argues that Colombia revealed the correlation between violent regional rates, economic growth, and inequality gaps (Bushnell 2011, 358; Penagos *forthcoming*). Facing low prices of agricultural products in local markets, many poor farmers became single cocaine crop farmers. Subsequently, the Colombian government declared cocaine cultivation illegal, authorizing the national army to destroy cocaine crops. Coca farmers moved then to distant zones where guerrilla groups arrived shortly after, offering protection to farmers and, by doing so, building solid peasant grassroots.<sup>11</sup>

The Colombian army could not defeat the guerrillas because the government never got control over those distant zones nor over the rest of the complex geography of the country. By contrast, the guerrillas that were born in those zones knew them well. Since 1980, revolutionary forces have stretched over more zones and expanded their activities in the cocaine traffic to buy guns. The response of different governments to guerrilla warfare has often been inadequate. Therefore, the problem was entirely managed by the national army, whose attacks suppressed the whole population where the guerrillas were found (Melo 2019, 62).

In the 1980s, the homicide rate increased due to two main reasons: criminal activities and political reasons. Forced displacement became frequent, and, consequently, complex situations emerged within cities and rural areas. The frustrations in Colombian society were not alleviated with public policies but exacerbated by the national government's incapacity to prevent murders and criminal activities. One of the most significant upshots was the proliferation of private security services that were encouraged shortly after the formalization of self-defense groups (Bushnell 2011, 357).

Overwhelmed by drug traffickers and guerrilla groups, the Colombian justice system collapsed. The gravest crimes were not judged. A record of impunity persisted in the country, and the reasons for violence were not

<sup>10</sup>In the 1970s, cocaine crops were mainly located in Peru. Coca leaves were transformed but not produced in Colombia at that time (2019a).

<sup>11</sup>Paraphrasing Jorge Orlando Melo (2019).

clearly identifiable. Every year, 30,000 homicides were registered without being directly linked with protracted conflict or drug trafficking. The heads of drug empires armed the population in the zones where they had interests or were running businesses (Melo 2019).<sup>12</sup> Guns replaced justice, and no government could face this unless it developed the capacity for accurate control over the monopoly of violence, justice, and taxation (Penagos [forthcoming](#)).

Guerrillas and self-defense groups multiplied, enlarging their influence over several areas within the national territory. The nexus between armed groups and international trafficking networks was also linked to the armed groups' activities to fund war operations and prolong the civil conflict. During the presidencies of Alvaro Uribe Vélez (2002-2006 and 2006-2010), homicide rates decreased from 30,000 to 20,000 yearly, but those crimes became much more political and were perpetrated by the state agents and paramilitary groups. Colombian society was polarized regarding Alvaro Uribe Vélez. One part of the population saw his figure as a sort of messiah that brought back security and trust with his "Democratic Security Policy" (mainly in the major cities), while the other part saw him as someone who led the country to a new violence breakdown in Colombian rural areas (Melo 2019).<sup>13</sup>

### *A Comprehensive Peace Agreement with No Ceasefire*

The presidencies of Juan Manuel Santos (2010-2014; 2014-2018), a former Minister of Defense, changed the history of Colombia regarding civil war forever. Since 2012, secret negotiations have been held in Havana, Cuba, between the government and the representatives of FARC-EP, the oldest revolutionary group still present in Latin America.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, the protracted conflict has demonstrated how Colombia faced not only one single conflict but several severe conflicts with a large variety of actors and global

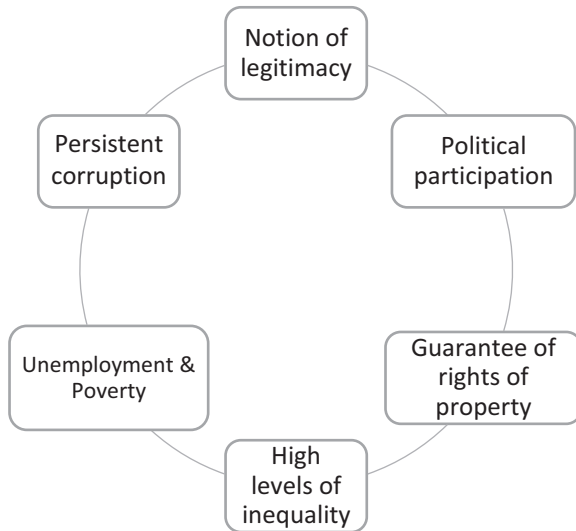
<sup>12</sup> Idem.

<sup>13</sup> In February 2021, a special investigation carried out by the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) (established after the signature of the peace agreement of 2016) found out that 6,402 young civilian men were kidnapped and killed by the Colombian army between 2002 and 2008. Many of those men belonged to poor families and were seen as left-wing rebels from the FARC-EP. The JEP found that these actions obeyed to an incentive policy consisting of rewards to military members and showed increasing numbers of insurgency member assassinations (Navarro 2021).

interactions, as briefly explained in the preceding subsection. While the international attention was focused on several failed attempts in relation to the peace process with the FARC-EP, the action of guerrillas such as the *National Liberation Army* (ELN), the *Popular Liberation Army* (EPL), and an important number of organized crime groups that constantly challenged the peacebuilding process escaped from the scope of media and researchers, apart from those specialized in the field.

The protracted conflict in Colombia unfolded complex interactions derived from political and socioeconomic causes that triggered brutal and unequal responses from different actors. The behavior of government and non-state armed groups kept evolving under different variables and interactions, with an impact on the intensity and severity of the conflicts in at least six dimensions (Penagos [forthcoming](#)), as follows (Fig. 4.1):

In this framework, the peace agreement signed in 2016 embodies a new chapter in Colombian history. While the political and ideological project of the guerrillas was discredited by many in the cities when the fight blurred the boundaries of criminality with kidnappings, terrorism, and drug trafficking, the peasant grassroots were still supportive of their ideals



**Fig. 4.1** The six drivers of protracted conflicts in Colombia. Source: Author

or were pleading for them to stop hostilities. Particularly for FARC-EP, the fact of not being defeated in confrontation kept alive the possibility of achieving political power even though no one believed in their communist project. A remnant of their ideals, however, is still very present in the form of communitarian organizations, working to attain specific projects such as diverse cultivation, entrepreneurship, or daily life, as observed during the fieldwork carried out from February to March 2020, just before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in Europe and the Americas.

Since 1991, the Colombian government has entailed at least twelve peace negotiations with rebel groups. This experience makes the country one of the most valuable references in the field. The current mayor of Bogota, Claudia Lopez, a specialist in peace studies, suggests that there are three dimensions of stability in municipalities where these experiences of negotiation can be observed: coercion (war actions), extortion, and legitimacy.

After more than sixty years of confrontation then, the signature of the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC-EP represents the onset of a reintegration process that is changing the country and will continue doing so for at least the following fifteen years. The following section presents the characteristics and impact of selected context-specific peacebuilding interventions and changes in power distribution. The peacebuilding experiences gathered decentralized processes to overcome hierarchies in regions to facilitate the bottom-up approach that marked the 2016 peace agreement. Table 4.1 summarizes the list of armed non-state groups that took part in peace processes from 1991 to 2016, the number of disarmed fighters, and their current status in the peacebuilding process.

*The Single Undertaking: “Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.” The Three Dimensions of Adaptive Peacebuilding*

Between 1980 and 2002, three peace negotiations with the FARC-EP failed to achieve DDR objectives. The inflexibility of the actors results from their demands, the broad agendas, and the untrustworthy parties that make it difficult to achieve any successful negotiation and fit this into Colombia’s institutional context. In the secret negotiation that started in 2012, both parties agreed that Cuba, Norway, Chile, and Venezuela would serve as observers.

After almost four years of negotiations at La Habana, a comprehensive agreement gave birth to “the third major attempt in five decades to reach

**Table 4.1** Non-State Armed Groups taking part in peace processes from 1991 to 2016

<i>Non-State Armed Groups (NSAG)</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Number of disarmed people</i>	<i>Current status</i>
Popular Liberation Army–EPL	1991	2256	Active dissidence
April 19 Movement—M-19	1990	900	Political participation
Revolutionary workers party	1991	200	Civil organizations (research and actions in human rights)
Quintín Lame Armed Movement—MAQL	1991	157	Demobilized
Ernesto Rojas Command <i>the urban arm of the EPL</i>	1992	25	Demobilized
Socialist renewal group	1994	433	Demobilized
Militias	1994	650	Active dissidence in other NSAG groups
Francisco Garnica Front	1994	150	Political participation
Revolutionary Independent Movement	1998	171	Civil organizations (research in armed conflict)
Guevarista Revolutionary Army (ERG)	2008	45	Demobilized
United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC)	2006	31,671	Reintegration
Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC-EP)	2016	13,000	Reincorporation

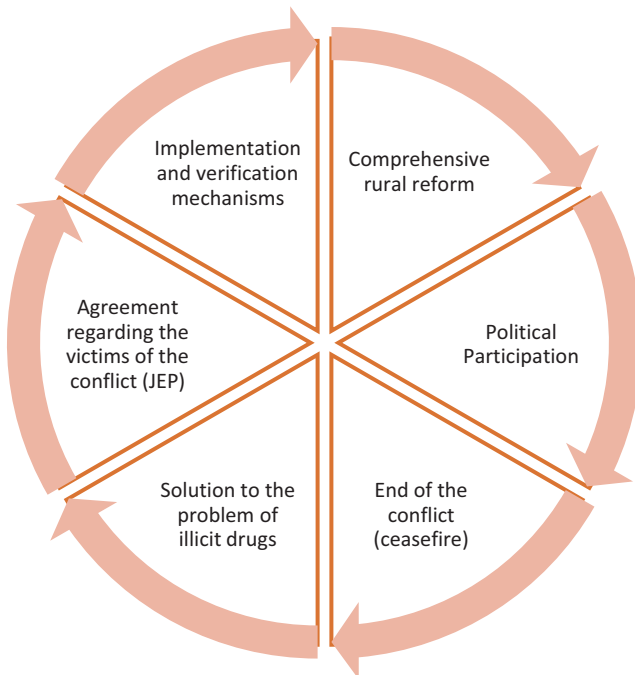
Source: López Hernández (2016).

a negotiated solution to the conflict”(Herbolzheimer 2016). However, under the premise of the single undertaking, negotiators decide “to have nothing agreed until everything was agreed,” differentiating this attempt from the precedent ones. In that sense, the government and FARC-EP developed three different models of negotiations: talks without negotiations (1982-1997), talks with a ceasefire within a demilitarized zone (El Caguán) (1998-1999), and secret talks without a ceasefire (2012-2016).

The peace agreement of 2016 changed the country radically. It created a new institutional structure to guarantee the demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) process based on lessons learned from former peace processes in which insurgency members were murdered shortly after signing of the peace agreement and new violence breakdowns had begun. Melo underlines that the peace agreement of 2016 reflects a change of mind of the FARC-EP more than a change in the structure of

the state. That means that the former combatants had bet on a left-wing political project but in the framework of democratic rules, keeping important links with the supportive rural populations (Melo 2019, 65).

At the point of not having a win-win situation, both parties were willing to create conditions of trust and reliability to end this protracted conflict. Notwithstanding the weaknesses of the FARC-EP when facing the second-best trained army of the American continent, which achieved the strategic killings of the heads of the military staff of the guerrilla group between 2008 and 2011, Colombian government continued to seek for negotiations. Colombia's peace process was then carefully structured: a secret agenda was fixed before the public negotiations and established six points that would become the milestone of the FARC-EP DDR process, as summarized in Fig. 4.2:

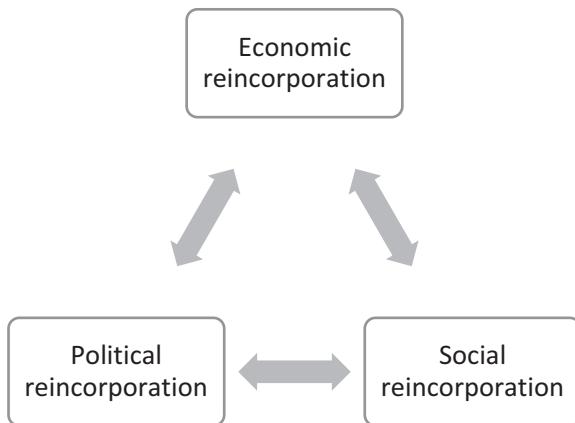


**Fig. 4.2** The six points of the 2016 Final Peace Agreement. Source: Adapted from the Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace (NGC and FARC-EP 2016)



Colombia learned from previous experiences. According to Natalia Salazar, senior advisor to the director-general of the ANR (2020), these six points gathered together the experiences of three generations of the DDR processes initiated by Frank Pearl, former High Presidential Advisor for the Social and Economical Reintegration of People and Armed Groups. Pearl, who was also a former Minister of Environment and Sustainable Development, participated actively in the DDR process of the former United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) in 2006. With a vision of long-term reintegration, housing facilities and employment opportunities were at the heart of the first generation of the DDR process. The second generation considered the more active participation of cooperation agencies (2010-2012) and strong south-south cooperation to share experiences aligned with the international standards related to DDR.

The third DDR generation process gathered all these experiences to improve the institutionalization of the reintegration process. As a key component of the implementation, this DDR process required the inclusion of local and national actors to assist with the economic reincorporation, political reincorporation, and social reincorporation (Fig. 4.3). In



**Fig. 4.3** The three dimensions of the adaptive peacebuilding approach within the Colombian case. Source: Adapted from the 2016 Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace (NGC and FARC-EP 2016)

this framework, the ANR, as a national peacebuilding institution, accumulated meaningful adaptive actions that show how functional and effective this approach can become.

The report from the Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution (NOREF) points out that the parties learned from their own past failures and the lessons of the peace processes in the following terms:

*“In doing so they have developed innovative frameworks and approaches, e.g., a clear procedural distinction between peace negotiations and the peace process; positioning the rights of the victims at the centre of the talks; addressing the structural problem of rural development; creating a Gender Subcommission; and planning for implementation long before the agreement is signed”* (Herbolzheimer 2016).

As highlighted by Kristian Herbolzheimer, the Colombian case shows that the adaptive actions within a complex peacebuilding framework were based on an innovative agenda with a specific goal: to end the protracted armed conflict. Former agendas between the government and the FARC-EP were focused on broad discussions on the country’s all-embracing political and economic system. On the other hand, national actors and, afterward, international actors adapted to attain the specific goal of ending the armed conflict. Before and during the talks, the government and the FARC-EP were positioned differently regarding their visions for society. In the precedent negotiations, each party was seen as a single representative of a branch of society, whereas in the 2012 negotiations, the government and the FARC-EP understood the need for public participation and democratic decision-making (Herbolzheimer 2016).

Though previous actions illustrated different results of these adaptations, the more significant actions showing the importance of the adaptive actions were focused on the role of communities, victims, and civil society that could take part in the construction of a common agenda. In addition, the creation of a gender subcommission was an unprecedented mechanism established to recognize violence based on gender within the armed conflict (Nylander et al. 2018). The former process considered the participation of civil society and victims in a symbolic way, as well as the parties which identified themselves as representative of the whole society, as described above.

Therefore, in the 2012-2016 negotiations, public participation was fundamental, and it was deployed through several formats of direct and indirect participation (Herbolzheimer 2016).<sup>14</sup> The presence of the victims at the negotiation talks had no precedent in Colombia. Despite the tensions related to the presence of representatives of more than six million victims (including women for the first time), this was undeniable progress for all peace processes worldwide (Santos Calderón 2019, 139). Thus, the sub-special commission of gender set a milestone in peace talks, both in Colombia and the world.

President Juan Manuel Santos led the peace process into a national agreement through the democratic mechanism of a referendum. The *Final Agreement for Ending the Conflict and Building a Stable and Lasting Peace* was submitted for ratification by the Colombian people in October 2016. However, the referendum was unsuccessful in the context of the peace process: 50.2% of people voted against the ratification, and only 49.8% voted in favor. This fact marked the beginning of a very polarized society regarding the terms and conditions agreed upon at La Havana, a polarization that spilled over to the implementation of the DDR process and remains alive until today. Nevertheless, the Colombian government and the FARC-EP presented a revised version of the Final Agreement in November 2016 that the Congress ratified.

Despite the suspicions of the opponents to the agreement, important adaptive actions can be identified in the national implementation policy. The following section discusses how peacebuilders worked within a bottom-up and adaptive approach based on the three dimensions of the reintegration policy for national reconciliation: the recovery of social trust and the guaranties for justice for new social linkages, the non-recurrence of war event, and the reparation of victims.

### THE NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION POLICY: PATHWAYS OF ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING WITHIN THE NATIONAL STRATEGY OF STABILIZATION

This section focuses on how the interactions between external and local actors facilitated peacebuilding outcomes and how emerging context-specific peacebuilding approaches were helpful at the end of a protracted

<sup>14</sup>This mechanism was implemented to remain in the peace process. For instance, the PDET is based on consultations with the communities most affected by the armed conflict.

conflict. To achieve this, three main actors will be introduced: the ARN, the PDET, and the JEP.

The former director of the Transitions to Peace program (Colombia and Philippines), Kristian Herbolzheimer,<sup>15</sup> points out that the Colombian Final Agreement has “a radically different approach that balances the power asymmetry between the negotiating table and other deliberation and decision-making processes: the conceptual differentiation between conflict *termination* (by the warring factions) and conflict *transformation* (by society at large) suggests that there are multiple paths to peace, of which the negotiations are only one” (Herbolzheimer 2016). It is essential that civil society contributes widely to proposing and implementing actions aimed at building peace. The implication of civil society at large is key to addressing adaptive peacebuilding actions.

The empirical evidence gathered during the fieldwork showed that adaptive actions were necessary to achieve the Peace Agreement agenda and were also required to implement and evaluate the related steps. It means that the sustainability of the peacebuilding is settled within the implementation policy.

### *The Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN)*

Former DDR experiences in Colombia have given birth to a robust model of reintegration for sustaining peace. The case of the Antioquian Department is particularly emblematic in the field. With 11,470 former combatants from the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), it has the most significant number of reintegrated people. The long-term 2006 reintegration process was considered a roadmap that was improved within the National Implementation Policy after 2016 by boosting partnerships with the private sector, associations, and the National Service of Education (SENA), as expressed by the ARN local unit of Antioquia (Chavez Gutierrez 2020).

Setting the conditions, benefits, strategies, methodologies, and actions defined by the ARN demands high levels of concertation. In addition,

<sup>15</sup> Kristian Herbolzheimer is the current director of the International Catalan Institute for Peace. In addition, he represented the Conciliation Resources in the International Contact Group on Mindanao that witnessed the peace negotiations and provided assistance to the Government of the Philippines, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and the Malaysian facilitator. He has also extensively supported peace initiatives in Colombia and in the Basque Country.

flexibility and adaptiveness within peacebuilding actors will enable them to achieve a comprehensive reincorporation policy that offers former combatants adapted options for education, instruction in civil rights, opportunities for productivity through entrepreneurship projects, and social services that include the families of former combatants.<sup>16</sup>

Local ARN units of different departments such as La Guajira, Tolima, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, and Bolivar drew attention to the importance of the Annual Action Plan that involves local and regional committees, where government representatives, former FARC-EP representatives, the private sector, and UN agencies participated at different stages. The coordination process between actors allowed to identify adaptive strategies by local communities before being proposed for implementation at the national level.<sup>17</sup>

The end of the protracted conflict in Colombia entails peacebuilding outcomes through these important regional committees. This participative process takes place in the national territory at large with a very special focus on the former *Territorial Training and Reincorporation Space (ETCR)*.<sup>18</sup> They represent an innovative project where government institutions, local populations, and international cooperation actors have converged to support individual or collective productive projects to generate incomes, promote social cohesion, and avoid new ways of violence.<sup>19</sup>

A remarkable implementation experience was held in the ETCR, where ARN agents informed the community about the action guidelines expected in five areas: productivity (sectorial agenda), education, communities, co-responsibility, and gender. Although ARN agents are experienced public officials, the decisions on addressing each action line belong entirely to the community, as explained at the ETCR of Icononzo, Monterredondo, El Oso y Agua Bonita. This experience involves a very complex decision-making process that empowers leadership and women's participation in collective actions.

<sup>16</sup>For further information see ARN (2021).

<sup>17</sup>In the framework of this research, the author was able to participate in a Territorial Reincorporation Committee held on 25/02/2020 in the city of Ibague (Colombia).

<sup>18</sup>After the signature of the peace agreement, 24 ETCRs were created. Almost 13,000 former combatants participated in the reincorporation process and roughly 20% currently live in ETCRs.

<sup>19</sup>A special handbook for social and economic reincorporation was prepared for former combatants living in ETCRs (ARN 2017).

## THE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS WITH TERRITORIAL FOCUS (PDET): A BRAND-NEW DIRECTION ON THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

At the highest level of the National Implementation Policy, the High Commissioner for Reintegration in Colombia, Emilio Archila, was in charge of one of the most innovative public policy projects. The Programs with Territorial Focus (PDETs) were implemented in 170 municipalities, the most affected by violence and poverty. Archila describes the PDETs as the aftermath of a major participative process all over the world with more than 32,000 initiatives proposed by local communities and organized in three main steps: identification of necessities to achieve sustaining peace with legality, developing a roadmap for implementation,<sup>20</sup> and strengthening networks with local governments to join the PDETs.<sup>21</sup>

Today, the country is classified into 16 PDET areas, and all international cooperation programs must now take the territorial focus into consideration. The National Development Plan (2018-2022) includes funds to carry out the programs established within the PDETs. Also, international funds for peacebuilding in Colombia are engaged around PDET actions. In this framework, 95% of former combatants have bank accounts, and 85% have access to the national social security system.<sup>22</sup> Archila pointed out the importance of this coverage that was made in record time if compared with other implementation processes that do not even have banking and social security services as milestones of the reintegration process.

International and multilateral institutions such as the Interamerican Bank for Development (BID), the UN Multi-Donor Trust Fund, and the European Union (EU) Trust Fund boosted actions with a territorial focus to improve institutional capacities and territorial development. In that sense, the international community prioritized actions around PDET zones, as confirmed by Maria Iraizoz (2020), project manager of the EU Trust Fund for Colombia (European Delegation).

Colombia succeeded in making the PDET strategy an inevitable international reference for sustaining peace. Furthermore, the PDET is also the

<sup>20</sup> Process carried out by Deloitte (r), a leading global provider of [audit and assurance](#), [consulting](#), [financial advisory](#), [risk advisory](#), [tax](#), and related services.

<sup>21</sup> Archila (2020).

<sup>22</sup> Updated data according to the information presented by Archila (2021).

pillar of a brand-new direction on the role of international cooperation. The former experiences of cooperation were based on the usual actions of cooperation agencies and UN representations. However, after creating and implementing the PDETs, international cooperation is aligned with the necessities expressed by the communities in the framework of their local plans.

As expressed in a personal interview by an officer of the UN Office of the High Commission for Human Rights (UNHCR) in Colombia, the beginning of the implementation of PDETs was challenging. It demanded reorganizing the cooperation between the parties. The needs expressed in the plans by the Colombian government were different from the methodological considerations applied by the UNHCR in each municipality. The UN agency works under frameworks focused on human rights, whereas the PDETs were mostly focused on economic and social reintegration, mainly through productivity. There was an increasing demand for technical cooperation to develop effective projects within ETCRs and PDET zones, and so the UN agency had to adapt its actions to cooperate in this new and atypical national context.

International Cooperation Agencies based in Colombia, such as JICA and TIKA,<sup>23</sup> offer important technical cooperation based on education exchanges and medical equipment to contribute to capacity-building. The actions of JICA were importantly deployed by former Japanese ambassador Kazuo Watanabe who reinforced educational cooperation in the framework of the national policy on early childhood (2017). JICA has vast experience in Colombia of supporting productive projects and offering technical cooperation. In the framework of the PDETs, JICA's expertise is highly valuable while articulated with the ARN, as this last one gathers information on specific requirements for productive projects as well as environmental initiatives. In addition, the community homes' provision of

<sup>23</sup>The former director of TIKA in Colombia, Mehmet Özkan shed light on comparative peace processes between Turkey and Colombia: "from a structural point of view, there are lessons to be drawn from the Colombian experience not only for Turkey but also for other peace processes in the world. So far, there has been no direct communication between the governments of Colombia and Turkey in terms of sharing experiences. However, a delegation from Turkey—organized by the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) with the participation of academics and members of political parties—visited Colombia in May 2016 with the goal of observing Colombia's experience in reaching peace (...) Since the 1980s, the PKK the [Kurdistan Workers' Party] and the FARC have had connections through their European cells. It is believed that PKK has been following the peace process in Colombian closely. Therefore, garnering conclusions and lessons from Colombia is not only useful for the Turkish government but also may have some bearings for the PKK" (Ozkan 2018).

cultural programs such as dance, arts, and robotics (for kids and teenagers) is an interesting pathway to explore. Also, projects with a gender equity focus and scientific knowledge are part of the possibilities.

Previous experience in Colombia, such as JICA's participation in the de-mining process, gave valuable results in terms of cooperation. JICA is a reference for cooperation with the prosthesis and medical equipment for disabled victims of the conflict in the current process. There are ongoing interesting projects in universities in Cali and Medellín with which it would be interesting to articulate for further cooperation as expressed by ARN and APC officials. In the case of TIKA, the cooperation is in full growth by providing medical equipment and training to medical practitioners. Also, technical cooperation for productive projects addressed peasants in PDET zones, mostly in Cauca and Catatumbo, where indigenous populations are present.

The Territorial Focused Development Plans represent a key adaptive action within the comprehensive rural reform for transforming violent and poor territories. The strategic bottom-up approach was agreed upon at La Havana for the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement that stands:

“In order to fulfill the objectives of the territory-based development programs, an action plan for regional transformation will be prepared for each prioritized zone, which will include all levels of territorial planning and will be prepared in collaboration with the local authorities and communities. The plans will address the following:

- *The territory-based approach to rural communities takes into account the socio-historical, cultural, environmental, and productive characteristics of the territories and their inhabitants; also their unique needs, which will vary owing to their membership of vulnerable groups and depending on the suitability of the land, so that sufficient public investment resources can be deployed in harmony with the nation's tangible and intangible assets;*
- *An objective diagnostic assessment carried out with the participation of the various communities—both men and women—which, using the aforementioned territory-based approach, will take account of the needs in a territory and the steps necessary to coordinate the various aspects, with clear, precise targets that will allow for the structural transformation of living and production conditions;*



- *The National Development Plan will encompass the priorities and goals of the territory-based development programs”* (NGC and FARC-EP 2016).

Development programs with a territorial focus gave birth to a significant number of adaptive projects carried out by local experts with national and international technical cooperation. This is the case of the former NGO *Fundación Reconciliación Colombia*, which was focused on developing programs based on territorial capacities to enhance trust. Their projects were based on the potentiality of the territories and analysis of conflict trends. Local leaders, the private sector, young people, and academia participated in a large number of projects across vast areas of the national territory. Peacebuilders such as *Fundación Reconciliación Colombia* and the *Jesuit Refugee Service* developed a bottom-up approach to peacebuilding issues and a large presence in the country. Both actors have applied scientific research methods for fieldwork and produced different support materials such as books, videos, papers, and scholarly literature that point out the significative social linkages renovated under their practices, as expressed in the interviews by both, Oscar Chaparro (project manager at *Fundación Reconciliación Colombia*) and Oscar Calderón (director for Andean region at the *Jesuit Refugee Service*).

For Professor Miguel Angel Martinez Meucci (2020) (Austral University, Chile), the implementation process in Colombia may improve the people’s quality of life as it is currently facing the consequences of the protected conflict. The abundant information about the process and the continuous involvement of peacebuilders prove the maturity of the Colombian society in both the analysis and comprehensive vision in relation to armed conflicts. However, he warns about the missing policy to integrate Venezuelan migrants that are currently part of a new way of violence linked with illegal trafficking. In that sense, Professor Stephen Launay (2021) (Université Gustave Eiffel, France) considers that the implementation of the peace agreement and all national policies confirm that Colombia has strong institutions that adapt their operations when needed.

### *The Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP)*

The transitional court system or JEP is one of the most controversial actors of the national implementation policy. The opponents of the peace process implementation (who won the Referendum in 2016) denounced many times the inconvenience of a special jurisdiction addressing the

former combatants of the FARC-EP. The Colombian President Ivan Duque voted against the Referendum and organized his campaign to run for the presidency based on introducing changes in the implementation of the Peace Agreement.<sup>24</sup>

However, the robust system of the Colombian institutions allowed the society to create and maintain the JEP. This Special Jurisdiction encompasses clearly what Professor Launay (2021) underlined about the institutional system in Colombia: “institutions meet the basic criteria of separation of powers, sometimes better than their French counterparts. Despite the protracted conflict, its justice system works rather well.”

The JEP will operate for up to twenty years.<sup>25</sup> Its mandate is to “investigate, elucidate, judge, and punish serious human rights violations, war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed in the context of the armed conflict up to December 1, 2016. It is obliged to investigate and adjudicate cases involving ex-combatants of the FARC and members of the Public Forces who have been prosecuted or linked to crimes related to the armed conflict.<sup>26</sup> It also investigates and adjudicates cases involving other non-military State agents and third-party civilians who appear voluntarily” (The Truth Commission, JEP, and UBPD 2019).

The JEP belongs to the Comprehensive System of Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition mechanism (SIVJRNR is the Spanish acronym). It has its own regulatory framework and sets actions to “guarantee the rights of victims to truth, justice, reparation, and non-recurrence, as stipulated in the Agreement for the Termination of the Conflict and the Construction of a Stable and Lasting Peace. It is integrated by the Truth, Coexistence and Non-Repetition Commission, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), and the Unit for the Search for Persons Presumed Disappeared (UBPD); as well as comprehensive reparation measures for peacebuilding” (The Truth Commission, JEP, and UBPD 2019).

<sup>24</sup> In June 2022, Gustavo Petro, former combatant of the extinct guerrilla M-19, won the presidential election for the term 2022-2026. His campaign proposed a complete application of the implementation of the peace agreement to achieve a sustaining peace.

<sup>25</sup> The whole implementation process is planned to take fifteen years, as indicated by Emilio Archila. All the information regarding the JEP is available on the website: <https://www.jep.gov.co> (last access 30/06/2022).

<sup>26</sup> Members who admit crimes could avoid jail time but will be required to contribute in other ways to reconciliation—such as participating in programs to remove landmines, build key infrastructure, or construct monuments. The measure does not cover crimes against humanity.

Within the comprehensive system of Truth Justice, all victims of armed conflict can participate to ensure accountability for what occurred. In this respect, the Truth National Commission<sup>27</sup> and the Centre for Historical Memory<sup>28</sup> play a key role in bottom-up adaptive actions to promote peace through recognition of the responsibilities of actors involved in the protracted conflict and reconciliation. Ingrid Betancourt, a former Colombian senator kidnapped by the FARC-EP between 2002 and 2008, highlighted the importance of the Truth National Commission and the commitment of Francisco de Roux to building the collective truth of years of civil war in Colombia.<sup>29</sup>

### CONCLUDING IDEAS: CHALLENGES FOR ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING ACTIONS AND CONFLICT TRENDS IN COLOMBIA

In the long path to a sustainable peace, Colombia gathered shareable experiences in at least three dimensions: adaptive actions, comprehensive implementation of peace processes, and reintegration policies for reestablishment of social linkages. The cases of adaptive actions presented in this chapter are evidence that sustaining peace is a delicate and long-term process that requires the permanent participation of local communities.

This participation is not only a matter of the actors directly impacted by the protracted conflict that ended in 2016. It has to do with all Colombian citizens with the aim to achieve the best possible implementation. Unfortunately, in some cases, the suspicions against the implementation process made it difficult to develop the agenda established for the ARN and the PDET's policies in sensitive areas such as Cauca and Catatumbo. For instance, in some cities, the atmosphere of mistrust was deeply nourished by fake news with impacts on some communities. However, as

<sup>27</sup> The mandate of the Commission covers three years, the Colombian Truth Commission's final report was released on June 28, 2022. The full report is available on the website: <https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co>. Comisión de la Verdad (2021)

<sup>28</sup> The Center for Historical Memory was created in 2005 with the task to provide reports and analysis to contribute with "comprehensive reparations, giving both the victims of the Colombian armed conflict and society, in general, the right to hear the truth" (Herbolzheimer 2016).

<sup>29</sup> Betancourt participated for the first time in a public event organized by the Commission on 23/06/2021 where victims willing to talk to former combatants could express themselves in public (The Truth Commission 2021).

Carlos Duran (2021) pointed out, the experiences gathered on capacity building and attention to displaced populations deserved to be observed in other regions of the world with protracted conflicts.

In January 2021, an unprecedented action within the Comprehensive System of Truth Justice, Reparation, and Non-Repetition mechanism took place: the JEP indicted eight former high-level members of the FARC-EP chiefs of staff of kidnapping crimes under the accusation of “hostage-taking and other serious deprivations of liberty” (Navarro 2021). The decision was made four years after the signing of the peace agreement—an unprecedented record if compared with other peace processes in the world.<sup>30</sup> This decision, as well as the public auditions of victims,<sup>31</sup> reinforced the trust and legitimacy of the institutions created in the framework of the peace agreement.

Within the territories, local communities and the Catholic Church work together to contribute to the regional strategies for reconciliation and new social linkages. On the other hand, insightful tools have been created to contribute to national reconciliation and give voice to victims. The Podcast proposed by the JEP<sup>32</sup> is only one example: “a radio broadcast in different accents, voices, and stories in which the victims are the protagonists shows the work of the JEP administering transitional justice, investigating, judging, and punishing the most serious and representative crimes that occurred during the armed conflict” (JEP 2022). Also, the report released by the Truth National Commission offers interactive and pedagogical information organized in sections with the gender and ethnic equity approach (Comisión de la Verdad 2022).<sup>33</sup>

Despite these efforts, profound pedagogical labor to socialize the guidelines of the national implementation policy is required to engage the broad participation of communities in the oversight of processes and peacebuilding budgets. Notwithstanding this, the oldest civil war in the

<sup>30</sup>The JEP also carried out an investigation against the Colombian army for body counting operations under the Alvaro Uribe Vélez presidency (Macro-case 03: Murders and enforced disappearances presented as casualties in combat by state agents).

<sup>31</sup>Since April 2022, the ongoing process of public audiences have shed light in the acknowledgment of crimes committed by former combatants in three of the seventh macro-cases: (01) taking of hostages, severe deprivation of liberty, and other concurrent crimes; (02) territorial situation of the Tumaco, Ricaurte, and Barbacoas municipalities (Nariño); (03) murders and enforced disappearances presented as casualties in combat by state agents.

<sup>32</sup>To access: <https://www.jep.gov.co/Paginas/podcast-de-la-jep.aspx>

<sup>33</sup>The full report is available on the website: <https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/>

American continent may reoccur, and therefore complex armed conflicts in Colombia may be far from over. The 2022 report of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) stressed that in the country at least six ongoing armed conflicts explain the increase of violence in different zones (ICRC 2022):

- The Colombian State vs. National Liberation Army (ELN);
- The Colombian State vs. Gaitanist Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AGC);
- The Colombian State vs. Former FARC-EP currently not covered by the Peace Agreement;
- Former FARC-EP currently not covered by the Peace Agreement vs. Second Marquetalia;
- Former FARC-EP currently not covered by the Peace Agreement vs. Border Commandos-EB.

In 2021, the three main complexities identified in the ICRC report were 1) enforced disappearance, 2) massive internal displacement of population and enforced lockdowns imposed by illegal groups, and 3) attacks against health infrastructure, particularly in rural areas (ICRC 2022).

Thus, the Colombian experience shows two ongoing trends: 1) an active engagement in reincorporation through productive projects, training in civil rights, and political participation of communities, and 2) a shift in national conflict trends from political confrontation to violence linked with illegal groups and underground economies triggered by corruption, and the international dynamic of drug trafficking, arms trafficking, illegal exploitation of mines, and irregular migrations (Penagos [forthcoming](#)).

The challenges of peace in Colombia can be addressed at local levels through continuous efforts toward adaptive peacebuilding. This means that the participation of former combatants in the political arena, their integration into civil life through productive projects, and the involvement of victims in a comprehensive justice system are, however, unavoidable. Therefore, adaptiveness is required to cope with complexity, reinforce institutions, and strengthen democracy. And this is a condition that cannot be overlooked in societies that need to overcome war while working to ensure sustainable peacebuilding.

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# Adaptive Peacebuilding in Mozambique: Examples of Localized International Non-Governmental Organizations (L-INGOs) in a Complex and Uncertain Environment

*Rui Saraiva*

## INTRODUCTION

From 1992 to 2012, Mozambique's peacebuilding process was hailed as a successful case of liberal peacebuilding. Various actors implemented numerous peacebuilding programs focused on disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), economic and social development issues, decentralization, state-building, and justice. However, more recent events have challenged more than twenty years of peacebuilding outcomes. In 2012, the country saw a small-scale resurgence of conflict between RENAMO (Mozambican National Resistance) and the FRELIMO

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(Mozambique Liberation Front)-led Mozambican government. In addition, since 2017, a Mashababos insurgency in Northern Mozambique aims to establish a Caliphate in the Cabo Delgado province. As a result, there is now a renewed sense of purpose in debating peacebuilding effectiveness in an increasingly fragile Mozambican context that has been aggravated by additional human security threats, such as natural disasters and climate change, and the spread of infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, cholera, malaria, and, more recently, the SARS-CoV-2.

The dominant peacebuilding approach implemented after the 1992 peace agreement—based on a determined-designed process and technocratic model—did not address issues related to political inclusion, gender, and youth and was not able to foster long-term sustainable peace. Thus, current threats to peace in Mozambique call for alternative peacebuilding approaches and its effective coordination with humanitarian actions, peacemaking initiatives, and development assistance programs, in line with a whole-of-society approach to sustaining peace. An increasingly complex and uncertain environment resulted from ineffective determined-designed peacebuilding approaches incapable of preventing conflict recurrence in the central and northern provinces and the rise of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado. It revealed that sustaining peace had not been realized in Mozambique and that addressing remaining grievances to achieve national stability will require further, and increasingly adaptive, approaches. After the signature of the 2019 Maputo Accord for Peace and Reconciliation (MAPR), several challenges remain to be addressed by peacebuilders in Mozambique, for example, recurrent post-electoral violence, RENAMO's Military Junta, the escalation of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado province, and widespread unemployment and poverty.

Amid this complex and uncertain environment, this chapter explores the current international peacebuilding paradigm shift as demonstrated by increasingly adaptive and context-specific approaches implemented by the Personal Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Mozambique (UN-PESGM) and the European Union (EU) in Mozambique. Furthermore, this chapter highlights adaptive peacebuilding examples presented by 'localized' international non-governmental organizations (L-INGOs), such as the Community of Sant'Egidio (CSE) and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). By examining the abovementioned cases, this chapter attempts to answer two main research questions: (1) Are adaptive peacebuilding approaches more effective than determined-designed approaches in Mozambique's increasingly complex and

uncertain context? (2) How have peacebuilders adapted to Mozambique's uncertainty and complexity? By answering these questions, this chapter offers some insights for peace and development practitioners facing increasing challenges to their activities in Mozambique.

This study draws from primary data collected during fieldwork conducted between January and February 2020 in Mozambique, Botswana, South Africa, Italy, and Portugal. The field research includes in-depth interviews, archival research, and site-intensive methods. The interviews were conducted with academic experts and practitioners from government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society organizations (CSOs), and faith-based organizations. In addition, archive and library research and site-intensive methods, such as ethnographic analysis and participant observation, allowed for the consolidation of an insider's perspective on Mozambican peace and conflict issues. These methods were combined with content analysis of online news coverage between 2012 and 2021 (mainly in Portuguese) and discourse analysis covering the main stakeholders involved in the peacebuilding process.

### MOZAMBIQUE'S COMPLEXITY AND UNCERTAINTY: PROTRACTED VIOLENCE AND INTRACTABILITY?

Since the independence war (1964–1974) against Portuguese rule, Mozambique has experienced multiple cycles of violent conflict, including a long civil war (1977–1992) between FRELIMO and RENAMO, and its recent resurgence (2012–2019) combined with the rise of a Mashababos insurgency (2017–present) in the northern province of Cabo Delgado. FRELIMO came to power in 1975, following a long-armed conflict and struggle for independence that started in 1964 against the Portuguese dictatorship, *Estado Novo*. The 'carnation revolution' that occurred in Lisbon in 1974 marked the end of the Portuguese colonial enterprise and the beginning of a new democratic regime in Portugal and the Mozambican independence. The civil war between the FRELIMO government and RENAMO began two years after independence in 1977 and lasted 16 years. One million people were killed in the conflict, which also resulted in 1.5 million cross-border refugees and 4.5 million domestic refugees (Funada-Classen 2013).

Mozambique's civil war was characterized as a conventional insurgency that opposed rival ideologies in the context of the Cold War dynamics. In

the 1990s, the withdrawal of external actors from Mozambique following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the apartheid regime in South Africa allowed for a peaceful solution. As with most post-Cold War insurgencies, the answer was found through political compromise instead of the battleground. A peace agreement was signed in Rome in 1992, which attempted to establish lasting peace by promoting democratic participation and the “development of a multi-party democracy based on respect for and guarantees of basic rights and freedoms (...) under which political power belongs exclusively to the people and is exercised in accordance with principles of a representative and pluralistic democracy” (United Nations Security Council 1992, 9).

### *Conflict Recurrence (2012–2019)*

Due to escalating tensions between the Mozambican government and RENAMO during peacetime, Mozambique saw a small-scale resurgence of the civil war in 2012. These developments had a significant impact on the country’s peace prospects after more than two decades of peace. RENAMO sought more decentralization, provincial autonomy, equal state resources allocation, and more opportunities to hold sufficient political power. The objective of the Mozambican government has been the total disarmament of RENAMO’s residual forces and the complete cessation of hostilities. RENAMO demanded the Mozambican government to address the issue of corruption and the incorporation of former combatants in the police and in the intelligence services. Many of RENAMO’s ex-combatants remained ineligible for pensions that should have been delivered as part of the previous DDR process. Young RENAMO recruits, many of whom were relatives of former combatants, concluded that resorting to arms as a bargaining tool was the only way to achieve their objectives. In addition, RENAMO underlined the need for a fair redistribution of natural resource revenues in the context of the discovery of one of the world’s largest gas reserves in Mozambique in 2012 (Academia Source 2020a).

