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## Peacebuilding and Human Security

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# Peacebuilding, Human Security, and Hiroshima

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This special edition "Peacebuilding and Human Security" is the outcome of the Annual Conference of the Japan Association for Human Security Studies (JAHSS), which was organized at the International Conference Center Hiroshima and Hiroshima City University in December 2018. Since its inception in 2011, the 2018 conference in Hiroshima was the 8th JAHSS annual conference, and it was the first time in which the main theme of the conference focused on peacebuilding in post-conflict and transitional countries.[2] Not only was it evident that the JAHSS conference in Hiroshima was on peacebuilding, but it was also quite timely.

More than 70 years has passed since the atomic bombs were dropped in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and World War II ended in August 1945. In 2019, the number of atomic bomb survivor certificate holders was 145, 844 (as of March), falling below 150,000 for the first time (Tanaka 2019). The average age of atomic bomb survivors – known as *hibakusha* – also reached 82.65 years old, posing a serious challenge to Hiroshima City: How to pass down the memory of *hibakusha* to the next generations? In its more than 70 years of reconstruction history, however, this is certainly not the first time the city has faced challenges in its peacebuilding process.[3]

When one talks about the issue of peacebuilding, there is a tendency to look at contemporary cases such as Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, and South Sudan. While the importance of research on these countries cannot be overstated, it is also true that we can learn from peacebuilding cases from the past. For example, Shinoda (2008) emphasized the importance of local leadership led by Shinzo Hamai – the first elected mayor of Hiroshima after World War II – in securing necessary budgets for reconstruction and transforming the identity of the city from a former military city to a peaceful city. Focusing on the case of the Atomic Bomb Dome – which was named as a UNESCO cultural heritage site in 1996 – Fuchinoue (2011) illustrated the process in which the Hiroshima City Council finally decided to preserve it as a monument in 1966, after more than two decades of discussion divided over its preservation. Focusing on the renewal of exhibits in the Peace Memorial Museum completed in the 1990s, Naono (2005) showed how the past can be linked to the politics of memory in the present day

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[2] In some years, the main theme of the conference was on related topics, but not necessarily focused on peacebuilding: for example, the 4th annual conference in 2014 at Tohoku University was on disaster management; and the 7th annual conference in 2017 at the Ritsumeikan University was on the Responsibility to Protect.

[3] For example, in the early stage of reconstruction of Hiroshima City in 1946, there was even talk about rebuilding a city elsewhere and leaving the ruined areas as a commemorative graveyard for eternal peace.

by looking at dividing opinions over a section related to Japan's colonial past in the Asia Pacific. Of course, a different context needs to be acknowledged between contemporary peacebuilding cases and Hiroshima – most contemporary peacebuilding cases grew out of intrastate conflicts, while Hiroshima experienced interstate conflict – however, we can still draw some lessons from Hiroshima, as exhibited by Shinoda (2008), Fuchinoue (2011), and Naono (2005). For a conference organized in Hiroshima, it was evident that its focus was on peacebuilding.

Time was also ripe for a conference on peacebuilding to link the following two key terms: peacebuilding and human security. A quarter century has passed since the release of the *Agenda for Peace* in 1992, which retrospectively can be marked as the beginning of the recent surge in peacebuilding research and practice. On peacebuilding research, major publishers have released books such as *Palgrave Advances in Peacebuilding* and *Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding,* published in 2010 and 2013 respectively, and the peer-reviewed journal titled *Peacebuilding* was also launched in 2013. The institutionalization of the term "peacebuilding" appears to be a success, as many organizations around the globe have incorporated the term to frame their own activities in post-conflict and transitional countries. Peacebuilding has proved to the international community that it is not a passing fad. At the same time, the term "peacebuilding" is under extensive review, since the term has a characteristic to "camouflage divisions over how to handle the postconflict challenge" (Barnett *et al* 2007, 44). As a result, many interesting questions are being asked by various researchers from different parts of the globe today. These questions range from asking about lessons learnt to reflect upon for future activities (Paris 2003; Paris and Sisk 2009), to questioning assumptions about the peace that is being built by the international community (Richmond 2007; Pugh *et al* 2008; MacGinty 2011). The former is referred as a problem-solving approach to peacebuilding research, and the latter is labeled as a critical approach (Tadjbakhsh 2011).[4] In addition, it is the critical approach to peacebuilding that problematizes the quality of peace that is being built by asking a question – whose peace? – thus linking peacebuilding and human security.

Here, everything proceeds in a circle from Hiroshima to peacebuilding, then peacebuilding to human security, and now from human security to Hiroshima. As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi succinctly put it during his visit to the city:

> No place in the world symbolizes humanity's devastating relationship with war more than Hiroshima. No city speaks to us about humanity's aspiration to peace like Hiroshima…Never has the suffering of ordinary people as a consequence of war been so

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[4] Tadjbakhsh (2011) also points out that even the so-called critical approach to peacebuilding is not monolithic.

acute, so devastating, so lasting. Hiroshima knows what it means for ordinary people to be left at the mercy of absolute destruction (Grandi 2016).

With decades of numerous struggles by ordinary people in Hiroshima, the city became a suitable atmosphere for people from different parts of the world to come together and discuss peacebuilding and human security, for which this conference organizer/editor is really grateful.

In this edition, there are seven papers related to the topic of peacebuilding and human security. The first two contributions by Ambassador Kenzo Oshima and Owen Greene were keynote lectures delivered at the conference, which were followed by a commentary by SungYong Lee who was also one of the panelists that day. The following four papers were selected from presentations made at the conference, hopefully illustrating the wide breadth of peacebuilding research here in Japan. Looking at a case study of Syria, Muto and Saraiva examined a new narrative and approach within the United Nations called the sustaining peace agenda, and suggested refocusing international peacebuilding activities during conflict from (often) ineffective high-level international mediation to contextualized local peacebuilding initiatives, as peace needs to emerge from within conflict-affected society. Next, taking note of the critique of liberal peacebuilding, as an example of non-Western vision(s) of peace in the post-liberal peacebuilding, Tanabe examined a hybrid peace model that integrates Buddhist peace and liberal peace. Looking at peacebuilding processes in Central American countries particularly on El Salvador, Matsuda argues that, while a peacebuilding process is crucial for ending war, the attainment of sustainable peace is a challenge for some countries if the root causes of war are not addressed, resulting in new internal conflicts due to poverty and migration issues. Based on extensive field work, Okano examined the transnational networks of rebel groups in the case of Myanmar (or Burma), focusing on Shan people. Okano points out that non-military officers of Shan rebel forces were involved in establishing the Shan NGOs and their expansions, and vice versa.

Last, but not least, the conference organizer/editor would like to thank both the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation and Hiroshima City University whose kind financial supports made the conference possible. Conference organizer/editor would also like to thank students from Hiroshima City University for their assistances in managing the December 2018 conference, especially Victor Doke for also working on text transcriptions of keynote lectures in this volume.

**Note:** As for names to refer to countries and areas, this volume will respect each author's preference.

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# United Nations, Peacebuilding, and Japan's Role[1]

## Kenzo Oshima[2]

## 1. Introduction

Thank you very much for the invitation to address this distinguished audience today. I am a retired diplomat, or should I say rather, a "tired diplomat."

I am very grateful for this opportunity for one good reason; that is, I am a native of this city. So, on my own behalf, I wish to warmly welcome all of you to Hiroshima, the Peace City, especially Professor Owen Greene and Professor Francisco Rojas-Aravena, who have travelled long distances.

Now, after 73 years of the atomic bombing, the city of Hiroshima has achieved a remarkable reconstruction and established itself as a symbol of peace, as a dedicated, leading advocate for peace of the world without nuclear weapons.

If I may divert a bit here, as you will recall, today December 8 is the day that is remembered as the start of the Pacific War by the Japanese Navy's attacks on Pearl Harbor.

Now, one remarkable thing took place just over two years ago, which is the visit to Hiroshima's Peace Memorial by President Barack Obama – the first ever by an incumbent US President. In the sign book, President Obama left the following brief but memorable message: "We have known the agony of war. Let us now find the courage together to spread peace and pursue a world without nuclear weapons." Then the Obama visit was reciprocated by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe a few months later with a return visit, together with President Obama, to Pearl Harbor, again for the first time by a Japanese Prime Minister.

This exchange of visits by the leaders of the two countries that fought a most devastating, tragic war more than 70 years ago, will be remembered as an epoch-making event, filled with both remorse for the past and hope for the future.

I should perhaps add one more thing in this regard, and that is the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon paid a visit to Hiroshima in August 2010, on the occasion of the annual peace ceremony to deliver his message directly to the people of Hiroshima and through Hiroshima to the world. Again, this was the first ever done by United Nations Secretary-General. Mr. Ban Ki-Moon is no stranger to me, so during his stay in the city I had much pleasure to pay him a private call at night

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[1] This speech was given on 8 December 2018 at the International Conference Center Hiroshima as a keynote lecture for the 2018 Annual Conference of the Japan Association for Human Security Studies.
[2] Former Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations

at his hotel. I did this with a small gift – a large-size wooden spoon called *Shamoji* in Japanese, which is a famous souvenir from the close-by Miyajima Shrine Island, with a prayer message for world peace written on the *Shamoji*.

Now back to the main topics. Time is limited, so in the first part, I would like to share a few of my experiences and episodes from my time at the United Nations, and in the second part, I wish to take up one ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis and a challenge of peacebuilding in Southeast Asia – namely Myanmar's Rohingya problem. I have chosen this because it has been attracting much international attention recently, and also because I happen to be personally involved in it as a member of the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE) established by the Myanmar government a few months ago.

## 2. OCHA and IDPs

More than a little over 10 years ago, I served in the United Nations altogether for five years: The first half of it as a senior official in the Secretariat in New York on the secondment of the Japanese Government, then another half as Japan's Permanent Representative. The Secretary-General during this period was Mr. Kofi Annan, who sadly passed away this August.

In the Secretariat, I was assigned the job of the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) as Under-Secretary-General. As I arrived to take up the job in OCHA, Secretary-General Annan gave me one specific instruction. He wanted me to find ways and means to strengthen the United Nations capacity to deal with the problems of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Why IDPs?

After the end of the Cold War, instead of peace prevailing, a series of violent, deadly regional conflicts and civil wars sprung up and continued. They afflicted tens of millions of people in many countries, particularly in the Middle East and Africa – Afghanistan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Angola, to name only a few. This obviously resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of refugees, asylum seekers, and internally displaced people, IDPs. At the time, the total number of people around the world thus affected – IDPs and refugees – was estimated at about 30 million, more than half of them IDPs. Today, according to the latest report from the UNCHR, that number has more than doubled, to over 65 million.

Now, different from refugees – who flee from persecution and violence and move across national borders and for whom well-known international conventions and organizations exist such as the Geneva Convention on Refugees and UNHCR – in the case of IDPs, there is no such dedicated

convention or organizational mechanism. There exist only some general guidelines and principles that have been developed by practitioners, scholars, and the Red Cross Organization/Movement. In such circumstances, the UN Secretary-General had come under pressure or solicitations from some member states – the United States and some European countries – pressing him to find ways for the UN to do a better job in helping tens of millions of IDPs. There were even suggestions to set up an organization dedicated to IDPs, backed up with enough personnel and resources.

So, to follow-up on the instructions from my boss, I set about exploring the possibilities to find out what sort of things would be feasible. I talked to several key donor states, UN agencies concerned, as well as developing country member states in the group known as the Group of 77 (G77). Some of them in the G77 were known as being highly sensitive to national sovereignty issues, and therefore very cautious about questions like handling of IDPs who, unlike refugees, remain in the territory of a country. My consultations with different groups made it clear that setting up a new, separate structure for IDPs was not a feasible proposition, so I reported this to the Secretary-General, who accepted this – yet, something had to be done. Under the circumstances, with the endorsement of the Secretary-General, we worked on a less controversial approach, which was setting up a new unit within the office that I led – OCHA's IDPs Unit – as part of efforts to strengthen the United Nations' capacity to deal with IDP problems.

## 3.   Security Council – North Korea Issue

Now, during this five-year period, especially during the time I served as Japan's UN ambassador, we at the Permanent Mission were all kept extremely busy throughout, because so many things happened one after another. First was the business in the Security Council. Japan was elected to the Security Council as a non-permanent member for two years (2005-2006). It was at this time, you will recall, that North Korea dared launch missiles in the Sea of Japan and over the Japanese archipelago in July 2006. Three months later in October, North Korea resorted to its first nuclear weapons test and this shocked the world. The long-range missiles launch combined with the nuclear test posed, of course, serious security threats to Japan and the entire region, and at the same time it presented serious challenges to global nuclear non-proliferation. Therefore, the Security Council had to respond quickly and effectively. Working closely with the members in the Council and other partners, the Council adopted with a unanimous decision a strong-worded sanctions resolution on North Korea, condemning its missiles and nuclear test in 2006.