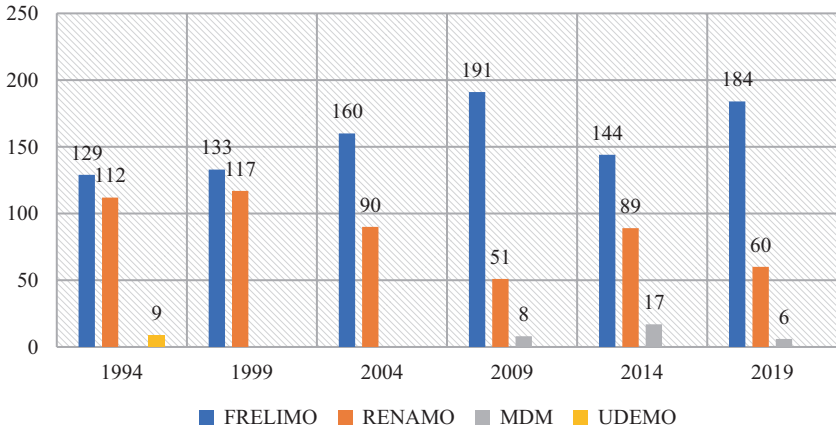
The 2012 political crisis in Mozambique began with the decision of Afonso Dhlakama to retreat to RENAMO’s guerrilla base in Satungira, Gorongosa, demanding changes in the electoral law and compliance with the provisions of the 1992 General Peace Agreement (GPA). The Mozambican government initially took this event as another strong call for negotiations, but it ultimately resulted in armed hostilities that started

in 2012. Between 2013 and 2016, RENAMO would attempt to seize control of six provinces, including Manica, Nampula, Niassa, Sofala, Tete (where important coal mining industries and the Cahora-Bassa dam are located), and Zambezia (Academia Source 2020a). Despite the limited scope of the RENAMO insurgency, the logistics and number of victims were comparable to other intrastate conflicts. RENAMO has resorted to its traditional guerilla and destabilization strategy, targeting specific areas and industries critical to the country's economy. The disruption of transportation routes has been central to the insurgent strategy, indirectly affecting FRELIMO's sources of income (Regalia 2017). In addition, targeted killings would occur in the capital Maputo, in particular the murder by FRELIMO hardliners of the constitutional lawyer Gilles Cistac, who defended the constitutionality of provincial autonomy in Mozambique (Granja 2016).

Over time, the impact of the small-scale civil war increased in severity. By March 2016, the UNHCR reported that more than 10,000 Mozambican refugees had fled to Malawi and that this was a considerable increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Shimo 2016). However, while the crisis was escalating, a new peace process was also unfolding based on the direct dialogue between the Mozambican government, led by Filipe Nyusi, and RENAMO, led by Afonso Dhlakama. After the signature of a new peace agreement in August 2019, the hostilities between the Mozambican government and RENAMO may have ceased; however, several challenges to peace remain, including recurrent electoral irregularities and electoral violence.

### *Electoral Irregularities and Electoral Violence*

Despite continuous constitutional and legal reforms, RENAMO has contested all six presidential and parliamentary elections, remaining as the most voted party in the opposition amid recurrent electoral irregularities. RENAMO's perception is that one of the main objectives of the 1992 GPA—establishing an effective democracy—has not been achieved. The consolidation of a democratic system presupposes uncertain electoral outcomes and alternation of the parties in power. According to Samuel Huntington (1993), a democratic regime has to achieve two turnovers in power to be considered a stable democracy, and the Mozambican political system was not able to achieve even one turnover in 27 years of multiparty elections (see Fig. 5.1).



**Fig. 5.1** Assembly of the Republic of Mozambique’s seats by political party (1994–2019). Source: (Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa 2021)

Despite several constitutional and electoral law reforms, FRELIMO has been consolidating its position as a “Party-State” and recognized early on that RENAMO posed an electoral threat in several provinces (Academia Source 2020a). It actively countered their democratic political participation by intimidating voters and party members during election cycles. Irregularities have occurred in every election since 1999, and in 2014—despite the signature of a Cessation of Military Hostilities Agreement (CMHA) ensuring that RENAMO would stop armed attacks and participate in the elections as a political party—Dhlakama contested the results, alleging that the election was rigged. The third major party, the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM), and its leader Daviz Simango also challenged the electoral results for the same reasons, but unlike Dhlakama, Simango accepted the Constitutional Council’s decision that confirmed the National Electoral Commission’s results and FRELIMO’s electoral victory (Nuvunga 2017, 86).

The 2018 constitutional reform and the 2019 MAPR would ensure again that RENAMO steps out from its guerrilla activities and participates in Mozambique’s parliamentary, provincial, and presidential elections. The October 2019 elections led to a resounding victory by FRELIMO. However, the elections were once more marked by

irregularities, cementing a lack of trust in political institutions and promoting further societal division. This is also a sign that FRELIMO may not have been genuinely interested in advancing with decentralization reforms, causing difficulties for voter registration in RENAMO majority provinces, in particular in Nampula and Zambeze (NGO Source 2020).

According to a 2018 poll, a third of Mozambicans fear election-related intimidations and violence, which increased by 11% between 2012 and 2018. High abstention rates in Mozambique are directly related to this phenomenon (Jacobs and Isbell 2021). The fact is that the Mozambican electoral process often occurs in a context marked by political violence, with two new peace agreements being signed before the last two national elections in 2014 and 2019. This demonstrates that reconciliation in Mozambique has not been fully realized, and recurrent electoral violence strongly affects future peace prospects in the country: “The general population wants peace and wants the negotiations for peace to continue. However, after the 2019 elections, the situation is not yet normalized. We are not sure about the future” (Civil Society Source 2020a).

### *The Division of RENAMO and the Rise of the Military Junta*

Afonso Dhlakama unexpectedly passed away on May 3, 2018, from diabetes complications. The untimely death of RENAMO’s leader was a major setback for the recent peace process, which was on the brink of reaching a definitive agreement. RENAMO quickly adjusted to the loss of its leadership and began the process of selecting a successor. Shortly after this, Ossufo Momade, a former RENAMO lieutenant-general (until 1992) and secretary-general (between 2005 and 2012), was appointed interim leader and eventually chosen as the effective head of RENAMO in a party congress on January 17, 2019 (Henriques 2019). Subsequently, the RENAMO Military Junta defied Momade’s authority and elected Lieutenant-General Mariano Nhongo as its leader. This splinter group did not agree with the terms of the 2019 MAPR and unleashed a new wave of violence, attacking vehicles and people in the provinces of Sofala, Manica, and Tete. Although the Military Junta consisted of a small group of 200 armed men, it had considerable support in central Mozambique, and it was able to cause significant disruption in 2019 (Vines 2021).

The Military Junta remained as a relevant peace threat during 2019 and 2020, focused on continuously raising their claims regarding the new DDR process. Momade’s response was to address this problem via

political means, which entailed continuous cooperation with the FRELIMO government. However, Momade was also facing constant political opposition inside RENAMO, not only by the Military Junta leader but also by other key RENAMO members, including Elias Dhlakama, the brother of the historical RENAMO leader. Other high-profile RENAMO members—including João Machava, a senior figure, and André Matsangaíssa Junior, nephew of one of the founders—were also discontent with Momade's leadership and temporarily joined the Military Junta (Academia Source 2020a). However, both have later opted to join the dialogue with the Mozambican government and accepted the terms of the new DDR process, further damaging the credibility of the Military Junta (Mozambique Information Agency 2020, 2021).

To make room for a possible dialogue with the Military Junta, President Filipe Nyusi announced a one-week military truce on October 25, 2020. However, the Junta's military attacks in the central region continued, leading the Mozambican armed forces to harden their positions and capture several Military Junta's combatants. Excessive national and international media coverage played a significant role in the emergence of the Military Junta, which had the opportunity to participate in various news conferences and radio interviews, allowing the splinter group to swiftly establish themselves as well-known insurrectionists (Institute for Multiparty Democracy 2021).

The Junta's leader—Mariano Nhongo—was killed in combat in October 2021—and at the time of writing, the insurgent group is neutralized or dormant. President Nyusi has underlined that fighting two armed conflicts (one with the Junta and another with the Mashababos insurgency) was unacceptable and encouraged the defense and security forces to follow a hard security approach to address the Junta's threat. Because there is no apparent successor to Nhongo, his death might mark the end of the Military Junta. Others, however, disagree and have sworn to fight under its new leader, Lieutenant-General Augusto Faindane Phiri, also known as Massiafumbi (Fabricius 2021). In the eyes of many RENAMO members then, Momade's legitimacy continues to be questioned, as it derives mainly from his political career as he lacks guerrilla experience in the jungle (Academia Source 2020b). The fact is that the Junta attempted to destabilize the implementation of the 2019 MAPR, which indicates that in the worst-case scenario, this insurgency could result in further conflict recurrence in central Mozambique.



*The Emergence of a Mashababos Insurgency (2017–Present)  
in Cabo Delgado*

Violent extremism emerged for the first time in the northern province of Cabo Delgado in October 2017, when extremist insurgents attacked a police station and other state infrastructure in an apparent attack against the Mozambican government in the port town of Mocímboa da Praia. The attacks occurred after growing tensions between the insurgents and other segments of the local community, who had been fighting over social and economic grievances, religious intolerance, and dissatisfaction with the local Frelimo-led authority. The insurgency is centered in Cabo Delgado, the least developed region of Mozambique, located on the northeastern border with Tanzania. However, the province is also one of the richest in the world in terms of natural resources. The rise of violent extremism occurred in parallel with powerful economic interests settling in Cabo Delgado, focused on natural gas extraction, ruby, and graphite mining (Alberdi and Barroso 2021).

The insurgents' affiliation has been ambiguous. The local population and local experts often identify the armed group as Al-Shabaab or Mashababos, and others English-language sources also referred to it as Al-Sunnah Wal-Jamâa, or 'followers of the prophetic tradition.' But, in June 2019, the insurgents' connection with ISIS emerged, with the Islamic State claiming that "the soldiers of the Caliphate were able to repel an attack by the Crusader Mozambican army" (Postings 2019). In addition, external insurgents from Tanzania, Uganda, Congo (DRC), and Kenya provided organizational resources and armament (Matsinhe and Valoi 2019, 8). The tactics, weaponry, and geographical reach of the armed groups have evolved considerably since 2017. According to Faleg (2019, 4), in 2019, the insurgent armed group counted "between 350 and 1000 militants, organized in cell-based structures with each cell comprising 10–20 individuals using basic weaponry and tactics." The Mashababos insurgency appears to function as a decentralized non-state armed group (NSAG)—an alliance of smaller groups where individual sub-commanders retain significant authority. Because of the dynamic nature of these alliances and the variety of subgroups, violence might appear chaotic and disorderly. However, the flexibility and local adaptability of such armed groups pose unique challenges for humanitarian, peace-making, and peacebuilding actions (Mcquinn and Courchesne 2020). The Mashababos insurgency grew stronger over time, and the security

situation in Cabo Delgado began to deteriorate rapidly. What began as sporadic attacks on smaller towns evolved into large sweeps across major provincial towns, causing a humanitarian crisis and the weakening of an already fragile government presence in the region.

The debate on the origins and nature of violent extremism in Cabo Delgado continues among scholars and policymakers (see Morier-Genoud 2020). Some see religious extremism or even ethnic issues as the root causes of the conflict. Others see poverty, inequality, marginalization, and youth unemployment as some of the most relevant factors. A local expert suggests that religious extremism is being used as a tool to take advantage of local people disenfranchised from the Mozambican state and society. In his opinion, addressing inequality, food security, and capacity-building to generate jobs is as important as the security operations to address the insurgency (Civil Society Source 2020b). The country's fragile and centralized governance structure is also a crucial vulnerability as it failed to provide adequate education, health infrastructures, and other forms of social support in Northern Mozambique. A local expert also reinforced that ISIS and Al-Shabab are just opportunistic groups "that take advantage of its system of terrorism franchising" in regions with weak states affected by poverty, unemployment, and other socioeconomic challenges. Therefore, addressing these issues should be part of the priorities of peace and security actors intervening in Cabo Delgado (Academia Source 2020b).

Local sources also underlined that heroin narcotraffickers in the region prefer a situation of instability because they can better choose the space and time to transport drugs in collaboration with NSAGs. If the state army and security forces are occupied with violent extremism, drug trafficking loses attention and expands its scope. In addition, human trafficking stands out as an additional element of the crime-conflict nexus in Cabo Delgado, as several women have been abducted by the insurgents in the region. Other sources also pointed to the trafficking of ivory, rubies, and wood as funding sources for the insurgents (Civil Society Source 2020b). Cabo Delgado's fragility and exposure to violent extremism, crime, environmental and health threats, together with its geopolitical and socioeconomic relevance, makes it a particularly sensitive context to destabilization and armed violence, possibly resulting in unforeseen consequences to the future of peace and security in Mozambique and the Southern African region.

As a result of the threats to peace presented by both the RENAMO and the Mashababos insurgencies, there is now a widespread perception of

insecurity among Mozambican political elites and the population in general. Many have considered that Mozambique has been facing not only one but two armed conflicts occurring simultaneously in the country. The Mozambican people's general perception is that the peace achieved in 1992 has been suddenly lost, and even after the 2019 MAPR, there is a general feeling that the conflict situation is not yet normalized. The fact is that most Mozambicans remain unsure about their future in an increasingly volatile and uncertain environment (Civil Society Source 2020a).

### THE PEACEBUILDING PARADIGM SHIFT IN MOZAMBIQUE: FROM LIBERAL TO ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING?

The Mozambican case presents a context that had been hailed as a successful liberal peacebuilding model until the events described in the previous section challenged more than 20 years of peace. There is now a common perception among Mozambicans that the coexistence between the RENAMO insurgency and the Mashababos insurgency demonstrated that the previous peacebuilding approaches, programs, and methods were not entirely effective (Civil Society Source 2020a). After the 1992 GPA, numerous peacebuilding programs have been implemented by various actors, ranging from traditional international donors such as the G19 group<sup>1</sup> to donors that have emerged in the last fifteen years such as China, Brazil, India, Vietnam, and the Gulf countries. Since the 1990s, peacebuilding interventions in Mozambique have been devised mainly under a liberal or determined-designed approach in five main areas: security, economic foundations, inclusive politics, justice, and revenues and services (de Carvalho et al. 2016). However, numerous factors contributed to peacebuilding ineffectiveness in preventing the relapse of violence in the country.

<sup>1</sup>The G19 group includes the UN, the African Development Bank, the World Bank, the EU, Portugal, Japan, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Portugal, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Italy, Norway, the UK, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium, Spain, the US, and the Netherlands.

*The Dominant Determined-Designed Peacebuilding Paradigm:  
What Has Failed?*

The previous literature has underlined the role of the UN and the United Nations Operation in Mozambique (ONUMOZ) in explaining the outcomes of the 1992 peace process. It also highlighted the role of bilateral donors with country experience and solid knowledge about domestic political actors and domestic constraints (Manning and Malbrough 2010). Peacebuilding and development assistance programs were focused on building democracy in Mozambique, attempting to support the transition from a single-party rule to multiparty politics in the early 1990s. In the early 2000s, the focus transitioned to improving good governance at national and municipal levels (Manning and Malbrough 2012).

The promotion of democracy and economic liberalization as central elements of peacebuilding practices in Mozambique has effectively changed people's perception of power and their ability to influence political spaces. Thus, the liberal peacebuilding focus on democratization may have contributed to people's empowerment by creating formal spaces of political participation. However, economic liberalization was not effectively implemented and failed to tackle poverty, while simultaneously negatively affecting the spaces of political empowerment (Maschietto 2015; Hanlon 2010). Other key reforms focused on decentralization and local governance. However, the limited effectiveness of such reforms revealed the inherent contradiction in the top-down and determined-designed dynamics that shaped the peacebuilding process.

The decentralization agenda and its emphasis on deconcentration instead of devolution did not result in effective power-sharing, thus affecting both the reconciliation and democratization processes in Mozambique (Maschietto 2016). The involvement of donors in decentralization programs followed the reversal of democratic decentralization, leading some donor agencies to reformulate or decrease their support to local governance. Instead, international donors focused on sector-based programs, for example, education and agriculture, that deconcentrated the deployment of resources and bypassed the control mechanisms of statutory bodies at the local government level. While this process may have allowed donors to achieve a relative degree of effectiveness and achieve short-term results, it also undermined the building of long-term effective local governance structures (Bossuyt and Gould 2000).

Another sign of ineffective peacebuilding in Mozambique is evident in the partial failure of the previous DDR process. Despite the efforts of the UN, religious organizations, and local NGOs, international donors assumed too early that Mozambique had undergone a successful post-conflict transition. They halted support to NGOs working on DDR issues, while RENAMO maintained armed men and stockpiles for more than 20 years. Both the ONUMOZ (United Nations Operation in Mozambique) and international donors could not conclude their peacebuilding mandate effectively, not only on disarmament but also on demobilization and reintegration, as support to former combatants in central Mozambique was consistently lacking (Vines 2021).

In addition, women, youth, and the most vulnerable have been left with hardly any assistance in the previous DDR program. Children received educational support and were placed under a different program when compared to adults. However, some of them rebelled, demanding the same vocational reinsertion package that their adult counterparts were receiving. The previous DDR program also failed to recognize the specific needs of female fighters in Mozambique. Only men were issued with resettlement grants, and only male clothing was available, demonstrating the narrow focus of previous DDR programs in Mozambique (Casey-Maslen et al. 2020, 6).

The growth and decline of both FRELIMO's and RENAMO's roles in assuring the effectiveness of peacebuilding programs were also evident. FRELIMO consolidated its power within various state structures and did not allow for the democratization and decentralization process to be fully realized. On the other hand, RENAMO opted for continuing to hold some of its military bases and concealed weapons. Dhlakama was not able to accommodate the fact that alternance in power at the national and provincial levels did not really occur in the country. The long-term ineffectiveness of previous democratization, decentralization, and DDR efforts after the 1992 GPA resulted both from an erroneous assessment on the progress of previous peacebuilding programs and the inability of both national and international peacebuilding actors to adapt to the new challenges that have emerged since 2012. Thus, the dominant peacebuilding approach implemented after the 1992 GPA—based on a determined-design process and technocratic model that did not address issues related to political inclusion, gender, and youth—was not able to sustain peace in the country after 2012. In that context of conflict recurrence, mediation became again a key tool to create a new peacebuilding avenue and a sustaining peace pathway in Mozambique.

*Direct Dialogue and Adaptive Mediation: The Emergence  
of an Alternative Approach?*

Responding to a continuously changing context and to the escalation of violence became a key priority for mediation efforts between 2013 and 2019 in Mozambique. Peacemaking solutions often involved a sense of urgency due to the complex and uncertain environment described in previous sections. Moreover, amid ongoing volatility, the future of peacebuilding in Mozambique had to first rely on the effectiveness of peacemaking and conflict resolution initiatives. In this context, the new peace process involved multiple stakeholders and featured three main mediation stages: (1) domestic mediation without external process facilitation, (2) standard high-level international mediation, and (3) adaptive mediation as facilitation of direct dialogue between both parties.<sup>2</sup> The Mozambican government and RENAMO, and several domestic and external mediation actors, such as individuals, states, international organizations (IOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), attempted to find new solutions to the conflict and participated directly or indirectly in the mediation process.

In the last stage of the mediation process, from 2016 to 2019, a small mediation team of four members was led by the Swiss ambassador to Mozambique, Mirko Manzoni. While addressing the failures and ineffectiveness of previous peace negotiations, the final round of the new mediation process was adaptive and pragmatic in style. It privileged the facilitation of direct dialogue between both parties in the context of a nationally owned peace process. This effective style of mediation was focused on three main pillars: (1) self-organization and national ownership, enabling the leaders of both parties and Mozambicans from both sides to be at the center of the architecture of negotiations, (2) an understanding of mediation as a synonym of process facilitation, with a small mediation team of four members working discretely and unassumingly amid challenging conditions, and (3) an adaptive and pragmatic approach that enabled the mediators to deal more effectively with complexity and uncertainty during the negotiations. This mediation approach allowed first for a permanent

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed account on the three mediation stages, see Saraiva, Rui. 2022. “Peacemaking from Within: Adaptive Mediation of Direct Dialogue in Mozambique’s New Peace Process (2013–2019).” In: De Coning, Cedric, Ako Muto, and Rui Saraiva, eds. 2022. *Adaptive Mediation and Conflict Resolution. Peace-making in Colombia, Mozambique, the Philippines, and Syria*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan.

ceasefire in 2017, an MoU on military affairs in 2018, and the MAPR signed in August 2019.

The implementation of an alternative mediation approach—that is, adaptive mediation—indicates that in the case of recurrent armed conflicts like in Mozambique, the effectiveness of mediation initiatives depended, first, on the resilience and adaptiveness of both parties in the conflict, as well as all domestic stakeholders involved in the peace process. Second, it also depended largely on the mediators’ mindset and the ability of external mediators to listen to domestic actors while focusing on understanding the culture and context of the conflict-affected situation. A mindset of discretion and humility, and a smaller number of external mediators involved in the peace process, also largely contributed to building trust among all parties. Third, when this mindset was allied to a pragmatic and adaptive approach, this enabled the mediators to face complex and uncertain environments more effectively. Adaptive mediation and adaptive peacebuilding initiatives should be perceived as ongoing and interlinked iterative processes and as essential long-term endeavors for sustainable peace in Mozambique. Therefore, it is possible to assert that for the effective implementation of the 2019 MAPR, the related peacebuilding actions should remain adaptive in nature while being adequately supported by international and domestic peacebuilders. The question that remains is whether adaptive mediation has opened an avenue for adaptive peacebuilding in Mozambique.

### *Implementing the 2019 MAPR: The Rise of Adaptive Peacebuilding in Mozambique?*

After the signature of the new peace agreement in 2019, the lead mediator of the recent peace process, Mirko Manzoni, was appointed as the UN-PESGM. The UN-PESGM’s primary function has been to deepen the dialogue between the Mozambican government and RENAMO and assist in implementing the 2019 MAPR. Manzoni’s approach in the implementation stage was focused on achieving significant progress on military issues by consolidating early gains in advancing DDR activities and expecting to progress on decentralization and reconciliation at a later stage. In addition, as in the mediation stage, the implementation of the peace agreement, which includes peacebuilding components, is focused on external process facilitation of a nationally owned peacebuilding process (Peace Process Secretariat 2021a).

Looking at the short-term impact of the MAPR implementation, the number of demobilized fighters increased from 6% to 20% in 2020, and two military bases have been thoroughly closed. Former combatants have returned home and began the reintegration process into their communities with the help of local religious, civil society, and community leaders. Unlike the previous program, the current DDR process also considers female combatants and their unique reintegration needs. On September 5, 2020, with the active support of the UN-PESGM, Filipe Nyusi and Ossufo Momade visited a DDR center in central Mozambique where 140 former female combatants (of an estimated total of 247) were disarmed and demobilized in a safe and inclusive manner (UN Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs 2020). The current DDR activities seem to prioritize a context-specific approach, taking place in specially designated ‘Assembly Areas’ (AA), where former combatants go through a registration and sensitization process that supports their transition to civilian life, and weapons and other military equipment are also registered and handed over. Subsequently, the former combatants also participate in reintegration interviews in the AA, which then provide crucial information on their hopes and intentions for the following phase. They are given training and livelihood options based on their needs, capabilities, and local opportunities in the communities where they want to settle (Peace Process Secretariat 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic presented an unexpected obstacle to the DDR process. Resource mobilization to address the health crisis, more restrictive measures, and the fear associated with the virus disrupted demilitarization initiatives. The impact of COVID-19 presented an increase in additional DDR logistics costs to both the government and international partners. Additional provision of food, accommodation, and access to health services, including hygiene and prevention kits for COVID-19, have been in increasing demand for those that remain in RENAMO military bases. On the other hand, DDR has also been impacted by the need to comply with the state of emergency measures, for example, social distancing and the prohibition on holding meetings of more than 20 people. These limitations also inhibit social practices and the community’s reception to former combatants (ACCORD 2020).

Despite the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the DDR process is expected to be concluded by the end of 2022. The new DDR program has been supported by a multi-donor fund (Canada, the European Union, Ireland, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom) and managed by



the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the Peace Process Secretariat (PPS), led by the UN-PESGM. The PPS includes members from the Mozambican government and RENAMO and works closely with the Military Affairs Commission (MAC), the Joint Technical Group for DDR (JTGDDR), the Joint Technical Group for Placement (JTGP), and the Joint Technical Group for Monitoring and Verification (JTG MV) (Peace Process Secretariat 2021).

At the level of international peacebuilding donors, the European Union (EU) has emerged as one of the main partners of the Mozambican government after the signature of the 2019 MAPR, allocating 62 million euros to address peacebuilding issues. Half of that amount is destined for the implementation of the DDR process. The other half is managed by the PPS to assist the reconciliation process, that is, supporting grassroots and civil society organizations, culture, sports, theater, and others. One-fourth of the funds will be allocated to decentralization programs and to support security sector reform. The assistance for decentralization in the short term will be focused on capacity-building and support for the 2024 district elections (EU Delegation in Mozambique 2020).

An analysis of the approach used by the EU to implement its peacebuilding activities in Mozambique reveals its focus on context-specificity, which tends to differ from the liberal peacebuilding paradigm endorsed by international donors in the 1990s and early 2000s. Most of the EU peacebuilding initiatives in Mozambique are initiated by the EU delegation in Mozambique with frequent consultations with national and local stakeholders. The EU officials in Mozambique and local partners engage thoroughly in problem analysis and recommend actions accordingly. Subsequently, the headquarters in Brussels will assess and approve the initiatives. At the implementation level, the initiative also remains in the hands of the field office, which will select the most appropriate implementation partner, for example, NGOs and CSOs, other international cooperation partners in Mozambique, private contractors, etc. The same context-specific focus is applied to the evaluation stage. An EU program officer in Mozambique is responsible for monthly evaluations based on local feedback. In the design, implementation, and evaluation stages, the EU perceives the process as a bottom-up approach within the EU peace and development bureaucratic structure. The decision-making process is initiated from the field office in Mozambique (with the input from local partners) up to the headquarters in Brussels, and not the other way around. Therefore, key inputs for peacebuilding programs result from the

assessment of EU officials in Mozambique, who will in turn privilege feedback from local organizations and the national and local governments at all stages of their peacebuilding activities (EU Delegation in Mozambique 2020).

Considering that the approach of the UN-PESGM and the PPS derives from an effective adaptive mediation model in the peacemaking stage, the implementation of the 2019 MAPR also seems to integrate a similar approach focused on process facilitation, national ownership, self-organization, and an adaptive mindset in the peacebuilding stage, to the point that the DDR program was not fully interrupted by the COVID-19 and the Military Junta crises. In addition, looking at the example of the EU as one of the main peacebuilding donors in Mozambique and its context-specific methods, it is possible to observe a gradual paradigm shift from liberal and determined-design approaches toward adaptive and context-specific peacebuilding approaches in Mozambique.

As peacebuilding processes encompass a larger number of actors and a longer time horizon when compared with mediation processes, further peacebuilding research in the next 20 years should be able to confirm if the peacebuilding paradigm shift toward adaptive approaches was effectively realized or not. However, this section highlights that current peacebuilding trends in Mozambique demonstrate that the transition from liberal to adaptive peacebuilding seems to be occurring and resulting in an increasing effectiveness of related programs. International peacebuilders are now recognizing the value of approaches that promote the self-organization and resilience of Mozambicans through adaptive, pragmatic, and context-specific peacebuilding initiatives. However, other non-governmental peacebuilding actors have contributed consistently to sustaining peace in Mozambique and offer a valuable example of how twenty-first-century peacebuilders should address current peace threats and challenges.

### LOCALIZED INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS (L-INGOs): AN EXAMPLE OF ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING IN MOZAMBIQUE

In the post-Cold War period, international NGOs have been contributing to humanitarian, development, and peace actions in conflict-affected situations. In the Mozambican context, the role of ‘localized’ international

non-governmental organizations (L-INGOs), such as the Community of Sant’Egidio and the Aga Khan Development Network, has been fundamental to sustain effective peacebuilding actions focused on the most vulnerable while often operating on challenging grounds. The unique characteristic of the L-INGOs is that they have both an international dimension—benefitting from the lessons learned and experience in other conflict contexts—and are simultaneously fully localized—that is, the design, implementation, and evaluation of their activities happen mostly at the local level and rely on local feedback. The L-INGOs are not a temporary mission or delegation constrained by specific national or economic interests. Instead, moved by faith-based or humanitarian principles, they have settled in Mozambique on a permanent basis. By nature, the process of transition from a global to a localized organization implies contextualization, pragmatism, and adaptiveness. Therefore, it is not surprising to find that these two cases constitute a valuable example for peacebuilders attempting to implement adaptive approaches in Mozambique and beyond.

### *The Community of Sant’Egidio (CSE) in Mozambique*

The CSE is a Catholic organization founded in Rome, in 1968, under three core principles: ‘prayer, the poor, and peace’ (in Italian, *preghiera, poveri, pace*). According to the Vatican (2021), the CSE comprises a network of small communities, with about 50,000 members in 72 countries over five continents. The CSE’s first activity in Mozambique took place before the end of the civil war, sending a boat on a humanitarian mission to provide food for the most vulnerable. One of the main stances of the CSE is that peace will only arise if the most vulnerable are taken into consideration. The CSE in Mozambique is also the result of a friendship developed in Rome between a Mozambican bishop and Italian priests. The Mozambican bishop invited the Italian priests to visit Mozambique in 1988 during the civil war. The Italians found a very fragile situation and extreme poverty. The Catholic priests stayed in challenging areas, eating no more than a portion of rice per day. Despite the challenging conditions, they have continued to visit Mozambique, and later the CSE would contribute to the mediation process that led to the signature of the 1992 GPA at the CSE headquarters in Rome. It is possible to say that the CSE in Mozambique developed from a personal friendship into an international project that was later localized (CSE Source 2020b). This fact also demonstrates that besides having the right means and the right intentions

(and predetermined plans), sometimes, to give an effective contribution in peacebuilding, it may be more a matter of being in the right place at the right time (CSE Source 2020a).

After the 1992 GPA, the CSE has been strongly committed to sustaining peace and reducing poverty in Mozambique, focused on the reconstruction of a network of infrastructures and communications, and strengthening education and health systems. The ‘Youth for Peace’ movement implemented in Mozambican schools and universities attempted to develop a culture of solidarity, pluralism, and peace, ensuring that younger people are included in community-based discussions and project implementation (Sant’Egidio 2017). Currently, the CSE is involved in two major projects in Mozambique: the BRAVO (Birth Registration against Oblivion) program, which addresses child trafficking issues, and the DREAM (Disease Relief through Excellent and Advanced Means) initiative, which aims to tackle the spread of HIV/AIDS in Mozambique. Through the BRAVO program, the CSE could assist in registering thousands of children that had no legal identity in Mozambique, enabling the protection of their civil rights. Birth registration is seen by the CSE not only as a human right but also as a gateway to a variety of other rights and services provided by the state. In the outskirts of Maputo, the first DREAM antiretroviral therapy center in Africa opened in February 2002. The DREAM program has helped over 200,000 people in Mozambique, making antiretroviral therapy increasingly available, as well as addressing other diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and malnutrition (Sant’Egidio 2019). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the DREAM program also collaborated with the Mozambican government to conduct disease screening, population awareness, training of health workers, and vaccinations (DREAM Sant’Egidio 2021).

The CSE’s context-specific and adaptive approach is focused on engaging and working with local actors. Considering the history of the CSE in Mozambique and its contribution to peacemaking and peacebuilding, the L-INGO was able to build trust and a solid relationship with the Mozambican government and with the local population. Regarding the CSE’s approach to peacebuilding, it derives from its faith-based principles while keeping an ecumenic spirit and promoting interfaith meetings. Although the CSE extends its activities in 13 countries, at the local level, it relies mainly on those living on the ground. Local communities are seen as those able to foster and deepen dialogue and enable effective implementation of the CSE programs (CSE Source 2020a). The BRAVO program

exemplifies the current peacebuilding and humanitarian vision of the CSE in Mozambique, that is, in conflict-affected societies, the most vulnerable need to be assisted first. Besides relying on the grassroots, the CSE also keeps close contact with the national government and international organizations when implementing its programs, for example, the EU, the Italian government, or other major development actors such as Germany and Japan (CSE Source 2020a).

In terms of evaluation, there is a monthly and annual review of CSE's programs. In addition, external audits ensure the accountability of these programs. In the case of Mozambique, the feedback from national and local actors is fundamental for a positive evaluation. Besides the monthly and annual reviews, the evaluation on the ground also happens daily. Through its localized practices and its long history of peacebuilding in Mozambique, the CSE developed contextualized knowledge through institutional learning, surpassing any external donor. In fact, Italian policymakers rely on the CSE to develop new peace and development policies to address Mozambican issues (CSE Source 2020a).

Some of the CSE activities may, at first glance, seem to have no direct relation with standard peacebuilding programs, for example, DDR, reconciliation, and decentralization programs. However, the relation with peacebuilding and sustaining peace here, although indirect, it is crucial, as the BRAVO and Dream projects help in building and strengthening the Mozambican civil society from a bottom-up perspective. In this context, the mission of the CSE in Mozambique unites both humanitarian and peacebuilding activities, focusing on the most vulnerable. The effectiveness of the CSE programs derives from its context-specificity from the design to the implementation and evaluation stages. The DREAM and BRAVO projects were designed in Maputo in collaboration with the national government and the Justice and Health Ministries. The CSE is also fundamentally adaptive in its approach, as there is no concrete design or planning but a response to concrete needs over time. According to Fr. Giorgio Ferretti, head of the CSE in Mozambique, "the evaluation stage is considered a fundamental tool, as an institution like the CSE needs to remain humble." The evaluation of the BRAVO and DREAM programs is mainly conducted in Mozambique with local and international coordination. Fr. Ferretti also underlined that "the presence of the CSE in Mozambique is not temporary, it is there forever. Therefore, there is no grand strategy but constant adaptation. If you would like to cure HIV/AIDS or other diseases, it will be the work of a lifetime. Sometimes this is

more than a matter of planning, implementation, and evaluation. It is necessary to think with the heart” (CSE Source 2020b).

This section highlighted that the CSE’s peacebuilding and humanitarian activities are based on an adaptive and context-specific approach that benefits from a long history of institutional learning and focus on context-specificity through continuous trust-building with local communities and national actors. The CSE adaptive actions in Mozambique derive from the localization of its know-how and procedures, and its faith-based and humanitarian principles focusing on the most vulnerable, which also makes them focus on a long-term objectives and people-centered actions.

### *The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) in Mozambique*

The AKDN is an international development organization founded by the 49th hereditary Imam of the Shia Ismaili Muslims. The activity of the AKDN is guided by Islamic ethical principles, such as consultation, solidarity with those who are less fortunate, self-reliance, and human dignity. Pluralism is also a cornerstone of the AKDN’s ethical framework. Its goal is to improve the living conditions of the most vulnerable, regardless of religion, ethnicity, or gender. The AKDN staff members come from a variety of faiths, backgrounds, and origins. The AKDN agencies operate in more than thirty countries across eight regions (Aga Khan Development Network 2021a). Its development approach is based on the idea of helping those in need to achieve self-reliance and improve their quality of life (Aga Khan Development Network 2021b).

In 1998, through a request made by the former President Joaquim Chissano, the AKDN and the Mozambican government signed a Diplomatic Agreement of Cooperation for Development. Since 2001, the scope of AKDN activities in Mozambique has been concentrated in the Cabo Delgado province, where the Mashababos insurgency has been active since 2017. In addition, the AKDN has been operating in other areas, for example, creating the Aga Khan Academy in Maputo since 2009 and engaging in various other projects such as the Moztex factory in Matola and the rehabilitation of the Polana Hotel in Maputo. At the time of writing, the AKDN was employing over 1000 people in Mozambique (96% of them Mozambicans) in seven areas of activity: (1) agriculture and food security, (2) strengthening the civil society, (3) early childhood and development, (4) economic development and financial inclusion, (5)

education and literacy, (6) humanitarian assistance, and (7) health and nutrition, including, more recently, assistance to address the COVID-19 crisis (Aga Khan Development Network 2021c).

Working mainly with local employees—and listening to local health committees, local activists, and community agents—has been one of the priorities of the AKDN in Mozambique. However, since violent extremism emerged in Cabo Delgado, the AKDN’s ability to engage with the situation on the ground has been substantially reduced. The AKDN continued to try to assist local communities in the region amid a very challenging context in the northern province. As the Mashababos insurgency instrumentalizes religious fundamentalism, the AKDN strived to work with all religious traditions and leaderships and with the local government in Cabo Delgado. It is also important to note that the AKDN activities are focused on social assistance, and although its principles are related to Islam, there is no religious element in the implementation of AKDN projects (including the AKDN education services). The key intermediary of the AKDN in Cabo Delgado has been the “committees of village development,” also known as “village development organizations” (VDOs). In addition, the AKDN also supports the creation of “community groups of savings” (CGS) focused on capacity-building and financial literacy (AKDN Source 2020).

The composition of the VDOs counts with 10 to 20 members. They are representatives of local areas, and sometimes there is also a representative of the local government. The AKDN funds the creation of the VDOs, and the members are elected by locals in democratic fashion. Once elected, these members will work to create “the map of dreams,” that is, their optimal vision for the future of those communities. Each member will share their dream for their village, and the AKDN will ask what they would do to achieve those dreams if they have financial support. By creating the map of dreams and generating this discussion, the problem recognition and the modes of assistance are clarified. Also, it is important to note that the exchange of ideas for the map of dreams remains limited to that small group of local people. Therefore, there is no external influence, which enables the AKDN activities to fully adapt to that context (AKDN Source 2020).

The VDOs are not an institution meant to serve the AKDN but to ultimately serve the local villages and their citizens. They function as intermediaries of an adaptive approach that promotes the self-organization and

resilience of local communities. This is a model that the AKDN has developed since 2001, applying it first in Pakistan and India with successful results. Although Cabo Delgado is the focus of AKDN activities in Mozambique, the foundation also works in interaction with other regions, for example, to support local producers of cashew nuts, as it is difficult to find people with skills in this type of produce. Often, the AKDN attempts to transfer capacities from one region to another, for example, from Nampula to Cabo Delgado, maximizing inter-province knowledge sharing. In addition, the AKDN often collaborates with local NGOs on capacity-building, supporting the management, supervision, and implementation of projects (AKDN Source 2020).

During the implementation stage, the AKDN also developed a tool known as ‘Linkage-Building Events’ (LBEs), which enables networking with government actors or other relevant stakeholders, for example, the leaders of small local businesses. The AKDN also organizes thematic conferences, focusing on addressing relevant issues in a deeper and broader way. In terms of evaluation of AKDN projects, the map of dreams and the VODs activities is the main method of evaluation of their success, that is, it is a method fully based on local feedback, which is often enhanced by ‘commissions of truth’—a small group mandated to evaluate any sensitive or controversial situation. Civic education programs are also based on the map of dreams instead of being based on external values to that community. Finally, the support offered by external donors, for example, the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Portugal, the European Union, or private corporations like the Mitsui Group, enables more robust and effective programs (AKDN Source 2020).

In summary, the values related to the implementation of the AKDN projects are associated with the importance of the context, local accountability, networking for institutional learning, self-organization, and resilience of local communities. The AKDN adaptive actions in Mozambique derive from the contextualization process enabled by the VDOs and the ‘map of dreams,’ providing additional local legitimacy to its forms of assistance and enabling effective peace and development actions even in the most complex, challenging, and uncertain regions. The AKDN adaptive method, if provided with enough security conditions, will be able to contribute with a more holistic approach to peacebuilding in Cabo Delgado, addressing issues related to unemployment and development in the most fragile region of Mozambique.



## CONCLUSIONS

In the face of conflict recurrence and the rise of violent extremism in Mozambique, domestic and external peacebuilding actors were obliged to reevaluate the effectiveness of peacebuilding approaches implemented since the 1992 GPA. As a result, the current trend indicates a paradigm shift from liberal peacebuilding toward an alternative adaptive peacebuilding approach based on context-specificity, national and local ownership, resilience, and self-organization. The peacebuilding paradigm shift in Mozambique was initiated by effective conflict resolution initiatives based on an adaptive mediation approach developed between 2016 and 2019 by both parties and a small mediation team led by the Swiss ambassador, Mirko Manzoni. The implementation of the 2019 MAPR derives from the same adaptive mediation model and attempts to similarly focus on external process facilitation, national ownership, self-organization, and an adaptive mindset now applied to the peacebuilding stage, namely on the implementation of DDR programs. Major peacebuilding donors, such as the EU, also have been making efforts to follow this trend and have developed more context-specific approaches to design, implement, and evaluate their peacebuilding activities in Mozambique.

In addition, L-INGOs such as the CSE and the AKDN have been presented in this chapter as key examples of how to contribute to sustaining peace through adaptive approaches amid increasing complexity and uncertainty. Both organizations have been active in many conflicts or fragile situations in the world and were able to develop adaptive approaches from their institutional learning experience in conflict-affected contexts. Simultaneously, they are fully localized, relying mainly on the contributions of local staff, including those living and working close to the people in remote areas. National and local staff are key to foster dialogue with local communities, and their presence on the ground is fundamental to the effectiveness of their programs. Due to their long-term commitment to Mozambique, they were able to build knowledge through institutional learning and build trust with the local population, the Mozambican government, and international donors. In addition, both the CSE and AKDN are moved by a faith-based approach beyond national interests or temporary mandates, which generates further trust in their long-term activities on the ground. Both L-INGOs are focused by nature on a context-specific and people-centered approach, adaptive to a constantly changing environment, as exemplified by the implementation method of the CSE's DREAM

and BRAVO programs and the AKDN's focus on the VODs and the 'map of dreams.' The assumption is that peace and development need to emerge from within rather than from the actions from external actors or from external methods.