I remember well the very heated debate and intensive consultations that took place during one

whole week in October 2006 to negotiate the first sanctions resolution against North Korea. Incidentally, Japan was serving as the Council's monthly-rotating president for the month of October. Our US counterpart at the time was Ambassador John Bolton, who as you know is serving today as the National Security Advisor to President Donald Trump. Ambassador Bolton has been known for tough, hardline views on questions like Libya, Iraq, Iran, North Korea, etc. But as far as collaboration in the Security Council was concerned, he led the efforts efficiently, and things went well on the North Korea and other questions.

## 4. Outcome Document

In the General Assembly, we were also kept extremely busy, not least because the year 2005 marked the United Nations 60th anniversary, and to mark the occasion the World Summit meeting was expected in mid-September at the start of the regular UN General Assembly. Now the member states had agreed to take this special occasion to agree on a landmark document which would include plans for comprehensive reform of the UN organizations, which had gone through six-decades of a turbulent post-WWII history. The document was to be referred to conveniently in the UN as the Outcome Document.

The process of member states consultations that led to the 2005 Outcome Document was a lengthy, very exhausting one marked with endless talks. Of course, there is nothing unusual about endless talks in the United Nations – organizations and fora sometimes ridiculed by some critics as nothing more than "empty talk-shops." I would not endorse this, but neither would I deny it all. Be that as it may, it was remarkable that the delegations managed to reach a final agreement on the text, literally just hours before the start of the World Summit, as the world leaders had just started arriving in New York. I remember myself having had to rush to the airport, with the text of the agreement just concluded in my bag, to greet our then Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi.

As you know, the Outcome Document contained a comprehensive package of proposals for changes and reforms needed in the United Nations after 60 years of its life. It proposed new institutions such as the Human Rights Council and the Peacebuilding Commission. It also introduced formally in a UN document of high importance, new concepts such as the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) and Human Security. As for Japan, two issues drew our special attention among others: the first was having the concept of Human Security accepted because Japan had been advocating it in the UN and other fora and therefore considered it very important that this concept be reflected in this landmark document. The second issue to which we attached high importance was the Security Council reform. On this

question, I am sure you will again recall, that Japan had worked very hard in the past years, particularly during several months in the year 2006, together with the other members of the Group of Four (Japan, Germany, India, and Brazil). A very intensive campaign was launched to get an agreement for reform of the Security Council, with an aim to get new permanent seats of the four countries in a reformed Council. However, despite all the hard efforts made, disappointingly this campaign failed to bear fruit at that time.

Now, there are many things on this and other matters in the UN that I can go on to talk about, but I should stop here. Suffice it to say that Ambassador John Bolton – now the US National Security Advisor – wrote a memoir titled *Surrender is not an Option,* in which he gives narratives in great detail, of course from his unique point of view, on what happened on some of the matters I described. For anyone interested, this book may be of interest, so I will recommend it.

## 5. Myanmar – Rohingya Problem

Now, let me turn to the second part of my presentation, which is Myanmar's Rohingya conflict and the challenges for peacebuilding in Myanmar.

First, a little factual information about Myanmar. It is a country in Southeast Asia, sharing its national border with five neighbors – India, Bangladesh, China, Laos, and Thailand. It has a population of over 50 million and was under British colonial rule for more than one hundred years until its independence in 1948. It is a multi-ethnic state as the domestic law identifies 135 distinct ethnic groups comprising the population. Bamar – the Myanmar people – constitute its majority at about 70%. Religiously, Myanmar is Buddhist-dominated (nearly 90%), with a small number of Christians (6.2%), Muslims (4.3%), and Hindus (0.5%).

Since independence, Myanmar has been troubled with many civil wars and ethnic conflicts. For example, in the eastern frontier states of Kachin, Shan, and Kayin, local armed groups have fought against the central government's military, demanding autonomous power and greater rights for their people in those states. Some of their conflicts have been peacefully settled, but there are other cases where fighting still goes on.

Politically, Myanmar remained under a military regime for nearly half a century, which came to an end in 2011. Today the country is moving towards democratic government, especially since 2015 under the leadership of the well-known figure, Aung San Suu Kyi, the State Counsellor. The fact nevertheless remains that the Myanmar military, having controlled the country for five decades, still retains a powerful influence over many aspects of life and politics in the country.

Now with that background, Rakhine State is one of the provincial states on the north western coast bordering the Indian Ocean – the place of the Rohingya conflict. Historically, during the British colonial time, large numbers of Bengali people, mostly Muslims, were brought in from the neighboring East Pakistan (today's Bangladesh) into Rakhine State, mostly as farm laborers, fishermen, and logistics supports for the British army. In those days many of them returned to their places of origin after their work was finished. But over time, they started to settle in Rakhine, particularly in the northern part and the Muslim populations started to increase sharply, with a result that Bengali Muslims came to constitute well over 90% of the population in the northern part, and the Rakhine population, mostly Buddhist, was reduced to a small minority – less than 5%.

Faced with this reality, the Myanmar government refused to recognize for these Bengali Muslims, for one reason or another, entitlement to citizenship and various rights such as labor, free movement, and so on. And such discrimination inevitably led to grievances of Bengali Muslim community, or, as they identify themselves as the "Rohingya." By the way, the Myanmar government does not officially recognize the term "Rohingya," but refers to them as Bengali Muslims or migrant Bengalis, but not as "Rohingya."

Anyhow, the Bengali-Muslim community developed frustration and anger and became politicized, demanding recognition of their right as a race, citizenship, freedom, and other civil rights. Over time, the problem led to local clashes between the local Buddhist and Muslim populations in the form of inter-communal riots and violence, sometimes causing the exodus of Muslim people across the border into the neighboring Bangladesh. Against such a background, rebellion and armed insurgency arose among the Rohingya-Muslims. When troubles occur, the Myanmar military and police forces intervene to maintain security, to restore law and order.

## 6.   What Happened and Why

Let me now turn to what has happened in more recent years? What triggered the flight of "Rohingyas" to Bangladesh in such great numbers – more than 700,000?

In October 2016 and August 2017, the Muslim armed group named the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) – Arakan is an old name for the Rakhine State – launched a series of sudden, premeditated attacks on Myanmar's local police stations and army posts in Northern Rakhine. As expected, the Myanmar military and security forces responded by counter-insurgency operations against ARSA. In doing this, the Myanmar government designated ARSA militants as a "terrorist group" and conducted area clearance operations. In the ensuing fighting and crossfires, many killings,

burning of village houses and other atrocities occurred.

This violence worsened the fears of the Muslim villagers, and they fled to Bangladesh and settled in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar just across the border with Myanmar. The number of Muslim refugees to Bangladesh is estimated at more than 720,000, and nearly a million people if those from previous exoduses are included.