The lessons we can draw from the shortcomings of peacebuilding in the past, and from the effectiveness of the approaches and methods used by CSE and AKDN, are that process-facilitation and institutional-learning based on context-specific feedback enable more flexible, adaptive, and effective peacebuilding initiatives. In addition, these initiatives should holistically address cross-cutting issues, such as poverty, inequality, and education, and respond to the needs of all Mozambicans, particularly those that are most vulnerable. Long-term peacebuilding programs will need to continue to reflect adaptations to a complex and uncertain environment and should follow the examples provided by L-INGOs, or by international peacebuilders such as the UN-PESGM and international cooperation partners who are breaking new ground and finding adaptive peacebuilding pathways in Mozambique.

The main hypothesis presented in this chapter is that to sustain peace—that is, the absence of physical violence and laying the foundations for durable peace—in Mozambique, adaptive peacebuilding approaches hold the potential to be more effective than the prevalent determined-designed peacebuilding approaches implemented between 1992 and 2012. Domestic and international peacebuilders will be able to adapt to an uncertain and complex environment more effectively if they focus on facilitation rather than full-fledged interventions and if the design, implementation, and evaluation of peacebuilding programs can stimulate the self-organization and resilience needed in the Mozambican society to manage its tensions without relapsing into violent conflict.

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# Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH): Impartiality and an Adaptive Peacebuilding Approach in Structural Asymmetry

*Ryoji Tateyama*

## INTRODUCTION

Hebron is a city located in the southern part of the West Bank of the Jordan River that has been under Israeli occupation since 1967. Because of its religious and historical importance and uniqueness, Hebron has witnessed frequent waves of violence. One of the most tragic incidents was a massacre perpetrated by a radical Jewish settler at the Ibrahim Mosque in February 1994, just five months after the Oslo peace accord was signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO).<sup>1</sup> To sup-

<sup>1</sup>The official title of the Oslo accord is the *Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements*. The full text of the accord can be found in the following UN internet site. [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IL%20PS\\_930913\\_DeclarationPrinciplesnterimSelf-Government%28Oslo%20Accords%29.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IL%20PS_930913_DeclarationPrinciplesnterimSelf-Government%28Oslo%20Accords%29.pdf).

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port the newborn and unstable Oslo peace process, an international presence was called for, and a group, labeled the “Temporary International Presence in Hebron” (TIPH), was deployed in the city in May 1994. This has had three phases to date, and although the first two, TIPH I and II, were short-lived, TIPH III operated for twenty-two years, from January 1997 to January 2019.

The TIPH was a unique international presence in many ways. It was, and still is, the sole international mission deployed inside the occupied Palestinian territories with Israel’s consent.<sup>2</sup> It had no military or police functions, only civil ones. Furthermore, the TIPH operated within the structural asymmetry that has been embedded in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians despite the peace process (Gallo and Marzano 2009, 34). Indeed, Israel is a state actor with sovereignty and the occupying power, while the Palestinians are the occupied and non-state actor with only the limited autonomy granted by the Oslo accord.

There are very few academic research papers on the TIPH (Aggestam 2001, 2003; Baruch and Zur 2019), but it has been well covered by journalists and UN documents. While some of these sources evaluate the TIPH negatively, using adjectives such as “useless” or “toothless,” many Palestinians in Hebron agree that it contributed to promoting a sense of security. In fact, data from the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) show that the number of Palestinian injuries in the center of Hebron suddenly increased after the withdrawal of TIPH III in 2019, which strongly indicates that the TIPH was, to a certain extent, effective in deterring violence against Palestinians.

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze how it was possible for the TIPH to be effective even when it had a very limited mandate (authority) and suffered from structural asymmetry. This question is explored from two theoretical perspectives: impartiality and adaptive peacebuilding. In the context of peacekeeping operations, impartiality is not the same as neutrality. It means that, while the peacekeepers will not take sides in a conflict, they “will not stand idly by when they witness, or become aware of, atrocities or human rights abuses (de Coning 2007, 59).”

<sup>2</sup> A European mission operated at the crossing points on the borders of the Gaza Strip, but not inside Gaza.



Adaptive peacebuilding is a complexity-informed approach where peacebuilders, including communities and people affected by the conflict, actively engage in a structured process to sustain peace by employing an interactive process of experimentation, learning, and adaptation (de Coning 2019, 37). The TIPH was inherently impartial because it was assigned to promote a feeling of security only to Palestinians in the city, the weaker side in the conflict. And indeed, the TIPH operated under the principle of impartiality by trying to deter violence against the most vulnerable. The TIPH's mandate and authority were strictly stipulated by an agreement between Israel and the PLO, which was not amended or revised for twenty-two years. In this sense, the TIPH should be categorized as deterministic or top-down peacebuilding in terms of its mandate and authority. Practically, however, the TIPH took an adaptive peacebuilding approach by developing broad interactions with local Palestinian organizations and people. In other words, the TIPH was able to build impartiality into an operational principle through different types of activities in specific contexts focusing on the local people and succeeded in deterring violence against the most vulnerable.

As noted earlier, the TIPH's mandate was only to promote a feeling of security among Palestinians in Hebron, it had no military or police functions. Therefore, from the beginning, it was impossible to expect the TIPH to create or restore peace as a peacebuilder in the general sense. However, the TIPH made a meaningful contribution to sustaining the peace process by deterring violence against the most vulnerable in a very sensitive spot in the occupied Palestinian territories, in which the spread of violence could disrupt the whole peace process. This chapter first provides an overview of the situation in Hebron and the background to the establishment of the TIPH. In the following sections, the mandate and tasks of the TIPH and the challenges it faced in a volatile situation are focused on. Then, how the TIPH contributed to promoting a sense of security among Palestinians in Hebron with its limited mandate is explored. Finally, the effectiveness of the TIPH from two theoretical perspectives, impartiality and adaptive peacebuilding, is discussed. The study is based on literature research in related fields, plus field research in Israel, the West Bank, and Norway in November 2019. During and after field research, eighteen semi-structured face-to-face and remote interviews with former members of the TIPH, officials from local governments, UN agencies and the Israel Defense Forces, the staff of international and local NGOs, and academics were conducted.

## HEBRON AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE TIPH

*The Uniqueness of Hebron and the 1994 Massacre*

Hebron, or *Al Khalil* in Arabic, is located about 40 kilometers south of Jerusalem. With a population of over 200,000, it is the second largest Palestinian city in the West Bank (OCHA 2019b, 2). Hebron is considered to be one of the oldest towns continually inhabited by people. In the center of the old city of Hebron, there is the Cave of the Patriarchs or the Sanctuary of Ibrahim, where it is believed that the three patriarchs, Abraham or Ibrahim, Isaac or Ishaq, and Jacob or Yaqub, and their respective wives were buried. Over the cave stands a large structure, which has been the Ibrahim Mosque since the beginning of the Islamic era. Because of its religious significance, Hebron is very important to both Judaism and Islam.

Hebron was under Jordanian rule from 1949, but after the war in 1967, Israel occupied the entire West Bank, including Hebron. At that time, the Ibrahim Mosque was divided into two parts: a mosque and a synagogue. In 1968, Jews who led settlement activities in the West Bank started to settle in the center of Hebron. In addition, a new Jewish settlement Kiryat Arba was built next to the east of the city area of Hebron in the same year. Since then, the old city of Hebron and its neighboring areas have been a place of frequent violent clashes between Jewish settlers and Palestinians.

In September 1993, the Israeli government and the PLO signed the Oslo accord, and the two parties started their negotiations over how to implement autonomy under the Palestinian National Authority. Hebron became a focal point in the negotiations because several hundred Jewish settlers lived in the very center of the Palestinian residential and commercial areas. On February 25, 1994, a brutal terrorist attack took place at the Ibrahim Mosque. A Jewish settler from Kiryat Arba attacked during Palestinian prayers at the mosque, leaving 29 Palestinians dead, and he was beaten to death by survivors (Boudreau 2014, 75). The Hebron massacre sparked additional violence all over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The perpetrator, Baruch Goldstein, was a devoted follower of radical religious Zionism, which promotes the thought that redemption can take place only when the Jews control all the biblical Land of Israel, including the entire occupied territories. In the aftermath of the Oslo accord, Goldstein

came to believe that the peace process could disconfirm the dream of redemption unless he stopped the process by a most dramatic act (Sprinzak 1999, 239–43).

### *Redeployment of Israeli Forces and TIPH*

The Hebron massacre halted the peace negotiations, and the PLO demanded an international presence in addition to the evacuation of Jewish settlers as a prerequisite for resuming those negotiations. Initially, Israel rejected the PLO's demand for an international presence because of its strong distrust of international forces. In Israeli society, the concepts “the whole world is against us” and “it is a nation that shall dwell alone” have been emphasized in various situations (Itsik 2020, 301). Therefore, as Yaakov Amidror argues, to “defend itself by itself” has been Israel's national security ethos, and international forces were considered in Israel as “notoriously unreliable, especially when they have been challenged by one of the parties”(Amidror 2014, 52–58).

Meanwhile, international criticism of the massacre gained momentum, and the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 904 on March 18, 1994, which called on Israel, “as the occupying Power, to continue to take and implement measures, including, inter alia, confiscation of arms, with the aim of preventing illegal acts by Israeli settlers,” and called for “a temporary international or foreign presence” as “measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians” (UNSC 1994).

Finally, Israel agreed to the deployment of a temporary international presence in Hebron (TIPH), consisting of 160 personnel from Norway, Denmark, and Italy, in an agreement with the PLO signed on March 31, 1994. The TIPH I began its operations on May 8, 1994, with a three-month mandate. The TIPH I, however, was withdrawn just three months later because Israel and the PLO could not agree on the extension of that mandate (Weiner et al. 2010, 14).

On September 28, 1995, the Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (hereinafter “Oslo II”) was reached, by which the IDF withdrew from major Palestinian cities in the West Bank and the Palestinian National Authority assumed responsibility for internal security and public order as well as civil affairs for Palestinians in these cities. However, Hebron was put under special arrangements, under which

the city was, and still is, divided into two areas: Hebron 1 (H1), which comprises 80% of the city (BADIL 2016, 21) and is home to about 115,000 Palestinians, and Hebron 2 (H2), which comprises the remaining 20%, including the Old City and all the areas settled by Jews, and was at that time home to about 35,000 Palestinians and 500 Jewish settlers (B'Tselem 2019, 8). At the center of Area H-2, there are several settlement buildings, the Cave of the Patriarchs/the Ibrahim Mosque, and a road connecting the downtown Hebron settlements to the two large settlements on the outskirts of the city, Kiryat Arba and Givat Harsina (Fig. 6.1).

Because of the presence of the Cave of the Patriarchs/the Ibrahim Mosque and Jewish settlements, Article VII of Annex I to the Oslo II agreement stipulated that in Area H-2, Israel would retain “all powers and responsibilities for internal security and public order,” and only the civil powers and responsibilities would be transferred to the Palestinian Authority, “except for those relating to Israelis and their property which shall continue to be exercised by Israeli Military Government.” In addition, both sides agreed to establish a second TIPH.

While redeployment of the Israeli forces from Hebron was delayed, the two parties reached a new agreement on May 9, by which the TIPH II was established. TIHP II consisted only of Norwegian civilians and was to be replaced by a new TIPH when Israeli forces were finally redeployed from the city. After long and complicated talks, Israel and the PLO reached the Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron on January 17, 1997, which called for the establishment of a third TIPH. Four days later, on January 21, both parties signed the “Agreement on Temporary International Presence in the City of Hebron” (hereinafter as “the 1997 Agreement”),<sup>3</sup> which stipulated the TIPH’s mandate, tasks, and modalities in detail. The 1997 Agreement requested six countries, Norway, Italy, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, and Turkey, to provide 180 persons as TIPH personnel. Upon this request, the six countries produced the Memorandum of Understanding on Establishing a TIPH on January 30, 1997 (hereinafter as “the MOU”).<sup>4</sup> The MOU was an agreement between

<sup>3</sup>The full text of the agreement of January 1997 may be found at the following URL: [https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IL%20PS\\_970121\\_Agreement%20on%20Temporary%20International%20Presence%20in%20the%20City%20of%20Hebron%20%28II%29.pdf](https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/IL%20PS_970121_Agreement%20on%20Temporary%20International%20Presence%20in%20the%20City%20of%20Hebron%20%28II%29.pdf).

<sup>4</sup>The full text of the MOU may be found at the following URL: <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-196765/>.

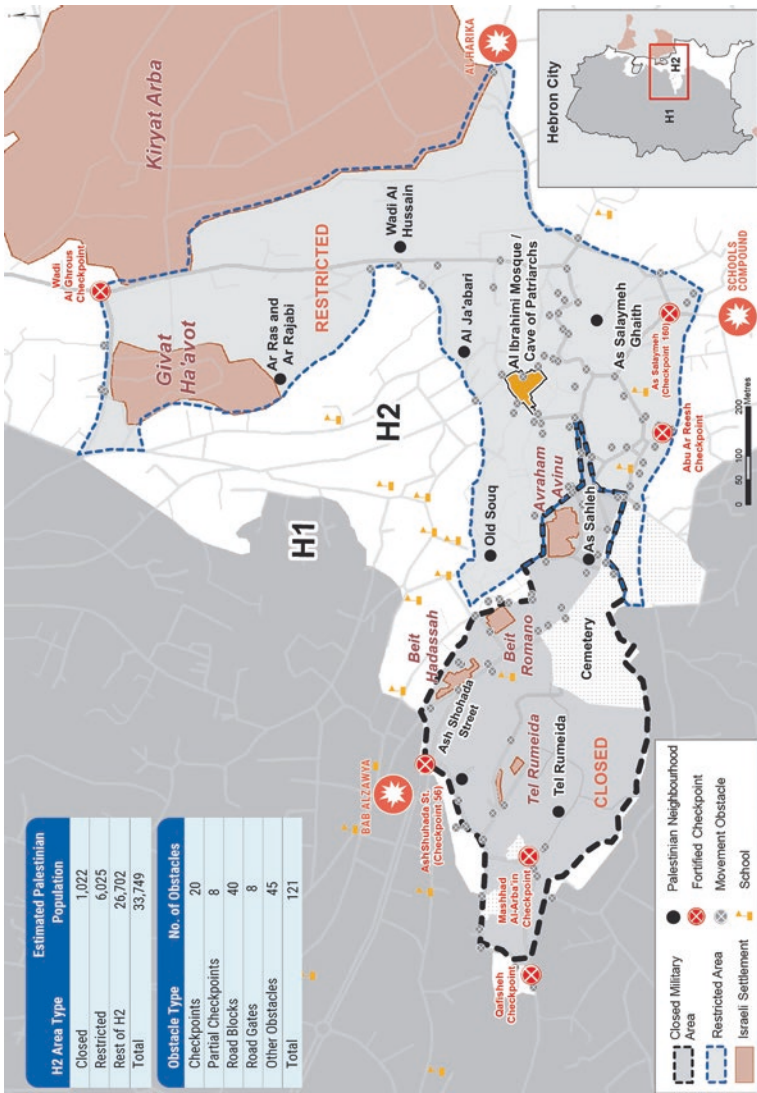


Fig. 6.1 Central part of the Hebron city. Source: *The Humanitarian Bulletin*, OCHA-occupied Palestinian territories, January–February 2020, courtesy of the UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (<https://www.ochaopt.org/content/dignity-denied-life-settlement-area-hebron-city>)

the member countries on TIPH's basic operational principles, modalities, and details. While the 1997 Agreement did not refer to international law and human rights, the MOU emphasized that the TIPH would operate based on internationally recognized human rights standards.

## THE TIPH MANDATE, TASKS, AND OPERATIONS

### *Limited Mandate and Tasks*

The TIPH III began its operations at the end of January 1997 with 180 international personnel dispatched by the six countries.<sup>5</sup> Its mandate and tasks were strictly limited by the 1997 Agreement. Paragraph 1 stipulated that it would “assist in monitoring and reporting the efforts to maintain normal life in the City of Hebron, thus creating a feeling of security among Palestinians in the City of Hebron.” In addition, Paragraph 3 stated that TIPH personnel “shall have no military or police functions, nor will they interfere in disputes, incidents or the activities of Israeli security forces or the Palestinian Police.” Paragraph 5 also stipulated its task as “to promote by their presence a feeling of security to the Palestinians of Hebron.” While it was responsible for the entire area of Hebron city, including Area H-2, the members of the TIPH were not allowed to enter privately held areas, military camps, and security installations without permission.

In short, the TIPH's mandate was to “promote” a feeling of security among Palestinian residents in Hebron with its presence alone. It was not mandated to become directly involved in the political or social interactions between Israelis and Palestinians or enhance peaceful relations between them, nor was its role to act as a buffer between Israeli and Palestinian security forces (Weiner et al. 2010, 16). To accomplish its mission within this limited mandate, the TIPH focused on patrolling, showing its presence, recording incidents by photo and video cameras, and writing reports. Indeed, the TIPH considered report writing as a “cornerstone” of its work and produced reports on various incidents which its members witnessed, such as damages to private property, prolonged ID checks, physical harassment, trespassing, and stone-throwing. In addition, the TIPH

<sup>5</sup>The number of personnel decreased over time, and in January 2019, when the TIPH terminated its operations, the number was 64 international and 13 local employees (Wijnen 2019). The number of member states was also reduced from six to five because Denmark withdrew.

recorded “violations of international humanitarian law, human rights standards and agreements applying to Hebron, whether committed by the Israeli or Palestinian side” (TIPH 2016b). Reports were shared with the Israeli and Palestinian authorities and the member countries of the TIPH. In the twenty years from the start of its operations until 2017, the number of incident reports was more than 40,000, with an average of 2000 per year (Blau 2018). Israel, the PLO, and the six-member countries agreed to keep these reports classified as “not for public use,” and they have not been published at the time of writing this chapter.

In addition to monitoring and reporting, the 1997 Agreement tasked the TIPH with enhancing “the well-being of the Palestinians” and to “encourage economic development and growth in Hebron.” For these purposes, the TIPH was authorized to “assist in the promotion and execution of projects initiated by the donor countries.” While only small-scale assistance projects were implemented due to a lack of funds, such as providing teaching materials for schools, laboratory equipment for hospitals, and food for people under curfew, as described in detail later, these projects were very helpful for the TIPH in the establishment of good relations with the Palestinians.

The 1997 Agreement stipulated that the mandate of the TIPH was to be renewed by the two sides every three months. In practice, it was renewed every six months (Aggestam 2003, 55). On January 29, 2019, however, the then Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that he would not renew the TIPH’s mandate, claiming that it “operates against us” (Landau and Berger 2019). As described in the following section, Netanyahu’s decision was criticized for not being well based. The foreign ministers of the five TIPH member-states also announced their regret over the “unilateral decision” to not renew its mandate (Norwegian Government 2019). At the beginning of February 2019, a draft statement was proposed to the United Nations Security Council to express its “regret” about Israel’s “unilateral decision,” but the USA reportedly blocked the proposal (AFP 2019).

The TIPH’s mandate thus terminated at the end of January 2019, after being in operation for twenty-two years.

### *The Challenges Faced by TIPH*

The progress of the peace process based on the Oslo accord is extremely slow or does not happen at all, and the expectations of the Palestinians



have not been fulfilled. Consequently, the situation in the West Bank and Gaza has continued to be tense. Particularly during the Second or al-Aqsa intifada, which erupted in September 2000 and lasted for about five years, a storm of violence raged in the entire occupied territories. While the IDF and Israeli settlers withdrew from Gaza in 2005, military confrontations frequently broke out between Israel and Gaza. In East Jerusalem and the West Bank, violent incidents increased for about one year, from the second half of 2015 to the first half of 2016.<sup>6</sup>

While the situation in Hebron, particularly in Area H-2, is almost always tense and volatile because of its historical and religious uniqueness, intermittent waves of violence in the occupied territories further destabilize the situation. Particularly, some young settlers have become radicalized and have caused numerous violent incidents. During the Second Intifada, even senior Israeli government and IDF officials indicated their dissatisfaction with the failure to enforce the law on settlers (B'Tselem 2003, 15). According to a survey of Palestinian families living in H-2 conducted by OCHA in summer 2018, nearly 70% of the respondents reported that at least one member of their household had experienced an incident of settler violence or harassment in the three years since October 2015, when the stabbing intifada broke out (OCHA 2019b, 7).

Under these circumstances, Israeli settlers were hostile to TIPH members because they saw it as a biased organization supporting Palestinians.<sup>7</sup> In response, the TIPH publicly expressed its concern about an increase in attacks against its patrols by young settlers (TIPH 2002). On the other hand, local Palestinians were generally friendly to the TIPH, but sometimes young Palestinians were also hostile to TIPH members. Indeed, in March 2002, three TIPH members were ambushed and shot by armed Palestinians when they drove a car in the outskirts of Hebron, and two of them died.

While the 1997 Agreement and the MOU guaranteed freedom of movement of TIPH personnel for their tasks, Palestinians' freedom of movement was and still is seriously hindered because of the many obstacles set by the Israeli security forces. According to an OCHA report, there were 95 obstacles, such as checkpoints, roadblocks, and road gates in Area

<sup>6</sup>The wave of violence in 2015 and 2016 is known as the "stabbing intifada" or "knife intifada" because many stabbing attacks were carried out by Palestinians who were not affiliated with any organizations.

<sup>7</sup>Author's e-mail correspondence with former member of the TIPH of November 5, 2019.



H-2, as of April 2009 (OCHA 2011). Areas around these obstacles, particularly checkpoints, were always tense, and violence or harassment occurred frequently. Therefore, the TIPH itself called on the Israeli authorities to remove obstacles by arguing that removing them would have no security implications (TIPH 2008).

## TIPH'S CONTRIBUTION TO PROMOTING A FEELING OF SECURITY AMONG PALESTINIANS

### *Evaluations of TIPH*

Two members of the TIPH were quoted as describing the TIPH as “a band-aid” with no real ability to affect the situation on the ground (Stephan 2004, 252). This negative description is not unusual regarding the evaluation of the TIPH. It is usually poorly, and sometimes negatively, evaluated. Pnina Sharvit Baruch and Lior Zur argue that the “TIPH is another illustration of the limitations of international bodies in fulfilling a meaningful role in the implementation of agreements” and “in influencing the reality on the ground or making any progress in conflict resolution” (Baruch and Zur 2019, 4).

Israeli officials tend to evaluate the TIPH negatively and sometimes question its neutrality. A high-ranking officer at the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), a unit of the Israeli Ministry of Defense in charge of coordinating civil and military activities in the occupied territories, criticized the TIPH for being not balanced between the two parties. According to him, the TIPH did not benefit Israel because it produced biased reports and caused frictions with Jewish settlers.<sup>8</sup> When Netanyahu announced his decision not to renew the TIPH's mandate at the end of January 2019, in its editorial, an Israeli daily, *the Jerusalem Post*, argued that the TIPH had become “part of the problem instead of the solution” and claimed that the works of the Israeli forces in Hebron would be “easier without an antagonistic foreign presence fanning the flames” after its withdrawal (Jerusalem Post 2019).

Before Netanyahu's announcement, the Israeli police department produced a report on the TIPH. According to a press release, the police report claimed that members of the TIPH confronted Israeli Defense Forces troops stationed at permanent checkpoints and interfered with

<sup>8</sup> Author's interview in Tel Aviv, November 18, 2019.

standard inspection procedures for Palestinians crossing these checkpoints. In addition, according to the police report, TIPH members were accused of deliberately creating friction to justify their salaries (Ben Kimon 2019). Based on the report, Israeli Minister of Public Security Gilad Erdan requested Netanyahu not to extend the TIPH's mandate (Ben Kimon 2019). However, Peace Now, an Israeli peace movement NGO, later criticized the police report for "having no basis in fact." According to Peace Now, the police report was a product of an extensive public campaign for demanding the removal of the TIPH by Hebron Jewish settlers and right-wing organizations (Peace Now 2019).

Some Palestinians living in Hebron also negatively evaluated the TIPH. A civil organization member said that what the TIPH could do was only to produce reports and not to prevent violence.<sup>9</sup> The dissatisfaction of Palestinian residents with the TIPH might be a result of a large gap between Palestinians' expectations and what the TIPH actually could do. An evaluation conducted in 2014 by Itad Ltd., which was contracted by the TIPH member-states, also suggested a gap between the expectation of Palestinians and the TIPH's performance. A summary of the evaluation stated that the mere presence of the TIPH was not perceived as sufficient by the Palestinians, though it might have some positive effect, and Palestinians in Hebron wanted to see more of an active role of the TIPH to influence events (Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2015).<sup>10</sup>

### *Impacts of TIPH's Presence on the Security Environment*

As discussed in section "The TIPH Mandate, Tasks, and Operations," the TIPH was granted only a limited mandate. Although local Palestinian actors frequently demanded an expansion of the TIPH's mandate,<sup>11</sup> the 1997 Agreement was never revised or amended during its lifetime. In this respect, Justus Reid Weiner and others argue that the TIPH should be evaluated based on its mandate, namely, to promote a feeling of security among Palestinians. According to them, the TIPH was a unique mission because its "civil confidence-building mandate" was significantly different from the type of mandate envisaged for peacekeeping forces intended to fulfill a certain security role. Based on their argument, they concluded that

<sup>9</sup> Author's interview in Hebron, November 14, 2019.

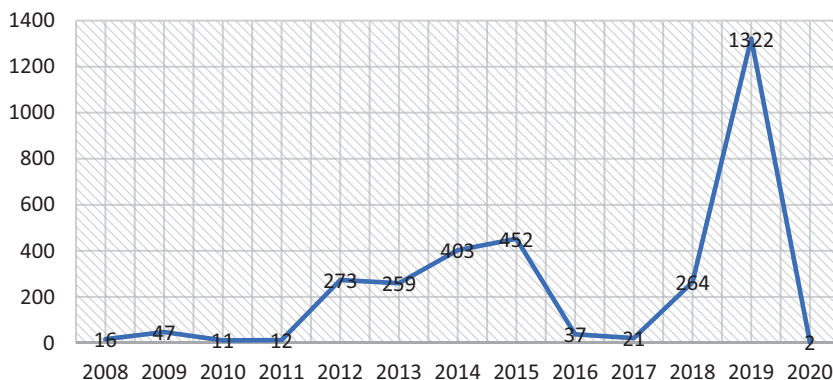
<sup>10</sup> A full report of the evaluation has not been published.

<sup>11</sup> Author's interview with Yousef Tabari, deputy mayor of Hebron, November 14, 2019.

the TIPH met with a significant measure of success in carrying out its mandate because a majority of the residents in Hebron were aware that reporting an incident to TIPH would improve the situation, although, at the same time, the majority felt less secure (Weiner et al. 2010, 16).

Statistical data also confirm that the TIPH played a significant role in deterring violence and harassment caused by Israeli soldiers or Jewish settlers against Palestinian residents. The figure shows numbers of Palestinians who were injured by Israeli soldiers or Jewish settlers in Area H-2 in Hebron from 2008 to 2020. The number of Palestinian injuries in 2019 was 1322, the highest since 2008 when data became available. In summer 2014, a large-scale military confrontation took place between Israel and Gaza for fifty days. In addition, in the latter half of 2015 and the first half of 2016, there was a wave of violence in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, which was called the “stabbing intifada” or “knife intifada.” During these events, the situation in the entire occupied territories was very tense. Compared to these years, the situation in the West Bank in 2019 was relatively calm. Nevertheless, the number of Palestinian injuries in 2019 in Area H-2 was exceptionally high. The OCHA data set recorded 3592 Palestinian injuries in total in the entire West Bank in 2019, of which 37% were concentrated in Area H-2 (Fig. 6.2).

Local Palestinian officials in Hebron affirmed that violent incidents and harassment against Palestinians occurred almost every day after the TIPH’s



**Fig. 6.2** Palestinian injuries caused by Israeli soldiers or Jewish settlers in H-2. (Source: Author, based on data from OCHA-occupied Palestinian territory, data on casualties (<https://www.ochaopt.org/data/casualties>))

withdrawal.<sup>12</sup> A Palestinian human rights activist based in Hebron also affirmed that the situation after its withdrawal deteriorated very much due to increasing harassment and violence against Palestinians by Israeli soldiers or Jewish settlers.<sup>13</sup> A headmistress of a school in the city also said that staff and students felt exposed and vulnerable without TIPH members accompanying the children (Oxfam International 2019).

### *How Could the TIPH Deter Violence*

The observers are supposed to protect 170,000 Palestinians from 500 settlers, without weapons and without the authority to separate the sides. They do not even have the authority to prevent violent incidents (Eldar 2008).

The first half of Eldar's comment above is not correct because the TIHP was not missioned to protect 170,000 Palestinians from 500 settlers. But the second half is correct. As stipulated by the 1997 Agreement, the TIPH's mandate was only to "assist in monitoring and reporting the efforts to maintain life in the city of Hebron, thus creating a feeling of security among Palestinians" in Hebron. It was not allowed to interfere in disputes or incidents. Furthermore, TIPH members were equipped only with uniforms carrying a special emblem, vehicles marked with the same emblem, and photo and video cameras. They were authorized to carry pistols for self-defense purposes, but they did not actually carry such pistols.<sup>14</sup>

Under these circumstances and with a very limited mandate and authority, the TIPH took two approaches to the fulfillment of its mission to create "a feeling of security among Palestinians." Firstly, they showed their physical presence as much as possible and produced incident reports of what they monitored. Secondly, they tried to build friendly relations and confidence with Palestinian residents.

Regarding their presence as a means for deterrence, Arthur G. Gish, who was an American human rights activist and lived in Hebron from 1995 to 2001, reported his experience in his memoirs. In February 1999,

<sup>12</sup> Author's interview with Yousef Tabari, deputy mayor of Hebron, and Rafiq F. Aljaabari, assistant governor, Governorate of Hebron, November 14, 2019.

<sup>13</sup> Author's e-mail correspondence, November 17, 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Author's e-mail correspondence with a former member of the TIPH of November 5, 2019.

Gish watched an Israeli soldier appearing to harass a young Palestinian passerby by trying to coerce the Palestinian into doing something. But when a TIPH member came to the spot and stood with his camera ready, the Israeli soldier ended his harassment. According to Gish, Israeli soldiers behaved with a certain discretion when TIPH members showed their presence, while Palestinians were more likely to be abused without their presence (Gish 2001, 141–42).

As described in the previous section, the Israeli security forces set many obstacles in Area H2, which seriously hinder the freedom of movement of Palestinians. Particularly, checkpoints often became a spot of search, detention, or harassment by Israeli soldiers, keeping Palestinian residents waiting for an excessively long time. Even schoolchildren can be stopped for a long time on their way to or from school. According to a survey conducted by OCHA in August 2018, 88% of the school children in Area H-2 had to cross a checkpoint to reach their school, and around 90% of households with school-age children reported at least one incident of delay, harassment, physical search, or detention on their way to school in the first half of 2018 (OCHA 2019a, 3). Therefore, TIPH members tried to show their presence as much as possible at certain checkpoints to deter unjustifiable incidents caused by Israeli soldiers and sometimes produced reports when Israeli soldiers stopped school children for a long time.<sup>15</sup> As a result, their presence was considered to be particularly helpful for school children on their way to and from school (Berger 2019).

To improve the human rights situation, the TIPH conducted a campaign to promote public awareness of their legal rights. It emphasized that all Palestinians in the occupied territories had the right to complain to the police and encouraged Palestinians to contact them when their human rights were violated, saying, “if you report to TIPH, it could make a difference for others in the future” (TIPH 2009). And indeed, Palestinians themselves requested the TIPH to show its presence when they felt it necessary (Kullab 2016; Excellence Center In Palestine 2018). Palestinians were able to feel a sense of security because of the presence of the TIPH, which independently observed and recorded violations of human rights.<sup>16</sup>

As described in section “[The TIPH Mandate, Tasks, and Operations](#),” the TIPH produced more than 40,000 incident reports between 1997 to

<sup>15</sup> Author’s interview with a former member of the TIPH in Oslo, November 22, 2019.

<sup>16</sup> Author’s e-mail correspondence with a former official of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in charge of the TIPH, October 24, 2019.

2017. Reports recorded various incidents, such as prolonged ID checks, harassment, and human rights violations. As the TIPH considered report writing a “cornerstone” of its work, reports were expected to serve as a witness and archive of the events taking place in Hebron. TIPH members showed their physical presence as much as possible, sometimes as requested by Palestinians, documenting incidents by camera and produced incident reports.

The second approach taken by the TIPH was to build friendly relationships and confidence with Palestinians. To this end, the TIPH initiated various small-scale projects, which were in line with tasks given by the 1997 Agreement to enhance the well-being of Palestinians. These small-scale initiatives were called “the community relations support projects” (TIPH 2010, 2016a), but were often “soft security projects” because they were also aimed at ensuring the safety of its members.<sup>17</sup>

Table 6.1 gives some examples. In addition to those in the table, a very wide range of other projects were implemented, including vocational training for young men and women, first aid training programs for volunteers, and arts and theater activities for children. The legal awareness campaigns were also implemented as part of the community relations support projects (TIPH 2010). It is noteworthy that the TIPH funded the construction of a new staircase and a tiled path to a school to enhance the safety and security of schoolchildren and teachers on their way to and from that school. According to the TIPH, the school was located only twenty meters from an Israeli settlement, and the main staircase of the school had been closed with barbed wire by the Israeli forces (TIPH 2006). The project was a good example of an attempt conducted by the TIPH to promote a feeling of security among Palestinians not only by showing the presence of TIPH members but also by implementing community relations support projects.

Many projects were implemented in cooperation with local actors, such as the Hebron municipality, schools, and Palestinian NGOs. Different types of projects were also conducted for children, such as distributing footballs, running a pottery school, and playing puppet shows. According to an account by a former TIPH member, projects for children were meaningful and important because they provided children with something else to do rather than stone-throwing. In addition, due to its strict

<sup>17</sup> Author’s interview with a former member of the TIPH in Oslo, November 22, 2019.

**Table 6.1** Selected Cases of TIPH's Community Relations Support Projects

<i>Case</i>	<i>Time</i>	<i>Outline</i>	<i>Source</i>
Food distribution	2002.6	4000 bags of bread to Palestinian families under curfew in cooperation with the Hebron municipality	TIPH 2020.6.29
Blanket distribution	2004.1	Blankets for the needy for the winter	TIPH 2004.1.29
Laboratory for nursing college	2004.4	A new nursing skills laboratory for the Hebron Nursing College, funded by US\$11,000 donation from TIPH	TIPH 2004.4.4
Radios for police	2005.4	20 radio communication sets for Palestinian police forces funded by US\$30,907 donation by TIPH	TIPH 2005.4.25
Construction of safer paths	2006.7	Funds for constructing a new staircase and a tiled path to enhance the safety of school children and teachers on their way to and from a school	TIPH 2006.7.6
Training for kindergarten teachers	2006.12	90 hours of training for kindergarten teachers to improve teaching skills, such as how to use music, to plan teaching, and to teach mathematics	TIPH 2006.12.8
Flour for Ramadan	2011.8	Distribution of flour for Ramadan bakeries in cooperation with a Palestinian NGO	TIPH 2011.8.7
Rehabilitating water systems	2012.8	Rehabilitating water systems in the old city of Hebron in cooperation with the Hebron municipality and an international NGO	TIPH 2012.8.15
Solar panels for schools	2015.12	Solar panel for a school for children with mental disabilities in cooperation with a Palestinian charity organization	TIPH 2015.12.17

Source: The TIPH official Internet site (<http://www.tiph.org/en/News/>) as adapted by the author. While the official site was closed, some of its pages may be found at the Internet site of the Wayback Machine, <http://web.archive.org/>

mandate, TIPH members could not stop stone-throwing by children, but they were able to talk to children on the spot and calm them down because children knew who the TIPH members were.<sup>18</sup> Thus, the community relations support projects were certainly useful and helpful for the TIPH to contribute to creating an environment with less violence.

<sup>18</sup> Author's interview with a former member of the TIPH through Skype, April 19, 2021.

## IMPARTIALITY AND ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING

*Impartiality and TIPH*

Yousef Tabari, deputy mayor of Hebron, said that local Palestinians in Hebron accepted and appreciated the TIPH because, as the weaker side in the conflict, Palestinians needed certain international protection, although the TIPH's mandate was limited.<sup>19</sup> As his statement suggests, it can be argued that the TIPH played a role as an impartial international presence since it provided a sort of protection to the victims or weaker side in Hebron, namely the Palestinians, based on internationally recognized human rights standards in structural asymmetry.

According to Daniel Levine, “neutrality” and “impartiality” tended to be used interchangeably until post-Cold War peacekeeping operations began to put neutral peacekeepers in tight spots, but the post-Cold War has seen increasing pressure for peacekeepers to take more robust action to resolve conflicts. Therefore, a notion of “impartiality” that favors principle over noninterference has gained favor (Levine 2010, 3). The UN Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, or the Brahimi Report, makes a clear argument on the necessity of impartiality for the UN peacekeeping missions. It argues that impartiality is “not the same as neutrality or equal treatment of all parties in all cases for all time, which can amount to a policy of appeasement,” because, in some cases, “local parties consist not of moral equals but of obvious aggressors and victims, and peacekeepers may not only be operationally justified in using force but morally compelled to do so” (Panel on United Nations Peace Operations 2000, para.50).

Along the same line, the UN document on principles and guidelines of peacekeeping operations of 2008 stresses that “the need for evenhandedness towards the parties should not become an excuse for inaction in the face of behavior that clearly works against the peace process.” Therefore, the document argues that a peacekeeping operation “should not condone actions by the parties that violate the undertakings of the peace process or the international norms and principles that a UN peacekeeping operation upholds” (UN DPKO 2008, 33).

Through their research on UN peacekeeping missions, Victoria Holt, Glyn Taylor, and Max Kelly conclude that successful UN peacekeeping

<sup>19</sup> Author's interview in Hebron, November 14, 2019.



missions are those that address the protection of civilians as an inherent part of their aims and emphasize the importance of the mission's ability to understand the threats and vulnerabilities facing the civilian population for delivering on its mandated tasks. Holt and others further argue that actions taken by peacekeeping missions to protect civilians based on their determination to use impartiality against those who challenge its efforts will help deter violence against the most vulnerable (Holt et al. 2009, 239–40).

The TIPH's mission was completely different from UN peacekeeping missions because the former was not mandated to physically protect civilians by force and had no authority to interfere in disputes or incidents. As discussed in the previous sections, what they could do to deter violence caused by Israeli soldiers or Jewish settlers was to show their presence as much as possible, to produce incident reports, and to build friendly relations and confidence with local Palestinians. It was obvious that the TIPH was not expected to promote a feeling of security to Israeli soldiers and Jewish settlers because they were well protected by their own or the Israeli military. In addition, the TIPH emphasized on many occasions that its operations were based on international humanitarian law and human rights standards and agreements.

As Karin Aggestam argues, the role given to the TIPH was to compensate for the existing asymmetry between the Israelis and Palestinians (Aggestam 2001, 64). Therefore, it can be argued that, while it adhered to the noninterference mandate, the TIPH tried to adopt the principle of impartiality by deterring violence or harassment against the Palestinians, not because it took sides in a conflict politically but because it acted to help the most vulnerable to human rights abuses in an asymmetric conflict.

### *TIPH as a Deterministic or Top-Down Peacebuilding Approach*

In the following subsections, the TIPH's operations are analyzed from the viewpoint of adaptive peacebuilding. In this regard, de Coning (2018) presents the concept of adaptive peacebuilding as a counter approach to the liberal peacebuilding approach, which is characterized by a deterministic nature and, because of this, has experienced many failures since the beginning of the 1990s. According to de Coning, the adaptive peacebuilding approach is characterized by complexity, resilience, and local ownership. Complexity systems cope with challenges posed by changes in their environment through co-evolving together with their environment

in a never-ending interactive process of adaptation. And in the adaptive peacebuilding approach, the core activity of a peacebuilding intervention is one of process facilitation, and by stimulating processes, a society would enable self-organization and strengthen the resilience of the social institutions that manage internal and external stressors and shocks. Therefore, it is crucial, in the adaptive peacebuilding approach, that the societies and communities that are intended to benefit from a peacebuilding intervention are fully involved in all aspects of the peacebuilding initiative. Thus, in the adaptive peacebuilding approach, the interlinkages with resilience and local ownership are essential, and these should be further developed in the process (de Coning 2018, 304–9, 2019).

As Toufic Haddad argues, intervention by the international community, particularly the major donors led by the USA, after the Oslo accord was signed in 1993, has been based on a theoretical and ideological understanding of development/peacebuilding/state-building tactics and strategies as a linear process (Haddad 2016, 2). In the 1990s, the international community provided a huge amount of assistance to build an economic foundation to establish an independent Palestinian state in the occupied territories and to expand peace dividends on the assumption that the interim autonomy period would end five years after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994 as stated by the Oslo accord.

In the late 1990s, however, the peace process stagnated, and the autonomy period, which was supposed to be five years, has been prolonged without any clear idea of the outcome of the process. The Second Intifada, or the al-Aqsa Intifada, between 2000 and 2005, made the situation even worse. While major donors have continued their assistance, the primary purpose of their assistance has changed from establishing an independent Palestinian state to preventing the disruption of the peace process itself or, more precisely, preventing the collapse of the Palestinian National Authority. Nevertheless, major donors and the international community have never exerted strong pressure on both parties, particularly on Israel, the occupying power, to advance the peace talks. Furthermore, no significant adaptive approach has been initiated, mainly because the international community led by the USA has stuck to the deterministic approach that any agreement should be reached through direct peace talks between the two parties.

Despite this stalemate in the peace process, the TIPH continued its operations. Although it was clear that the TIPH's mandate and authority were not sufficient, and therefore, local Palestinians called for widening

them, the 1997 Agreement was never amended or revised for the twenty-two years of its presence,

A major reason why the TIPH's mandate was very limited, and the 1997 Agreement was never amended or revised, can be attributed to Israel's unique national security ethos. As discussed in section "[Hebron and the establishment of the TIPH](#)," to "defend itself by itself" has been Israel's national security ethos, and international forces were considered as unreliable. The 1997 Agreement was produced against the background of Israel's unique security notion, particularly its strong distrust of international presence. While it reluctantly accepted the TIPH due to the strong pressure put by the Palestinian side and the international community after the 1994 massacre, Israel made, in practice, no compromise on maintaining the maximum operational freedom of Israeli forces to protect Israel's interests and Jewish settlers. Thus, there was no room for the TIPH to take any adaptive approach or action in terms of its mandate and tasks, which were strictly predetermined by the 1997 Agreement. In this sense, the TIPH should be categorized as a deterministic or top-down approach.

### *TIPH as an Adaptive Peacebuilding Approach and Impartiality*

The environment where the TIPH operated, however, constantly changed during the twenty-two years of its existence. The situation in Hebron is particularly vulnerable not only because of its unique character but also because of the harsh situation in the occupied territories outside Hebron that resulted in such events as the Second Intifada, the three large-scale military confrontations between Israel and Gaza, and the so-called stabbing intifada or knife intifada between 2015 to 2016. As the OCHA data indicate, however, the TIPH succeeded in deterring many of the violent incidents and harassment caused by Israeli soldiers or Jewish settlers. Thus, it contributed to the safety of Palestinians with the limited mandate to a certain extent.

To achieve its mission, as discussed in section "[TIPH's Contribution to Promoting 'a feeling of security' Among Palestinians](#)," the TIPH took two approaches. Firstly, it showed its physical presence as much as possible, cameras ready, and created an average of 2000 reports on various incidents per year. The TIPH showed its presence not only routinely but also in context, such as at locations as requested by Palestinian residents and checkpoints where tensions tended to increase. It also conducted a campaign to promote public awareness of their legal rights and

encouraged Palestinians to inform it of legal rights violations and other incidents. Secondly, they implemented various types of community relations support projects to build friendly relations and confidence with local Palestinian people. These projects contributed to enhancing the security of Palestinians, such as funding for constructing a staircase and tiled path to a school and providing children with something else to do than stone-throwing.

Through such efforts, the TIPH tried to adapt its operations to a specific context informed by a constantly changing environment. An adaptation was made possible by involving local Palestinian communities and societies. They were active in cooperating with the TIPH's activities and operations. After the TIPH's withdrawal, a local Palestinian activist established a patrolling team composed of eighteen Palestinian volunteers to prevent violence caused by Jewish settlers against Palestinians (Holmes 2019). This is a strong indication that, through the adaptation process in the period of the TIPH's presence, the Palestinian society had developed its ability to enable self-organization and strengthen the resilience to cope with a new situation caused by the withdrawal of the TIPH.

As discussed above, the TIPH tried to realize the principle of impartiality based on international humanitarian law and human rights standards. Due to its very strict and limited mandate, however, the TIPH itself could not provide physical protection. Therefore, the TIPH took various adaptive measures through involving local Palestinians in deterring violence against the most vulnerable, and it produced a certain level of results. In other words, through an adaptive approach, the TIPH was able to make the principle of impartiality operational in the context of Hebron.

## CONCLUSIONS

As shown in this chapter, it can be concluded that the TIPH succeeded in accomplishing its mission in the light of its mandate. That is not to say that the TIPH provided sufficient protection to Palestinians, but at least it deterred violence caused by Israeli soldiers or Jewish settlers against Palestinians to a certain extent. Thus, the TIPH was successful in promoting "a sense of security" among Palestinians as was mandated.

The main reason for its success was that the TIPH constantly adapted its operations to changing contexts by developing broad interactions with local Palestinian communities and societies. It was true that what its members could do was to show their presence as much as possible, document

incidents on camera, and produce reports. But Palestinian residents came to know that the presence of TIPH would reduce their exposure to violent risk and cooperated with it in various ways. And the TIPH's operations were made successful with the involvement of and cooperation with Palestinian residents. In order to realize the principle of impartiality, the TIPH took an adaptive peacebuilding approach by "employing an interactive process of experimentation, learning and adaptation with local Palestinians communities and societies" (de Coning 2019, 37), and thus it succeeded in making the principle of impartiality operational.

The TIPH's area of responsibility was only Areas H-1 and H-2, and the number of its members was also limited, starting with 180 at the beginning and finishing with only 64. Not surprisingly, it did not have a significant impact on the Oslo peace process. Rather, the peace process itself has almost collapsed. Many factors have caused a complete stagnation in the process, such as never-ending new settlement activities, mutual distrust, repeated waves of violence, and the factional rivalry between Fatah and Hamas. The most decisive factor though is the structural asymmetry in the relationship between Israel and Palestinians. While Israel is a state actor with sovereignty and the occupying power, Palestinians are the occupied and non-state actor with limited autonomy. As a result, Israel has been able to maintain strong power over almost all issues. The mandate and authority given to the TIPH precisely reflected this structural asymmetry. Israel maintained the maximum operational freedom of Israeli forces in Hebron and never accepted requests to revise the 1997 Agreement.

Therefore, as argued in the previous sections, the TIPH should be categorized as an international actor which implemented deterministic or top-down approach in terms of mandate and authority stipulated by the 1997 Agreement. Practically, however, to achieve its mission, the TIPH took an adaptive approach and tried to reach out to as many Palestinian residents as possible. In particular, the TIPH invented various types of small-scale initiatives called "community relations support projects," and implemented these in cooperation with local actors. By doing so, the TIPH succeeded in involving local actors and transferring impartiality into an operational principle. Thus, in the case of the TIPH, the two approaches, context-specific and adaptive, to peacebuilding are inseparably interlinked and significantly contributed to the TIPH's achievement of its mission.

The TIPH is the only international peacebuilding intervention that has operated inside the occupied territories with Israel's (however reluctant) consent, and it proved to be effective to a certain extent under the

conditions of structural asymmetry. Many meaningful lessons can be drawn from the TIPH's experience for future civil peacebuilding interventions, particularly on impartiality and adaptive peacebuilding. In March 2021, the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) announced the initiation of an investigation regarding the situation in Palestine (ICC 2021). The investigation is expected to deal with alleged war crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Hebron, since June 2014. The numerous reports produced by the TIPH, which have been closed to the public, could be strong evidence for the investigations and for the court once indictments are secured.

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# The Challenges and Effects of Externally Driven and Locally Driven Peacebuilding Approaches in a Complex Context: A Case Study of the Syrian Conflict

*Ako Muto*

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the significance and challenges of externally driven and adaptive peacebuilding approaches using a case study of the Syrian conflict. As discussed in Chap. 2, an adaptive approach promotes and facilitates locally derived peacebuilding initiatives inside a conflict-affected country and supports and encourages self-organized processes that sustain peace through the broad participation of society, communities, and people. However, in the case of the Syrian conflict, a self-sustaining locally driven national peace process is absent. Instead, peacemaking in Syria has been characterized by multiple externally driven initiatives linked to the many opposing parties and their international backers. One can say that in

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terms of the traditional phases of peace processes, that is, prevention of the conflict, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding (UNSG 1992; UNGA and UNSC 1995, 2000), the Syrian conflict remains stuck in the *peacemaking* phase.

Therefore, in order to consider peacebuilding approaches in the Syrian conflict, it is important to understand peacebuilding as a concept that bridges the entire conflict spectrum—as understood in the United Nations (UN) sustaining peace resolutions adopted in 2016 (UNSC 2016)—and not just the post-conflict phase. It should be noted that in the Syrian conflict, no national-level peace agreement has been achieved yet, and this chapter thus discusses the externally driven and locally driven peacebuilding initiatives in the context of an ongoing and unresolved conflict situation. Thus, with the understanding that adaptive peacebuilding (de Coning 2018) explores an alternative to the liberal peace approach, one that embraces a context-specific, participatory, and emergent approach to peace, as opposed to a top-down and predetermined approach, this chapter identifies the outcomes achieved to date and the challenges lying ahead, even in the context of a Syrian conflict that is not moving toward an end-state. Based on the above discussion, this chapter aims to answer two questions: (1) What externally driven and adaptive approaches to peacebuilding can be identified in the Syrian conflict? (2) How have these two approaches worked and what have they achieved?

In order to answer these questions, the chapter is organized as follows. Section “[The Complexity of the Conflict](#)” provides an overview of the complexity of the Syrian conflict during 2011–2019 at the international, regional, and national levels. Immediately after the disturbance in the provincial capital that sparked the conflict, the permanent members (P5) of the UN Security Council (UNSC) took an interest in Syria, and so did the countries in the Middle East region. Furthermore, they had divergent interests and supported different parties to the conflict. This affected the UN Special Envoy’s mediation process and the parties’ behavior in relation to the conflict and contributed to its complexity and prolongation. Domestically, the government, many opposition groups, and local communities and authorities negotiated humanitarian ceasefires in many areas, and some were achieved. These ceasefires, especially after the government gained a certain upper hand in the conflict, have also been criticized by some as a *de facto* surrender (Adleh and Favier 2017; Hinnebusch and Imady 2017; Sosnowski 2020). However, it has yet to bring the country under control.

Section “[Externally Driven Peacebuilding Approaches](#)” analyzes the various attempts by external actors to resolve the conflict. All four UN Special Envoys employed adaptive approaches in that they experimented with different ways to make peace and learned from and adapted their approaches along the way. While some approaches achieved results, overall, they were affected by international and domestic constraints and thus had limited success in terms of achieving a sustainable ceasefire. On the other hand, the responses of the P5 and other countries in the region were contested; they essentially supported the desired direction of conflict termination for just one party to the conflict. In terms of reducing violence, the support to the government was more effective than that of the opposition, but both influenced the UN-oriented adaptive mediation initiatives.

Section “[Diverse Locally Driven Approaches Toward Peacebuilding](#)” discusses two programs that represent Syrian-led initiatives that could be examples of adaptive peacebuilding. The first is the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR), officially launched under the leadership of the third UN Special Envoy in 2016, when the peace process between the parties began. The second is the National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) program, established by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN ESCWA) in 2012, although it was not intended to be a peacemaking initiative. In contrast to the externally driven peacemaking approaches discussed in section “[Externally Driven Peacebuilding Approaches](#),” this section examines the significance of, and challenges associated with, locally driven peacebuilding initiatives.

The final section summarizes the implications and challenges of externally driven and adaptive approaches to peacebuilding. It points out that in complex and protracted conflict cases such as the Syrian conflict, adaptive approaches contribute to preserving peoples’ networks. This chapter is based on empirical information obtained from semi-structured interviews with UN ESCWA staff, current and former NAFS experts, an international NGO operating the CSSR, and donor officials, as well as a literature review.

## THE COMPLEXITY OF THE CONFLICT

### *International and Regional Context*

The Syrian conflict involves a large number of external actors at the international and regional levels. In fact, the Syrian conflict has been the focus

of the P5's attention (UNSC 2011b) since shortly after the first disturbance in the capital of the southern province in 2011, which marked the beginning of a protracted conflict. At this time already, the P5 of the UNSC was at odds over which parties to the conflict to support: the US, the UK, and France supported the opposition, and Russia and China supported the government (UNSC 2011b). The three Western countries supported the opposition group which came to demand the president's resignation and the establishment of a transitional government (UNGA 2012a). On the other hand, the Russian approach respected Syrian sovereignty and accused the West of seeking regime change (Allison 2013; Averre and Davies 2015). As a result of these opposing approaches to Syria among the P5, the application of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which leads to military intervention, has never been on the UNSC's agenda, nor has a resolution been adopted to hold the government accountable for protecting its people (UNSC 2011c; UNGA 2012a). Russia, with support from China, continued to refuse to adopt any resolution that undermined Syrian sovereignty. In this way, Russia successfully blocked the West from using the kind of liberal peace or determined-designed peacebuilding approach it used in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya.

France, the UK, and the US joined the "core group,"<sup>1</sup> which supported the opposition in stepping up their offensive in response to the failure to adopt UNSC resolutions. The core group led international ministerial meetings to politically support the dissident National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces (SOC) (MOFA 2012). However, the core group members kept diplomatic relations with the government, and the support of the members to the SOC was not unanimous. For example, Saudi Arabia and Qatar each supported different factions of the SOC (Oweis 2014; Carter Center 2013, 9), which may have hindered the SOC's ability to develop strong, unified leadership. Furthermore, Turkey provided SOC with its headquarters. On the government side, in addition to Russia, Iran has also consistently supported the government since the outbreak of the conflict (Abdo 2011). The SOC had a weak domestic base in Syria and could not unite the opposition. In sum, there have been discrepancies among countries involved in the Syrian conflict and among countries supporting the opposition at the international and regional

<sup>1</sup>The countries supported the opposition strongly: Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the UK, and the US (Foreign and Commonwealth Office and The Rt Hon William Hague 2013).

levels. Thus, international relations surrounding Syria were tense, and there were multiple externally driven peacebuilding approaches that hindered building a consensus among the countries involved.

After more than four years of stalemate, the conflict dynamics changed. In September 2015, Russia launched airstrikes in the Syrian territory at the request of the government to clear out the so-called Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Meanwhile, the UN-led peace process among the parties to the conflict began in 2016. This process did not emerge from local actors but can be understood instead as an externally driven initiative to try to negotiate a peace agreement in Syria. However, this negotiation for a ceasefire did not succeed. The Russian airstrikes affected the opposition groups (Roth et al. 2015; Council of the European Union 2015) and resulted in the government's dominance in the conflict. The government recaptured many areas it had lost by mid-2019 (Lundgren 2019). But the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) and the Turkish-backed Free Syrian Army (TFSA) have controlled northern Syria effectively. Thus, the context of the conflict has changed since 2015, from an opposition offensive to a certain government dominance. The presence of Russia and Iran supporting the government, and Turkey became more prominent.

Throughout this period, the UN has been mediating for nearly a decade, successively appointing four special envoys from 2012 after the Syrian government rejected the initial peacebuilding model of establishing a transitional government which suggested the president's stepping down (UNGA 2012a). As mentioned, so far, no effective peace agreement has been reached between the parties. Therefore, an effective peacebuilding approach will have to respond to the changing domestic context of conflict. With the government gaining a certain upper hand in the conflict, the initially proposed determined-designed peacebuilding approach that focused on regime change was even less likely to succeed.

### *Domestic Context*

Inside the country, there is a much more complex context to take into account. The 2011 unrest in one provincial city spread across the country, while the UNSC failed to reach a consensus to take action. In June 2012, the president himself acknowledged that Syria was in a state of civil war, and the UN Human Rights Council successively concurred (BBC News 2012; UNGA 2012b). The government became weaker in the northern

and northwestern areas of the country near the border with Turkey, and the southern part near the border with Jordan, due to armed group offensives. The creation of local councils (LCs) was an attempt to fill the administrative vacuum resulting from the conflict in these areas, an arrangement that peaked at about 700 councils (The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue 2014). The emergence of these alternative administrative structures after the government's withdrawal from an area is evidence of the fact that the government had functioned to some extent before the conflict and provided public services to the Syrian people, and these services needed to be maintained. For example, Syria had a 99% school enrollment rate in 2008, a vaccination rate of over 87.8% in 2006, a 92% rural electrification rate in 1992, and a 92% access to safe water in 2007 (Hinnebusch 2002; UNDP and Syrian Arab Republic 2014). The need to maintain pre-conflict public services is, therefore, a natural reason why people tried to organize alternative administrative structures.

On the other hand, governance structures in the opposition-held areas were not stable. More than 4000 armed opposition groups were not united as a force against the government, by themselves or under the SOC (Sayigh 2013; Carter Center 2013, 24). Among them were radical militant groups such as ISIL. In some areas, fragmented armed opposition groups fought each other over the expansion of areas under their control, resulting in frequent changes of rulers and the government's attempts to maintain its influence even after its withdrawal (Khalaf 2015; Favier 2016; Abboud 2018). Under these circumstances, the LCs had to maintain relations with the government, the opposition, and even various armed groups.

While the fighting intensified, both the government and the opposition groups participated in ceasefire negotiations at the local level. Negotiations were between government forces, armed opposition groups, and influential local people and civil society groups. From 2011, when the conflict broke out in some areas, such negotiations were sometimes mediated by the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS) during its around four months of deployment in 2012 (Turkmani et al. 2014). By 2014, fifty ceasefire agreements had been reached (Stone 2016). In some cases, after the ceasefire, the opposition could hold some control because it had a clear decision-making chain, or the opposition had facilities such as highways or water purification plants that the government wanted to secure (Turkmani et al. 2014). Such pragmatic ceasefire negotiations, often initiated and led by local actors, serve as examples of adaptive,

context-specific, and locally driven peace initiatives. In some cases, however, the terms of the ceasefire were broken.

Turkmani et al. (2014) also argue that in such local-level ceasefires, neutral mediators, Syrian or otherwise, could play an important role. On the other hand, since Russia began the airstrikes in late 2015, the government has gained a certain upper hand in the conflict. Some previous studies have argued that the ceasefire negotiations were effectively a process of surrender by the opposition (Adleh and Favier 2017; Hinnebusch and Imady 2017; Sosnowski 2020). In such a complex context, it was unlikely for both parties to reach a mutual agreement, and in 2016, the UN initiated a peace process.

Since 2016, the government has regained many lost territories, but this process involved not only government forces. The pro-government militia, while it did not always follow the terms of a ceasefire and was sometimes against government forces, played an important role (Turkmani et al. 2014; Sosnowski 2020). In 2017, the SDF defeated ISIL and took control of Raqqa—a provincial capital in the north of the country. Lundgren (2019) also points out that the establishment of four de-escalation zones in Syria agreed at the so-called Astana talks hosted by Russia, Iran, and Turkey had contributed to the government's territorial recovery to some extent by mid-2019. As a result, the government could redirect its military power from the de-escalation zones to other areas. The LCs decreased to 400 in 2016 (Hinnebusch 2018), and the fatalities in the conflict also decreased from around 77,000 in 2014 to 11,000 in 2019 (UCDP n.d.).

The third UN Special Envoy, de Mistura, recognized that regime change would not occur (Miles 2017). Thus, the Syrian conflict continues to be a situation where the government is gradually strengthening its dominance through ceasefires and using its military force rather than focusing on peacemaking or peacebuilding. However, it has yet to bring the country under control, and the SDF and the opposition, TFSA have effectively taken control of northern Syria. Therefore, the Syrian conflict has followed a complex path that hinders the self-organization of the conflict parties. A decade of the Syrian conflict has culminated in the deterioration of the economic and social infrastructure, causing more massive damage than in other conflicts, with more than a third of the population forcibly displaced as refugees or internally displaced persons, and more than half of the population in need of some form of humanitarian assistance (OCHA 2014; OCHA and Government of Syria 2013a, 2013b).



### *Context of the Syrian Conflict*

At the international level, the Syrian conflict involves at least three types of international actors: the United Nations, as a neutral mediator; France, the UK, and the US, which support the opposition groups; and Russia, which supports the government. In addition, regional actors such as the Arab League are also involved. Saudi Arabia and Qatar support the opposition and have consistently opposed Iran, which supports the government. Turkey supported the opposition and then moved closer to Russia as SDF started contributing to the combat against ISIL and expanding its territory. Turkey has intervened together with TFSA in northern Syria repeatedly to combat SDF.

The complexity of the Syrian conflict lies in the fact that both at the international and regional levels, many countries supported either the government or the opposition, and, in some cases, different opposition factions. The fact that countries that supported the opposition were not unanimous may have influenced the division of the opposition. This situation basically worked to the advantage of the government and the countries supporting it, leading to the government's recovery and a certain dominance after 2016. However, the government also lacks the strength to pacify the entire country with its own forces alone and is trying to regain its fragile control with the help of militias, Russia, and Iran. The power tensions among the countries surrounding Syria—at both international and regional levels—have reduced the chances of finding a Syrian domestic solution and have prolonged the conflict. They have also discouraged the parties to the conflict from engaging in non-military means of conflict resolution, such as mediation, hindering the achievement of a lasting peace agreement, which is the goal of traditional peacemaking and would pave the way for more concrete peacebuilding programs.

## EXTERNALLY DRIVEN PEACEBUILDING APPROACHES

### *Arduous Mediation*

Mediation efforts in the Syrian conflict<sup>2</sup> by international peacebuilding actors, such as the United Nations, have thus been difficult due to the

<sup>2</sup>For a detailed account of mediation efforts in Syria, see Muto (2022), "Exploring Mediation Efforts amidst Systemic and Domestic Constraints: The Case of the Syrian Conflict," In *Adaptive Mediation and Conflict Resolution. Peacemaking in Colombia, Mozambique, the Philippines, and Syria* The citation "de Coning et al. (2021)" has been changed to "de Coning et al. (2022)" to match the author name/date in the reference list. <(de Coning et al. 2022).

complex and protracted context of the conflict. In mid-2011, when the UNSC failed to take a unified response to the Syrian conflict, the League of the Arab States (LAS) initiated a mediation process between the parties to the conflict at its behest. The LAS has traditionally adhered to the principle of non-intervention in state sovereignty, but due to the Arab Spring and the intervention in Libya under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (UNSC 2011c), the LAS changed its stance and came out in support of the opposition groups (Küçükkeleş 2012). First, the LAS urged the government to engage in dialogue with the opposition, and when this did not happen, it suspended Syria's membership<sup>3</sup> and imposed economic sanctions (Batty and Shenker 2011). The LAS then proposed that the Syrian government establish a transitional government and transfer presidential power (UNSC 2012). The United Nations General Assembly backed this strategy for peacebuilding by adopting Resolution (UNGA 2012a), but the government rejected it (Mroue 2012). The government's rejection of this peacebuilding approach reflects the confrontation within the P5 and the view that the president had garnered a certain level of domestic support at that time (Steele 2012; McDonald 2012). Therefore, a peacebuilding approach to ending the conflict based on the formation of a transitional government and the president's ouster seems to have been externally driven and deterministic and consequently unsuccessful.

Since 2012, the UN has continued to appoint Special Envoys for Syria. Under the mediation of the first Special Envoy, Kofi Annan, the participants in the international conference held in June 2012 agreed to the *Geneva Communiqué*, which has become the primary document for the peace process (UNSC 2015). This document states that a transitional government will be created but that the existing governance structure will remain in the confidence of the Syrian people and makes no mention of the transfer of presidential powers (UNGA and UNSC 2012). While it can be argued that the international conference itself was externally driven, as the parties to the conflict did not participate, the document itself can be considered a compromise between a determined-designed and an adaptive approach. Second, although nationwide ceasefires were rarely established

<sup>3</sup>The Charter of the LAS stipulates in Article 18 that any resolution to suspend a country's membership must be adopted unanimously except for the country in question. However, the resolution to suspend Syria's membership was adopted despite Lebanon and Yemen being against and Iraq abstaining (Küçükkeleş 2012).

during the period analyzed in this chapter, small-scale ceasefires of limited area and duration, as mentioned in section “[The Complexity of the Conflict](#),” were sometimes established to provide humanitarian assistance, and successive special envoys since the second Special Envoy, Lakhdar Brahimi, have supported such bottom-up ceasefires. Small-scale ceasefires have contributed in some way to saving lives, even when a nationwide ceasefire is hard to achieve. In addition, many valuable mediation activities have been developed by international NGOs (de Coning et al. 2022). Thus, although limited by externally driven approaches and the deterministic direction of ending the conflict, there have been adaptive mediation approaches in Syria implemented amidst systemic and domestic constraints resulting from its context.

### *International Responses*

In parallel with the mediation efforts of the first two special envoys, the US and some other members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) provided stabilization assistance to the LCs. This assistance was aimed at forming new governance structures in preparation for establishing a transitional government based on liberal values and state-building in the areas the government had withdrawn from (The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue 2014; Brown 2018). Humanitarian assistance accompanied state-building assistance and contributed, to a certain extent, to saving lives in the opposition-held areas that were considered more difficult to access than the areas on the government side. However, assistance to establish a new governance structure in the absence of a ceasefire agreement is different from peacebuilding assistance based on the mutual consent of the parties to a conflict.

Khalaf et al. (2014) argue that stabilization assistance was accepted primarily because of the livelihood needs of the population. In other words, many LCs were interested in maintaining community-level governance functions to sustain the livelihoods of their residents rather than in the proposed democratic governance structure. As dissident forces remained unintegrated, building new governance structures in preparation for the formation of a transitional government became difficult to achieve. Reflecting this context of the conflict, assistance to prepare for a transitional government could not generate or promote the necessary changes from within and beyond the community and remained an externally driven peacebuilding approach.

On the other hand, Russia's approach to conflict resolution was consistently supportive of the government. Not satisfied with the functioning of the UNSC, Russia initiated the Astana talks with Turkey and Iran after 2017. This involved a more inclusive range of armed opposition groups and resulted in face-to-face negotiations between the parties, which had not been achieved through UN mediation (Lundgren 2016; Cengiz 2020). On the other hand, as discussed in section "The Complexity of the Conflict," the Astana talks supported the adoption of local ceasefires promoted by the government and the territorial recapture that accompanied it (Lundgren 2019). Russia's response backed state sovereignty and adapted to the new context of the conflict. Lundgren (2019) argues that the establishment of the Constitutional Committee, proposed during the Russian-led dialogue in Sochi (UNSC 2018), also aimed to exclude issues such as a transitional government and the transfer of presidential powers from the peace process.

The mediation of the third and fourth Special Envoys, Staffan de Mistura and Gier O. Pedersen, resulted in the establishment of a Constitutional Committee in 2019, a pragmatic adaptation to Russia's response and the changed conflict context after 2015. Moreover, the contribution of these two special envoys to adaptive peacebuilding was their civic engagement in the peace process, further discussed in the next section. The Constitutional Committee owes much to their involvement, including the fact that one-third of its members are citizens' representatives, in addition to the government and the opposition representatives (Pedersen 2019). In sum, Russia's pragmatic support to the government prevented the turn of the government and directly impacted the context of the Syrian conflict. The two special envoys conducted their mediation activities adaptive to this context.

### *Divergent Peacebuilding Approaches*

The intervention of the international actors was thus in discord. The UK, France, and the US favored the ouster of the president and the formation of a transitional government early in the conflict, but failed to achieve consensus among the parties to the conflict and the countries involved. The assistance to promote a new governance structure with liberal values was not always welcomed. This determined-designed peacebuilding approach had to compromise with the changed context of the conflict after 2015. On the other hand, despite being externally driven—in that

the opposition and its supporters disagreed—the pragmatic responses by Russia and other Syrian government supporters have worked to the government’s relative advantage and contributed to reducing violence and casualties. For example, one interviewee pointed out the role of the government, for example, in public works when rebuilding the country (NAFS Member 1 2020). As a result, the governance of the sovereign state that functioned before the conflict has been gradually reconstructed with a fragile basis (Hinnebusch 2018). Simultaneously, the Syrian holistic system looks to reorganize itself, being able to engage in self-organization even amidst a complex context.

However, the responses and peacebuilding approaches argued in this section were not based on a peace agreement or mutual consent between the conflict parties. The UN mediation remained within the framework of determined-designed approaches. Although the special envoys attempted to implement an adaptive approach, the confrontation between the core group, and Russia and Iran, influenced the character of their mediation initiatives.

## DIVERSE LOCALLY DRIVEN APPROACHES TOWARD PEACEBUILDING

### *The Significance of Citizen Engagement Programs*

This chapter views peacebuilding as a broad concept that includes the period of the conflict, rather than limiting it to the post-conflict period. This broad concept of peacebuilding can embrace citizens’ participation in the programs toward peacebuilding initiated in 2012 and later. Two cases are worth mentioning here as examples of adaptive peacebuilding in Syria: the CSSR and the NAFS Programme. The predecessor of CSSR was the Syrian Peacebuilding Advisory Unit, which was set up in 2014 to exchange views with Special Envoy Brahimi responding to the lobbying efforts of Syrian civil society organizations (Turkmani and Theros 2019). The unit evolved into the CSSR under the leadership of Special Envoy de Mistura in 2016, at the same time as the peace process between the parties began. The CSSR was initially composed of more than ten people as a resource for the special envoy. Gradually, the CSSR gathered and increased its members. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed down its activities, the number of members increased to hundreds (NOREF 2021). It

has opened its doors to a wide range of ordinary citizens and consists of people from various professional fields, including constitutional and legal experts, university professors, economists, and former government advisors (Turkmani and Theros 2019). The Norwegian Centre for Conflict Resolution (NOREF) and the Swiss Peace Foundation (Swisspeace) both support the CSSR and are based in countries that are not core group members. The CSSR is a public consultation system that can be directly linked to the peace process (NOREF 2021) and thus is considered a groundbreaking example of adaptive peacebuilding, driven by the high motivation of the Syrian people who were divided by the conflict.

The importance of the CSSR lies in its diverse functions. It contributed to ensuring humanitarian access based on ground information in the midst of a dire conflict (Turkmani and Theros 2019). The members are able to contribute because they are locally based and have their networks in the country. Secondly, it is groundbreaking in that the UN has established a mechanism for the input of civil society knowledge into the peace process (NOREF 2021). The CSSR is able to exchange ideas in line with the matters discussed in the peace process and provide relevant inputs to the context on the ground. Therefore, the peace process can reflect the views and needs of citizens. It is also evidence of the growing recognition of the importance of the role of civil society in the peace process, urged by the endogenous and sincere quest of the Syrian people for participation. Third, the CSSR provides a constant forum for exchanging ideas among Syrians divided by the conflict, regardless of their political views or where they are based. The exchange of ideas is thus not limited to Geneva but extended to a wide range of locations like Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon. Moreover, the platform focuses on listening to each other's different opinions rather than on aiming to build any kind of solution (NOREF 2021). This adaptive approach allows Syrians from different situations and with different views to participate in the CSSR. In this way, there is an expectation that the members will become closer to each other. In fact, the CSSR has contributed to building a network of Syrians (Turkmani and Theros 2019; NOREF 2021), and, as such, the CSSR has come to function beyond its original purpose of being a resource for the special envoys in the peace process. In a sense, an adaptive peacebuilding approach to the conflict context has come to contribute to the self-organization of a holistic system through networks and trust.

In terms of building networks among Syrians, the NAFS also deserves special mention. The NAFS was established by UN ESCWA to prepare for

post-conflict state-building and contribute to sustainable peace. In 2012, the UN ESCWA established the NAFS Programme as a response to the dire conflict and created a platform for technical dialogue to bring together Syrian technical experts, stakeholders, actors in civil society, the private sector, and academic institutions. As such, the NAFS inclusive platform for technical dialogue aims to bring all these experts together, from different backgrounds and all walks of life, to put their differences aside and come to a common understanding for a better future for their country.

The program began as a platform for dialogue for Syrians to talk about the future of their country and monitor the damage caused by the fighting (NAFS Member 1 2020). One interviewee mentioned that the NAFS emerged because “we needed an agenda that was coming out from the Syrian themselves, not from anyone else (NAFS Member 2 2020).” In this way, the internal aspirations of the Syrian people led to the launch of the NAFS. It does not aim to engage in political dialogue but to provide a space for Syrian technical experts (NAFS Member 2 2020; German Government source 1 2019; German Government source 2 2020; UN ESCWA Staff 2020). The fact that the Syrians themselves lead the program to assess the situation in their country with clear objectives can itself be a practice of practical tool for adaptive peacebuilding.

NAFS is not a political program, but like the CSSR, it has a variety of functions. First, the NAFS collects data inside the country and conducts damage assessments and is prepared for post-conflict state-building. The Syrian experts themselves, recruited from inside and outside the country, conduct all the analyses. The methods differ from sector to sector, but essentially the impact of the conflict is calculated by comparing a range of information, including pre-conflict statistics, with information available from additional surveys once the conflict entered the country. These sources include interviews of experts, field visits, dialogues with stakeholders such as NGOs, and discussions with NAFS technical experts. Those experts who had left the country collect the information through their networks inside.

Although the conflict has been prolonged and continuous data collection faces many hurdles, the Syrians have maintained and functioned under this holistic system based in the country. Second, the NAFS has, over time, moved beyond assessing the socioeconomic impact of the conflict to integrating the results in policy alternatives as preparation for post-conflict state-building. The Syrian experts identified priority issues in their sectors and developed policy alternatives on how to overcome them. One

hundred sixty-five experts led the development of the strategic policy alternatives framework, published in 2017 (UN ESCWA 2017), with input from more than 1400 Syrian citizens and 200 civil society organizations inside and outside Syria (Bymolt 2016; UN ESCWA Staff 2020). In 2021, NAFS prepared the second launch of the strategic policy alternatives framework (UN ESCWA 2021).

In other words, many Syrians have participated in the process of creating policy alternatives. This case is unique, as the Syrians themselves, even during the conflict, prepared for post-conflict state-building by developing policy alternatives from the bottom (UN ESCWA 2017). Thus, the NAFS constitutes a vital part of the self-organization and holistic system that is the hallmark of adaptive peacebuilding. Third, the NAFS was also a contextualized, localized, and self-organizing program from the outset, led by Syrians, in the sense that it received almost no foreign technical guidance in its sector analyses and preparation of policy alternatives. Before the conflict, Syria was not perceived internationally as a fragile state, and its governance system was functioning to a certain extent. The Syrians are highly motivated not to let their country fall apart, and they are knowledgeable and capable of taking such measures. Furthermore, the UN ESCWA is a UN agency conducting research and training with a neutral and apolitical mandate. This position of UN ESCWA has provided a safe space for Syrians of different political persuasions to discuss issues. The location of the UN ESCWA in Beirut, Lebanon, remains within the Middle East, and the ease of travel, regardless of their political affiliation, was also beneficial in providing a forum for discussion. Moreover, the donors who funded NAFS did not lead it but rather supported and facilitated the process (German Government source 1 2019). In this way, the NAFS can be considered an adaptive peacebuilding practice characterized by self-organization, in that Syrians themselves ran the program and produced results without external influence.

Unlike the CSSR, the NAFS has distanced itself from political contributions. However, like the CSSR, the NAFS network includes members from within Syria and worldwide, including the diaspora in Lebanon, Turkey, the Gulf states, and Europe, some supporting the government, some supporting the opposition, and some being neutral. It is normal and easy to understand that the atmosphere at the early meetings was so tense that few technical experts stopped attending. Nevertheless, most of them have participated continuously, and all the interviewees contacted felt the responsibility and significance of being involved in future state-building



regardless of their political views. Some Syrian technical experts felt that their participation in NAFS had strengthened their capacity. The NAFS Programme’s ability to maintain the safety, neutrality, and trust of these platforms, and to continue expanding its network of Syrians at a time of increased polarization within Syrian society, is one of their main achievements. This is a unique asset that it can offer Syrian stakeholders to advance thinking and debate on the country’s future. Furthermore, several technical experts noted the development of network, solidarity, and trust among them. As one interviewee puts it:

I guess the word ‘trust’ has a broad meaning and contains taking process. In many cases, the first time the experts met, we camped on our positions, but through the time passage and meeting frequently, some of the ice had broken. We still had very strong and big differences of opinions but at least learned to respect and accept each other’s opinions and to engage in conversation, putting political affiliations aside and focusing on technical conversation. This requires the process. (NAFS Member 3 2020)

This form of trust-building also appears in the CSSR as its participants “credited the CSSR with creating the space for a divided civil society to build trust and respect” (Turkmani and Theros 2019, 15). Although both programs have different scopes and objectives, it is possible to see that the constructive dialogues between people from different walks of life contribute to a better understanding of each other. These dialogues were possible partly because they were likely to know each other directly or indirectly, as they worked in the same country and the same sector before the conflict. Thus, the networks, solidarity, and trust formed among the participants comprised a nonlinear pathway to adaptive peacebuilding.

### *The Challenges of Citizen Engagement Programs*

The CSSR—a program aimed at civic engagement in the political peace process—and the NAFS—a technical dialogue platform in which citizens participated proactively—were based on the intrinsic motivations of the Syrians themselves. These programs have had a range of positive impacts based on an adaptive peacebuilding approach to the context of conflict, as mentioned in the above section. On the other hand, there have been challenges as well. In the case of the CSSR, there is the challenge of the objective itself, which was to engage citizens in the political peace process: the

CSSR was a program launched primarily through the lobbying of citizens supporting the opposition, but as noted in section “[The Complexity of the Conflict](#),” the opposition was divided. Some opponents doubted that the CSSR had created a new opposition and reduced their influence in the peace process. For the government, the CSSR did not represent civil society on the government side (Hellmüller 2020). Considering this background, the function of the CSSR became as an input to the peace process through the special envoy, not directly. This function has not met the expectations of its members who, as the conflict became protracted and the damage more devastating, wished to make a direct contribution, such as reducing fighting, through their participation in the peace process. However, for the CSSR to continue participating in the peace process, it needed to address the concerns of the parties to the conflict, becoming the third party and influencing decision-making. Therefore, the CSSR was adaptive to the extent that it maintained its position in the peace process to giving inputs to the special envoys.

Another challenge was the quality of the discussions among its members. For example, Turkmani and Theros (2019, 21) point out that “the main obstacles that impeded the CSSR and the quality of discussions were the presence of non-civic actors (66%) and those with extreme views (56%).” These results illustrated that in some cases, spoilers were involved, and discussions were dominated by extreme views. In an intense armed conflict, extreme opinions will easily run parallel to each other, and there will be no progress in promoting any understanding among all the participants. As conflicts become protracted, regional fragmentation in the country would hamper people’s interaction with and assistance from external actors (NOREF 2021). This can widen the available information gap. The approach of the CSSR, which is contextualized, localized, and adaptive, has tried to contribute to filling such gaps and is expected to continuously provide the space for discussion for the variety of Syrians to understand their differences of opinion.

In the case of NAFS, the prolonged conflict affected the program’s premise of preparing for post-conflict nation-building. The NAFS was originally a program to prepare for the future, not to address the current situation, and UN ESCWA’s function of survey and research is consistent with the program’s objectives (UN ESCWA Staff 2020; German Government source 2 2020). However, as the conflict dragged on, the need to address the damage to the status quo increased. For this reason, the NAFS initially provided an analysis of the current situation in each

sector to prepare policy alternatives, but from 2016 onward, it concentrated its aim on analyzing the current situation and updating the gap between policy and reality as well to bring consensus among Syrians through dialogue. The NAFS regularly studies and analyzes the situation on the ground to understand the current context of the conflict and its changing dynamics to come up with policy alternatives for short, medium, and future long-term recovery. Doing so better tailors the policies and ensures that they maintain their relevance. This change of approach is adaptive to the context of protracted conflict. While the vast amount of data accumulated and analyzed by technical experts is effectively used as basic information among its network of experts—who indirectly and at personal capacity contributed to the dissemination of the key messages relevant to this dialogue at a wider scale—and by many international organizations and donors, many members would like to be involved more in the recovery process.

While understanding NAFS's unique setting to contribute to the future, the interviewees expressed their concern with the cumulative damage to the economic and social infrastructure sustained by the country as the conflict dragged on. As one interviewee mentioned, "We should do implement something more than reporting" (NAFS Member 4 2020). Another interviewee felt that the "Syrian people inside do not have knowledge about what we were discussing" (NAFS Member 5 2020). Such challenges remain and continue as far as the conflict is ongoing. Still, the NAFS's design of thinking and discussing about the future state in the post-conflict period facilitated building networks, solidarity, and trust through frank discussions among its members. It developed into a locally driven, contextualized, adaptive, and meaningful peacebuilding practice and is expected to contribute further.

### *The Adaptability of Locally Driven Approaches*

This chapter's section "[Diverse Locally Driven Approaches Toward Peacebuilding](#)" analyzed examples of adaptive peacebuilding that emphasize the local context: the CSSR, a political program launched by the UN Special Envoy at the request of the opposition groups, and the NAFS, a technical program established by UN ESCWA in response to the Syrians' own desire to avoid fragmentation and to hold the network of the technical experts responsible for future state-building. The CSSR provides the space for citizens to listen to each other's views, while the NAFS promotes

building consensus among its members. Both have become platforms for Syrians of different opinions to come together, regardless of their political affiliations. They are adaptive and sustainable within the conflict context while facing some challenges. In the case of the CSSR, its challenge has been how to contribute to the political context of the peace process itself. As for the NAFS, since the conflict has not ended, it needs to keep its adaptability to produce constant outcomes. However, both programs have been part of a holistic system and have contributed to bringing Syrians together regardless of their backgrounds. Although both programs face the inevitable challenges of trying to make their contribution align with the context of ongoing and unresolved conflict, they are adaptive and try to continuously integrate Syrians in the peacebuilding process.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on various approaches to peacebuilding in the Syrian conflict, examining the responses of the UN Special Envoys, the P5, the core group, and others, as well as the significance and challenges of the CSSR—initiated by the UN Special Envoy and operated by NOREF and Swisspeace—and the NAFS—established by the UN ESCWA. Underlying the adaptive approach is the premise that “the systems that make up a society are complex” (Chap. 2). The Syrian conflict system is certainly complex. The countries involved at the international and regional levels were at odds supporting the different parties to the conflict. The Syrian conflict has followed a nonlinear path with significant changes in the context along its way. Thus, externally driven peacebuilding approaches have not resulted in a comprehensive peace agreement agreed upon by the parties to the conflict. This chapter has presented several examples of how different international and local peacebuilding initiatives adapted to the context of the conflict.

What lessons can be identified from the Syrian case for peacebuilding? Three points need to be considered. First, externally driven peacebuilding is not effective without the mutual consent of the people in a country. Lundgren (2019) argues that the peacebuilding approach developed after the end of the Cold War, which envisioned the establishment of a democratic social order, did not work as a prescription in such a conflict as Syria, where the UNSC could hardly come to a unified response. Particularly, Russia believed that the application of Chapter VII of the UN Charter against Libya had caused its regime change, and this made Russia try to

eliminate any possibility of recalling such an intervention in Syria (UNSC 2011c, 4–5; Allison 2013, 797). On the other hand, contemporary international relations have moved from bipolarity to unipolarity, and then to multipolarity. The Syrian conflict became internationalized immediately after its outbreak, and a complex mix of renewed bipolarity and multipolarity has persisted. The context of the conflict was heavily influenced by external factors, as one interviewee puts it:

Many agencies and countries have supported the groups of oppositions to strengthen them and enable them to negotiate. However, at the end, I believe such inputs created the oppositions not for supporting the solution. (NAFS Member 6 2020)

Within these systemic constraints, a determined-designed peacebuilding approach in the early years of the conflict could not respond to the subsequent changes in the context of the conflict. The holistic system of which the Syrian conflict parties are an integral part has become increasingly complex, and many areas of Syria has effectively returned to government control except northern area. The UN Special Envoy, P5, and core group seem to have gradually adapted their peacebuilding approaches taken in the beginning of the conflict to its current context. Nevertheless, the path to an effective peace agreement in the sense that the fragmented parties to the conflict are convinced and cooperate still remains uncertain.