This tragic event shocked the world, and the international community moved swiftly to find out what happened and why. In the UN, the issue was brought to the Security Council and to the Geneva-based Human Rights Council. Prominent international human rights groups such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, etc. got active, setting up investigation teams and publicizing their findings. The main line of their findings is very much similar, with allegations of killings, rapes, burning of houses, torture, etc., levelled against the Myanmar security forces, even suggesting the possibility of ethnic cleansing and genocidal crimes. Their findings are mostly based on interviews conducted in the refugee camps in Cox's-Bazar, Bangladesh, because the Myanmar government had refused their access to Myanmar territory including the northern Rakhine region for purposes of investigation. The Myanmar government said "no" to their access, so their findings necessarily had to rely on one channel, which was to conduct interviews with the Muslim refugees in Bangladesh.

## 7.   Reaction of the Myanmar Side

On the Myanmar government side, it publicly denied all those allegations of human rights violations and crimes by Myanmar military, especially the charges of genocide and ethnic cleansing, characterizing those allegations as misrepresentation, misinformation, one-sided or fake information.

While refusing access of the UN and international human rights groups to the scene of the events, what then has the Myanmar government done for its own investigations? Well, as regards the October 2006 incident, the government established an investigation commission led by the Vice President, which came up with a final report with its own findings. The Myanmar military on its part has done its own investigation and published its findings. In essence, the military's conclusion was to say that there was nothing wrong done, it did all it had to do according to the law in order to eradicate the terrorists and secure the integrity of the country. Then, there was a third very important commission established by the Myanmar government – the Advisory Commission on Rakhine, led by a former UN Secretary-General, the late Mr. Kofi Annan. This advisory commission came up with 88 recommendations that the Myanmar government is encouraged to implement to promote peace, security, and development in the country.

Now, apparently these series of action taken internally by the Myanmar side were criticized as insufficient, self-serving or one-sided from the international perspective. To counter such arguments, the government decided to create one more body in order to find facts, evidence and truth, a body that would include as its members not only Myanmar nationals but also foreigners. And this is how the Independent Commission of Inquiry (ICOE) came to be established in last August, in which I serve as one of the two designated foreign members. The Commission is expected to issue a final report within one year or so, with its findings of facts, evidence and truth about the 2017 incident in northern Rakhine, strictly following the principle of impartiality, fairness and balance. A lot of work is ahead of the Commission, and that is why I must be leaving for Myanmar early tomorrow morning.

## 8.    Root Causes of the Rohingya Problem

The Rohingya conflict, what are its root causes? Root causes are many and complex, and it is not a simple question. First, there is the historical context – waves of Muslim migration, particularly during the British colonial time. Second, there is a social problem – disruption of population balance in northern Rakhine state resulting from migration, which created tensions and problems among different ethnicities and religious groups. Third, there is a religious dimension to the conflict – Muslim vs. Buddhist. Fourth, there is a political/legal aspect to it, which is the discrimination in terms of freedom and rights, or the rights restrictions, imposed on Bengali Muslims based on ethnicity. Fifth, there is also an economic dimension – Rakhine is one of the poorest states in all of Myanmar in terms of poverty rate and underdevelopment, and this factor also contributes to making the situation very complex and difficult to handle.

## 9.    Political, Security Dimension of the Problem

Last but not least, there is a geopolitical dimension – the demand of Bengali Muslims for the grant of autonomy and self-governed territory for them in northern Rakhine. To make matters further complicated and dangerous, extremist armed groups, most notably the aforementioned ARSA, came in and agitated local Muslims to turn them into activists and collaborators. Information about ARSA is still limited: who are the militant operators and their supporters? Whether there is any influence or support from outside the countries, etc.?

In pointing out these problems, we must not forget the dire humanitarian situation of the large number of people who fled and live in very miserable conditions in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar in

Bangladesh, and of those who have been driven into IDPs camps inside Rakhine state. In this connection, we must praise international organizations such as the Red Cross, UNHCR, IOM, and many NGOs which have been hard at work to assist those people in dire situations.

## 10. Repatriation of Refugees

Now, the key question is whether, when, and how those Bengali Muslims now in refugee camps in Bangladesh are going to return to their places of origin in the Rakhine State of Myanmar – challenges of repatriation. There has been agreement reached between the Myanmar and Bangladesh governments last November on repatriation. However, this agreement has not been followed up with concrete action until today. The Myanmar government apparently has taken preparatory measures for the return of the refugees, but for whatever reasons, nothing much has happened so far, and a sort of stalemate continues, causing concern of the international community as well.

In terms of peacebuilding, as I said before, Myanmar still has not resolved problems of armed insurgency in the country's peripheral regions. A peace agreement has been achieved with some of the armed groups, but fighting still continues with the others. In terms of governance, the country is on its way to democratization since 2011, but in fact the military which governed the country for half a century still exercises strong influence in the internal politics and administration. And, Aung San Suu Kyi – who is the actual leader of the country as State Counselor, a position especially created for her because she is not under the constitution allowed to become President – comes sometimes under criticisms from overseas for not standing up strongly enough on issues like protection of human rights, including those of Bengali Muslims.

It is easy to find fault with and criticize the way things are managed in Myanmar, including Aung San Suu Kyi. But if one looks more closely and learns how complex the political, ethnic and overall geopolitical situation in Myanmar is, then perhaps one would understand a little better in what sort of situation Aung San Suu Kyi finds herself in governing the country. She, of course, advocates the importance of the rule of law and respect for human rights. She also publicly admits that this is a very difficult problem that they face. She emphasizes that changes are needed, but they would need time to occur.

## 11. Mindanao in the Philippines

Before I finish, I would like to briefly touch upon another peacebuilding case in the Asian region – that of Mindanao in the Philippines, where Muslims are involved. The Philippines is a Christian

majority-country, excepting Mindanao which historically was dominated by a Muslim population. Then, over the centuries Christians migrated to the southern island of Mindanao, and this migration created conflict and clashes between the two communities in Mindanao with heavy human tolls. And this eventually led to the rise of a Muslim armed insurgency for the liberation and even independence of their territory: Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). After decades of fighting between the armed insurgency groups and the Philippine army, a long and arduous process of peace-making began for reconciliation and peace in Mindanao. And after two decades of negotiations, a comprehensive agreement was finally reached, signed by President Benigno Aquino and MILF leader Al Haj Murad Ebrahim in March 2012 and in 2014. Japan, along with Malaysia, assisted these peace talks. In fact, the 2014 agreement was signed at a venue adjacent to the Narita International Airport near Tokyo. According to this agreement, a new Muslim entity referred to as "Bangsamoro" has been formally recognized, with the grant of self-rule rights in exchange for the cessation of armed struggle. There are going to be elections in Mindanao in the Muslim dominated area in 2022 – four years from now – and there is a transition period and the law that governs this transition period has also been approved by the Philippine parliament.