Second, there is the possibility of implementing an alternative adaptive approach to peacebuilding in Syria. Adaptive peacebuilding respects the ownership of local people and emphasizes the promotion of the agenda of the local people, not the agenda of the other countries involved in the conflict. If people take the initiative for peacebuilding, the nature of the conflict will change, and the system will become more self-organizing, although it will take time. According to Lederach (1997), peacebuilding is a process of changing the elements of conflict over time. In this regard, the CSSR has paved the way for public participation in a UN-led political mediation process. The NAFS has shown that people can take positive action for peace even in protracted conflicts. It also showed that UN agencies could adaptively promote such aspirations of local people in a variety of ways. Despite all the challenges, participants with different views have been able to better understand each other's situations through continuous dialogue, mitigating the huge gaps between them, and building networks, solidarity, and trust. Both programs were very special experiences for the

participants (Turkmani and Theros 2019; NAFS Member 1 2020; NAFS Member 2 2020; NAFS Member 3 2020; NAFS Member 4 2020; NAFS Member 5 2020; NAFS Member 6 2020). This fact suggests the importance of resuming dialogue as soon as possible among people divided by a conflict, regardless of whether there is a ceasefire or not. In other words, in a protracted conflict, even in the absence of a ceasefire agreement, adaptive peacebuilding efforts aimed at stimulating dialogue and moving forward with building networks, trust and momentum for peace can be effective.

In this chapter, we have identified a number of valuable aspects of adaptive peacebuilding. The third point, however, is that there are challenges to the adaptive approach to peacebuilding. Due to the nature of the adaptive approach, which appropriately addresses the context of the conflict, it faces the influence of externally driven approaches, especially when they are dominant. In the case of the Syrian conflict, most countries' involvement in the conflict at the international and regional levels has not been neutral for both parties to the conflict. Mediation activities by the UN Special Envoys have continued to be affected by these systematic and domestic constraints and changes in the context of the conflict. The activities of the CSSR have been hindered, considering the concerns of the parties to the conflict. The activities of NAFS have also needed to adapt to the changes in the context of the conflict. However, despite the continuously changing dynamics of the conflict, both the CSSR and the NAFS Programme have maintained their relevance and effectiveness by tackling the most pressing key issues in Syria and by maintaining their trusted platform for dialogues among Syrians at the national and local levels. Both programs can be examples of the meaningful practice of adaptive approaches to peacebuilding that respond to endogenous changes in society. They have made valuable contributions, such as the mediation activities of the special envoys and the provision of field data to international organizations. Their activities should be highlighted.

In the Syrian conflict, externally driven efforts to end the conflict have so far not resulted in a comprehensive peace agreement, and adaptive peacebuilding approaches seem to have made contributions to support networks that have helped people to keep working together for peace. This experience shows that a pragmatic response that is adaptive to the context of the conflict can make a contribution, even within an ongoing and highly internationalized conflict like Syria. In a country like Syria, where certain infrastructure and administrative structures were in place

before the conflict and people were living sophisticated lives, the existing administrative structures will be helpful in rebuilding the state after the conflict, with confidence in its people, as clearly stated in the Geneva Communiqué. Currently, the government tries to recapture the land, and what Galtung (1969) called a negative peace, a state without armed struggle, may be reproduced. On the other hand, to achieve a positive peace, a peacebuilding approach based on the consent of the parties to the conflict, even if it is externally driven, is important. As this chapter has shown, excluding external influence in the Syrian conflict is not realistic, and the conflict is prolonged, both of which constrain adaptive approaches. However, as this chapter has also shown, externally driven peacebuilding initiatives can promote adaptive approaches that encourage the participation of diverse local actors. A concerted effort by external actors to promote adaptive approaches that are contextualized to the conflict and encourage the engagement of diverse local actors could contribute to the reduction of violence and improved conditions for peace in the complex Syrian conflict.

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# Accommodating Incomplete DDR, Security Sector Development, and Veterans' Issues to Peacebuilding Efforts: National Responses, *Suco*, and Local Security in Timor-Leste

*Yukako Tanaka-Sakabe*

## INTRODUCTION

Timor-Leste is often interpreted as a successful case of peacebuilding because no mass violence has been observed since 1999. Nevertheless, the country has experienced repeated upheavals directed against the government after independence. These include the 2002 Dili riots; the turmoil in 2006 that led to the dysfunction of the national police and the resignation of the first Prime Minister, Mari Alkatiri; and the assassination attempts against the Nobel Peace Laureate José Ramos-Horta and the charismatic liberation leader Xanana Gusmão by army mutineers led by a new officer in 2008. Communal violence has also been prevalent since the 2006 turmoil, and is said to involve mostly youths, members of gangs, and martial

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arts groups (MAGs), many of whom were unemployed (Scambray 2006). Some observers have pointed to geographical and social divisions, such as those between east and west or urban and rural, as well as ethnic divisions, that appear to be promoting the scattered violence in Dili, but also “veterans’ issues” as a source of instability (Babo-Soares 2003; McWilliam 2007; Kingsbury 2008).

During the 46th anniversary ceremony of F-FDTL (*FALINTIL-Forças de Defesa de Timor-Leste*/Timor Leste Defense Force) in 2021, the president of the National Parliament called on the Minister for the Affairs of National Liberation Combatants and the National Council of Combatants of National Liberation to integrate the veteran survivors into the socio-economic development of the nation (Martins 2021). This comment exemplifies that the veterans’ issue is at the center of the political agenda, which strongly connects with the resistance history of Timor-Leste since the mid-1970s. As veterans today are recognized as influential actors that shape the political landscape of Timor-Leste, the issue is worth exploring from the view of peacebuilding discourse.

A civil society figure articulated that “the security and stability [of Timor-Leste] is heavily dependent on the actions of Xanana Gusmão, the veterans’ pension system, and continued revenue from the [P]etroleum [F]und” (Belo 2016). International society engaged with Timor-Leste heavily in the early phase of peacebuilding post the 1999 referendum, but its engagement has been reduced since the UN mission withdrawal in 2012. This chapter addresses the following questions: What actions have been taken by national and local actors to deal with the veterans’ issue? What actions by international actors have supported national and local actors? What are the consequences and the challenges that remain?

This chapter analyzes the adaptive processes that accommodated the veterans’ issue in national and local contexts, arguing that two types of self-organization have been developed. One is the process of considerably rewarding veterans by the government using the abundant state budget that the country supports by oil and gas deposits, and the other is the iterative process of inclusion through assessing local governance within a traditional conflict resolution mechanism. Current security-political challenges in Timor-Leste stem from (1) the prolonged political rivalries and ties between elites since the successful resistance movement, (2) an incomplete disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process, and (3) security sector development, which produced the Timorese version of the “veterans’ issue.” While the handling of veterans is considered the

central agenda by domestic elites, the international community, specifically the United Nations (UN) and donors, have considered this issue an exclusively domestic one. Then the chapter argues that the *suco* (village) functions as a catalyst of state affairs and traditional practices, where local security is also managed. Their contribution indirectly creates a basis for accelerating some national initiatives at the community level where conflict prevention measures were sought by incorporating traditional dispute mechanisms.

This chapter, by applying the concepts of self-organization and adaptation, demonstrates that Timorese national and local actors have steadily managed their emerging conflicts in connection with the veterans' issue. The highlight is two self-organizations that are reinforcing each other: local governance arrangements at national level creating a sustainable self-organization at village level, and vice versa. These interactive assessments have enabled the government to integrate the fledging state structure with local practices, which has crafted a new governance system that corresponds with the transformative Timorese context, and so with the adaptive peacebuilding approach that this book suggests. International peacebuilders have iteratively refined their actions since the early period in a step-by-step development of the relationships between national and local actors.

In this chapter, section “[Conflicts, Peacebuilding Efforts, and Rising of Veterans' Issue in Timor-Leste](#)” reviews the historical background of elite competition across historical phases that shaped the fates of veterans in the post-independence period. It also briefly covers the trends of international peacebuilding efforts, which have diminished over time. Section “[Crafting Space Around the Government: Incomplete DDR, Security Sector Development and Veterans Issues](#)” demonstrates the connections between DDR processes, security sector development, and the emerging veterans' issue, along with international peacebuilding efforts in these relevant fields. While democratic elections and state-building could contribute to bringing about political concessions through nonviolent means, both processes are tied to a renewed relationship not only among the leaders but also among their ex-colleagues from the resistance movement. The DDR processes ended within an international-led time frame in which the valorization of veterans and treatment arrangements are largely left to national elites, who have adopted a “buying peace policy.” Section “[Crafting Space for Self-organization Around Suco](#)” turns our view to *suco*, where the valorization of veterans and local security is managed through an iterative



assessment for developing local administration with traditional practices. Section “Discussion” then considers the relevance of international cooperation on veterans’ issues when national/local initiatives were concurrently active, and where the latter is the key to conducting iterative peacebuilding processes. The last section concludes with the overall findings from this case study, the significance of understanding political developments and upcoming challenges in the Timor-Leste context, and the prospects for future international peacebuilding policies.

### CONFLICTS, PEACEBUILDING EFFORTS, AND RISING OF VETERANS’ ISSUE IN TIMOR-LESTE

The resistance movement against the government of Indonesia launched in 1974 was the main conflict in Timor-Leste prior to 1999. Earlier conflicts such as the colonization by Portugal in the mid-sixteenth century and the invasion by Japan during World War II form the backdrop to this conflict. This prolonged struggle resulted in between 100,000 to 180,000 casualties due to violence, hunger, and illness even though the population of the country is under 1 million (CAVR 2005, 44). During this period, violent conflicts between the group leading the resistance movement and pro-Indonesian groups demonstrate the variety of positions of the Timorese in regard to nation-state formation. Additionally, as the resistance actions intensified, the different positions among the leaders of the resistance movement made the political environment intricate.

#### *Political Ties, Rivalries, and Power-Sharing Among the Elites and Veterans’ Issues*

A charismatic leader often called *Maun boot* in Timor-Leste, Xanana Gusmão remains a central political figure in the country. He was one of the core members of the political party favoring independence for the Timorese called FRETILIN (*Frente Revolucionária de Timor-Leste Independente*—Revolutionary Front for an Independent East Timor), together with Ramos-Horta and Mari Alkatiri. Leading the resistance movement since the mid-1970s, all three have become eminent leaders since then. A military wing named FALINTIL (*Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor-Leste*—Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor), operating under FRETILIN and headed by

Gusmão, was primarily responsible for guerrilla activities against the Indonesian Army. As the rivalries between hardliners such as Alkatiri and Gusmão escalated, Gusmão and Ramos-Horta left FRETILIN and sought to expand the resistance movement and integrate the entire country. They formed a nonpartisan organization known as the CNRT (*Conselho Nacional de Resistência Timorese*—National Council of Timorese Resistance).<sup>1</sup>

This competition among the elite intensified when the independence of Timor-Leste was accelerated by the international community. The CNRT ultimately became a core delegate for international negotiation in the 1990s when the United Nations (UN) facilitated the mediation between Portugal and Indonesia over the future status of Timor. Gaining 55 seats out of 88 in the 2001 Constituent Assembly allowed Alkatiri, the secretary-general of FRETILIN at that time, to expand his influence over the draft of the new country's constitution as well as to control government activities as the first prime minister of the country, while Gusmão was elected president.

The turmoil irrupted in 2006, revealing the intensification of rivalry among the top leaders combined with weak state-building and social dissatisfaction. For instance, a FRETILIN defense minister in 1975, Rogério Tiago Lobato, formed the Association of Former Combatants of '75. Being the first interior minister, Lobato utilized these veterans' networks to form a special police unit (Simonsen 2006, 591). This likely reflects the fact that the old divisions between the leaders of the resistance were being institutionalized as F-FDTL and the *Polícia Nacional de Timor-Leste* (PNTL—National Police of East Timor) as the turmoil started from a protest by a group of “petitioners” on their discrimination by high-ranked officers from the eastern region. The 2006 protest was enlarged with the participation of anti-government groups such as “Colimau 2000” composed mainly by FALINTIL veterans as well as farmers and youth, mostly from the western region, and later a group led by Major Alfredo Reinado. Minister Lobato conducted an extrajudicial act to give the uniforms and arms and ammunition of special police units to a civil group in the midst of the 2006 turmoil, placing them under the supervision of the prime minister (UNHCHR 2006, 40).

<sup>1</sup>The original name of the organization was CNRM (*Conselho Nacional Resistência Maubere*).

The pursuit of further political influence between the top leadership Alkatiri and Gusmão created tense confrontation in several social situations (Hasegawa 2013b). In particular, the latter insisted that the former resign to take responsibility for unlawful acts by PNTL. In the following year, as the result of an election, Gusmão successfully took over the legislature by forming a new political party, the CNRT (*Congresso Nacional de Reconstrução de Timor*—National Congress for Timorese Reconstruction) and built a political coalition to create the government.<sup>2</sup> Reelected in 2012, Gusmão remained prime minister until the beginning of 2015.

In essence, the political leaders from the “old generation” (*jerasaun tuan*) who contributed to the resistance movement renewed their old ties in the form of the introduction of free and competitive elections. Taur Matan Ruak, a commander of the FALINTIL, then became the commander of F-FDTL in the new state, taking over the presidency from Ramos-Horta in 2012. While he was an independent candidate, Ruak received support from Gusmão, highlighting the significant needs of veterans and former combatants, and youth throughout the electoral campaign (Powels 2012). The political situation turned volatile as a result of the 2017 national elections when FRETILIN won the presidential seat through Francisco Guterres “Lu Olo” but did not gain an absolute majority in the legislature. At this time, an opposition coalition led by CNRT with newly established political parties, one of which is the *Partidu Libertasaun Popular* (PLP) led by Ruak, was launched. However, confrontation between FRETILIN and CNRT continuously brought political deadlock, such as denial of the state budget by President Lu Olo, which led to new elections in 2018.

It should be noted though that the country remained stable during these political impasses. In this light, the second section in this chapter addresses the extensive arrangements made for veterans by elites following the 2006 turmoil.

### *Shifts in International Peacebuilding Efforts*

On the path toward independence, between 1999 and 2002, intervention by external actors was characterized as immense and top-down in style. The independence referendum was conducted under the UN auspices,

<sup>2</sup> Other parties participated in AMP were ASDT (Associação Social Democrata Timorese), PSD (Partido Social Democrata), and PD (Partido Democrático).

while security was Indonesia's responsibility. As massive violence and destruction prevailed following the announcement of the referendum result in favor of independence, the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET) was dispatched to recover security under UN (Chap. 7). This was followed by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNMISET), which performed as a peacekeeping operation (PKO) to implement executive, administrative, and judicial authority until Independence Day. As the "Timorization" policy, which demanded consultation with the locals, was developed, Timorese representatives were eventually invited to work with the international staff of UNMISET by creating the National Consultative Council and a transitional administration for East Timor, as well as to assign Timorese district administrators (Babo-Soares 2003). However, the ultimate decision-making power was vested in the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General, the highest-ranking position of the UNMISET. This mission was followed by the United Nations Office in Timor-Leste (UNOTIL), which largely supported the police.

The 2006 turmoil redirected the international society to enlarge the PKO to support reinventing the national police by recruiting, training, and mentoring new officers. This peacekeeping operation, the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), was initially mandated to support the democratic electoral process in 2007, then to review security sector development with the government, supporting the judicial system and government organizations, while the recovery and maintenance of security was arranged by an agreement with a multilateral force led by Australia.

The closure of the UNMIT by the end of 2012 marked the shift of the Timorese government to the message, "Goodbye Conflict, Welcome Development" (RDTL 2010). This message implied the country's readiness to transit to economic development as its citizens began to enjoy growing, stable, safe, and peaceful situations (Tanaka-Sakabe and Honda 2018). Further, a massive volume of external financial support was no longer expected. The public finance management of Timor-Leste is unique from other post-conflict countries in that over 90% of the source is the oil/gas deposit-related tax and royalties available from the resources in the country; the grant contribution of donors is only approximately 10% of the state budget (RDTL 2021). This privileged fiscal environment allowed the government to project a positive outlook for the country.

At a glance, the UN missions' involvement, especially their early engagement, is largely considered to be an example of a determined-designed approach. The downsizing of international intervention and the shifting of the focus to development represent a relatively successful case of peacebuilding, even though social tensions remained. The succeeding sections discuss veterans' issues, which necessarily accommodate the interests of ex-combatants, politicians, and communities with the international peacebuilding efforts.

### CRAFTING SPACE AROUND THE GOVERNMENT: INCOMPLETE DDR, SECURITY SECTOR DEVELOPMENT, AND VETERANS' ISSUES

This section examines the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) processes, security sector development, and emerging veterans' issues, along with international peacebuilding efforts. There is a direct connection between the DDR process and the veterans' issue, as once a soldier is demobilized, this person can assert themselves as a "veteran."

#### *Managing Tensions in the State-Building Process*

From the launch of state-building processes, the Timorese leaders were quite flexible and adaptive to the emerging needs given the concern to settle the requests of ex-combatants and veterans. When Gusmão and Ramos-Horta were formulating the foundation vision for the new country, that is, visualizing state-building, they both agreed that the new country would not have a standing army (CNRM n.d.). However, aggression from militia camps in West Timor, combined with the need to provide a role for FALINTIL ex-fighters, forced the leaders to reconsider their positions (Walsh 2011). At the time, Gusmão recognized that ex-FALINTIL fighters were "almost in a state of revolt" because they were dissatisfied with their inappropriate treatment in the cantonments and the lack of follow-up on their demands (Conflict, Security and Development Group—King's College London 2003). As a consequence, the CNRT recruited 650 ex-combatants for the new army, F-FDTL, who had been core members of FALINTIL under the direction of Gusmão. Another 1300 members were demobilized and assigned to the DDR program called FRAP (Falintil Reinsertion Assistance Program).

The initial arrangements for ex-combatants sparked further grievances. Some were dissatisfied with their exclusion from army recruitment and requested a pension and compensation for their contributions to the resistance movement. In response, Alkatiri, as prime minister, established an “Office of Veterans Affairs” in the “Office of the Secretary of State for Labour and Social Affairs” to deal with veterans’ complaints (Conflict, Security and Development Group—King’s College London 2003, para. 53). Using the capacity of the presidential office Gusmão initiated the registration of veterans and ex-combatants through two commissions to establish a pension system in August 2002. The two commissions were the Commission for the Issues of Former Combatants (*Comissão para os Assuntos dos Antigos Combatentes*: CAAC) to register the combatants that worked between 1975 and 1979, and the Commission for the Issues of FALINTIL Veterans (*Comissão para os Assuntos dos Veteranos das FALINTIL*: CAVF) to register the combatants that worked between 1981 and 1999. Nevertheless, these initiatives did not satisfy all of the requests. Some ex-combatants eventually joined anti-government groups that participated in violent acts, such as the 2002 Dili riots (Rees 2002, 151–56).

One contributing factor to the failure of the DDR process was the lack of financial resources. Ex-combatants considered that the international society should provide compensation to them (McCarthy 2002, 30), but there was no specific mandate for a UNPKO or other entities to take care of them. The FRAP did not have sufficient funding, and not much attention was paid to supporting the committees initially established by Gusmão (Conflict, Security and Development Group—King’s College London 2003). Rather, international donors urged the Timorese government to provide a budget for compensation through its own efforts (The Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis 2004). This was a shocking message to the government, which had sought financial support from donors, embassies, and international organizations (Hasegawa 2013, 34).

Subsequent to the FRAP, the Recovery, Employment and Stability Programme for Ex-combatants and Communities in Timor-Leste (RESPECT) offered an additional opportunity for former FALINTIL members but also targeted other vulnerable groups such as widows and unemployed youth, as needing to be integrated into the community. Some projects aimed at creating short-term jobs for ex-combatants by participating in rehabilitating the infrastructure. Villages had the opportunity to reconstruct irrigation systems, markets, local roads, or receive training for

starting up small businesses such as kiosks. The program was managed by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), financially supported by the Japanese government, and later by the Thai government, while its challenges included achieving satisfactory participation of the Timor-Leste government and communities (The Timor-Leste Institute for Development Monitoring and Analysis 2004). Overall, as observed, international support for reintegrating ex-combatants skewed quickly.

The constitution endorsed in 2002 articulates the positions of those who contributed to national independence. Section 11 clause 3 highlights that it would not only support the fighters and church people that had roles during the resistance, “the state ensure[s] special protection to the war-disabled, orphans and other dependents of those who dedicated their lives to the struggle for independence and national sovereignty, and shall protect all those who participated in the resistance against the foreign occupation, in accordance with the law” (RD TL 2002). Article 85 then specifies the president’s competency to award honorary titles, decorations, and recognition of merit in accordance with the law.

Despite this articulation of the importance of honoring and protecting the fighters for national liberation, the implementation was not straightforward. The dissatisfaction of ex-FALINTIL members again revealed itself in July 2004 when they held a demonstration in front of the *Palácio do Governo* (Government Palace) calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Alkatiri. As the demonstration ended only when the police opened fire on the protestors, President Gusmão held a dialogue with them (Stidsen and Vinding 2005). Following this dialogue, Gusmão accelerated the revalorization of ex-combatants (Office of the President 2006; ICG 2008, 19) by establishing another commission, the Commission for Matters of the Cadres of the Resistance (*Comissão para os Assuntos dos Quadros da Resistência*: CAQR), to register personnel involved in civil resistance, and the Data Validation Commission (CVD), subsequently the Data Consolidation Commission (CCD), which completed its work in May 2007. Also, the Commission for Tribute, Supervision of Registration, and Appeals (CHSRR) followed the appeals to the registration process. Most of these commission works were financially and technically supported by the World Bank, UNDP, and donors such as USAID and AusAID (World Bank 2008, 12).

As a result of the commissions established under the Office of the President, a veterans’ law was introduced in March 2006 (RD TL 2006). The 2006 law mainly set up three policies, which sought to recognize and

valorize liberation combatants, to protect their socioeconomic status, and to preserve and disseminate the memory of their contribution to the liberation work. In other words, it defined how to register the liberation combatants, the provision of subsidies to veterans as well as widows, orphans, and surviving parents and siblings of deceased combatants who met the criteria of vulnerability, as well as recognizing their contribution in various ways, such as by awarding medals and establishing museums and archives.

*Accelerating Registration, Adjusting Policies, and Sporadic Responses from Veterans Outside of National Politics*

Following the 2006 turmoil, the government identified payments to veterans as one of the priorities in enhancing social protection using the country's growing revenue from its oil and gas industries (RDTL 2008b). This policy is backed by the issuing of a decree-law in 2008 that specifically identifies the number of payments, according to rank, with registration by the committees (RDTL 2008a). Furthermore, the awarding of scholarships to the children of ex-combatants allowed the government to support a good proportion of the youth identified as vulnerable. The total number of veterans and ex-combatants registered by the three committees (CAAF, CAAC, and CAQR) was 75,143 as of 2008 (World Bank 2008). The second-round registration phase in 2009 found 125,000 cases (ICG 2011).

The process of valorization and registration of veterans were generally accepted with positive impressions but also caused tensions in the communities (see section “[Crafting Space for Self-organization Around Suco](#)”). The general acceptance is partly due to the broad selection of commissioners who are largely distinctive former commanders, and its openness to the public (Kent 2006; World Bank 2008). Commissioners conducted interviews with pre-set questionnaires. Then the registered list was posted in each *suco* for its verification by the public. Data were rechecked through the work of the CHSRR. The Office of the Prime Minister in 2008 conducted reviews of the data to select the beneficiaries for pensions involving over 2000 former resistance leaders from national to local levels (World Bank 2008).

This two-year work of registration allowed the government to conduct payment of veterans' pensions, and this volume was increased over time, compared to other schemes for the vulnerable. Among a range of social



benefits in Timor, the annual benefits from the veterans' pension scheme for veterans are within the range 2760 to 9000 USD, while the elderly receive 360 USD; support to children in vulnerable households called *bolsa da mãe* (the wallet of mother) is also available, but it provides only 80 USD per year (Dale, Lepuschuetz, and Umaphathi 2014). Additionally, international reports argue that veterans are incorporated into the patronage system, which rapidly grew through procurements in projects targeting the subnational level by the AMP government (Valters, Dewhurst, and de Catheu 2015; ICG 2011). Among them, rice procurement was also at the forefront, and contracts for rice import were granted to 68 veterans in August 2010, among other political cronies (Kammen 2011).

This abundant distribution of wealth is possible because over 90% of the state's revenue is derived from royalties and tax income via petroleum production in offshore deposits such as Bayu-Undan and Kitan liquid products. The establishment of the Petroleum Fund in September 2005 targeted the country's state budget—reasonably sustained by the oil sector in the long term—creating the mechanism of the Estimated Sustainable Income (ESI) and investment abroad for future financial reserve. Utilizing this fund, the 2015 budget included 130.4 million USD for payments, in addition to 1.8 million in goods and services, equivalent to 8% of the state budget (the total of the state budget is 1.57 billion USD), “so as to honor the sacrifice” made by the contributors of the liberation (RDTL 2015, 17). As of 2021, this budget is maintained and has added 23,000 new cases for ex-combatants and their families. Within this range of social protection programs, 93.6 million USD for pension payments and health treatment of veterans has been allotted. Additionally, grants and scholarships for the children of veterans are provided separately under the Human Capital Development Fund (RDTL 2021).

On the other hand, the supportive work led by Gusmão did not capture all liberation combatants, and the veterans' group outside the politics of the “75 generation” reactivated their violent activities in 2013. The return of a famous ex-FALINTIL member, Paulino Gama, aka Mauk Moruk, in 2014 showed that the division between ex-FALINTIL members back in the 1980s, when Gusmão called for nonpartisanship to all resistance activists, was unresolved. Moruk has criticized the high unemployment, poverty, and corruption rates that continue in the country, and has created the militant group Conselho Revolucionário Maubere (KRM) to change this situation. In response, Gusmão mediated a special forum, but Moruk did not attend, and the MRM with other veterans' groups such as Popular

Council for the Defense of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste (CPD-RDTL) intensified violent activities, including attacks on the police (Leach 2015). Such unrest caused a parliamentary resolution No. 4/2014 to identify CPD-RDTL and KRM as illegal groups (Beuman 2016, 142). In March 2015, Gusmão responded by mounting a joint police and military operation to “prevent and suppress criminal actions from illegal groups” (ABC News 2015).

Honoring veterans is another continuous arrangement by the government, which is considered as a form of respect and recognition. Since 2017, the government commemorates the first meeting of the FRETILIN Central Committee in 1981 as National Veterans’ Day, honoring all the men and women serving in the national liberation struggle (Colo 2020). In the fourth ceremony in 2020, President Lu Olo at that time emphasized that “[we must] record all the stories from each combatant who still survive, as we have lost many people during the independence [period]; when one dies, we are losing part of our collective history.” Timor-Leste has also created a monument named the *Garden of the Heroes of Metinaro*, and the Archive and Museum of Timorese Resistance opened in 2005.

The treatment of veterans’ issues forms an important policy agenda in this post-conflict state. Timorese veterans strongly seek to ensure that they are recognized, honored, and rewarded in society. Timorese elites assess policies for veterans and attempt to respond to the need of veterans today. This continuous assessment derives from the disaffected perception of veterans, in that they perceive themselves as neglected by a government composed of ex-leaders of the resistance movement (Peake et al. 2014). While the typical DDR concept, in a determined-designed view of peacebuilding, expects ex-combatants to reintegrate themselves into communities where they settle and manage their civilian life, their status as veterans is continuously under scrutiny and must be continuously acknowledged.

### CRAFTING SPACE FOR SELF-ORGANIZATION AROUND *SUCO*

The veterans’ issue is not just a matter of political figures but directly connects with the people of Timor-Leste. The slogan “*Povu Mak Bee, FALINTIL Mak Ikan*,” which literally means “the army are fish and the people are water,” is repeatedly used by F-FDTL (Pereira 2020). This demonstrates a close historical link: the FALINTIL’s guerrilla warfare acts were only operational with the people’s support, incorporating their guidance, civil guards, and later associating youth and church (ICG 2011).

People generally view veterans' power as influential in their political, social, and economic life. While the degree of their power may vary in each community, especially those in urban and rural areas, the data show that approximately 10% of the population in each *suco* in the eastern region are veterans, and this shows their considerable proportion in the society (Gusmao et al. n.d.). Such a situation led to the formation of the Association of Former Combatants (*Associaçaun Antigos Combatentes—AAC*), demanding cash payments from those who registered in return for an ID card or electoral card and promises of employment following independence. The demands of these groups swiftly fueled tension over who was or was not a *bona fide* veteran (World Bank 2008, 9). Such tensions were raised among Timorese as a source of local security concerns (Tanaka-Sakabe 2018). The following section discusses how veterans' registration was assessed at the subnational level and how veterans were incorporated into local affairs.

### *Suco and Suco Council Role in the Process of Reintegration and Verification of Veterans*

The *suco* (village) in Timor-Leste is unique, as it is an administrative unit in the state structure recognized in the process of state-building but also a community unit acknowledged by the people to represent their collective will. Throughout the Portuguese and Indonesian occupations, one pattern used to construct local government was to incorporate traditional authority systems into the occupying authorities' own administrative structures. This enabled the local king (*liurai*) to be appointed as *chefe de suco/kepala desa* (village chief) or *chefe de aldeia/kepala dusan* (sub-village chief) (Ospina and Hohe 2001). In the current Timor-Leste, it is increasingly important that activities around the *suco* are connected to peoples' everyday life. The usual practice is that services in the communities are launched with the permission of *chefe de suco* and *chefe da aldeia* (Tanaka-Sakabe 2021). The position of *suco* is expected to collaborate with public administrative bodies and services while considering public interests within the community (RDTL 2016). This was done to preserve cultural identity and traditional symbols such as the *knua* (geographical area of an extended family) and the *uma lulik* or *uma lisan* (sacred house/kinship system based on a common ancestry). The election of *chefe de suco* was advanced, for example, from 2000, based on the suggestion of CNRT, which targeted rebuilding power structures at the local level (AGLD 2003, 54).

Regarding the veterans' issue, *sucos* has become a pivotal interface in the registration process. The registration lists are posted in each *suco* for public consultation, which reinforced its credibility (World Bank 2008, 15). The original lists contained thousands of claims, which included some people falsifying their participation in the resistance. The registration process was dependent on grassroots organizations and community-level engagement where the commissioners connect themselves to the registration request updates. As mentioned earlier, the process produced many tensions, specifically reaction to the fact that claims have been denied, causing interpersonal and village-level insecurity (ICG 2011). More concretely, the procedure of gaining eligibility of payment causes wider dissatisfaction as the legislation specifies the hierarchical categories for lifetime pensions according to their contributions. Thus, the repetitive verification process is unfinished even today, and it functions as one of the means for alleviating tensions in communities.

Simultaneously, in Timor today, veterans play various roles in communities. Common local security concerns derive from general crimes such as thefts of personal property (animals), physical attacks, land disputes, bribes, unlawful taxation, to domestic violence (New Zealand Foreign Affairs and Trade 2019). Veterans can be involved in such local disputes. In contrast, some veterans have turned into elected community leaders, being respected by villagers as they contribute to village development (Gusmao et al. n.d.).

*The Timorese Model of Integrating State Structures  
and Traditional Practices: The Role of Community Policing  
and Conflict Prevention Mechanisms*

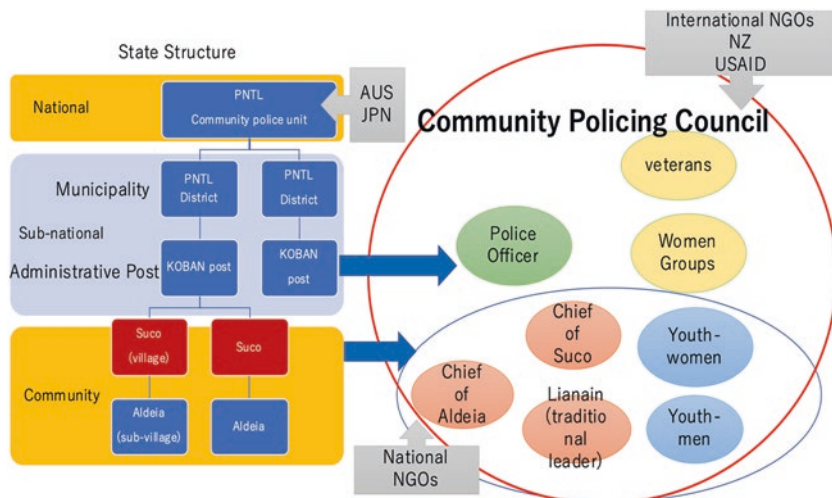
Local security received attention following the 2006 turmoil, and many initiatives have been launched for preventing conflicts or de-escalating tensions in villages, from the government, civil society organizations, as well as from communities themselves. This section explores those efforts to attain local security through linking community policing and traditional mechanisms. It addresses the efforts to show how existing local systems and mechanisms could be incorporated to ensure their effectiveness in the phase of state-building.

Building a relationship between the public and police officers in communities has been a challenge in Timor due to the historical experience of the non-professional behavior of police organizations during the

occupation and the 2006 turmoil, signaling the failure of a top-down style of state-building in the police sector. Therefore, the establishment of the Community Policing Council (CPC), also known as the *Konsellu Polisiamentu Komunitária* (KPK) in Timor-Leste, only happened after repetitive consultation about its style. The PNTL is responsible for implementing the principle of community policing as defined in the Organic Law issued in 2009 (RDTL 2009). The core of community policing is the deployment of police officers, namely *Ofisul Polisu Suku* (OPS), and the establishment of the KPK. Among 425 *sucos*, OPS have been deployed to 323, and it was expected that all OPS would be assigned to the rest of the *sucos* by 2021 (as of August 2021). The left side of Fig. 4.1 shows the state structure incorporating the PNTL organigram.

The uniqueness of the Timorese model of CPC is that it is the voluntary participation of community representatives that links with the governance structure. As noted by the director of PNTL, Community Policing Program Commandant Antonio da Luz, the Timorese community policing model is developed from the essence of the Japanese Koban system, the Singaporean Community Policing system, and New Zealand's community policing council mechanism which especially functions in Maori communities (da Luz 2021). This development was progressed with continual intervention by international organizations, donors, and the participation of the civil society for law development, institution building, and training of police officers for the installation of the CPC.

Australia's Timor-Leste Police Development Program (TLPDP) is one of the lasting programs of police training, and the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) has offered police officers support to study the Koban program since the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) period, which has enabled PNTL officers to form the Timorese style of community policing (Tanaka-Sakabe and Honda 2018). The installment of CPC was supported by Timor-Leste Community Policing Programme (TLCPP) through the New Zealand police, with a program called HAKOHAK (*Hametin Koperasaun Hamutuk Polisia ho Komunitade*) operated by the Asia Foundation (Peake et al. 2014). The roles of national and international NGOs were also important in the development and operationalizing of a unique CPC style in each *suco* according to their needs (Tanaka-Sakabe 2021). The right side of Fig. 8.1 illustrates the actors in CPC, including their international involvement.



**Fig. 8.1** State structure, CPC, and interactions between internationals, nationals, and locals. Source: Updated from Tanaka-Sakabe (2018)

The core of the linkage between the state and society is represented in the collaboration between OPS and the *chefe de suco* (see Fig. 8.1). This is key to managing incidents, conflicts, and potential tensions that arise at the village level on a range of issues, from social crime to interpersonal disputes. As it is common to carry out *Nabe biti boot* (which literally means spreading of the large mat, a traditional method of discussion and resolution) in most communities, the traditional leader *lia nain*, who interprets customary law and resolves local disputes, is also a crucial figure in the solution of many of the social conflicts that lead to this process. In fact, the *Nabe biti* process is applied to numerous community reconciliation programs including the Commission for Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor (*Comissão de Acolhimento, Verdade e Reconciliação de Timor Leste*: CAVR), a transitional justice process at the local level set up to investigate and reconcile crimes committed during the resistance period.

In the post-independence period, the *Nabe biti* process has been implemented in diverse formats, including the involvement of church authorities and district administrators or with wider participation (Miyazawa and Miyazawa 2021). Among these, dealing with cases in the CPC could be interpreted as an extended version of the current *Nabe biti* process. The

CPC is generally composed of *chefe de suco* as head and the OPS as deputy head, and *suco* council members. As the CPC functions by volunteer work, it depends on the participation of church, youth, women, and veterans. Usually, their participation is confirmed by their mutual will with an invitation from the *chefe de suco*. In practice, public crime, which corresponds to procedural cases such as assaults, is handed over to OPS, which refers such cases to the prosecution and investigation authorities, while minor crimes such as theft and interpersonal disputes are handled by the *chefe de suco* and *lia nain* to implement the *Nabe bitu* process. As the formal judicial procedure is perceived to be slow and dysfunctional, many cases select the *Nabe bitu* process for their resolution.

In this context, the importance of including veterans is well understood as it has the potential to promote local stability. Up to today, the situation reports occasionally identify veterans as perpetrators of local disputes (Belun 2019). At the same time, there was an attempt by *Suco Madohi*, a part of Comoro in the capital Dili, to successfully include veteran representatives in the CPC following the violence among young gangs at the market during the 2006 turmoil (da Luz 2021). In this CPC, respected veterans take the role of mediator between youth groups to reduce their confrontation.

Beyond the CPC, veterans are influential in Timorese communities, playing an important role in decision-making and in local activities. Other observation notes that some veterans' networks have a good hierarchical structure with abundant finance from their pensions and could become mobilizers at the time of elections. A survey found that a local veterans' organization funded the rehabilitation of a village school and similar projects (World Bank 2015). These cases exemplify ways of reinventing the relationship with communities, which could be said to be reintegration of ex-combatants in the peacebuilding discourse.

Furthermore, veterans' positions at the subnational level have been confirmed as having a consultative role. In the deconcentration law issued in 2014, which laid out the structure of the Administrative Post but is yet to be operative as of March 2020, veterans' representatives are expected to be part of the Administrative Post Assembly and the Local Advisory Council, among others, such as the post administrator, the *chefe de suco* and *lia nain*, women, and youth groups. While the aim of the Assembly is to formulate recommendations over local development priorities, the Local Advisory Council promotes social participation to implement decentralization policies (RDTL 2014, paras 30, 31, 68, 69). These official



arrangements led by the government indicate that veterans are increasingly becoming key figures at the local level.

This section has demonstrated that the *suco* has become a self-organized space for Timorese to integrate state structure and local practices, where veterans take various local roles. As an integration process, veterans are incorporated into village-level security assessment mechanisms such as the CPC and local administration but also some of them engage in social activities. International donors and NGOs have financially and technically supported these processes. These stakeholders have been adaptive in the transformative Timorese context, in response to the need to create the local security being demanded by citizens after the 2006 turmoil. In this area of development, national and local actors were considered the main figures in peacebuilding who searched for new forms of managing upcoming conflicts.

## DISCUSSION

The chapter has observed that there are two crafted spaces for self-organization and adaptive peacebuilding that deal with the veterans' issue in Timor-Leste. One is the space where national responses are formed by the '75' generation elites and the governments, and the other is the space around *suco*, mainly with local actors. Both spaces have been developed since the early period of peacebuilding, which was characterized by a top-down style of international intervention, but more iterative adaptive processes of assessing national initiatives and local efforts increased following the 2006 turmoil.

When we apply the determined-design view of peacebuilding, the DDR process is a necessary component of state-building, considering the establishment of the brand-new security institutions in the case of Timor-Leste. Specifically, the implementation of disarmament and demobilization of FALINTIL members was in parallel with the formation of the army and national police (F-FDTL and PNTL). These analogous processes occurred with heavy intervention by UN missions and donors, within a tight time frame, and created the discretion on important decision-making and then the dissatisfaction of the excluded.

While disarmament and demobilization are considered ended by international organizations and donors as the responsibilities of external and internal security were handed over to nationals, the leaders launched the registration process of contributors to liberation. Thus, international



involvement was confined by devoting their financial and technical support mainly to DDR and security sector development, and the valorization process for veterans. This was an essential step to invent public transfer payment schemes for veterans following the 2006 turmoil, which revealed a range of disaffected groups in the country. Accelerated by the Gusmão's coalition government, this shift in the policy agenda was fortuitously backed by an oil-dependent state budget to create the "buying peace policy." In essence, it was the national initiative that incessantly addressed the veterans' issue, especially with the elites, which created space for self-organization and locally owned adaptive solutions at both national and subnational levels, as discussed below.

Behind the wheel, the sequence of responding to veterans' demands exposes the importance of political leverage. Veteran status is much shaped by security sector development, disarmament, and demobilization. The conversion of their social status in the war-to-democracy transition period principally affects those who are included and excluded from mainstream politics and from posts in state organizations. This has created new political parties, veterans' associations, and nonformal political groups that sporadically participate in violent demonstrations, including the 2002 riots and the 2006 turmoil. This process also continuously challenged the elites who all previously fought together for national liberation. These events demonstrated the significance of understanding elite politics but also the interactions among veterans that turn into a variety of social stratifications. The processes are assessed to be context-specific when they are dealing with veterans' issues. Particularly for this issue, the elites' prospects were gradually reflected in policy development as international involvement skewed.

The crafted space around the *sucos* supports legitimizing veteran registration, but also the incorporation of veterans to take their roles respectively at the local level. To make payment schemes functional for example, the registration of veterans confronts its validity. Any personnel can justifiably claim themselves as a veteran irrespective of the length of their involvement in the role of the armed, clandestine, or civil guard (Scambray 2009). The process has been generally perceived as inclusive, incorporating the multiplicity of the views of different factions within FALINTIL and the communities, and the efforts to maintain transparency could be and were made in this structure.

The creation of the CPC was not straightforward, however. It is a product of repeated consultations among national figures with international

support since the independence period. Following the amendment of the PNTL organic law to set the community policing principle, the setup of the CPC was nationally led with technical and financial support from international donors and NGOs. Such arrangements were available due to the local governance established in *suco*, which incorporated *lia nain* in the local structure as well as the local dispute mechanism such as the *Nabe bititi* process. The advantage of *chefe de suco* in Timor is that they have the option to apply formal, modern procedures within a traditional system in the current context of conflict management.

In Timor today, as a result of the relative success in reintegration through payment schemes, veterans have penetrated diverse social dimensions. From being politicians, business persons, and community leaders, veterans are recognized as having influential power in the local public sphere. They are not just represented as a potential source of insecurity but alternatively as a source of stabilization when they contribute to village development and local security.

Nevertheless, the management of payment schemes still needs caution to maintain security as the pensions, scholarship, and support to orphans are often politicized during electoral campaigns (NGO member 2021; Wallis 2015). The citizens alarmed that the process of valorization for receiving cash payments is blurred. As one citizen said, “with regard to scholarship assistance for veterans’ children, some children received it, and some didn’t, despite the fact that they are all the children of veterans (Tanaka-Sakabe 2018, 25).” Furthermore, people note that some of those who really need assistance (other than veterans) have not received it yet. A new social division of “do have” and “don’t have” likely remains in Timor-Leste today (FM 2021).

Additionally, veterans’ registration is not complete. The contribution of women veterans was underestimated given the gender-based expectation of returning to traditional roles after the conflict, that extends the assumption that the resistance was a male struggle and reinforces a dominant male society (Kent and Kinsella 2015). While some women have held political positions in the FALINTIL, none were included in the command structure. The CAQR possesses around 9000 women personnel who are registered (equivalent to 25% of the total as of 2008) (Kent and Kinsella 2015). The *Organização Popular da Mulher de Timor* (Timor Popular Organization of Women: OPMT), the women’s arm of FRETILIN, was formed, but the scope of their contribution remains a contentious matter in the verification process. Addressing such issues is a challenge for the

international community, considering this is underrepresentation in honoring veterans from the view of gender equality.

Furthermore, other excluded members from the local governance structure along with women are the elderly citizens, people with disabilities, and poor villagers. These groups are much more constrained in their ability to influence local public decisions. However, their inclusion in society and the creation of a connection between them and the younger generation could be a source of social cohesion.

This case study demonstrates the importance of incorporating national-led initiatives and decisions into peacebuilding processes, as proposed in this book, and at an early stage of the peacebuilding process when heavy international intervention usually prevails. It should be noted that the treatment of veterans was a main concern for Gusmão and the CNRT. Their will to prioritize the valorization of the resistance's contribution was clearly reflected in the Constitution. These legal arrangements directed the elites in the government to launch a series of commissions, accelerate the registration, and provide a payment scheme. This type of institutional framework likely elaborates national initiatives, and their incorporation into important decision-making is essential from the early phase of peacebuilding. The donors' role was financial contribution and some technical support, following the decisions from the drivers' seat which the nationals and locals took in the post-2006 turmoil period.

Another important decision made by the CNRT was to conduct local elections in advance, which was a clear message from the national level that local governance matters. Acknowledging the significance of communal ties, culture, and customary practices, the design of the state structure to integrate the *sucos* function has been key to connecting local and state affairs. As discussed, decentralization/deconcentration and incorporation of customary justice are ongoing after the first two decades of independence. In this realm, Timorese stakeholders, including national NGOs with back support from donors, assess the local governance mechanism by repetitive trials in a range of programs and projects (Tanaka-Sakabe 2021). *Sucos* have become an epicenter for local affairs as they represent the peoples' will for social-economic activities as well as for conducting traditional practices for conflict resolution and social cohesion. The CPC has developed in the balance between assessing customary justice mechanisms and the formal justice sector development. Thus, *sucos* have become a cohesive power in another space for creating self-organization—including international organizations, NGOs, and donors—being adaptable to the steps of

the peacebuilding process. In such processes, a common sharing of what direction to take in creating new organization is likely an essential matter and can be achieved by continuous interaction with national and local figures.

On the other hand, the financial vulnerability of the buying peace policy is a concern. The cash payment of veterans' pensions is a strategy adopted by the elite to deal with veterans' issues. In other words, to use "oil revenue to finance veterans' pensions and the Program of Integrated District Development has provided a peace dividend to the population and reduced the chances of conflict (RD<sup>TL</sup> 2015, 29)." However, the backbone of this buying peace policy fluctuates due to the volatility of oil/gas prices and the volume of oil deposits. The oil price dropped from 110 USD (in 2014) to 30 USD per barrel in 2016, and the volume of production is likely to diminish within a decade. As represented in the intense negotiation over a treaty with Australia to confirm the equal distribution of benefits from the Greater Sunrise oil/gas deposit, sustainable revenue is one of the Timorese priorities in trying to project future fiscal policy, but also the peace and stability of the country.

## CONCLUSION

Democratization, the introduction of competitive and fair elections, is relatively successful in Timor-Leste in that the leaders have followed the rules for power-sharing over time. In parallel, the state-building process that is required to develop the state's capacity, such as forming security organs, administration, and operating the state budget, has renewed a close and tense relationship between leaders and ex-combatants. As determined-designed peacebuilding essentially includes both democratization and state-building processes, understanding of political development matters.

Then, when this is recognized, adaptive political solutions can be sought, which corresponds to the discussion in the UN HIPPO emphasizing the "primacy of politics" for peace operations (High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations 2015). In the case of Timor, national initiatives, especially from CNRT decisions at the pre-independence period, were taken. This demonstrates that international engagement in state-building is not simply reliant on pure technical assistance, and political assessment can show how international peacebuilders

could be more involved in adaptive peacebuilding that corresponds with nationally led state-building.

Following the heavy intervention in the early phase, international donors and NGOs have become more flexible in Timor-Leste as the state and society struggle to balance veterans' demands, the views of citizens, and the creation of brand-new state institutions that also fit with customary practices. As solving veterans' issues is a relevant matter for many Timorese, it requires public consultation. This has not been done on a single occasion but through iterative and multifaceted interactions between elites, veterans, and citizens. The valorization of veterans directly connects to justify the use of the state budget, creating disputes over the redistribution of wealth. As shown in this study, the Timorese reintegration phase was developed mainly by the elites, while the DD phase was monitored by international peacebuilders. Meaningful interlinkage of national initiatives with international peacebuilders, but also employing those linkages among different arms in international efforts from time to time, could be reviewed for further assessment to understand their adaptiveness to national initiatives.

This chapter demonstrates that adaptive peacebuilding has eventually been able to create the conditions for self-sustaining peace in Timor-Leste, after numerous trials and errors evolved with interactions between national, local, and international stakeholders. A Timorese version of the adaptive peacebuilding approach, which is grounded in the local context—down to the village level—has been so far viable through efforts of national actors, from the elites that sought the basis of local governance, to those NGOs that closely worked together with local communities to find solutions that work for all. However, this process was accelerated only after the deterministic peacebuilding efforts were considered questionable in the wake of the 2006 turmoil. Simultaneously, this chapter elaborates some of the national-led initiatives taken during the early peacebuilding period to address veterans' issues and shows that this is key to the later development of self-organizations. This infers that assessing political development is much more viable for international stakeholders as they are more heavily engaged in the peacebuilding activities.

Adaptive peacebuilding continues in Timor-Leste. The relative success of the Timorese strategy of generously rewarding veterans is left with some challenges in the forthcoming future. The government clearly mentioned that payment schemes are a "peace dividend." On the one hand, this is problematically viewed as the foundation of patronage. On the

other, Timorese elites considered it an effective measure for creating stability and peace. While the politicization of veterans' issues remains as a source of instability, the elites are continuously tested, especially those in the government, on how they manage the upcoming disaffected demands and treat excluded groups such as female ex-combatants. In other words, the problem of inclusiveness persists. Furthermore, another challenge is how to sustain this grand strategy by assessing sound fiscal management and the distribution of welfare so that privileged payment to veterans will not become another source of conflict. In this vein, a challenge for international peacebuilders is how they can be more flexible when it comes to balancing the promotion of transparent democratic governance and sustaining stability and peace. One way to address this challenge is to recognize that the Timorese and international peacebuilders need to take another step toward closer interaction.

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# China's Peacebuilding in South Sudan: "Top-down" Adaptation and Its Effectiveness

*Miwa Hirono*

## INTRODUCTION

China is engaged in peacebuilding activities in several fields: UN peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, conflict mediation, and development/investment activities. Of the UN Security Council's permanent members, China contributes the largest number of peacekeeping personnel and the second-largest amount of funding to UN peacekeeping, after the United States. Moreover, China has expanded its humanitarian assistance since 2003, as well as its contribution to development assistance under the banner of the Belt and Road Initiative. Since the early 2010s, China has also increased its political mediation activities.

Critics accuse China of promoting an illiberal or authoritarian peacebuilding agenda (Vanderhill 2013; von Soest 2015; Bader 2015; Yakouchyk 2019). China's pressure to reduce the number of human rights positions in UN peacekeeping operations is often cited as evidence of this trend (Gladstone 2018). Problems identified in relation to China's investment

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activities, such as the non-conditionality of lending and the “debt trap” in BRI projects, also add more narratives to such accusations. Others argue, however, that this accusation ignores the fact that China does not have a peacebuilding policy as such (Hirono 2021). The Chinese conception of peacebuilding is fragmented and consists of activities individually and separately conceptualized, such as those of UN peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, conflict mediation, and infrastructure development/investment activities. China’s official documents rarely discuss the concept of “peacebuilding” or present a clear overarching conception that captures what the UN calls peacebuilding. The Chinese government’s discussion on peacebuilding is linked to either concrete programs, or to the broad idea called the “community of shared future of mankind,” but there is no clear definition or policy of peacebuilding, nor a systematic practice of peacebuilding. The policy is unclear, and the practice is fragmented.

This debate on China’s peacebuilding approach is highly relevant to the adaptive peacebuilding focus of this book. Critics of China’s peacebuilding assume that China takes an authoritarian approach to peacebuilding, another determined-designed approach and an alternative to liberal peacebuilding. However, the latter, which focuses on fragmentation, opens a window through which to examine China’s peacebuilding in relation to the analytical framework of deterministic, context-specific, and adaptive peacebuilding discussed in Chap. 2 of this book.

This chapter seeks to answer the following questions: (1) Did Chinese peacebuilding actors adapt their peacebuilding approaches and practices in South Sudan, and, if so, how? (2) How effective have any such adaptations been in sustaining peace in that country? These questions are examined by analyzing China’s policies and practices related to peacebuilding in South Sudan, encompassing UN peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, conflict mediation, and development/investment activities.

Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with members of the South Sudanese peacebuilding communities in Nairobi and Addis Ababa in July 2018. For the interviewees, two to three were selected from each of ten categories that were likely to express diverse perspectives on China’s peacebuilding efforts: South Sudanese government officials, academics, journalists, officials working for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) (the regional organization that provides conflict mediation in South Sudan), businesses, refugees, students, civil society actors, rebel groups, and the diplomatic corps. In the spectrum of views on China’s contribution to South Sudan’s peacebuilding process, this

research expected that South Sudan's government officials' comments would fall into the praising end of the spectrum, whereas comments by expatriates from Western countries would fall into the critical end. In-between these two extremities are comments by various other actors in the rest of the categories. Content analysis was used to examine the data obtained.<sup>1</sup>

This chapter argues that China's policy structure does not allow it to take a determined-designed approach. Rather, the case of China's peacebuilding in South Sudan shows more complex realities. This chapter identifies three features of China's peacebuilding of the late 2010s. First, Chinese peacebuilding actors adapted more to the local South Sudanese situation in the late 2010s than they did in the early 2010s. Such adaptation, however, was introduced in a "top-down" manner not necessarily deriving from China's experimentation and learning in South Sudan. Rather, it emerged as a result of the Chinese government's global policy shift from a sovereignty-centered, hands-off approach to conflict, to an approach based more on a flexible interpretation of sovereignty. Second, while the Chinese government's new approach to peacebuilding allowed it to be context-specific, it was extended only to the South Sudanese government. To the vulnerable populations in South Sudan, China's peacebuilding approach remained deterministic or indifferent. Third, this mixture of approaches determines the effectiveness of China's peacebuilding. China's context-specific peacebuilding was effective in the sense that it helped the South Sudanese government and rebel groups to form an agreement for a unity government in 2018. In contrast, China's deterministic approach to peacebuilding with regard to the vulnerable populations led to the ineffectiveness of its peacebuilding effort.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section draws upon the discussion in Chap. 2, and establishes the analytical framework consisting of deterministic, context-specific, and adaptive peacebuilding approaches. The second section identifies key peacebuilding actors in South Sudan at national, local, and international levels, and examines

<sup>1</sup>In addition, fieldwork was also conducted in Beijing intermittently from 2009 to 2017, and discussed China's contribution with the People's Liberation Army Peacekeeping Office, the Ministry of Defense, National Defense University, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Commerce, Earthquake Bureau, various academics, and civil society organizations. The views of some military and humanitarian aid officers in various countries such as the UK, Denmark, and Australia, who worked with their Chinese colleagues in various peacebuilding activities, were also sought.

whether their policies are deterministic or context-specific. In so doing this section aims to set the ground against which the third section examines whether China's peacebuilding approach is deterministic, context-specific, or adaptive, and how effective it is for South Sudan.

### ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: DEFINING DETERMINISTIC, CONTEXT-SPECIFIC, AND ADAPTIVE APPROACHES TO PEACEBUILDING

This chapter uses three approaches to peacebuilding as its analytical framework: deterministic, context-specific, and adaptive approaches. This section operationalizes these approaches in the South Sudanese context so that the framework can be used as a means to assess China's approach to its peacebuilding effort there. In a nutshell, this chapter sets two criteria to assess a particular approach to peacebuilding. First, whether an approach to peacebuilding is deterministic or context-specific is assessed by the level of compatibility of peacebuilding policies with the vulnerable populations. Second, whether an approach to peacebuilding is deterministic or adaptive is assessed by a process of deliberation in which their pre-set policies should change when practicing peacebuilding. This section briefly mentions the three approaches and clarifies how this chapter uses them.

As de Coning explains, a deterministic approach to peacebuilding is "a causal model where the outcome is more or less guaranteed if the design is followed" (Chap. 2). It is prescriptive in nature—a specialist "diagnoses the problem by identifying the root causes" (Chap. 2). The policy decision is made in a top-down or outsider-led manner, based on imported theories or values. The theory that the US and other Western actors based the cases of their interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example, was neoliberalism. Today, analysts question whether China's peacebuilding approach signifies yet another theory or value based on the so-called China model. Some say developmental peace (*kaifa heping*) is such a theory (He 2017)—an idea that peace derives from development. Others say that China strengthens authoritarianism and weakens democracy through the various activities it conducts, which include peacebuilding (Nathan 2015; Pillsbury 2015). Is China bringing about a change in the international peacebuilding model in the context of the declining power of the West? A significant proportion of the debate about China's roles in peacebuilding relates to this question.

In contrast to the fact that a deterministic approach focuses on prescriptive policy in a top-down manner, context-specific peacebuilding derives from the primacy of local actors in peacebuilding, and the policy is created in a bottom-up manner. The "context" of the context-specific situation is a local one rather than an outsider's one. Further, there are some variations in context-specific peacebuilding. When the "local context" means the interests and needs of local actors, it can be called grassroots peacebuilding (Lederach 1997), but when the coexistence of international and local agendas is emphasized, it can be hybrid peacebuilding (Mac Ginty 2011; Uesugi 2020).

However, the deterministic and context-specific approaches share two problems. First is the assumption of a dichotomy between "top" and "bottom." The reality in South Sudan is that actors are so diverse that it is extremely difficult to distinguish the "top" from the "bottom." Is the South Sudanese government the "top" or the "bottom"? Are rebel groups "top" or "bottom"? Are the Chinese oil companies "top" or "bottom"? The dichotomy of top and bottom is inherently hierarchical in its worldview that international actors are regarded as the top, and local actors as the bottom. This dichotomy does not offer a useful analytical lens for two reasons. The first is because it is impossible to define *the* "local context." The "local" is completely separated and scattered into diverse groups who fight civil wars against one another. The second is because once various national and local actors are regarded as peacebuilders, "being deterministic" could mean pursuing a wide variety of agendas, including attacking enemies. The agenda of the South Sudanese government (to secure its regime and legitimize it) is far from that of the South Sudanese civil society (to have their voices heard and their living standards improved, and some to question the legitimacy). Which of these local agendas and interests should peacebuilders respond to?

Given the very complex relationships amongst different interests, this chapter modifies the definition of the deterministic approach to an approach *compatible with the interests of the vulnerable populations*, such as refugees and women. This means that even though the peacebuilding approach might be based on a predetermined diagnosis of problems and an assumed prescription, if the policies are compatible with the interests of the vulnerable populations, then it is deterministic *as well as* context-specific. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive.

The second problem is that these two approaches assume that peacebuilding policy is static. Policy and practices develop over time as a result



of interaction, experiment, learning, and adaptation. Adaptive peacebuilding addresses these problems. It does not conceptualize particular peacebuilding actors as top or bottom, and it does not assume any peacebuilding agenda in a static manner. Adaptive peacebuilding emphasizes the dynamic and iterative *process* of experimenting, learning, and adapting by various peacebuilders. According to de Coning, “adaptive peacebuilding is a complexity-informed approach where peacebuilders, including communities and people affected by conflict, actively engage in a structured process to sustain peace, by employing an iterative process of experimentation, learning, and adaptation” (Chap. 2).

The question of whether a particular peacebuilding approach is deterministic or adaptive can be assessed in terms of dynamic policies or practices, rather than static policies or inaction, as a result of learning. It is assessed based on the extent to which policies or practices have been *developed and changed* in accordance with the nature of the conflict. It is possible that as a result of engagement with the local population, actors recognize that the pre-set (determined) approach should remain. Then it is possible to be deterministic as a result of considering the possibility of adaptation. So a more important question than whether a particular policy or practice is deterministic or adaptive is whether the actor(s) went through the process of deliberation in which their pre-set policies could be changed when practicing peacebuilding.

In summary, based on the above understanding, this chapter defined being deterministic or context-specific as the level of compatibility of the peacebuilders’ policies to the needs of the vulnerable people. Also, the definition of being deterministic or adaptive is described in this chapter as the extent to which the practices have been deliberated, and if necessary developed and changed, in accordance with the nature of the conflict. Adaptive peacebuilding is, as mentioned above, the learning process where peacebuilders actively engage in a structured operation to sustain peace.

Based on this discussion, this chapter assesses particular peacebuilding policies and practices based on the following criteria. If the answer to the following question is yes, a particular policy or practice can be categorized as deterministic, context-specific, or adaptive:

- Deterministic approach: Is the peacebuilding policy or practice prescribed based on a particular theory?
- Context-specific approach: Does the peacebuilding policy or practice address the needs of vulnerable populations?

- Adaptive approach: Does the peacebuilding policy or practice emerge as a result of an iterative process of experimentation, learning, and adaptation?

### ANALYSIS OF KEY ACTORS' PEACEBUILDING POLICIES: ARE THE KEY ACTORS' POLICIES DETERMINISTIC OR CONTEXT-SPECIFIC?

This section examines the peacebuilding *policies* of key actors focusing on the South Sudanese government, the South Sudanese civil society actors, the UN, IGAD, and the Chinese actors, by focusing on the question of whether their peacebuilding policies amount to a deterministic or context-specific approach when using the analytical framework introduced in the previous section. This section deliberately conducts a static analysis of existing policies of key actors rather than the dynamic analysis of the change in policies and practices in the next section. Here, the following two points should be noted. First, the South Sudanese warring factions remain deterministic about their approach to peace, while the South Sudanese civil society actors have their own deterministic approach to peacebuilding but are context-specific in a sense to address the needs of vulnerable populations. Second, the UN, IGAD, and regional governments uphold deterministic policies, but their attempts to engage with the vulnerable populations amount to being context-specific.

#### *South Sudanese Government's Peacebuilding Policy*

First, it is important to bring to the forefront the South Sudanese national government as a key peacebuilder, although the degree of success in peacebuilding is outside of the question here. While it may sound problematic to consider the South Sudanese government as a peacebuilding actor because it is fighting a war rather than making peace, it is inappropriate to ignore the fact that the government remains the key actor in determining the nature of the peacebuilding in the country. The following is the question addressed in this section: To what extent are the South Sudanese policies compatible with the interests of the vulnerable population? Examining the 2018 peace accord offers a platform from which to explore this question.

In September 2018, President Salva Kiir, Chairman and Commander in Chief of the SPLM/SPLA-IO Riek Machar, and other conflicting and relevant parties signed the “Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS)” (IGAD 2018), which aimed to end the civil war that had erupted in 2013. The R-ARCSS specifies the tasks to be implemented by the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) for the 36 months transitional period, and designates the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC) to monitor and oversee the implementation of the tasks. These tasks encompass governance, security, humanitarian affairs, economic and financial management, transitional justice, and constitutional affairs. Since the RTGoNU was formed on 22 February 2020, the RJMEC has undertaken periodic reviews (RJMEC 2021).

According to the RJMEC’s report on the first year of the transitional period, governance and security are the principal areas of the agreement that the RTGoNU implemented (RJMEC 2021, 2). These areas relate to the power sharing among the conflicting parties by allocating the appointment of key governing positions to them. Further, “the Parties have largely adhered to the provisions of the Permanent Ceasefire” (RJMEC 2021, 2). On the other hand, issues that are directly relevant to the vulnerable people’s daily lives have not seen much progress. The RJMEC report states:

None of the tasks related to humanitarian assistance and reconstruction that were expected to start on the formation of the RTGoNU has been implemented. However, modest progress has been made in creating an enabling political, administrative, operational and legal environment for delivery of humanitarian assistance and protection; and in delivering programmes for relief, protection repatriation, resettlement, reintegration and rehabilitation of IDPs and returnees. Also, a critical task where implementation was expected to give a significant boost to the humanitarian effort was the creation of the Special Reconstruction Fund, which so far has not been established. (RJMEC 2021, 2)

The delays in humanitarian assistance and reconstruction derive from attacks on humanitarian aid workers (124 aid workers died in South Sudan from 2013 to February 2020), fighting between some warring factions, and “illegal roadblocks, impassable roads, and community-based violence” (RJMEC 2021, 5). But at a more structural level, the ways in which the South Sudanese government paid disproportionate attention to power sharing among elites show that it is taking a deterministic approach to

peacebuilding, rather than a context-specific one that pays attention to the vulnerable population.

The literature argues that the South Sudanese government only addresses the interests of the elites. Wight (2017, 2), for example, argues that the power sharing "has descended into a contest between the country's politico-military elite over how the spoils of patronage are dispersed." The interviewees in the present study also suggest that civil society and refugees all consider that the South Sudanese government addresses the interests of the elites, rather than the interests of the people (Civil society actor 2018; South Sudanese refugees 2018).

### *South Sudan's Civil Society Groups' Peacebuilding Policy*

In contrast, South Sudan's civil society organizations (CSOs), by their bottom-up nature, are expected to focus on helping the vulnerable populations, but the story is not that simple. While many CSOs attempt to focus on a specific issue and dedicate their work to the vulnerable people in South Sudan, as far as the policy is concerned, South Sudan's CSOs are still underdeveloped. Geoffrey L. Duke, the director of the South Sudan Action Network on Small Arms, points out the difficulties that South Sudan's CSOs face. While CSOs in South Sudan have begun to engage in broader policy issues such as security sector reform, which itself is a welcome development, the engagement with policy issues still needs further improvement to properly address the needs of the vulnerable population. "The absence of mechanisms of long-term engagement [and] a particular lack of attention paid to security at the local level such as implementing individual components of larger policy document" means that the CSOs' policy direction still needs further development to make it more "context-specific" (Duke 2019, 2).

### *The United Nations' Peacebuilding Policy*

The UN's peacebuilding policy in South Sudan has shifted from a deterministic approach to a context-specific approach. In terms of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) mandates, the major shift took place in 2014. When the UNMISS was established in 2011, the prioritized mandates were "support for peace consolidation and thereby fostering longer-term state-building and economic development" and "support the Government of the Republic of South Sudan in exercising its

responsibilities for conflict prevention, mitigation, and resolution and protect civilians,” among others (UNSC 2011). However, conflict erupted in Juba on 15 December 2013, which led to the killing of nearly 400,000 people by 2018 (Specia 2018), and 4.3 million had been displaced by 2021 (USA for UNHCR n.d.). Given that “tens of thousands of civilians fled” from war zones and “arrived at UNMISS compounds ... to seek refuge (UNMISS n.d.),” the UNMISS then opened the UN compounds for the protection of civilians—as many as 85,000 people (UNMISS n.d.). The UN Security Council Resolution 2132 (2013) of 24 December approved the increase in the troop and police strength to address the emergency situation, and Resolution 2155 (2014) of 27 May “reprioritized the UNMISS mandate” toward the protection of civilians, human rights monitoring, and support for the delivery of humanitarian assistance (UNMISS n.d.; UNSC 2014). The UN Security Council also “urge[d] all parties to engage in an open and fully inclusive national dialogue seeking to establish lasting peace, reconciliation and good governance, including through the full and effective participation of youth, women, diverse communities, faith groups, civil society, and the formerly detained SPLM leaders” (UNSC 2014). This change shows that the UN policy has shifted from a deterministic liberal peacebuilding agenda to context-specific peacebuilding, addressing the needs of the vulnerable.

However, the extent to which this policy is meaningful on the ground is questionable. The UN mission is so overstretched that even UN Secretary-General António Guterres questions its ability. In remarks made to the Security Council, he stated, “I urge Security Council members to sharpen and streamline mandates. Please put an end to mandates that look like Christmas trees. Christmas is over, and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan cannot possibly implement 209 mandated tasks” (Guterres 2018). In short, while the UN policy has shifted from a determined-designed to context-specific approach, the magnitude of the tasks the UN faces presents significant challenges.

### *IGAD's Peacebuilding Policy*

What is IGAD's policy in South Sudan's peacebuilding? IGAD was originally a regional organization that addressed drought and desertification in East Africa, but its mandate was expanded in 1996 to promote peace and security in that region (Dersso 2014, 8). IGAD mediated a conflict between the north and the south in Sudan, and this eventually led to the

Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, which led to South Sudan's independence in 2011. IGAD's primary policy to South Sudan's post-2013 conflict was mediation. It became IGAD-PLUS, consisting of the IGAD members, the African Union, the UN, the EU, the Troika (the US, the UK, and Norway), China, and the IGAD Partner's Forum, with the aim to put unified international pressure on the South Sudanese conflicting parties (ICG 2015, 3). The main aim was, yet again, power-sharing between warring factions in South Sudan. According to Betty Bigombe, Uganda's special envoy to South Sudan, "the peace process suffers from an overemphasis on power sharing" (Boswell 2022). She states that no grassroots consultation is taking place, and "a more inclusive national dialogue is needed that brings together the political elites, civil society and refugees" (Boswell 2022). In short, the IGAD's approach to peacebuilding is akin to that of the South Sudanese government, in the sense that it takes a deterministic approach focusing on the need of the elites, rather than on the needs of the vulnerable.

### CHINA'S PEACEBUILDING: DETERMINISTIC, CONTEXT-SPECIFIC, OR ADAPTIVE?

#### *No Peacebuilding "Policy"*

To begin with, there is no such thing as China's peacebuilding policy. China's policy documents do not mention peacebuilding (*heping jianshe*) as such. Rather, its approach to building peace consists of four areas of activities such as UN peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, conflict mediation, and development/investment activities—not necessarily policies. China has developed its UN peacekeeping policy, but it has no policy on humanitarian assistance. Conflict mediation is a relatively new phenomenon—emerging from the mid-2010s—and is not based on publicly identifiable policies. China's development and investment is under the direction of the Belt and Road Initiative, which itself is not a policy, but only an "initiative" or a frame of reference. Again, there is no specific policy about where and how China offers development assistance, nor do China's state-owned enterprises invest. Practices come first, and policies are developed later to explain these practices.

The reason for the lack of policy on peacebuilding lies in what is called "fragmented authoritarianism" (Mertha 2009; Lieberthal 1992; Jakobson

and Knox 2010). Despite the image of China being a “China Inc.”—an authoritarian, top-down decision-making process centering on Xi Jinping—China’s bureaucratic complexity plays a significant role in the policymaking process, particularly when the policy does not relate to the top agenda for the Communist Party. China’s economic policies, domestic stabilization, and the US–China relations, for example, are the clear top agendas that require Xi Jinping’s constant attention. In contrast, peacebuilding, or the amalgamation of the four areas of activities mentioned above, is usually not in that top agenda. In this context, the incentive to employ holistic decision-making, or to create a substantial coordination mechanism among all relevant ministries and departments, is quite low (Hirono 2019). In other words, one must question who “China” is in this context. What is usually referred to as “China” consists of a variety of actors associated with the People’s Republic of China, each of which has its own interests to meet through its “peacebuilding” activity—whatever that means.

Each of the four areas of activities has been dealt with by specific ministries and departments, and these activities are regarded as something quite different in their nature. In the main, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People’s Liberation Army, and the Ministry of Defense are in charge of UN peacekeeping; the Ministry of Commerce is in charge of humanitarian assistance; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Communist Party’s Foreign Relations Department are in charge of mediation; and the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administrative Commission of the State Council (SASAC) and the Ministry of Commerce are in charge of development/investment activities.

In this fragmented context, “China’s peacebuilding policy” in South Sudan does not mean that the Chinese government has some systematic policy. Rather, it is actually a reflection of the shifting practices that various Chinese actors are making with respect to South Sudan.

### *Shifting Practices*

Some of the shifting practices that have been observed since the middle of the 2010s are the Chinese government’s approach to dealing directly with not only the South Sudan government but also nongovernmental groups, such as civilians, civil society groups, and multilateral institutions. More specifically, these practices have been seen in the following: (1) China sending infantry forces in the UN peacekeeping role, which allows China’s

peacekeepers to protect civilians, (2) the increasing engagement with civil society groups and multilateral institutions in humanitarian aid delivery, and (3) an increasing level of engagement with rebel groups in the conflict mediation context as well as on the ground. While these shifts are significant in nature, the level of change is still moderate, and is not considerable enough to the extent that it changes the general tendency of a Chinese government that prioritizes its relations with the South Sudanese government over those with civil society actors.

In UN peacekeeping, China sent 700 strong infantry forces to UNMISS in January 2015. Prior to this, China focused on sending force enablers. This shift took place as a result of the UNSC Resolution 2155 (May 2014) to change the UNMISS mandate to civilian protection. Some of the Chinese forces guarded the UN Protection of Civilian (POC) sites in Juba. This allowed Chinese peacekeepers to address the needs of the vulnerable populations. However, Chinese peacekeepers, and other UN peacekeepers as well, have significant difficulty in protecting civilians in the midst of conflict. A conflict in Juba in July 2016 was a painful lesson, as it not only killed two Chinese peacekeepers and injured four, but also brought some international criticism to the Chinese peacekeepers, as they "abandoned" their POC sites in Juba, leaving thousands of civilians behind (Center for Civilians in Conflict 2016, 5; UNSC 2016, 4). Ban Ki-moon ordered an Independent Special Investigation, which reports that "a lack of leadership on the part of key mission personnel had culminated in a chaotic and ineffective response to the violence", which was also responsible for the Chinese abandonment of the POC sites (UNSC 2016, 3-4).<sup>2</sup> In this context, China's contribution to the vulnerable population should be noted, but the operating environment made it extremely difficult to help the vulnerable populations.

The ways in which China provides humanitarian assistance have also shifted somewhat in the sense that the Chinese government engages increasingly more with South Sudanese and Chinese civil society groups and multilateral institutions. While the majority of assistance is still delivered from the Chinese government to the South Sudanese government

<sup>2</sup>To respond to the criticism, China's Ministry of Defense claimed that it is a "groundless and malicious hype" (People's Daily Online 2016). Further, the Chinese defense white paper published in September 2020 states: "the Chinese infantry battalion acted immediately on orders and quelled the violence decisively and promptly" (The State Council of the People's Republic of China 2020).



directly, there have been two noteworthy developments since 2015. First, an increasing amount of donations was given to multilateral institutions. China donated US\$5 million to the World Food Program (WFP) in South Sudan in 2015, 10 million in 2017, and 7 million in 2019 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2017). Further, in the context of COVID-19 response from 2020 to 2021, the Chinese government offered a total of US\$1 million to UNICEF, US\$200,000 to the WFP, and US\$100,000 to the World Health Organization—all in their South Sudan office (UNICEF 2021; Seetao 2021; Radio Tamazuj 2020). Second, China's civil society organizations participated in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The Jack Ma Foundation and the Alibaba Foundation donated medical supplies to the South Sudanese government in March and April 2020 (Embassy of the People's Republic of China in South Sudan 2020a, 2020b). The China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation also collaborated with the Chinese embassy in Juba to deliver 1800 school bags to the Jonglei State government as part of the flood response of 2021.<sup>3</sup>

In China's effort in conflict mediation, the extent to which China brought the interests of the rebel group to the negotiation table is unclear, but China was repeatedly thanked by the South Sudanese government for its mediation efforts, showing that China maintained good relations with the government actors. However, China knows that it is important to maintain some relations as part of the IGAD framework with the rebel groups as well, and the Chinese ambassador gets in touch with Riek Machar. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held consultation with the IGAD and conflicting parties of South Sudan in January 2015 (Xinhua 2015). As far as China's oil interests are concerned, the interviewees in this study suggested that China needed to have good relations with rebels around the oil field, so some on-the-ground discussion with rebel groups was taking place (Journalist (Anonymous) 2018).

While some changes are taking place, the Chinese government's approach to peacebuilding is not geared toward changing the state structure but toward "deferring to 'African solutions' or leaving the

<sup>3</sup>The Chinese Red Cross also provided US\$100,000 in cash as humanitarian aid to support South Sudanese refugees as early as 2013, but it was a cash transfer from the Chinese Red Cross to the South Sudanese Red Cross, rather than the actual delivery of humanitarian aid. One South Sudanese NGO, Concern South Sudan, also received humanitarian medical supply from the Chinese government, but this NGO was established in 2006 by H.E. Mary Ayen Maryerdit, the wife of President Salva Kiir, so it is not a "civil society" organization in the sense that it has sufficient autonomy from the government.

tough-talking to African or Western mediators" (Xie and Copeland 2017). For this reason, China abstains from UN Security Council resolutions to put sanctions against particular individuals and any arms embargo. In the words of Foreign Minister Wang Yi, "we need to adopt an objective and impartial attitude, understand where the issue has come from, and establish the basic facts. We shouldn't just listen to one side of the story and we shouldn't write out the wrong prescription" (Mission of the People's Republic of China to the European Union 2015). The Chinese actors take a nondeterministic approach in a sense that it does not offer any blueprint to conflict resolution, but to leave it to the decisions by conflicting actors.

However, the extent to which China's peacebuilding is context-specific—whether it addresses the needs of vulnerable populations—is questionable. While China's use of multilateral institutions such as UN peacekeeping and the above-mentioned new efforts of humanitarian assistance through multilateral institutions may reach the vulnerable populations, bilateral humanitarian assistance mainly goes to urban areas and benefits people who can afford such assistance, according to the interviewees. For example, China modernized and expanded "the country's main referral hospital, Juba Teaching Hospital" and renovated Kiir Mayardit Women's Hospital (Xinhua 2017). However, "they are used by the rich. The vulnerable people do not have access to the hospitals" (Civil society organization A 2018). In other words, China has a specific, predetermined approach to humanitarian assistance and development aid, which does not reach the vulnerable populations. As China gives aid to the South Sudanese government, the aid goes along with the South Sudanese government's priority areas, and these are not the vulnerable people. As discussed above in the South Sudan's government section, this approach to vulnerable people is deterministic.

In summary, while the Chinese government's approaches to peacebuilding allow the possibility of making it locally context-specific, its application is only extended to the South Sudanese government. With regard to the vulnerable population in South Sudan, China's peacebuilding remains mostly deterministic. It is, however, useful to add that China traditionally does not distinguish between the government and the vulnerable population. It assumes that the other government it deals with (e.g., the South Sudanese government) represents the legitimate interests of their people. This is based on the Confucian ideal: "The state-centric nature of China's approach acknowledges the principle of unity between a

state and its people—strengthening the state by successfully providing assistance in disaster areas will inevitably enhance the degree of harmony between the state and its people” (Hirono 2012).

### *Chinese Actors’ “top-down adaptation”*

The shift in China’s peacebuilding practices is a reflection of China’s adaptation to the local context because they “actively engaged in a structured process to sustain peace” (de Coning and Osland 2020). However, their adaptation is derived not only from the examination of local conditions but also from the overall geostrategic policy of China, because the same kind of adaptations can be observed in other conflict-affected areas outside of South Sudan. This can be called China’s “top-down based adaptation,” or, alternatively, Beijing-oriented adaptation.

The Beijing-oriented adaptation derives from the Chinese government’s increasingly flexible interpretation of sovereignty. Such interpretation, in fact, dates back to the 1990s (Carlson 2002, 2004). Given the need to show its responsible “great power” status, China wanted to make more contribution to the international community, which necessitated a more flexible approach to sovereignty (Pang 2009). This was compounded by China’s growing international commercial interests and the need to protect increasing numbers of Chinese citizens in conflict-affected areas in the 2000s onward, and in the context of the “Go Abroad” (*zouchuqu*) policy, which encouraged Chinese corporations to do business activities overseas (Hirono, Jiang, and Lanteigne 2019; de Coning and Osland 2020). With the development of the Belt and Road Initiative, the above tendency still continues today, and China’s academics and policy community also support the flexible interpretation of sovereignty, as indicated by my interviews with them.

The top-down adaptation in the field of UN peacekeeping is observed in the policy need for force protection, which has been discussed in China’s policy circle since the late 2000s (China-based policy analyst 2009). Due to the international tendency where UN peacekeepers are dispatched to locations with “no peace to keep,” the danger to peacekeepers becomes a significant international problem. The increase in Chinese peacekeeping “martyrs” has attracted attention in the Chinese media too (Xinhua 2021). Even though dispatching infantry forces goes a step ahead in terms of China’s nonintervention principle, the urge to protect peacekeepers is felt inside and outside of China. As a matter of fact, China also sent its infantry forces (called a “guard detachment”) to the United Nations

Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in 2013 (F. Wang 2015). The decision to dispatch infantry forces was a result of China's learning process, but it is not necessarily bottom-up learning deriving from South Sudan, but more of top-down learning.

China's increasing use of multilateral institutions in humanitarian delivery in South Sudan is also top-down adaptation. In 2015, for example, approximately 15% of China's humanitarian assistance was provided multilaterally, but this had rapidly increased by 2017. Then, approximately 51% of humanitarian assistance was given via multilateral institutions (Hirono 2018).<sup>4</sup> This shift in South Sudan, therefore, does not show that the adaptation took place by learning the local context in South Sudan. It rather shows that China's humanitarian assistance to South Sudan now goes more along with the global tendency of China's humanitarian assistance. The increasing presence of China's civil society organizations in humanitarian assistance also derives from the Chinese government's policy of social organizations' "going abroad" (Hirono 2018, 26).

With regard to conflict mediation, again this is to do with China's global tendency rather than deriving from the local South Sudanese context. China had long supported a government-to-government approach to diplomacy, and stayed away from contacting nongovernmental actors such as rebel forces. This is because doing so was regarded as a breach of the nonintervention principle. However, China's domestic opinion had become more forthcoming and flexible toward the nonintervention principle by the early 2000s. According to the questionnaire survey that Zhao Lei and his group conducted in 2010, 43.19% of respondents (mainly academics, policymakers, and university students) responded negatively to the question of whether or not China should always maintain the principle of consent of host states when deciding to dispatch peacekeeping operations (Lei 2011, X). Further, Wang Yizhou (2011, 2018), one of the top international relations specialists at Beijing University, published a book called *Creative Intervention*, arguing that China should engage in more UN peacekeeping operations and conflict mediation. China's mediation efforts have increased since then, Myanmar since 2013, Afghanistan since 2014, and Syria since 2015, for example. China's effort in conflict mediation in South Sudan should be understood in the context of China's foreign policy development. The International Crisis Group's signature

<sup>4</sup>The data on 2017 are the author's calculation based on Financial Tracking Service (FTS), OCHA.

report on China's approach to South Sudan's conflict is rightly titled "China's Foreign Policy Experiment in South Sudan" (Xie and Copeland 2017). Having said that, China's sanctions policy remained the same, prioritizing the principle of sovereignty and so-called political solutions. Yet again, this is China's foreign policy, rather than being based on a careful calculation of local situations in South Sudan.

All these adaptations derive from the policy changes in Beijing, rather than directly from China's experience in South Sudan. The iterative process of learning—a sign of adaptive peacebuilding—can be observed in Beijing, rather than in South Sudan. In short, the shift in China's peacebuilding practice is a reflection of China's top-down adaptation, rather than bottom-up adaptation through learning from the local contexts.

### *Effectiveness of Chinese Approaches*

No matter where China's adaptation derives from, how effective has China's approach been in order to sustain peace in South Sudan? This issue addresses the fourth question of this book: Does a context-specific approach to peacebuilding result in more effective adaptations? What matters in thinking about this question is "whose context" and "effective for whom." There is a significant division between the government actors and the vulnerable populations in South Sudan. The context and effectiveness need to be discussed while paying attention to this division.

As far as the South Sudanese government is concerned, China's top-down adaptation mentioned above was perceived effective in sustaining peace. In the words of the South Sudanese ambassador to Kenya, James Morgan, China's conflict mediation is regarded as highly effective because of its nondeterministic approach, customized to the South Sudanese government's needs:

In mediation, [Chinese actors] feel that the mediation or the agreement must come from the people of South Sudan themselves. China stood with us when other countries even wanted to impose sanctions. Sanctions never solve any problems. You can never solve a problem with creating another problem. When Western countries wanted to impose individual targeted sanctions on the leaders of South Sudan, or arms embargos on the government of South Sudan, China—in the UNSC—has been very straightforward by saying 'This cannot be, and this cannot bring peace.' When you sanction the government, the rebels will have an upper hand in the conflict. So, what

will happen? It will be a continuation of war without end. This is where the people and the government of South Sudan feel that China is a friend—not only a friend, but also a friend in deed and a friend in need. (Morgan 2018)

China's nondeterministic approach to the South Sudanese government has led to a somewhat effective adaptation—"somewhat" in the sense that China's pressure on the South Sudanese government led to an agreement for a unity government—but the agreement is still fragile. In contrast, the adaptation has not been felt by the vulnerable populations, according to interviews with civil society actors and refugees. China's deterministic approach to the vulnerable in South Sudan still led to ineffective adaptation—ineffective because China's assistance is mainly delivered to the national government and does not necessarily reach the vulnerable. It does not empower local agencies to fully participate in the decision-making process—the key gap between the Chinese approach and the South Sudanese people's perceptions of peacebuilding by China.