## 12. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, the conflict involving so-called "Rohingya" people in Myanmar is a highly complex case. Overcoming the many root causes of the conflict – historical, ethnic, religious, legal, political, and even geopolitical – is no simple and easy task. I am afraid it is going to take a long time, even under a strong political leadership, to achieve peace and reconciliation among the different communities, particularly among Bengali Muslims and Buddhists in Rakhine State. Whereas in Mindanao, after long difficult negotiations there is finally a political agreement for peace. Comparing these two conflicts and peace-making and peacebuilding cases in Southeast Asia, there is one common factor, and that is Muslims are involved in both cases. But obviously the factors involved in the Mindanao case and in the Bengali Muslims case in Myanmar are different; a successful solution in one may not necessarily be followed by another. But at the same time there may be some lessons or hints that may be learned and worthwhile to be explored.

Hopefully, ways to find peace and reconciliation will be vigorously pursued by the Myanmar government and people, supported by well-intentioned international support and cooperation.

So, that is all I wanted to present and share with you today. Thank you very much for your attention.

# Human Security, Peacebuilding, and State-Building in Conflict-Affected Societies[1]

## Owen Greene[2]

It is a pleasure to be here; thank you very much to the association for the invitation. It is my second time to visit Hiroshima. I have been to Japan many times, but it is a pleasure to be back. I am going to talk about human security, peacebuilding and state-building experience over the last twenty-five years. One of the purposes is to very briefly review the progress and development over the last twenty-five years. I am going to look at the lessons learned and experience, the issues and debates about next steps, and the problems and challenges that are being faced. Throughout this session, there is going to be a human security and peacebuilding staple; they are going to be a continual theme, as you will see, with all sorts of complex tensions quite closely integrated into the modern development, at least since the early 2000s of international multilateral peacebuilding missions in post-conflict societies.

## 1.   Peace Research, Peacebuilding, and Human Security

Peacebuilding is a broad term, constructed well before the end of the Cold War, and well before the United Nations and multilateral missions. Simon Fisher – who tried to bring together the insights from peace research and peacebuilding research over many years – once said that a peacebuilding program is designed to address the causes of conflict and the grievances of the past, and to promote long-term stability and justice. Another way of putting it is, as one of the classic figures in peace studies Johan Galtung – who contrasted negative peace and positive peace – said, peacebuilding is related to "positive peace," complementary to programs to ensure freedom from fear of physical violence and illegitimate coercion, that is, "negative peace." These insights are inherent to the core understanding of what peacebuilding is in the broad sense, and therefore obviously relevant to every country in the world – certainly relevant to Britain, and presumably to Japan, a tremendously peaceful society, but still a relevant tool.

There has been a lot of criticism of UN multilateral peacebuilding, state-building, and human

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security efforts over the last two decades. After generating initial enthusiasm, they did not work as well as many people had hoped. We are in a moment now where many analysts and practitioners are criticizing these efforts, and in criticizing, some of them are going back to the skills and approaches that have been developed outside of post-conflict affected and fragile states, to see how peacebuilding enterprise might be refreshed. Now certainly it can be refreshed, but another theme of this talk is "let's be careful." There are good reasons why there are significant challenges and specifics to do with addressing peacebuilding in a conflict-affected context, and it is very easy for critiques to lose sight of some of those issues. So here is just a reminder; it started off as liberal peacebuilding. We are all liberal peacebuilders. We come from the human security perspective – we value issues such as human rights and due process.

With the end of the Cold War, new opportunities emerged. Within that context, *the Agenda for Peace* in the United Nations set a new framework for international efforts to contribute to peace and security in areas of conflict. During the Cold War, there was no peacebuilding by the UN really. Of course, that is a bold statement, but the political context just did not enable it. So, wars essentially had to run their course until the parties were exhausted, where upon there would be sufficient consensus for the UN to send in peacekeeping missions to keep parties apart, while provisions were made to make transitions and to provide humanitarian assistance. Now, the big difference since the end of the Cold War is that mandates have become available to intervene in conflicts much earlier, and that is a great advantage. There was a series of human security reports, by a significant international research center, which have looked at the human security impacts of this change, and in general their conclusions are positive. The UN and international agencies – sometimes not under UN mandate – have been able to intervene in wars early, and succeeded in bringing conflict to an end sooner. One of the tragedies of most conflicts is that they last much longer on their own momentum then they need to. Because once you are in a mode of conflicts, it is very hard to pull out of it. Therefore, it is a great advantage to have a context in which the UN and other agencies can intervene to bring an end to large-scale, violent conflicts more quickly.

Of course, the human security perspective will then say, "yes, but we also need to notice that after the conflicts officially end between the major parties quite often does the injury go up, rather than down." This is because the violence is associated not only with the organized violence between armies and militias. Human security challenges do not end when a war comes to an end, and this brings very serious implications for the challenges of post-conflict peacebuilding in conflict-affected areas.

Now in setting that agenda, many realists have said, "this is too much." But, in the end, even though the human security concept was only being launched in 1994, the impetus that drove that

agenda not only involved realist concerns about the security of states, but also involved human security – reducing death and injury, promoting recovery early, and dealing with insecurities that emerge in a war-torn country, even after the war has officially ended. So, many peace researchers – including people from my own center, people here in Japan and everywhere – were saying, "you cannot just talk about negative peace, let's talk about positive peace." Ending a war is not enough, but now, I tend to be slightly resistant about this distinction between positive and negative peace, because ending violence is a pretty good thing and it is hard enough, so let's not polarize our efforts. In the end, peace researchers were extremely influential regarding human concerns, and drove an agenda which was to increasingly make peacebuilding in war-affected areas a comprehensive exercise – as state-building comes in natural parts with peacebuilding.

## 2. Practical Realities of Peacebuilding

We have a whole associated network of reports, changes in concepts, and evolution of ideas about what is essential and what is the appropriate approach. Through every phase in this process, there have been active lessons learned: how could we do better, how could we avoid the mistakes, where are women in the story, what about marginalized peoples and those people that look particularly vulnerable, and what about treating seriously the challenges of reintegrating the demobilized combatants? This was not a case of people making up what an ideal process of peacebuilding should be. There were powerful forces separate from those addressing particular concerns about human security and peacebuilding in its positive sense, but also those hard lessons from experience got us to the position that we are in now: peacebuilding is conceived as this comprehensive approach.

We have often witnessed successful interventions essentially to end wars earlier. Of course, these are delicate processes that cannot be done at any time; there has to be an agreement amongst the main parties, and it is a challenging process. But, then peacebuilding takes over. And there are many debates about coordination, phasing, and sequencing; you cannot do everything at once, so how do you link those together? We all also know that the announcement of when a conflict ends is a rather bureaucratic statement. It ends when it is officially declared to be at an end, through a peace agreement or through some mandate. But, in practice, many of the conflicts carry on. There is insecurity, intense struggle in different parts of the country often led by spoilers, and then there are areas where peacebuilding is taking place. It is a messy process. And, that is the environment that any leader of a UN peacebuilding mission has to cope with. There are self-interested external influences as parts of peacebuilding arrangements. Many countries contribute forces either under UN command or alongside the UN, and

some of them are more self-interested than others. You also have a transnational criminal networks in conflict zone. They do not leave when the conflict comes to an end; they adjust and work through it. And in all of this context, everybody knows a multilateral mission will only last for a certain time, and so there is always the question of whether you can play for time, if you are a spoiler.

Throughout the last two to three decades, I was intimately involved with the development and implementation of post-conflict security-building programs: DDR (demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of ex-combatants), security sector and justice sector reform, and weapons management/control. All those are now well established. It took a lot of battles to get these established as a legitimate part of UN peacebuilding, since there was a high degree of caution amongst important Security Council members.

These are just a reminder of just how big are the implications of taking human security seriously, as part of the objectives of international peacebuilding in a post-conflict country – if there is a mandate that allows you to do it. What a big enterprise it is. So, what is peacebuilding and state-building in a fragile state?

## 3. Fragile States, State-building, and Human Security

Fragile states are not necessarily conflict states, although many of the states that we often label as fragile have experienced large-scale conflicts. Fragile state can be states that have not undergone conflicts. For example, for eight years, I worked very closely with the Cabinet Office in Jamaica to help support them with the various things that the Jamaican government and society wanted to do, in terms of addressing fragility in that country. Not a post-conflict state really, but terribly affected by issues that challenge the integrity of the state, including massive money laundering, narcotics trafficking, illegal fishing from powerful states that take advantage of weak states, capacity to guard their own coast, and so on.

Now, "fragile state" is a contested concept. Some people will put some countries in the category, and others will not. I can remember when I was a part of an expert panel back about 15 years ago, where we were asked to look around the world and find out which countries were fragile. We said it looks as though there were 98 fragile countries. We received a reply that said, "98 is far too many; look again until it is around 40." Fragile states, by the way, are not failed states. A fragile state is about something else. It is about governments that have profound challenges in one or more of these areas: governance, security, economy, access to justice, and profound societal cleavages. Now, I know Britain quite well, being a citizen. I have to admit that we have got some challenges in some of those areas,

and so do other countries.

Fragile states may not be conflict-affected in the sense of experiencing war, but many of them are also experiencing much higher death and injury rates than war zones. I worked in Jamaica. It is a beautiful country. You can travel around Jamaica and be safe and happy, and not notice any violence. And yet, the levels of death and injury from gun violence every year in Jamaica are higher than most war zones. So, fragile states is a concept that comes from concern with human security.

Fragility is a systemic issue about the society, not about dealing with bits and pieces. You can try and improve one part, but because other parts of the system are fragile or vulnerable, it undermines progress in that particular area. The point is that peacebuilding and state-building, in a sense, is a different category of international activity from the UN post-conflict peacebuilding operations.

So, what are some of the lessons learned that have to do with emerging from fragility? The drivers of fragility are powerful and hard to overcome. States are not fragile just because of neglect. There are reasons for that fragility and fragmentation. They may come from deep social divisions. In Jamaica's case, it comes particularly from its structural position in the Americas and in the middle of the transit route for massive flows of money, which it cannot control. That means that it is very hard to prevent the institutions being hollowed out. So, with many businesses being forced or actively willing to participate in money laundering, it is hard for any legitimate business to make a living and that is why businesses get involved in money laundering, just in order to survive.

Piecemeal initiatives are hard to sustain. There are many examples of really good times, such as when you have a good minister, you have a real coalition, and/or there is an interest in support from the world to address an issue, and as a result something is done for three or four years. In the midst of changes, however, there are other factors in that same society undermining that progress or maybe there is an outbreak of violence/political crisis, which sends things back. So, it is a systemic issue. Fragile states can be pretty weak, but I have never yet come across a fragile state so weak that it can destroy any positive initiative it chooses to in its own territory.

Strategies to get out of a fragile context are deeply contested within the society, so most people can agree they want to get out of the situation. But, which strategy to take will be inevitably contested. This is because it will affect who benefits, and people will be very suspicious that a strategy which essentially enhances central government control for good reasons might be misused.

Furthermore, it requires long-term efforts by a critical number of elites that really want that change. In Jamaica, many of the people I worked with were totally admirable and constant, and there were ministers and other powerful groups who wanted to be sure that Jamaica did not go down the road of some Central American states. That decision was taken after very tough, difficult divisions and

close to an insurrection civil war, which was quietly prevented in the 1980s, essentially by the US and UK. Since then, the elites in Jamaica have really wanted to make progress and they have, but it has taken 25 to 30 years to get to where they are now, and it is still really tough. Compare that with a country where the elites are less unified. So, this may sound like a diversion but what I am saying is that, peacebuilding and state-building proceeds after the government has taken control.

## 4.   Challenges for Peacebuilding

One of the challenges is that once you promised to do peacebuilding, people then expect you to do it, and they criticize you if you fail to do it, or critique your actions because you have taken away ownership of the problem. While there are a lot of critiques and challenges, some are legitimate and I share those critiques. So, we need to be sure that we are critiquing with a real view to what the intrinsic challenges are and whether or not the best is being done.

There are several common explanations of what the problems are. One of them is inadequate effort. There was a special UN Security Council meeting called around 2007 – where the UK was in the chair at that point. At that meeting, then-Foreign Secretary David Miliband said the big problem is we are just not doing enough, and he had a point. But it is not the only point. Good critiques will say, for example, that the reason why this did not work is because "you did not do this enough," "it was not comprehensive enough," "you neglected dealing with the IDP situation," and/or "you neglected job creation." So, we need to do more in a context where resources are tight.

There is also a critique – a very legitimate one in many of the UN operations during the 90s and early 2000s – which says insufficient notice was taken of the local social political dynamics. Sometimes it was hubris, as in East Timor where the local East Timorese elites who came into power knew their country about as well as the internationals did. They had a very strong sense of what the agendas were, and it proved that there was not enough connection with powerful interest groups that had lived in East Timor throughout the occupation. It is a challenge to develop civil society groups that go beyond "briefcase NGOs" – NGOs that simply are set up in order to respond to international resource opportunities – which takes time.