## CONCLUSIONS

The argument in this chapter is threefold. Firstly, while the Chinese government's approaches to peacebuilding allow for the possibility of making it locally context-specific, its application is only extended to the South Sudanese government. With regard to the vulnerable population in South Sudan, China's peacebuilding remains deterministic. To elaborate further, one major difficulty present during research is the huge diversity on the ground. The word "local" does not capture the complexity of South Sudan. Dichotomizing the "local" into the elites and the vulnerable does not justify the analysis either. However, during the interviews, a recurring theme to emerge from the answers of the interviewees was that the Chinese are paying attention to the powerful, and not to the vulnerable. No matter how simplistic that might sound, this is the perception of the South Sudanese people (elites and the vulnerable), and the analysis made in this chapter confirms that.

Hence, to take this finding into consideration, this chapter puts importance on distinguishing at least who is the local, thus dividing the population into two groups: the South Sudanese government and the vulnerable population. For the South Sudanese government, China allows the possibility of a context-specific approach, letting the government take the lead in peacebuilding and providing support for their initiatives. However,

when it comes to the vulnerable population, China's peacebuilding remains very deterministic in the sense that China still relies on the South Sudanese government for the distribution of humanitarian goods, for example.

The second argument is to do with the concept of top-down adaptation. For instance, China's peacebuilding efforts have been adapted to the local context to some extent. However, this does not necessarily derive from the South Sudanese situation but comes from a shift in China's global policy toward conflict-affected regions, and the shift is from a sovereignty-centered, hands-off approach in the past to a more engagement with a flexible interpretation of sovereignty.

Last but not least, the third part of the argument is about effectiveness, and it includes two directions since the effectiveness of China's peacebuilding approach is mixed. On the one hand, China's context-specific peacebuilding has been effective in the sense that it has helped to form an agreement for a unity government between the South Sudanese government and rebel groups. On the other hand, China's deterministic approach to peacebuilding with regard to the vulnerable population led to its ineffective adaptation. Therefore, the question concerning the linkage between context-specific approach and effectiveness must be further addressed in this part of the argument.

In conclusion, answers to the four questions brought up at the beginning of the chapter are provided. Regarding the first question that asked whether the local, national, or international peacebuilding actors have implemented deterministic or context-specific approaches to peacebuilding, this study found that the answers are different depending on which context it is being discussed in. For instance, in the case of the South Sudanese government and the rebels, the approach is deterministic, while in the local civil society context, it is context-specific. Also, while the Chinese actors operate a context-specific approach to the South Sudanese government and are deterministic to the vulnerable population, other international actors do the opposite. As to the second question that queries the effectiveness of each approach in terms of their contribution to sustaining peace, it was discovered that the context-specific approach was somewhat effective for the South Sudanese government in making a peace deal, while a deterministic strategy with the vulnerable population was ineffective.

Concerning the third question about their inclination to adapt, this chapter observed that adaptation in all aspects (conflict mediation, UN peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, and development/investment activities) mainly derived from China's global strategy, not from bottom-up considerations ("top-down adaptation"). In regard to the fourth question that asked about whether the context-specific approach to peacebuilding results in more effective adaptations, this chapter could not identify such a causal relationship in the case of China in South Sudan. This is because, even though China takes a context-specific approach vis-à-vis the South Sudanese government, China's adaptation derives from its own global policy rather than the result of the context-specific approach. Context specificity and adaptations are two separate issues in the case of China's peacebuilding.

For the policy implications, this study is keen to note that while China's adaptation in conflict-affected areas is welcomed, Chinese peacebuilding needs to pay more attention to vulnerable populations. This also means that Chinese companies' CSR should go beyond the current charity model, such as merely providing money to schools and hospitals, and address more contextual issues. In addition, the South Sudanese government should also recognize the importance of paying attention to their vulnerable populations, which, in turn, affects the legitimacy of the government. In other words, rather than being satisfied only with the Chinese contribution made to the South Sudanese government, they must become more attentive to the vulnerable populations and make suggestions to the Chinese government to also better the situation for the vulnerable.

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# The Role of Adaptive Peacebuilding in Japan's Assistance of the Mindanao Peace Process in the Philippines

*Miyoko Taniguchi*

## INTRODUCTION

Liberal peacebuilding in the context of the post-Cold War era, which was designed to achieve multiparty democracy, a free-market economy, and the rule of law (Richmond 2006), has failed to resolve the issue of conflict and violence in the contemporary world. Despite the high level of attention paid to the local in the post-liberal peacebuilding discourse, called hybrid peace (Boege et al. 2009; Richmond and Mitchell 2012; Roberts

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The views addressed in this chapter are the author's own and do not reflect the views of the JICA.

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2012), it is still unclear how the concept of hybridity in two contested disciplines—universalism and particularism—can be transformed in practice. Besides, the existing debates are inadequate to deal with the current political reality. Many cases in a post-conflict setting, as observed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Angola, Tajikistan, Burundi, Ethiopia, Sudan, and elsewhere, have been inclined to be illiberal or authoritarian (neither liberal nor hybrid) despite significant efforts to introduce liberal peace, to construct a hegemonic order and elite stranglehold over the political economy (Soares de Oliveira 2011; Piccolino 2018).

Within this global context, there has been a growing recognition that: (i) peacebuilding is complex and that linear diagnostics and predetermined solutions, typical of the liberal peace approach to conflict resolution, are too simplistic and generic; and (ii) peacebuilding is a political activity that must avoid templates, formulas, and a one-size-fits-all approach to solutions (de Coning 2018; Randazzo and Torrent 2020; Paffenholz 2021). Call and de Coning (2018, 262) articulated, “the era in which peacebuilding was synonymous with pursuing a liberal peace end-state is coming to an end, and the next phase in the transition seems to be characterized by a more open-ended or goal-free approach toward peacebuilding, where the focus is on the means or process, and the end-state is open to context-specific interpretations of peace.” On the basis of this argument, de Coning (2018) defined adaptive peacebuilding as a process where local, national, and international peacebuilders, together with the societies, communities, and people affected by the conflict, actively engage in a structured collaborative process to sustain peace and resolve conflicts by employing an inductive and iterative process of learning and adaptation.

From the results of the literature review on peacebuilding, several main problems can be identified, namely, (i) there is a lack of academic argument from a non-Western perspective, especially from Japan, despite its engagement over the last three decades; (ii) few case studies of peacebuilding efforts have been done by bilateral donor agencies, especially major Indo-Pacific powers; instead, they tend to be done by international organizations such as the United Nations (UN) or UN agencies; (iii) the arguments are inclined to piecemeal not comprehensive, with the view of synchronizing efforts on peacemaking and peacebuilding or development, diplomacy, and defense (3D); (iv) the scope of the timeframe is rather short against the protracted and complex peace process in reality; and (v) few cases have proved the effectiveness of an adaptive peacebuilding approach despite the attention it has received.

To fill the gaps, this study examines an alternative approach to peacebuilding that is context-specific by taking up a Japanese peacebuilding approach, as in the case of Mindanao in Southern Philippines, to cover the period from the late 1990s to 2019, from a non-Western perspective. For that, key questions are asked: (i) Who are the local, national, or international peacebuilding actors who have implemented deterministic or context-specific approaches to peacebuilding? (ii) How effective or not has each approach been in contributing to sustainable peace? (iii) How have they been adapted? and (iv) How are context-specific and adaptive approaches interlinked? Throughout this process, it is important to elucidate how Japanese policies, approaches, and practices in peacebuilding have been shaped by external and internal factors. This then becomes the basis of verification to identify the particularities and universalities in adaptive peacebuilding efforts and leads to further contributions to the arguments in the literature.

The reasons to take up the Mindanao case are as follows. First, Japan's contribution to peace in Mindanao is considered part of the expanding global engagement underpinning the diplomatic principle of proactive contributions to peace. This case illustrates one way of embodying "proactive pacifism" by one of the major Indo-Pacific powers. Second, success factors through international cooperation, based on the Japanese experience, can be extracted from the recent progress in Mindanao's peace process, such as the creation of a new autonomous region and transition government in 2019. Third, Japan has incrementally been evolving the forms and contents of assistance in conflict-affected areas in Mindanao over the last 30 years by strengthening the development–diplomacy–security nexus without dispatching the Japanese self-defense forces (SDF) for peacekeeping operations (PKOs). By elucidating the synchronizing mechanism in a non-UN-Peacekeeping Operation (PKO) setting through collaborative efforts with diverse international, national, and local stakeholders, new lessons can be learned, and policy implications can be further addressed.

To this end, this study: (i) describes the evolution of policy and practice on Japan's contribution to peace in the post-Cold War era with the expansion of global engagement repositioning Japan in the global context; (ii) provides an overview of Japanese assistance to peace and development in Mindanao, specifying peacebuilding architecture in the form of the



development–diplomacy–security nexus; (iii) examines how Japan’s assistance to peace and development in Mindanao has evolved incrementally by identifying four phases of assistance by nature and content; and (iv) elucidates the effectiveness of “adaptive” peacebuilding approaches in the Japanese context, by underpinning the norms and values, and proposes policy implications in conclusion.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

This study adopts analytical concepts from de Coning’s defined adaptive peacebuilding approach as described in Chap. 2. Based on complexity theory and a system approach, it includes non-linearity, self-organization, and process facilitation with an emphasis on local and national ownership that would result in increasing resilience and consequently sustainable peace. In fact, all these concepts have a high affinity for Japan’s aid principles such as request-based, self-reliance, ownership, and capacity development. Thus, the study seeks to verify how these aid principles have been conceptualized and how they can be inserted into the adaptive peacebuilding discourse.

The survey methods that were applied are individual or semi-structured interviews, literature reviews, secondary surveys, process tracing, and the context analysis of narratives. The field survey in the Philippines was conducted from February 16 to 29, 2020. Interviews were conducted with 28 informants, including government agencies, the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF), the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF), donors, civil society organizations (CSO), and academic institutions. To probe further, online interviews with ten informants, including diplomats and non-governmental organizations (NGO) staff in charge of mediation, were conducted from December 2020 to February 2021. For the interviews, each narrative was respected and understood as the interviewee’s own perception through active listening and oral history methods. Prior to the field survey, other interviews were conducted with 72 personnel who had been involved in assistance in Mindanao since the 1990s. These interviews were primarily undertaken by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) study team for the “Comprehensive Review of the JICA’s Assistance in Mindanao” (JICA 2021) from May 2019 to January 2020. All the interviews were recorded and coded for context analysis, the basis for synchronizing all the results to derive a reliable and persuasive conclusion.

## JAPANESE ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING: POLICY AND PRACTICES

### *Evolution of Concept and Policy on Japan's Contribution to Peace*

The end of the Cold War spurred inter- and intra-state conflict in many parts of the world and disrupted the international order. In response to these international security challenges, the UN, or equivalent multinational forces, took on peacekeeping. In this context, the so-called Gulf War erupted—led by the United States (US) and a multinational force in reaction to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990 (Dobson 2003). As a part of its participation, Japan contributed US\$ 13 billion to the US-led multilateral coalition. Later, Japan became more active in UN peacekeeping operations (PKO) through the enactment of the International Peace Cooperation Act in June 1992. This allowed for the dispatch of the SDF on UN-PKO missions. The first dispatch was to Cambodia in 1992–1993 as part of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), followed by involvement in other post-conflict states including Iraq through the enactment of the Iraq Special Measures Law in 2003. Japan has, until recently, been a regular financial and human contributor to the UN-PKO since 1992.<sup>1</sup>

Besides contributions to international peace to restore order, Japan has also been engaged in peacebuilding through official development assistance (ODA) and its evolving concepts, developing policies and practices to this end. On the basis of the human security concept addressed by Prime Minister Obuchi (1998–2000) in 1998, which later became one of the pillars of Japan's foreign policy in the post-Cold War era (Kurusu 2011), the term peacebuilding first appeared in Japan's Medium-term Policy on ODA in 1999 and identified “conflict and development” as one of its priority issues. Prime Minister Koizumi (2001–2006) first articulated in May 2002 that Japan would increase its international role by focusing on the “consolidation of peace” and “nation-building” in conflict-affected countries.

Simultaneously, the JICA, as a development agency, undertook its own initiatives to examine the role of development assistance in peacebuilding on the basis of human security. In October 1999, a study acknowledged

<sup>1</sup>Japan contributed 8.56% of the total UN-PKO budget in 2020-2021 after the US (27.89%) and China (15.21%) (MOFA 2022).

the importance of the JICA's peacebuilding activities based on the principle of "Do No Harm," covering conflict prevention, emergency humanitarian assistance, and reconstruction (JICA 2001). Based on the study, the JICA defined it as the process of preventing the outbreak and recurrence of conflicts, revitalizing societies, economies, and people's lives destroyed by conflict through a seamless response leading to sustainable development (JICA 2003). As part of subsequent ODA reforms, this view was incorporated into the succeeding JICA guidelines and ODA policies, notably, the ODA Charter in 2003, stipulating peacebuilding as one of the priority issues.

In response to the changing nature of regional and global geopolitics and security environments, and with the rise of China, Japanese (passive) pacifism, shaped by the notion that disarmament is the road to peace (Kitaoka 2014, 6–7), reached a milestone toward breaking free from the postwar regime (constitution) under the Abe administration (2012–2020) when it adopted proactive pacifism. Prime Minister Abe took strong initiatives to undertake doctrinal, institutional, and legal changes in security (Nakanishi 2015). In 2013, the National Security Strategy (NSS) was formulated as the first document to set a course for Japan's security policy and diplomacy, presenting a "proactive contribution to peace" and "international cooperation" as its central concepts (Kitaoka 2014, 2).

Japan's foreign aid policy was also revised from the ODA Charter of 1992 and the 2003 revision to the Development Cooperation Charter of 2015, which includes the "strategic use of ODA," as specified in the NSS. In addition to contributing to peace and prosperity through cooperation for non-military purposes, human security—a concept that pursues the right of individuals to live happily and in dignity, free from fear and want, through their protection and empowerment—is the guiding principle that lies at the foundation of Japan's development cooperation (MOFA 2015, 4). One of the noticeable changes lies in its name, reflecting the reality that international cooperation is carried out not only by ODA but also by non-ODA organizations, including the private sector, civil society, and academia.

The other significant change can be observed in the views on the international landscape and domestic conditions. The ODA Charter in 2003 was framed on the basis of a worldview in the post-Cold War era when a liberal-based international order became dominant. In response to the ethnic or intra-national conflicts that emerged after the Cold War, peacebuilding was situated as one of the priority agendas. Alternatively, the

views in the Development Cooperation Charter reflected the changing balance of power and the acceleration of multi-polarization in world politics due to the rise of emerging countries, including China. Consequently, the term “security” was added to “peace” in the new charter to promote the liberal order based on universal values that was reframed into the concept of a Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP).

Based on the above, it appears that, at a concept and policy level, Japan has geared itself toward adopting an “All Japan Approach,” by strengthening the development–diplomacy–security nexus. Influenced by external and internal factors, Japanese pacifism has incrementally changed its concepts, synchronized national and human security concepts, and shifted the context from the postwar to the post-Cold War. The next section will discuss how the above concepts and policies on international peace cooperation and peacebuilding have been translated into practice.

### *Evolution of Practice on Japanese Contribution to Peace*

In the Japanese government’s review of all practices influencing international peace since the early 1990s, there are three main approaches: (i) participation in the UN’s PKO abroad by the SDF and regulated by collective security; (ii) participation in non-UN peace operations by the SDF determined by collective self-defense within the framework of the US alliance; and (iii) the provision of peacebuilding assistance in conflict-affected areas/countries by the JICA and the MOFA through ODA. Despite the separate lines of activities related to “international peace cooperation” and “peacebuilding assistance,” the coordination between the Ministry of Defense(MOD)/SDF, MOFA/Embassy of Japan in the Philippines (EJP), and the JICA, the synchronization efforts are undertaken on a case-by-case basis. This resulted partially from the changes in the SDF’s mission in PKOs in accordance with the expansion of UN and non-UN-PKO missions, from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and counterterrorism.

After the legalization of Japan’s participation in UN-PKO in 1992, about 12,500 personnel (SDF, police, and civilian) have been dispatched to 28 UN and non-UN missions in 14 countries as of March 2021(MOFA 2021). Among them, the first dispatch to UN-PKO under the PKO Law was to the UN Angola Verification Mission II as election observers in 1992; this was followed by a dispatch to UNTAC (1992–1993). Other missions included Mozambique (1993–1995), El Salvador (1994), Golan

Heights (Syria) (1996–2003), East Timor (1999, 2002–2004, 2007–2008, and 2010–2012), Nepal (2007–2011), Sudan (2008), Haiti (2010–2012), and South Sudan (2012 to the present). Non-UN missions formed by US allies included Rwanda, Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Sinai Peninsula (Egypt). While adhering to the principles for participation in PKO in compliance with Article 9 of the Constitution, these missions were non-military activities such as monitoring elections, engineering, and humanitarian assistance.

On the other hand, peacebuilding assistance through ODA has also evolved since the late 1990s in response to a growing need for peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction. The basic principles and features are described as follows: (i) consolidation of peace- and nation-building; (ii) respect for local communities and their ownership; and (iii) emphasis on the perspective of human security (MOFA 2007). The first peacebuilding support project through ODA was undertaken in Cambodia and extended to Timor-Leste, Sri Lanka, Bosnia Herzegovina, Afghanistan, the Philippines (Mindanao), and Iraq when expanding its global engagement. Aside from country-based assistance, Japan has taken a leading role in peacebuilding in Africa through the Tokyo International Conferences on African Development (TICAD) since 1993, underpinned by the three principles of consolidation of peace, human-centered development, and poverty reduction.

Over the years, synchronizing efforts on the development–diplomacy–security nexus have been observed in Timor-Leste, South Sudan, and other countries (cf. Uesugi 2016). After Cambodia, the “All Japan Approach” initiative through the SDF, MOFA, and JICA took off in Timor-Leste in 1999 through the first donor conference organized by the Japanese government, followed by the dispatch of the SDF to the UN mission (UNTAET) in 2002, where the SDF was in charge of infrastructure construction. This was followed by the JICA and Japanese NGOs and private companies. In the case of South Sudan, soon after the establishment of the UN Mission here (UNMISS) in 2011, the SDF (330 personnel) was dispatched to the UNMISS for infrastructure development around Juba. With the establishment of a coordination center between the UNMISS and Japan, the “All Japan Approach” was reinforced through the strategic integration of the SDF with the ODA projects and JICA/NGO activities (Tana 2021). As such, South Sudan is considered to embody a proactive contribution to peace on the basis of the human security principle. Based on the above, the next section takes up the case of Mindanao with a detailed analysis.

## OVERVIEW OF THE MINDANAO CONTEXT: CONFLICT, VIOLENCE, AND THE PEACE PROCESS<sup>2</sup>

Over the last decades, the peace process in Mindanao, as the conflict resolution with the Moro (mainly Muslim) secessionist movement, has partly resulted from changes in the government's policies and commitment to peace under the influence of international and domestic stakeholders. The political reality in the Philippines, which lacks guarantees regarding the continuity of the administration's public policy, has significantly affected the status and length of the peace process. In this sense, peacebuilding in Mindanao is seen to be a non-linear process.

In the peace process between the government of the Philippines (GPH) and the MNLF, both parties signed a peace agreement in Tripoli in 1976, which stipulated the establishment of an autonomous government exercising judicial powers (Sharia) and possessing special security forces and an economic system under the auspices of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. A partial by-product of the agreement resulted in a provision in the 1987 Philippines constitution, which allowed for the creation of an Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) in 1990 through a referendum without the participation of the MNLF. Eventually, a final peace agreement (FPA) was concluded in 1996 that led to the election of Nur Misuari, the then MNLF chairman, as the governor of the ARMM.

Peace negotiations between the GPH and the MILF formally started in 1997, immediately after the signing of the FPA. Since then, the negotiation process has been interrupted three times—in 2000, 2003, and 2008—by outbreaks of high-intensity violence in response to changes in the government's direction and policy toward the peace process. Under the Aquino administration, both parties signed the Framework Agreement on the Bangsamoro (FAB) in 2012 and the Comprehensive Agreement on the Bangsamoro (CAB) in 2014 to replace ARMM with a new political entity called Bangsamoro, now with a larger territorial scope and broader autonomy. However, the CAB could not be legislated at the Philippine Congress. With the strong initiative of then President Duterte (2016–2022), the Bangsamoro Organic Law (BOL) was enacted in 2018, creating the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM) and subsequently the Bangsamoro Transition Authority (BTA)

<sup>2</sup>This section is mostly based on Taniguchi (2019, 2020).

in 2019, initially planned to govern the region until 2022, and extended to 2025.

In addition to the above vertical conflict, feuds among prominent Muslim clans over political power, land, and resources, called *rido*, have also been rampant in this region. These horizontal conflicts are characterized by sporadic outbursts of retaliatory violence between families and kinship groups as well as between communities where the local government or central authority is weak (Torres III 2014). In a historical sense, the “divide and rule” policy introduced by the US colonial government has prevented the Moros from unifying against the state. The government provided the local leaders, mostly *datus*, with vested interests or official positions to pacify the region. As a result, clan feuds and political violence have intensified, with links to numerous violent Islamic extremist groups since the 2000s, as typically seen in the Marawi Crisis in 2017. Conflict and violence are by their nature complex in the Mindanao context.

Moro society is intrinsically divided by diverse affiliations such as kinship (clan), ethno-linguistic groups, and political positions (separatist rebels or state collaborators). Thus, it should be understood that the complexity of the Bangsamoro context is both vertical and horizontal, resulting in considerable conflict and violence (Taniguchi, 2019, 2020; Lara 2014).

## OVERVIEW OF JAPANESE ASSISTANCE TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN MINDANAO

In the early 2000s, assistance toward peace and development gained momentum in response to the global security threat in the aftermath of the New York terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As US allies, both Japan and the Philippines supported the US government’s “Global War on Terror,” with both sharing the US anti-terrorism agenda, depicted as “new security challenges,” to push forward their own security challenges, and strengthen the US and Asia–Pacific alliances (Hughes 2007, 327). Under these circumstances, in December 2002, the then Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi announced a “Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao” during President Arroyo’s visit to Tokyo.

The next momentum came in July 2006 during an event to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between the Philippines and Japan. During the meeting in Manila, the

then foreign minister Aso expressed Japan's commitment to peacebuilding in Mindanao in the form of the following: (i) dispatching a development expert to the International Monitoring Team (IMT), a Malaysia-led cease-fire monitoring team; (ii) establishing the Mindanao Task Force (MTF) at the Embassy of Japan in the Philippines (EJP) to coordinate with the JICA and the Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) for effective peacebuilding; and (iii) implementing the "Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Project" (MOFA 2006). This assistance was soon integrated into one initiative, called "Japan-Bangsamoro Initiative for Reconstruction and Development (J-BiRD)," to contribute to the peace process and development in the conflict-affected areas of Mindanao (CAAM) so that people could experience the dividends of peace at a grassroots level (EJP 2014). To date J-BiRD remains the overall framework for Japan's ODA in Mindanao.

## PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE

### *GPH-MILF-Third Party: Peacemaking-Peacekeeping-Peacebuilding*

Since the start of the peace process between the GPH and the MILF in 1997, the peacebuilding architecture has also evolved, adapting to the non-linear process. Making, keeping, and building peace in Mindanao is characterized by its "hybridity" (Rood 2016), with international, national, and local actors, and its "multi-layered nature" that includes diverse international, national, and local (state and non-state) actors with roles and functions that strengthen the relations among the diverse local actors, who have their own constituencies in a divided society (Fig. 10.1).

To resume the stalled negotiation after the military operations by the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP) in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Malaysia came into the picture as a facilitator at the request of President Arroyo, and this led to the Tripoli Agreement in 2001. To realize this agreement, the Joint Coordination Committee on Cessation of Hostilities (JCCCH) between the GPH and the MILF was created in 2003. The following year, Malaysia led a (multilateral-hybrid) International Monitoring Team (IMT) composed of Libya (withdrawn in 2011), Brunei, Japan (2006), Norway (2010), the European Union (2010), and Indonesia (2012). The IMT was dispatched in 2004 for ceasefire monitoring. Further, the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA) under the MILF



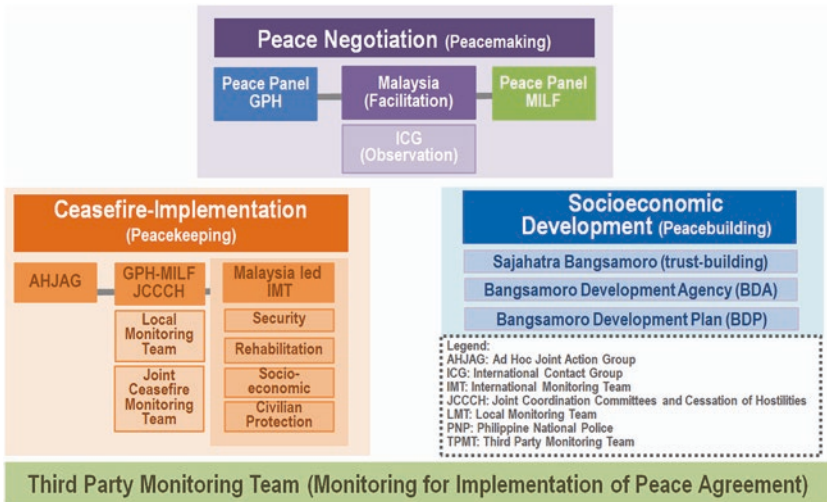


Fig. 10.1 Peacebuilding architecture: GPH–MILF–third party. Source: The author modified from Rood (2016)

was set up to coordinate humanitarian, rehabilitation, and development assistance for trust-building between the parties through collaborative works and capacity development on the MILF side for future governance.

After the failure to sign the framework of the peace agreement in 2008, called the Memorandum of Agreement for Ancestral Domain (MOA-AD), due to a challenge filed by Moro leaders on its constitutionality in some provisions on exclusive jurisdiction, the International Contact Group (ICG), composed of four countries and four international NGOs, was established in 2009 to rebuild trust between the parties and act as a guarantor mechanism. In 2013, the Third-Party Monitoring Team (TPMT), composed of an EU diplomat (head), and international and local NGOs, was set up to monitor the mechanism of the implementation of the peace agreement and to help in the crafting of a final “exit document.”

To summarize, all new mechanisms were not designed at the beginning. Rather, they were incrementally adapted and developed to break through the stalemates and to resume successive negotiations based on inputs from specialized NGOs, such as the Coalition of Resources and Humanitarian Dialogue, which were globally involved in conflict resolution. In particular, the engagement of a third party is inevitable for the

cessation of hostilities between parties. Further, diplomatic delegates, especially from Japan, also played a crucial role, exercising leverage due to socio-economic, political (diplomatic), and cultural ties from a historical perspective. Looking back at how third-party engagement in the peace process in Mindanao evolved over time, and at the diversity of countries and agencies involved, we can consider the process as “adaptive,” in that it evolved from experience and in response to setbacks, challenges, and breakthroughs (Taniguchi, 2022).

*The “All Japan Approach”: Development–Diplomacy–Security Nexus*

In line with the above peacebuilding architecture, Japanese peacebuilding is characterized as adopting the “All Japan Approach” by synchronizing all efforts in a development–diplomacy–security nexus (Fig. 10.2). More specifically, it can be explained as: (i) all efforts by phases have overlapped with the non-linear peace process over the last 50 years; (ii) it started through development (peacebuilding), even before the signing of peace agreements to promote peace momentum, security (ceasefire monitoring), and diplomacy (mediation); and (iii) the whole process of providing assistance is by nature adaptive rather than predetermined due to the aid

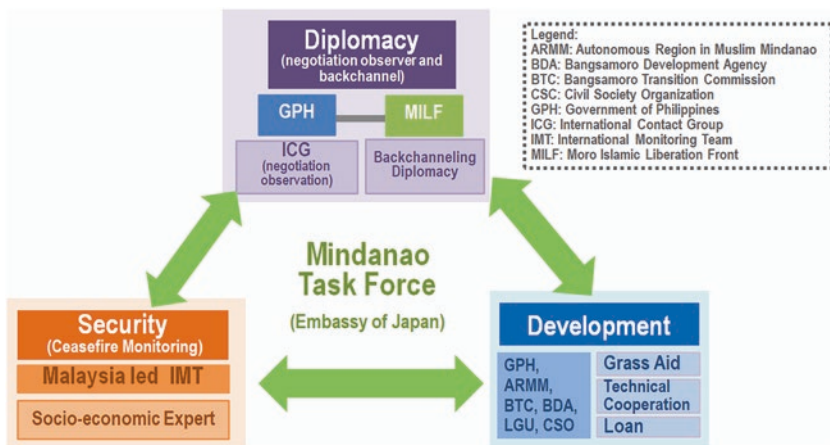


Fig. 10.2 Japan’s peacebuilding architecture in Mindanao (the GPH–MILF Peace Track). Source: Author

principles of self-help, ownership, and on-request basis from recipient countries. The overall direction and the contents of assistance are aligned and realigned in response to the changes in the status of the peace process.

Under the rubric “assistance,” the main actors on the Japanese side were the EJP, JICA, and JBIC (JICA since 2008), while other actors included the private sector, NGOs, and academics who were also involved in implementing specific projects and studies. Aside from the above diplomatic contribution through participation in ICG and backchanneling facilitation between the parties by the EJP, JICA provided financial and technical assistance in the areas of infrastructure, socio-economic and community development, and governance capacity development. Notably, Japan dispatched an expert seconded from the JICA to the IMT to be engaged in monitoring socio-economic and security conditions and implementing small-scale projects at a community level to deliver peace dividends through the EJP. All these efforts were synchronized by sharing information and experiences with the MTF to determine effective and timely assistance in alignment with the status of the peace talks and security on the ground.

#### EVOLUTION OF THE JAPANESE ASSISTANCE TO PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT IN MINDANAO

Japanese assistance to peace and development in Mindanao from the 1990s to 2019 can be categorized into four phases by the content and amount of assistance: (i) from 1990 to 2002 under the Aquino and Ramos administration in alignment with the development agenda; (ii) from 2002 to 2006 in relation to the Support Package for Peace and Stability in Mindanao; (iii) from 2006 to 2011 after JICA President Sadako Ogata’s visit to the MILF military base in Darapanan; and (iv) after the first summit meeting between President Aquino and MILF Chairman Murad held in Narita from 2011 to 2019 until the BARM and the BTA were created as part of the peace agreement.

##### *Age of Search for Assistance (from 1990 to 2002)*

After the final peace agreement between the GPH and the MNLF in 1996, Japan started to provide assistance for Mindanao to support the peace process, although it was not undertaken as “peacebuilding.” The

assistance was mainly done through concessional loans to the national government for infrastructural development in the areas of agriculture, electrification, and roads to correct disparities between regions in the Philippines, in line with the direction of the Philippine government, as the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao were among the most impoverished areas in the Philippines. Despite the first attempt toward improving economic development in the conflict-affected areas in Mindanao, the conflict between the GPH and the MILF erupted into a full-scale war under the Estrada administration in 2001. This resulted in the suspension of all projects in the region.

However, the peace process slowly moved ahead in accordance with the transition of the administration from Estrada to Arroyo in January 2001. In September of the same year, when President Arroyo was invited as a guest of honor to Japan, the MOFA included the phrase “Support for Mindanao” in a joint press statement that consequently became the trigger for Japan’s agreement to support the peace process in the succeeding years.

*Initial Stage of Full-Fledged Support Under the Koizumi Initiative (from 2002 to 2006)*

In 2002, assistance was explicitly framed as “peace and development” in Mindanao. In addition to infrastructure projects, Japan’s commitment started to materialize in two ways: (i) implementing a joint loan project with the World Bank for poverty reduction and strengthening social cohesion through small-scale infrastructure projects with the use of participatory methods; and (ii) dispatching a high-ranking retired JICA officer as a senior advisor (2003–2005)<sup>3</sup> to the ARMM regional governor, then Parouk Hussin (2001–2005) of the MNLF. In 2003, it was initially to build working relations and later to identify the JICA’s assistance. The JICA officers were generally of the opinion that in parallel with the quick delivery of peace dividends to the people, the ARMM government needed to enhance its administrative capacity.

The advisor was the first travel-based expatriate among the other donors. At the time, the Japanese ambassador strongly supported the dispatch with the idea that Japan should assist peace in Mindanao in consideration of the history of the war between the countries, which was beyond

<sup>3</sup>The senior advisors were four and were dispatched by 2013.

the US-initiated “War on Terror” discourse. Consequently, the work undertaken by the advisor, especially the Comprehensive Basic Study of the ARMM in 2003, became the basis of Japanese peacebuilding assistance to Mindanao in terms of content in the areas of governance, community development, agricultural extension services, and infrastructure.

On the Tokyo side, 2003 became a landmark for JICA’s peacebuilding for the following reasons. First, the ODA Charter 2003 stipulated “peacebuilding” as one of the priority agendas for the first time. Second, as part of the government’s administrative reform from the mid-1990s, JICA became an independent administrative institution from a special corporation under the MOFA in October 2003, with the new JICA Establishment Law that included “reconstruction” for the first time to clarify the efforts of peacebuilding (JICA 2019). Upon the establishment of the “New JICA,” Dr. Sadako Ogata took office and promoted operational reforms within the JICA with the principles of “field-centered” and “human security.” All the above enabled the JICA to push forward in expanding assistance to peacebuilding in Mindanao.

*From Ogata’s Initiative to Non-linear Peacebuilding Assistance  
(from 2006 to 2011)*

Despite the momentum created through diplomatic initiatives under Prime Minister Koizumi and Foreign Affairs Minister Aso, this phase typically demonstrated that the peace process is non-linear. It started with Ogata’s visit to the MILF military base in Darapanan in September 2006. During the meeting with MILF Chairman Murad, Ogata expressed the JICA’s commitment to active support for socio-economic development in conflict-affected areas to promote the realization of peace from a human security perspective. At that time, the Japanese delegate headed by Ogata was welcomed by the MILF leadership, as they perceived that the MILF would gain political legitimacy for its claim in the international community, thanks to the trust and political leverage of Ogata. Simultaneously, Ogata directly requested President Arroyo to reach a political resolution during her visit (Taniguchi 2020).

Before the visit, diplomatic efforts had intensified behind the scenes since 2005, with a series of meetings with the MILF leadership to show Japan’s commitment to contribute to peace in Mindanao. This was largely initiated by Minister Taeko Takahashi at the political desk of the EJP,

based on her idea that Japan should be actively engaged in a “true peace” in Mindanao that would contribute not only to the Philippines but to the entire Asian region and Japan. The idea was widely shared not only by embassy officials but also by the MILF and the government side. Further, the minister had actively worked on the MOFA and the JICA in Tokyo to synchronize efforts for peace as Japanese diplomacy through engagement in peace process and reconstruction that would later evolve into J-BIRD. All of the above eventually created the MTF at the EJP and led to the dispatch of a JICA representative as a socio-economic specialist to the IMT based in Cotabato. Importantly, the view was well shared with Ogata, who enabled the JICA to undertake a “seamless assistance” before signing a peace agreement to minimize the gap between emergency/reconstruction and development phases. With Ogata’s visit, Japan’s contribution to peace in Mindanao began in full swing.

As envisioned, the synchronizing efforts were incrementally institutionalized. The effort started with the IMT expert: (i) conducting advocacy activities for the peace process and Japan’s assistance to local leaders with frequent field visits; and (ii) gaining information on the socio-economic, political, and security status at the grassroots level. This experience and knowledge were shared with the EJP, JICA, and then JBIC (JICA since 2008) and contributed to: (i) gaining the people’s trust in Japan through its physical presence; (ii) improving Japan’s level of understanding of the local situation, including the political dynamics; and (iii) identifying appropriate projects. On the JICA side, a fast-track system was introduced to respond quickly to the immense need for assistance in conflict-affected areas by simplifying certain procedures to accelerate decision-making. Using this system, the JICA conducted the Study for Socio-economic Reconstruction and Development of Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao (SERD-CAAM) (2007–2009) through collaborative work with the BDA that was extended to other assistances such as: (i) community-targeted assistance for people to benefit from the dividends of peace; (ii) assistance for the BDA to underpin the peace process through capacity development for future governance; and (iii) assistance for the ARMM to improve its administrative capacity for effective governance.

Simultaneously, assistance for the ARMM government also continued in the areas of economic development, agricultural extension services, and human capacity development in the form of loans, studies, and technical cooperation. In particular, the JICA directly assisted the ARMM

government in developing the capacity of mid-career officials in the areas of administration, management, economic development, and infrastructure development through the ARMM Human Resource Development Project (2004–2007). The rationale behind this assistance was as follows. First, as the ARMM government was the legal entity until the new autonomous government was established, it was required to deliver public goods and services effectively. Second, once it was established, the new government would replace the organizational structure, system, and employees of the existing government to some extent. Thus, the new autonomous government would require an organizational and institutional foundation.

The momentum for peace, however, did not last long. The recurrence of violent conflict between the GPH and the MILF resulting from the ruling of the Philippine Supreme Court on the unconstitutionality of the MOA-AD in 2008 led to a temporary suspension of all JICA's assistance to Mindanao. Yet, while all other donors withdrew from their operations in Mindanao, the continuous presence of a Japanese expert in the IMT, even adding one JICA official to show the diplomatic commitment determined by Ogata, consolidated the GPH and MILF's trust in Japan. In addition, the so-called Maguindanao Massacre in 2009—clan feuds were driven by political competition over local elections and power—was conducted by the Ampatuan clan and included the then regional governor of the ARMM government. In the wake of these incidents, the peace process entered a period of stagnation.

Despite the impasse, Japan played a significant role in moving the peace process forward through backchannel diplomacy. The failure of the MOA-AD forced Malaysia to withdraw its peace brokering role, and this effectively brought the peace talks to a close. To bridge the gap, the EJP took the initiative to get the peace talks back on track by continuously sending messages to both sides, exchanging ideas, and building trust. With other foreign delegates in Manila, a new hybrid mechanism for mediation, the ICG, was established in 2009 to rebuild trust between the parties and act as a guarantor mechanism for the MILF. In this sense, more direct involvement in peace negotiations by Japan was formally institutionalized. This led to a more systematic synchronization of all efforts and played a mediating role between the government and the community. As described, Japan's diplomatic position to support peace in Mindanao based on the Tripoli Agreement in 2001, as requested by the GPH, was consistent despite its non-linearity.

*A New Dimension of Peacebuilding for Bangsamoro (from 2011 to 2019)*

The stagnant peace process had a breakthrough because of a meeting between the then President Aquino III and MILF Chairman Murad in Narita, Japan, in August 2011 (Rood 2016). It was the first summit meeting since the peace negotiation between the GPH and the MILF began in 1997 and was secretly arranged by Japan at the request of both parties. This first face-to-face meeting helped to build trust, and all the efforts of the parties and international and national actors resulted in the signing of the FAB in 2012 and CAB in 2014, which eventually led to the creation of the BARMM and the BTA in 2019.

In accordance with the progress of the peace process, Japan diversified its assistance in terms of counterpart agencies, target beneficiaries, areas, and contents. After the signing of FAB, JICA launched a new project in 2013, the “Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro (CCDP)” (2013–2019). The project included two implementation agencies: the ARMM government and the MILF led by the Bangsamoro Transition Commission (BTC) that were primarily authorized to draft the Bangsamoro Basic Law (BBL), which would be the legal basis for creating the new entity. The project’s objectives were to: (i) promote the organizational reform process of the ARMM government; and (ii) promote the transition process toward a Bangsamoro autonomous government. Covering these two entities, the project included sub-projects in the areas of governance, community development, and economic development that were mostly carried over from previous projects. The ideas behind this integration lay in: (i) reducing administrative and transaction costs; (ii) bringing about synergetic effects among sub-projects; (iii) hedging risk by having small-scale projects in consideration of the non-linear peace process; and (iv) achieving a balance between the existing government (ARMM) and the expected MILF-led government.

The CCDP was launched in 2013 when there was neither a *de facto* peace agreement nor a legislation to create a new autonomous government. This implied that there was no guarantee that the MILF-led transition government would take over the ARMM government. Under such circumstances, the JICA proposed that the GPH and the BTC should co-chair a joint coordinating committee that would establish its own coordinating committees as sub-projects, assuming that the MILF-led transition government would take over the ARMM government upon the



legislation of the BBL and its ratification. However, this was not agreed by the Governor. As a result, the project was divided into two parts—one with the BTC as the counterpart and the other with the ARMM government as the counterpart.

Based on the fact that the CCDP consisted of sub-projects from previous assistance, JICA's assistance had evolved, transforming from piecemeal assistance for the ARMM government and the MILF-affiliated agencies to more integrated and comprehensive assistance for the BTA. All the achievements through both channels of the ARMM government and BTC, and BDA had created a solid foundation for building institutions for the new transitional government, the BTA. The process will be explained in greater detail in the next section.

### *From ARMM Government and BTC to BTA*

With the dispatch of the advisor to the ARMM governor, assistance was extended to the ARMM Human Resource Development Project (2004–2007) that was contracted out to the Asian Institute of Management in Manila, accredited by the Civil Service Commission (CSC), due to travel restrictions on Japanese personnel. It was valuable for the mid-career managers to learn the basics of administrative management and to raise their awareness as civil servants since few had received any training before entering the service, especially those from the island provinces. Besides, it was also important for the JICA to build a relationship with the ARMM government, assess their baseline capacity for future assistance, and learn about formal and informal (customary) institutions shaped by patronage and nepotism based on the local political culture (Bacani 2004).