There are those who say the whole enterprise is failing because it is imposing too much on a sovereign state. In Mali, now there is a very big operation, and the Mali state has a very clear sense of – and being a sovereign state has the right to essentially determine – the direction and priorities of how the international community will support peacebuilding in the country. That is in itself an assertion of its only limited sovereignty in that sense because it cannot control all of its own territory

without international support. But, we know that the sources of the dispute there are deep; the conflicts between north and south Mali are deeply associated with the way the national government has operated for the past decades. So, there is a real peacebuilding challenge: to what extent to pay proper attention to the priorities that are established by the sovereign state. It is certainly true that peacebuilding will fail if you do not pay enough attention to the priorities of the government itself.

But, there are other critiques. For example, is the whole approach to liberal peacebuilding wrong? Certainly, lots of good evidence shows that liberal peacebuilding as it was interpreted in some places in the 1990s and early 2000s was too naïve. The idea that you use elections as an exit strategy, as opposed to the first step in a developing the democratic institutions, is now recognized universally to be foolish, but it was widespread in the 90s. The idea that one could take the opportunity to introduce an even more pure, free market model than the United States and/or UK in a post-conflict country was also naïve. It was an extreme version of liberal peacebuilding.

If we look to some key aspects of liberal peacebuilding that have survived, it is quite challenging to conceive of concerted multilateral efforts to support peacebuilding in the state that do not retain the idea of democracy and democratic institution building: that is, the development of norms of institutions, rather than just picking winners and backing the president whom you favor. Even if it is not the end goal and it might take some years, the idea that democracy is not one of the items would be – it seems to me, but this is me being biased – to lose faith with the people who have prepared to queue for very long hours at the first opportunity to cast their votes in elections. So, there has to be some element of support for that, even if there is some concern about rule of law and due process.

While there are all sorts of aspects of liberal peacebuilding as traditionally practiced that needed to be junked, it is hard to see just that in principle being the problem. This is because the whole concept of peacebuilding as it came through from peace research is about more inclusive government and peaceful systems for grievance settling. With a democracy at its roots, an idea is that you do not have to have a civil war in order to get rid of a government you do not like; you can do it through peaceful elections. This is deeply engraved in the human security approach, so we should not adopt positions that are too contradictory normatively when we critique the peacebuilding operations.

What about other questions? Is it better to focus more on the bottom-up? Definitely, but still there are challenges here, such as the talk of a local turn in peacebuilding – that is, do not focus so much on the national state apparatus in the process of state-building. It certainly appeals to the main Western international actors that support peacebuilding. This is one of the prescriptions to which almost everybody in the room will say, "yes, we agree with that." One of the important things we need to note though is that it is not as if practitioners did not support local peacebuilding initiatives from the

beginning; they said there could be challenges.

The local peacebuilding is about grassroots empowerment, community empowerment, and community-based programs to build the capacity up from the community to deliver their own programs – as opposed to empowering the government to deliver programs for the community. This incidentally is extremely important in fragile states because in a context where the state has deep fragility and therefore the national apparatus is not very capable of delivering a lot of services, it makes simply functional sense to invest closer to the supposed beneficiaries in order to get effective delivery.

So, what is a community? A community is a warm, mutually supportive ideal social unit, just like a family. Not for all, obviously. In most of the civil wars we talk about, much of the violence is perpetrated by parts of the community on other parts of the community. Most of the challenges, even in less fragile states, are the communities being deeply divided with deep marginalization. Thus, when we talk about community, we need to think very hard about what we mean by the community. For example, I have just recently worked in Lebanon, with the Lebanese police and army. There is a very strong impetus to promote greater service at the community-level security deliverables. But in Lebanon, each community – the Christian Maronite, Shia, Sunni, and Armenian – is already set up to serve each identity group community, rather than having an inclusive community. The big challenge in Lebanon is that everybody supports the idea of community policing, but that does not necessarily mean to allow minority groups to have a say. It is deeply contested to have an inclusive notion of community,and is a constant challenge to have a fully inclusive approach against some of the customary marginalization. It has to be something that the community wants, but immediately you are getting into some difficult contradictions, potentially between universal norms and community norms. They are not simply arrogance from the international committee; rather they are inherent dilemmas and difficult choices in every locality in which we are trying to do peacebuilding.

## 5.   Tensions among Human Security, Peacebuilding, and State-building

While there is a natural overlap between human security, peacebuilding, and state-building, there are tensions among them potentially. There are certain key tensions that we need to recognize and be clear about. One criticism is that the international forces are too assertive, and that is often true, but do not forget that this is a conflict situation in which conflict was ended before it naturally would have ended without international intervention. Some degree of assertion becomes important for inclusiveness, for just not allowing the country to be the creature of whichever happen to be the most powerful local actors.

Local ownership is often a very powerful international concern and can become another arena of tensions. Local ownership often frustrates local governments because for them local ownership is what the government signed off on, whereas for internationals it has to be more than the government, and that can lead to real tensions. This is a challenge for universal norms which are being used to mobilize support: how do you justify support from the UK population to pay for this, if it is not in the interest of norms that they care about? Most people pragmatically will understand that there are compromises and you should not impose things on others, but that tension is intrinsic.

Some of the great arrogances were in Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor, where essentially international protectorates organized and decided how everything was going to be run. That certainly did not work. But at the same time, you have to build on what exists. What exists is deeply problematic. In addition, there is a challenge between the short-term imperatives versus long-term objectives. If you are delegated as a UN operator, you are told that you have two years to implement this program; then you will be sacked if you cannot design that program in order for it to be implemented in two years with all of the difficult choices.

So, there are these inherent strategic dilemmas. In East Asia, a lot of the population sees a natural alignment between state security and human security, and it is obvious that having a well-functioning state can better protect its population. But obviously an abusive state can better abuse its population if you are not careful about it. One study shows that basically the international presence is just too big, so big that it distorts the local economy. In Burundi, a great many jobs and businesses will disappear the moment the UN operation finishes. There is a duration, how long to plan for, and how long to announce, which is really interesting. It was only in Sierra Leone recently where the British governments said we are going be here for 20 years at least, and you can count on that. That made a very big difference to the dynamics of Sierra Leone. Participation entails a number of questions; how long do you spend time reassuring the elites who have made the peace, as opposed to irritating them by bringing in others that they do not necessarily want to be brought in for a more inclusive participatory process? How do you cope with the risk of dependency? How do you cope with the fact that as soon as there is a big operation you have got hundreds of different senses of decision-making about what to do within that country and how to improve coordination?