Based on the above, the JICA expanded its assistance to the ARMM Human Development Project (2008–2013), which was implemented by a team of Japanese experts. Besides continuous training for middle and top management, the memorable achievement was the enactment of the ARMM Administrative Code that provided the legal basis to exercise its autonomy. The absence of a code resulted in dysfunctional and non-accountable government due to unclear roles and authorities among departments. In fact, assistance was eagerly requested by some career officials who wanted to improve governance. In response to the request, the Japanese expert allocated a knowledgeable local lawyer to work on the code and provided the officials with a venue to work together in technical working groups. Despite political pressure, the Code was approved at the

Regional Legislative Assembly in 2009, although only after Governor Ampatuan was arrested for the Maguindanao Massacre. The Code became the legal basis for budget allocation that increased transparency and accountability.

The Administrative Code of ARMM also became the basis for crafting an Administrative Code for the transitional government. After the signing of the CAB, all the stakeholders in charge of transition in both MILF and GPH felt the need to draft an administrative code for the BTA that would be functional by its establishment. As part of capacity development in the CCDP, a Japanese expert on institutional and organizational development was dispatched in 2014 to provide reference material to design a new organizational setup for the BTA. To avoid political discussion (power struggle), the expert prepared a matrix that stipulated all the related laws, roles, and functions related to the powers that would be given to the new autonomous government in addition to the powers that would be given to the ARMM government. Logically, the ARMM Administrative Code would be the basis of crafting the BARMM Administrative Code, as the latter would add more powers than were stipulated in the CAB. The idea behind this assistance was that those in the future government would be able to discuss issues based on legality, not politics, to consolidate the rule of law.

Adhering to the noninterference principle, the JICA would neither directly craft a law nor assist in the passage of a law. Instead, the CCDP assisted the BTC to conduct public hearings on BBL in diverse communities through the Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society, based in Cotabato. The opinions of over 3000 participants were consolidated and submitted in a report to the BTC. In particular, the inclusion of the island provinces in the process was important to raise people's awareness and sense of unity as part of the Bangsamoro created under the MILF during the peace deal. As a result, the BTC submitted a draft of the BBL to the Philippines Congress. The support for the drafting of the BBL not only facilitated the passage of the law but also increased the momentum for peace at a community level by connecting the BTC and the people at a grassroots level.

### *From BDA to BTA*

The JICA extended its assistance from the SERD-CAAM to the Capacity Development Assistance for Community Development in Conflict-Affected Areas in Mindanao (CD-CAAM) Project (2012–2016) to: (i)

support livelihood improvement; (ii) promote collaborative work between the BDA and the local government unit (LGU); (iii) strengthen the BDA's capacity to implement and manage community development for future governance; and (iv) build a model for community development planning and implementation. All these community-based activities had political implications for peacebuilding. First, a community profiling that covered all (more than 3500) the affected barangays/villages through the SERD-CAAM in collaboration with the GPH and the MILF sent a political message to the people in conflict-affected areas that the public service would be extended as one of the dividends of peace. The field visits by the project team gave the people some hope for the future, as it was the first time the people in remote areas were able to voice their concerns and needs. In this context, the JICA played a mediating role in the sense that the team visited areas where people had not received any public service or rejected it due to distrust in the government.

Second, during the implementation of quick-impact projects, the community requested the BDA to conduct orientation meetings and not just build infrastructure. After some trial and error, it was framed as "social preparation" that includes: (i) the identification of development needs; (ii) the prioritization of necessary projects; (iii) the formulation of a community investment plan; and (iv) the identification of specific projects. As people were wary of outsiders due to protracted conflict, they needed to enhance their ability to accept external actors, increase their sense of ownership, and create a space for self-organization, and network with external actors. As such, social preparation was considered a process of: (i) building relationships; (ii) promoting mutual understanding and trust-building among stakeholders; (iii) strengthening social cohesion within the community; and (iv) developing resilient institutions. It was also effective for the JICA side to gain knowledge on the complexities of power structures and social relations in a local context, which contributed to an awareness of needing to be politically sensitive when interacting with stakeholders and identifying the scope of assistance.

Third, a CD-CAAM model through a community-driven approach, introducing new norms such as transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability, was characterized as being fully engaged in a livelihood, unlike others that were mostly associated with small-scale infrastructure. The model was turned into a set of guidelines for replication that was applied to sub-projects in agricultural extension. As a product of livelihood activities, some groups formed into an organization that was registered as a cooperative for further business activities under their own initiative.

Fourth, the BDA took the lead in formulating the Bangsamoro Development Plan (BDP) under the CCDP. On the JICA side, there was a consensus that Japan should start working on projects that could be implemented to deliver tangible peace dividends. In the latter half of the project, as part of the promotion of the implementation plan, capacity development training on project formation and the management of the BDA was held to strengthen relationships with other stakeholders in Mindanao development, such as local government, the ARMM government, other government agencies, and universities to further effective governance. The process itself was effective in the sense that stakeholders from diverse sectors discussed the future on a common theme, visioning how development should be, creating a network and social capital among stakeholders.

When implementing projects, the BDA, as the coordination body, focused on the following: (i) bolstering the hopes of the people at a grassroots level during the protracted peace process; (ii) delivering peace dividends in the form of small-scale infrastructure projects, livelihood activities, basic services such as education and health; and (iii) connecting people with other actors, including the government, private sector, and NGOs. Working closely with the BTC under the CCDP, all of these roles and functions ultimately led to: (i) creating a sense of social coherence in a divided society through collaborative work; (ii) adopting new norms of transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in the public service; (iii) increasing the legitimacy of the MILF at a grassroots level; (iv) keeping people's hopes alive; and (v) consequently preventing conflict and stabilizing the region. From JICA's perspective, support for the BDA and the BTC, which are related to the MILF, contributed to maintaining or improving the momentum of peace in the midst of the non-linear peace process, sending a diplomatic message that Japan had been robustly supporting peace and development in Mindanao.

### CONSTRAINTS TO ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING IN THE JAPANESE CONTEXT

Due to aid principles, that is, request-based, self-reliance, ownership, and capacity development, Japanese assistance is by nature adaptive to non-linearity rather than being predetermined. However, when it comes to the operational level, adaptation is constrained in such a way that Japan, as a member-country of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of

the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), has to follow DAC evaluation criteria, that is, relevance, effectiveness, impact, coherence, efficiency, and sustainability. The guidelines, based on a predetermined, simple linear causal framework, are not necessarily applicable to conflict or fragile settings shaped by non-linearity (cf. Brusset, de Coning, and Hughes 2016). In this setting, simplistic understanding and narratives might mean practitioners do not pay attention to the principle of “Do No Harm.” In the Japanese ODA context, policy-makers and practitioners are primarily bound to the predetermined simplistic framework to fulfill accountability, as all assistance is subject to national auditing that does not necessarily allow for context-specific settings, even if they understand the irrelevance of such auditing. This chapter elaborates this point, but it should be further explored to enable Japan to promote effective assistance for peacebuilding.

### CONCLUSION: JAPANESE ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING

In the post-Cold War era, the frequent occurrence of inter- and intra-conflict provided Japan with the impetus to open up new diplomatic horizons by expanding into geographical areas and contents and means as a contribution to peace and security through the dispatch of the SDF to UN-PKO missions and non-UN-PKO missions, and the provision of ODA. Despite constitutional constraints in Japan, the government has operated adaptively and incrementally changed the legislation to allow greater flexibility to take on active roles in contributing to peace and security in the international community. In this sense, the case of peacebuilding assistance in Mindanao has been positioned as a focus of Japanese global engagement, based on socio-economic, diplomatic, and historical ties between the Philippines and Japan that affects the peace and stability not only in the Philippines but also in the whole Indo-Pacific region under the current situation where the rules-based international order has been challenged.

Given the above context, Japanese assistance to peacebuilding in Mindanao was explicitly launched with the Koizumi Initiative in the early 2000s as part of Japan’s foreign policy and subsequently diversified its assistance in terms of counterpart agencies, target beneficiaries, and areas, and contents in accordance with the non-linear peace process. Simultaneously, the incremental expansion of networking and

trust-building with diverse stakeholders along the way became the basis of progressive assistance in conflict-affected areas where people tend to be wary of outsiders. Besides, the initiative was framed into the J-BIRD, underpinning the human security principle to publicize all of Japan's assistance and synchronized efforts in development, diplomacy, and security. The mechanism at the MTF located at EJP allowed Japan to assess the status of the peace process, national and local politics, and security to plan short-term assistance through effective and appropriate timing in response to a fluid and complex situation and formulate a longer-term program based on foreseen scenarios.

At an operational level, exerting diplomatic leverage on the basis of infrastructure loan projects since the 1990s, Japanese assistance with elements of peacebuilding has been undertaken mostly through technical cooperation with the emphasis on capacity development through face-to-face interaction with the ARMM government, BDA, BTC, CSO, and others. In particular, dispatched experts (mostly Japanese), who had internalized the aid norms in respect of their self-reliance and ownership, applied them to enhance capacity for self-organization that contributed to increasing the level of resilience for sustainable peace. Besides, Japan, as the third party, played an intermediary role in all aspects of intervention, thus providing diverse stakeholders with a space to share ideas, needs, issues, and vision for the future, while easing tensions, building trust, and bringing about a sense of unity, thus creating new norms and values and formulating a new political order in fragmented societies. This mediation/facilitation role through collaborative work to strengthen vertical and horizontal ties with diverse stakeholders in the Mindanao context can be expressed as "process facilitation" in the adaptive peacebuilding discourse. It can be applied to other situations, especially when adjusting interests among stakeholders.

To summarize, the case of Japanese peacebuilding assistance was considered adaptive rather than predetermined, while having some deterministic elements in aid principles aligned with the OECD-DAC. It has proven that the adaptive approach, which has intrinsically a high degree of compatibility with Japanese aid principles and norms, has been effective in the Mindanao context, where conflict and violence are complex and protracted and intermingled over time with other new elements such as violent extremism. In this sense, the context-specific is interlinked with the adaptive in the Mindanao context.

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# Conclusions. What Have We Learned About Adaptive Peacebuilding from Comparing Determined-Design with Context-Specific Peacebuilding Experiences?

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## INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, several key trends in armed conflicts have changed significantly. After several decades in which the world became more peaceful, the trend has been reversed and now conflicts have become more protracted, more violent, and recur more often. Several developments have likely contributed to these changes, including 1) geopolitical rivalry among major and regional powers in the context of a changing global order; 2) an increase in the use of violent extremism as a way to express frustration with existing local and regional ideologies and orders; 3) new threats to human security, including infectious diseases, climate change and related natural disasters, resource scarcity, and the impact of new technologies (see ACLED 2022; PRIO 2022; UCDP 2022; United Nations and World Bank 2018; United Nations 2022). Separately, and even more so when compounded, these developments can increase the risk of violent conflict.

However, in many cases the effects of these developments have also triggered peaceful cooperation (Autesserre 2021; Mac Ginty 2021). The point is that the outcome of these effects on any specific social-ecological system is not pre-determined. Despite the overall trend, the outcome in each specific context depends on the actions of those affected by these developments – both in terms of investments in mitigation, resilience, disaster preparedness, social cohesion, and so on, and in response to specific events or developments. The project that resulted in this book set out to explore if peacebuilding approaches that are adaptive to context, like Adaptive Peacebuilding, rather than pre-determined by ideological assumptions, like the liberal peace approach, are more effective at preventing and resolving conflict.

The United Nations (UN) Security Council has the ultimate responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. However, many other parts of the UN, and indeed the international system, contribute toward this goal, including the UN Peacebuilding Commission. In 2016, the UN took the lead in redefining the concept and practice of international peacebuilding by shifting the focus of the UN agenda away from crisis management toward prevention and by introducing the concept of “sustaining peace” (see Chap. 3). The sustaining peace concept shifts the primary agency from the international to the national and local levels. It leverages all functional areas of the UN (human rights, humanitarian, women, development, peacebuilding, peace operations, and political) to

generate sustaining peace outcomes. It broadens the institutional responsibility for peace from the UN secretariat to the whole UN system, that is, the whole UN system contributes to one overarching goal—to sustain peace. And the sustaining peace concept broadens the instrumental focus of the UN beyond its current emphasis on the just-in-time capacity to respond rapidly to emerging violent conflicts (de Coning 2018).

However, the adoption of the new sustaining peace agenda has been slow, even within the UN. The operationalization of the new UN sustaining peace agenda is thus still a work in progress, and one of the reasons why we have put forward this edited volume is to explore if the Adaptive Peacebuilding approach can help build further momentum for the sustaining peace agenda.

### CONTEXT-SPECIFIC VS. DETERMINED-DESIGN PEACEBUILDING

Although there is a broad spectrum of peacebuilding approaches in theory, one has been dominant since the end of the Cold War, liberal peacebuilding. When looking at Peace Inc.—the term that Séverine Autesserre (2021) used to describe the peace industry or those who make a living by building peace in the world—we can say that the actual practice of peacebuilding has largely remained rooted in liberal peace values and practices and that the determined-design approach to peace remains dominant, despite the shift in the academic peace literature toward hybrid, context-specific, and localization over the past decades. Although there have been exceptions, the prevailing assumption remains that international experts have the agency to analyze a conflict, determine its causes, and design interventions according to international knowledge and the best practices rooted in the liberal peace ideology.

When results are unsatisfactory, they are usually attributed to poor implementation, insufficient resources, or local spoilers. However, after several decades of implementing these liberal peace solutions, and considering the outcome of Western interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya, the ineffectiveness of this liberal peacebuilding approach to prevent, manage, and resolve the major conflicts of the early twenty-first century is clear. This is why this project has explored an alternative approach in this edited volume. We consider the effectiveness of context-specific adaptive approaches to addressing armed conflicts and compare them with

determined-design approaches in a few specific contemporary and recent cases. We have used one specific approach—Adaptive Peacebuilding—to explain the theory behind this alternative approach (see Chap. 2), and we have introduced and analyzed the UN’s new sustaining peace agenda (see Chap. 3), to show how the UN is shifting its own peacebuilding thinking toward a more context-specific adaptive approach. Toward this aim, we have gathered empirical evidence from a variety of case studies in four regions—Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and Latin America—and in the context of current geopolitical shifts, we have also explored two cases that analyze the evolving peacebuilding policies of two major East Asian countries, China and Japan. Through this empirical research, we have attempted to identify in each specific case examples of determined-design and context-specific adaptive approaches to peacebuilding, and we have analyzed the effectiveness of each of these approaches to try to determine their respective effects on sustaining peace.

We review our findings in the next section, but before we do, a brief reminder of the theory of Adaptive Peacebuilding and the sustaining peace concept is in order so we may better understand the comparative analysis between the determined-design and context-specific adaptive approaches to peacebuilding in the case study chapters.

### SUSTAINING PEACE WITH ADAPTIVE PEACEBUILDING

The origin of the sustaining peace concept can be traced to Johan Galtung’s idea of *positive peace*, which highlights the attitudes, institutions, and structures that need to be present to create and sustain peaceful societies, as opposed to *negative peace*, which sees peace merely as the absence of violence (Galtung 1969). The 2016 twin resolutions on sustaining peace were inspired by the need to redirect the international community’s collective efforts toward positive peace to respond to today’s complex and interconnected crises. Therefore, the sustaining peace agenda attempts to go beyond managing negative peace and instead provides a roadmap for the UN and its member-states to synergize their peacebuilding efforts around multiple actions across all the stages of the conflict and peace cycles.

In this book, we have introduced Adaptive Peacebuilding as one approach to pursue the sustaining peace agenda that is specially designed to cope with the complexity of an increasingly uncertain world. Adaptive Peacebuilding can be described as an iterative process of experimentation, learning, and adaptation that is home-grown, self-emergent, and locally

owned and led. This approach is aimed at increasing the likelihood of self-sustaining results as it is grounded in the local context of each conflict situation, and it depends on a participatory process that ensures that solutions emerge from within the affected communities and are sustained by their continued active engagement and ownership of the process. The core elements of the Adaptive Peacebuilding approach can be summarized in the following six principles:

1. The initiatives taken to influence the sustainability of a specific peace process have to be context- and time-specific, and thus emergent from a collaborative process with the people affected by the conflict.
2. Adaptive Peacebuilding is a goal-orientated or problem-solving approach, so it is important to analyze and identify, together with the people affected by the conflict, what the problems are and what the initiatives aimed at sustaining peace should try to achieve. At the operational level initiatives can imply actions, interventions, campaigns, and programs.
3. Based on this analysis and the intended objectives this process generates, multiple initiatives are simultaneously undertaken to try to nudge the system into the desired direction, and the effect of each initiative is then monitored, assessed, and adapted in a continuous and iterative purposeful learning process.
4. One element of the adaptive approach is variety; as the outcome is uncertain, one must experiment with a variety of initiatives across a spectrum of probabilities. The theory of change that informs each alternative needs to be clearly understood so that the effect actually generated can be assessed against the desired effect.
5. Another element of the adaptive approach is selection; we have to actively monitor and evaluate the effects of each initiative by paying close attention to the feedback they generate. It is important not to monitor only for desired effects, but to assess actual effects, as we know that each attempt to influence a complex system will generate a number of reactions, not all of which can be anticipated. Adaptive Peacebuilding requires an active participatory decision-making process that assesses the effects of the various initiatives in the context of an evolving social and ecological system. Those initiatives that perform poorly or generate negative side effects should be abandoned or adapted, while those that show promise can be further adapted to increase their effectiveness or introduce further variety, or can be scaled up to explore their effects on larger sub-systems.

6. Lastly, Adaptive Peacebuilding is an iterative process. It has to be repeated continuously because social-ecological systems are highly dynamic and will continuously evolve. Any effect achieved is temporary and subject to new dynamics, so the adaptation process has no stopping point. While key milestones can be achieved—ceasefires, peace agreements, new constitutions, peaceful elections, the peaceful transfer of power, and so on, to name a few in the political domain—and the behavior of societies can be transformed, peace will need to be continuously sustained. Even if a society is no longer at risk of lapsing into violent conflict, the institutions that sustain its peace will need to keep on adapting to changes in its own system and its environment.

In contrast, determined-design approaches are goal-oriented in the sense that they move toward a goal with a pre-determined direction. A liberal peacebuilding program may also be implemented because of a local initiative. However, in the current environment of increasing uncertainty and volatility, peacebuilding approaches that aim at a pre-determined direction and are based on previous best practices and externally driven agency – often based on liberal values – have been increasingly demonstrated to be ineffective in various regions affected by conflict. Adaptive Peacebuilding, on the other hand, is based on an alternative approach that promotes adaptiveness, resilience, and self-organization in each specific conflict-affected context. Therefore, Adaptive Peacebuilding requires a shift in peacebuilders’ mindsets from thinking in terms of fixing a society’s problems to recognizing that it is only the society itself that can fix its own problems, and at best, peacebuilders can help to facilitate and support this process. It also requires a change in the culture of organizations, partners, and funders away from linear plans that pursue pre-determined outcomes toward investments in processes that generate context-specific emergent outcomes. This requires changes in the way organizations and institutions plan, budget, manage, assess progress, report, and engage with partners and with the affected communities. Most importantly, it requires a decolonization of the ideological frameworks and institutional imperatives that inform the knowledge, attitudes, and behavior of international peacebuilders. If self-sustainable peace is the goal, what should drive and determine the scope and pace of the peace process has to be determined by the context and the people affected by the conflict.

## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM PEACEBUILDING IN COLOMBIA, MOZAMBIQUE, THE PHILIPPINES, SYRIA, AND TIMOR-LESTE?

Colombia's peace process, following the 2016 peace agreement between the Colombian government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), generated a number of examples of adaptive and context-specific approaches to peacebuilding, especially in the context of adapting aspects of the implementation of the peace process and reintegration policies to a variety of local contexts across the country. The implementation of the Colombia peace agreement is also an example of a participatory process that engages local communities in various aspects of reintegration and other initiatives. The Colombia case study demonstrates the importance of adaptive approaches attuned to local needs and contexts.

In the case of the Agency for Reincorporation and Normalization (ARN), government institutions, local populations, and international cooperation actors came together to support the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program of the FARC-EP. Benefiting from the lessons learned from previous DDR experiences in the country and from community participation, ARN agents facilitated projects to generate income, promote social cohesion, and avoid the resurgence of violence. Another program, the Development Programme with Territorial Focus (PDET), generated a participative process involving more than 32,000 initiatives in which local communities forwarded their proposals to attain peace, justice, and an implementation roadmap. With support from international donors, the PDET contributed to sustaining the peace accords by establishing several context-specific adaptive projects. Lastly, a Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) was created to provide a transitional court system to which all the conflict victims could send their petitions, thereby facilitating a way to address justice and victimhood-related grievances in the respective communities.

The Colombian case provides an implicit comparison between determined-design and context-specific peacebuilding approaches by analyzing Colombia's experience with previous peace efforts and comparing it with the localization and adaptiveness of the National Implementation Policy (NIP) of the 2016 peace agreement. The selected cases—ARN, PDET, and JEP—show that the adaptive approach employed in the implementation of the 2016 peace agreement in Colombia was more successful



in consolidating and sustaining peace than previous attempts were. In these examples, international and local peacebuilders often worked together and made use of bottom-up and adaptive approaches to carefully assess local concerns and needs in different parts of the country.

The case of Mozambique addressed the small-scale civil war resurgence in the country between 2012 and 2019, and assessed the gradual shift toward adaptive approaches, which resulted in more positive outcomes compared to earlier attempts and despite Mozambique's complex and uncertain context. The examples of adaptiveness explored in this case study include the approaches carried out by the personal envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Mozambique (UN-PESGM) and the European Union (EU), as well as those of "localized" international non-governmental organizations (L-INGOs), namely the Community of Sant'Egidio (CSE) and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). The interventions implemented by these peace actors encompassed projects related to various sustaining peace tools, such as peace mediation, peacebuilding, humanitarian, and development assistance. The Mozambique case study identifies a shift toward more context-specificity, national ownership, and adaptiveness in contemporary peacebuilding efforts, compared to those employed in the earlier peace processes. In the case of Mozambique, this shift began with an adaptive mediation structure focused on external process facilitation, national ownership, and the promotion of self-organization, leading to a new peace agreement in August 2019 and more adaptive and context-specific peacebuilding programs.

In addition, L-INGOs such as the CSE and the AKDN have provided valuable examples of how INGOs may implement adaptive approaches by remaining localized, relying on local staff, and staying firmly connected to local communities. Their adaptive approaches enabled them to build trust with local, national, and international stakeholders while developing in-depth knowledge about local issues and promoting the much-needed flexibility to adapt to changing needs and challenges. Overall, the gradual switch to adaptive approaches in Mozambique confirms the assumption that peace needs to emerge from within to become self-sustainable in the long term and that the design, implementation, and evaluation of peacebuilding programs should stimulate the self-organization and resilience necessary for Mozambican society to manage its own tensions.

In the case of Mozambique, while liberal peacebuilding allowed for positive outcomes after the 1992 General Peace Agreement (GPA), it did not create conditions for long-term peace. On the other hand, adaptive

approaches started to emerge during the recent mediation process that took place between 2013 and 2019. Since then, domestic and external peacebuilding actors have been reevaluating their activities and shifting their approaches toward context-specific and adaptive interventions. An analysis of the implementation of the 2019 peace agreement reveals that the focus on national ownership has helped to stimulate self-organization and an adaptive mindset in the peacebuilding stage, for example, with the implementation of the DDR programs. Several major peacebuilding donors in Mozambique, including the EU, are following this trend, developing more context-specific approaches to peacebuilding activities in the country. Finally, this case study introduces L-INGOs such as the CSE and the AKDN as key examples of how to contribute to sustaining peace through adaptive approaches amidst increasing complexity and uncertainty. The approaches and methods used by CSE and AKDN reinforce the idea that process facilitation and institutional learning based on context-specific feedback enable more flexible, adaptive, and effective peacebuilding initiatives. In addition, they confirm that peacebuilding in the twenty-first century should holistically address cross-cutting issues, such as poverty, inequality, and education, to respond to the needs of those most vulnerable.

The Palestine case study assesses the adaptiveness of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), a civilian observer mission created to support the Oslo peace process, which operated between May 1994 and January 2019. The TIPH occurred in three main phases, and although the first and second were short-lived, TIPH III operated for 24 years in the city of Hebron, from January 1997 to January 2019. The mission consisted of assisting the normalization of daily life in the city of Hebron, creating a feeling of stability and security among the Palestinians affected by the conflict. However, the mission was implemented in a context of structural asymmetry observed in the conflict's political, military, and socio-economic differences between the Israeli and Palestinian parties. This case study finds that the relative effectiveness of TIPH III was due to its ability to continuously adapt its operations according to the evolving context over the years and through its focus on engagement with local communities. The Palestinian case study highlights the role of two dimensions in the TIPH's success: impartiality and adaptiveness. While the TIPH's mandate stemmed from an agreement between the Israeli authorities and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), profiled as a top-down and deterministic peacebuilding arrangement, the mission

nonetheless operated in line with an adaptive peacebuilding approach. The mission's members showed their presence as much as possible and documented incidents, which resulted in Palestinian residents realizing that the TIPH's presence would reduce their exposure to the risk of violence, incentivizing them to cooperate.

It is important to note that the TIPH was essentially tasked with promoting a feeling of security among Palestinian residents in Hebron with its presence alone and was not mandated to get involved in political or social affairs. It had to maintain neutrality and impartiality. However, the TIPH's ability to monitor and record incidents, as well as its work with assisting donor countries with their small-scale assistance projects, allowed it to gain the trust of local communities. Adaptation was made possible by involving the local Palestinian communities in the TIPH's activities and by undertaking initiatives together such as implementing various types of community relations projects. The TIPH also conducted campaigns to promote public awareness of legal rights and encouraged Palestinians to be actively informed about legal violations and other related incidents. Overall, the presence of the TIPH in Hebron was characterized by adaptiveness within an asymmetric context and by sustained confidence-building on the ground. The mission was able to reduce violence and contribute to the peacebuilding goals of the Oslo agreements.

The Syrian case study explored both externally driven and locally driven adaptive peacebuilding approaches in one of the most violent and complex armed conflicts of the twenty-first century. These approaches were present in the responses of the UN Special Envoys, the permanent members of the Security Council (the so-called P5), and other local actors. The role of adaptiveness in the Civil Society Support Room (CSSR) and the National Agenda for the Future of Syria (NAFS) were particularly evident in this case. On the other hand, various determined-design initiatives have been ineffective in Syria and have failed to secure a comprehensive peace agreement between the conflict parties. The reality on the ground is that despite several interventions since the beginning of the conflict, a more self-sustainable and locally driven national peace process is still absent in Syria. However, the CSSR, NAFS, and other UN-supported initiatives show that even in an ongoing and protracted conflict like Syria, adaptive approaches to peacebuilding can be effective. The initiatives promoted by the CSSR and the NAFS demonstrated the capacity for stimulating dialogue, building important networks and trust, and generating momentum for peace in the absence of a formal ceasefire or peace agreement.

Promoting an agenda that underlines local and national ownership and self-organization in Syria is a long-term effort, but the positive outcomes identified in this case study show that context-oriented adaptive interventions that encourage local participation and resilient institutions can make a positive difference, even in contexts like Syria.

Some examples of positive outcomes emerge from the mediation initiatives conducted by UN Special Envoys—who secured small-scale cease-fires—and the CSSR—which provided a space for members of the Syrian civil society from various professional fields such as legal experts, academics, economists, and former government advisors to build trust and foster coordination and collaboration. One last example of adaptation presented in this case study is the NAFS Programme, which created a platform for technical dialogue regarding post-conflict state-building. The NAFS brought together Syrian technical experts, civil society actors, and scholars, who participated in a self-organized iterative process of debating and finding solutions for Syria’s post-conflict reconstruction needs.

The case of Timor-Leste addresses interventions related to DDR, security sector development, and the issue of local veterans in the post-independence period, which is central to peacebuilding efforts in the country due to the relevant influence they have in shaping Timor’s political landscape. In this context, adaptive approaches took place focusing on two types of self-organization: first, bolstered by oil and gas profits, there was a generous allocation of the state’s budget to DDR issues; and second, it was possible to observe the emergence of an iterative process of inclusion focused on local governance and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms through the *suco* local village administration system. The *suco* function as a catalyst of state affairs and traditional practices, where local security is managed more effectively. Regarding the self-organization processes related to the veterans’ issue, these have consisted of an effective registration of the veterans, effective coordination with *suco* leaders, de-escalating tensions, and building a relationship between communities and police officers by creating Community Policing Councils (CPC), which rested on the collaboration of local communities. This highlights the significance of communal ties, culture, and customary practices.

Through these adaptive processes, national and local Timor-Leste actors positively managed the emerging tensions related to veterans’ issues, and this has been crucial in keeping the country’s stability. The public consultations and the balancing act between the state and society in attending to the veteran’s demands also prompted the emergence of

context-specific and adaptive approaches. This was done through iterative and multi-faceted interactions between elites, veterans, and citizens. Thus, the Timor-Leste case study highlights the importance of a proper balance between domestic initiatives and international support while demonstrating the advantages of adaptive peacebuilding in pursuing self-sustaining peace.

### WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED FROM THE EXAMPLES OF TWO NON-WESTERN PEACEBUILDING APPROACHES: THE CASE OF CHINA AND JAPAN?

Considering China's peacebuilding activities in South Sudan since the 2010s, the case study found three main features of its peace intervention. The first is that Chinese peacebuilding adapted in a more intensive manner toward the end of the decade than at the beginning. However, this process occurred from the top-down, because of policy developments in Beijing, rather than from *in situ* learning and experimentation in South Sudan. Secondly, while the Chinese approach to peacebuilding became more adaptive, it did not engage with the South Sudanese population directly but remained focused on engagement with the government and the political leadership of the country. Thirdly, China's interventions yielded mixed results in South Sudan. On the one hand, the outcome was positive because China contributed to the adoption of a peace agreement and the creation of a government of national unity between the state and rebel groups. However, on the other hand, it did not achieve tangible gains for the local population.

The case study of China's peacebuilding approach in South Sudan analyzed the contribution of China's diplomatic and development activities to the peacebuilding process. Among others it considered the relationship between Chinese actors and the government of South Sudan, South Sudanese civil society organizations (CSOs), the UN, and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a regional organization that worked on peace mediation in South Sudan. This case highlights that the Chinese intervention was not the product of a formally designated "peacebuilding" policy. While China is engaged in peacebuilding activities globally, its peacebuilding concept is not defined, resulting in activities conceptualized in an ad hoc way for each conflict-affected situation. In the case of South Sudan, China contributed military and police

officers and a military unit to the UN peacekeeping force, engaged with CSOs for humanitarian aid delivery, and engaged with rebel groups and the government in the context of peace mediation. China's top-down adaptive and context-specific approach was effective in contributing to the adoption of a peace agreement in South Sudan, helping to consolidate and sustain the peace agreement, and contributing to development and humanitarian aid. However, China's shift to a more context-specific and adaptive approach did not extend to direct initiatives with the South Sudanese society but remained limited to government-to-government relations.

The case study of Japan's peacebuilding activities focused on its role in the the Philippines' Mindanao peace process, where a secessionist movement has been active for several decades. This case examined how Japan made adaptations in its peacebuilding activities in Mindanao across four periods. From 1990 to 2002, Japan assisted Mindanao through loans to the national government for infrastructure and technological development. This began after a peace agreement between the government of the Philippines (GOP) and the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in 1996. The second stage consisted of full-fledged support under the Koizumi Initiative (2002–2006) and included supporting World Bank loans, the dispatching of JICA advisory officials to the region, and a closer assessment of the political, social, and economic needs of Mindanao. This period also coincided with institutional reforms within JICA and Japan's ODA, allowing the expansion of assistance to Mindanao. The third stage lasted between 2006 and 2011 and was characterized by the direct engagement of JICA's head, Sadako Ogata, and top-level officials of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and the government of the Philippines (GOP). This bolstered the involvement of the Japanese government and allowed for peacebuilding programs to be tailored to local needs despite the recurrence of conflict in the second half of the decade and the subsequent stagnation of the peace process. The last stage (2011–2019) consisted of the revival of Japanese peacebuilding for Mindanao. After promoting a peace meeting in August 2011, in collaboration with Malaysia, Japan began diversifying its assistance concerning counterpart agencies, beneficiaries, areas of intervention, and contents. The Comprehensive Capacity Development Project for the Bangsamoro was launched with local actors, covering institution-building and social-economic development.

Despite Japan's unique constitutional constraints, the Japanese government played a vital peacebuilding role in Mindanao. It operated adaptively by incrementally changing its legislation to allow greater flexibility in its peacebuilding role. Japan's assistance was based on socio-economic, diplomatic, and historical ties with the Philippines, and was initiated in the early 2000s. The Japanese assistance subsequently diversified its range, counterpart agencies, and target beneficiaries. Technical cooperation emphasizing capacity development was another critical aspect of adaptiveness, especially since dispatched experts had internalized aid norms according to the principles of self-reliance and ownership. Japan was also able to play an intermediary and mediating role in the context of the Mindanao armed conflict by connecting with diverse stakeholders through process facilitation. Altogether, Japan's peacebuilding in Mindanao can be considered context-specific and adaptive and is a valuable example of the positive outcomes that adaptive and context-specific approaches to peacebuilding can yield.

Finally, in looking at the peacebuilding actions undertaken by two non-Western peacebuilding actors, namely China and Japan, it was possible to identify a pattern of transformation in their peacebuilding practices from a predominantly determined-design approach in their early engagements in South Sudan and the Philippines respectively, more toward context-specific and adaptive approaches in the later years.

## OVERALL FINDINGS

All the case study chapters found that overall, top-down, determined-design, and technocratic approaches were less effective than context-specific, locally driven, and adaptive approaches to managing and resolving conflicts and sustaining peace. The context-specific approaches that were most effective were those that were rooted in the history, culture, and current experienced reality of the people affected by conflict. The adaptive approaches identified in the case studies were more effective when they relied on the active engagement and participation of the affected community. When people affected by conflict felt that they have been involved in shaping the peace, they also felt a sense of responsibility to sustain the institutions and processes necessary to sustain peace. One emerging finding from the case studies thus seems to be that there is a link between the extent to which a peace initiative is context-specific and adaptive and the level of its self-sustainability.

This implies that when it comes to assessing peace initiatives, some of the indicators of the sustainability of a peace initiative may be the extent to which they are context-specific and adaptive. It would be important, however, to look beyond formal institutions established as part of the implementation of peace agreements. Broader legitimacy and ownership would imply that societies and communities spontaneously integrate the spirit and letter of such agreements into their own cultural and social institutions, for example, through song, dance, and spiritual affirmation and reinforcement (Everyday Peace Indicators 2022; Firchow 2018). As reflected in the peace literature, the legitimacy of peace processes depends, in part, on the quality and resilience of the circuitry between the formal peace process and its manifestations and lived experience at the community level (Mac Ginty 2019). Several of the case studies demonstrate that it is possible to assess the legitimacy and quality of the peace process by identifying, tracing, and evaluating the degree to which it has been integrated into local social institutions as an indicator of the extent to which a community or society are investing in sustaining this peace (Mac Ginty 2021). One of the characteristics of societies that are able to sustain their peace, despite pressures, shocks, and setbacks, is that they have invested in social institutions that proactively work to promote tolerance and respect across identity groups (Aumeerally et al. 2021). One such example has been the National Peace Accord that emerged from a combined private-civic-and public sector initiative to safeguard the South African peace process (Carmichael 2022). As the case studies in this volume show, there have been several subsequent attempts to establish similar infrastructures for peace initiatives elsewhere (Odendaal 2013).

As these case studies have demonstrated, however, it is impossible either to pre-determine what kind of societal arrangements will generate self-sustainable peace in a specific context or to pre-plan a series of peacebuilding steps that can lead to such a peace. As discussed in Chap. 2, this uncertainty is generated by the non-linear dynamics of complex social systems. The irreproducibility of peacebuilding lessons from one case to another is thus not a result of insufficient knowledge or inadequate planning or implementation, but part of the characteristics of complexity. This explains why all the case studies in this volume found that context-specific and adaptive approaches were better suited to cope with the uncertainty, unpredictability, and irreproducibility that characterized the peacebuilding experiences in each of the specific contexts studied.



In Chap. 2, complexity theory provides a theoretical framework for understanding how the resilience and adaptive capacity of social systems can be influenced to help them prevent, contain, and recover from violent conflict and sustain peace. Insights derived from how self-organizing processes maintain and transform complex systems suggest that for peace to become self-sustainable, resilient social institutions that promote and sustain peace need to emerge from within the culture, history, and socio-ecological contexts of the relevant society. A society is peaceful when its institutions can ensure that political and economic competition is managed without people resorting to violence to pursue their interests. For peace to be self-sustainable, a society thus needs to have sufficiently robust social institutions to identify, channel, and manage its disputes peacefully. In addition, these same social institutions need to be resilient enough to help the society absorb and adapt to shocks in the broader socio-ecological system it is part of, such as natural disasters, climate change, or political and economic developments elsewhere in the system that may have an adverse effect on the supply chains or other resources and systems it relies on.

Peacebuilders can assist this process, but if they interfere too much, they can cause harm by disrupting the feedback, critical for self-organization to emerge and be sustained. Too much external interference undermines self-organization. Every time an external intervention solves a problem, it interrupts the feedback needed to stimulate societal self-organization. For example, the more effective an international operation is in stabilizing a situation, the less incentive there is for political elites to invest in the internal political settlements necessary to bring about self-sustainable peace. State, civic, and social institutions develop resilience through trial and error over generations. Too much filtering and cushioning slows down and inhibits these processes. Understanding this tension—and the constraints it poses on international agency—helps us realize why peacebuilding interventions in various regions have made the mistake of interfering so much that they ended up undermining the ability of societies to self-organize. In this context, the findings presented in this edited volume that may be useful to peacebuilding practitioners include the following:

1. To help end violent conflict and to support national and local efforts to build peace, the international community should stimulate, support, and facilitate dialogue processes among the affected communities and parties, so that peace emerges from within, rather than

influencing them to pursue outcomes pre-determined by the international community.

2. Protecting lives is essential in protracted and recurrent conflicts. However, protection is not sufficient on its own to safeguard and sustain people's livelihoods and dignity. Regardless of whether there is a peace agreement in place, implementing peacebuilding and reconstruction programs in relatively stable areas can be a significant contribution to preventing the humanitarian situation from deteriorating.
3. One of the characteristics of complex armed conflicts is that the context and interests of the affected communities and parties to the conflicts may differ from region to region. As a result, it is necessary to develop context-specific solutions, that is, contextualized peace agreements, peacebuilding, and reconstruction programs in different regions.
4. It is essential to involve not only the parties to the conflict but also the affected people and communities whose understanding of local needs and context should inform the peace process, as well as recovery and reconstruction programs.
5. Using existing local structures, such as social and administrative systems, is a fundamental tool to sustain peace.
6. It is important to understand that peacebuilding may be needed for decades, even in the absence of violent conflict, to prevent a relapse, build resilience, and sustain peace.

An Adaptive Peacebuilding approach does not imply that expert or scientific knowledge is not important, but one needs to understand the distinction between evidence-based knowledge and how to act on it in a specific social context. For example, science may indicate that one prevents the spread of COVID-19 by avoiding close contact between people, but how to achieve that in a densely populated slum community is something we can only find out through adaptive practice and learning in partnership and collaboration with local communities.

One of the core lessons from the debates in the peace literature is that the empowered agency of the local people involved is critical for the emergence and sustainability of any peace initiative. Adaptive Peacebuilding shares with other context-specific approaches—the hybrid peace tradition and the local turn in peacebuilding—a recognition of the limits of top-down determined-design peacebuilding interventions. Adaptive

Peacebuilding can contribute to the local and hybrid turns in the scholarship by providing a theoretical framework grounded in complexity theory that explains why local ownership a necessary but not sufficient condition for self-sustainable peace is. Thus, Adaptive Peacebuilding introduces and explains the role of self-organization in ordering complex social systems.

Adaptive Peacebuilding is thus a conscious effort to decolonize peacebuilding by placing the affected communities in the driving seat of an iterative doing-while-learning process aimed at navigating the complexity inherent in trying to nudge social-ecological change processes toward sustaining peace without causing harm.

## CONCLUSIONS

This edited volume has attempted to engage with the current debates in the peace literature and the actual reality of peacebuilding practices on the ground. The primary distinction in the volume, as exemplified in the four questions that all the case studies have grappled with, is between, on the one hand, determined-design or top-down approaches to peacebuilding that are based on pre-existing theories, models, or best practices, for example, the liberal peace approach, and on the other hand, context-specific, locally driven, and adaptive approaches to peacebuilding that are bottom-up in that they are emergent from, and continuously adapting to, the local cultural, historical, and political context. The case studies in this edited volume have found a large and diverse number of empirical examples where in specific instances, context-specific adaptive approaches have been more effective to sustain peace than determined-design peacebuilding approaches.

The various cases studied, from Colombia to the Philippines, show that context-specific adaptive peacebuilding approaches help to sustain peace because they stimulate, facilitate, and support local agency, resilience, and self-organization. Within this context we have introduced Adaptive Peacebuilding as one particular approach and method to sustain peace in an increasingly complex and uncertain world. Complexity science provides us with a theoretical framework for understanding how complex social systems lapse into violent conflict and how they can prevent or recover from conflict. This means that for a peace process to become self-sustainable, resilient social institutions need to emerge from within, from the culture, history, and socio-economic context of the relevant society. Adaptive Peacebuilding contributes to the “local turn” scholarship by

providing a theoretical framework grounded in complexity theory—the role of self-organization in the ordering of social systems—that explains why the meaningful participation of the affected communities is a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for self-sustainable peace.

The case studies in this volume have also reminded us that international actors can assist and facilitate peacebuilding processes, but if they interfere too much, they will undermine the self-organizing processes necessary to sustain resilient social institutions. Adaptive Peacebuilding navigates this dilemma with an adaptive methodology where peacebuilders, together with the communities and people affected by the conflict, actively engage in a structured process to sustain peace and resolve conflicts by employing an iterative learning process and adaptation.

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