So, where does that leave us? Where we avoid superficial critiques of why peacebuilding by the UN has not been successful, it is very easy to see faults because they are all over the place. When we are talking about better options, the idea of just saying, "oh, well it is all about liberal peacebuilding, let's abandon the liberal elements," seems appealing, but people do not mean that when they say it. What they mean is just do not do it in the way that you are doing it now. Watch out for the local. There

is a whole debate about hybridity of peacebuilding, which to my mind is a very good notion if you mean by hybridity, complex and multi-faceted things joined together. It is very inadequate notion, if you mean internationals and locals struggling and somehow reaching a compromise in the middle. That is not how anything works.

Finally, the last point is about placing dilemma assessment at the center of our thinking. It seems to me that this is perhaps the biggest lesson from what I have been talking about: that human security really matters and these programs can make a difference. State-building really matters, and states often cannot be built in a way that is relatively resilient without some degree of international influence and support, and peacebuilding obviously matters. But, rather than simply critiquing and whenever there is a contextual challenge looking at it and saying, "actually you should have taken the other option," place these dilemmas that are intrinsic to every UN peacebuilding operation at the center of the assessment, and be clear about them. In this way, it becomes understandable why a bounce has gone in this way rather than that way. And it is crucial to conduct a serious analysis in each particular context of which dilemmas really matter; which you have to focus attention on really consistently; and which ones you just have to take a decision on, and run with it, and hope and keep monitoring.

## 6.  Concluding Remarks

There is no easy answer. But, I think, what is necessary is to refocus our efforts so that we are doing national state-building and national peacebuilding, but much more consciously as a way of making local initiatives sustainable, as opposed to investing everything at the national state level and hoping that it will trickle down within 10 or 15 years – by which time the international community is long gone, and the whole reform process is probably finished and long gone. This is an area of really tricky analysis. How not to be naïve about local peacebuilding, recognizing that there has got to be action at the national center and there has got to be a framework in which local initiatives are made a little bit more sustainable – which means, you think hard about which ones to support and take, and how to work with that.

What I am aiming to do is to say that the human security agenda, peacebuilding agenda, and state-building agenda have proved to be effective, compared with what would have happened if they had not happened at all. But, there has been too easier tendency over the last five years to offer rather easy critiques, as if the practitioners and peacebuilders who are in office are ill-intentioned, as opposed to having to navigate intensely complicated context – in which we can think more strategically about how to engage with that. So, I do thank you for your attention, thanks very much.

# Reflection on the "Local Turn" in Peacebuilding: Practitioners' Views[1]

SungYong Lee[2]

The local turn has been a buzzword that has defined the peacebuilding discourse over the past decades. It began to attract academics' attention in Peace and Conflict Studies in the mid-1990s, when the limitations of the conventional models for post-war reconstruction became evident. As an alternative way to consolidate peace, researchers have paid attention to the importance of reflecting locality and the roles of local actors in peacebuilding. Numerous studies have proposed, theorized, and examined various issues relating to the local turn. Concepts like local ownership, hybrid peace, everyday peace, and resilience peace have emerged and discussed among the academics who want to make peacebuilding "be more closely situated in its local societal and cultural contexts" (Schierenbeck 2015, 1025).

The reflection of the locality has also become evident in the operational principles of many international peacebuilding agencies since the early 2000s. The UN for example acknowledged national ownership as "the single most important determinant of the effectiveness of capacity-building program[me]s" (UNSG 2002). Donor agencies adopted local ownership as a central theme in their policy statements and often as a criterion for reviewing funding applications. A radical increase was made to the amount of financial assistance channelled from the donor communities to or through local civil society actors throughout the 2000s. In their operational guides, on-the-ground organizations proposed and developed various forms for local capacity building and reflection of local contexts (Paffenholz 2014, 2015).

Nevertheless, the centrality of the local turn is a lot more uncertain when we focus on the "quality" of its implementation in the practice of peacebuilding. While many international organizations adopt it as rhetoric, others allow local actors' involvement only to the extent of being the implementers of the international agenda (Donais 2009; Richmond 2012). Although recent reports demonstrate more active involvement of local actors, still evident is the tendency to treat locals as "customers" who select one of the pre-set options offered (Lee and Özerdem 2015). In some cases, the activities of civil society groups were frequently co-opted by international watchdogs or corrupt local elites who apparently promoted "locally-driven" programs (Norman 2014; Richmond 2015).

Researchers have explored the barriers that underlie such limited application of the local turn in

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[1] An early draft of this article was delivered at the keynote panel of the 2018 Annual Conference of the Japan Association for Human Security Studies (8 December 2018).

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field practice. Some studies pay attention to the epistemological and ontological limitations presented in the theoretical debates over the local turn, which include overly simplistic conceptualizations of the actors (local vs. international) and hybridity, the underplay of some relevant factors, and biased approaches to peacebuilding in the global North (Visoka 2017; Wallis et al. 2018). Others pay attention to the division and the power disparity within and between the academic and practitioner communities that reinforce the problem-solving approaches to peacebuilding (Bright and Gledhill 2018; Chandler 2017; Gleditsch, Nordkvelle and Strand 2014; Gnoth 2020; Kristensen 2012; Goetze 2017; Jackson 2015; Thiessen and Byrne 2018).

With appreciation of the validity and insightfulness of the above studies, this article aims to identify and analyze further challenges by listening to the voices of field practitioners who determine the nature of peacebuilding operations. So, how do practitioners view the academic debates regarding the local turn, and why do they think the debates are not deeply applied in field practice? By exploring these questions, the article will highlight the gap between the academic debates and field practitioners' perspectives and discuss what specific areas of the gap need to be addressed. To this end, the author has questioned approximately two dozen field practitioners in Asian countries (specifically, Cambodia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Mindanao in the Philippines, and Southern Thailand) during his field studies between 2013 and 2019.

This article integrates and examines the responses given in these dialogues, by roughly categorizing the ideas which emerged in most interviews into three broad themes: (1) local-international friction as the central framework, (2) the agency of locals, and (3) external actors' position. While practitioners appreciate the normative values of the debates, they consider that many academic discussions do not accurately reflect the most important agenda or the urgent needs in the field, and tend to focus on raising questions rather than giving answers. This research finding reveals one of the long-standing issues – a lack of communication between the academic and practitioner communities. As a caveat, these interviews were conducted with people working in different contexts, over a period of time. Moreover, it relied on snowball sampling to recruit interview participants from a large number of field practitioners who have significantly different levels of understanding of the relevant academic debates. The analysis in this article in this regard does not confirm the overall perception of all practitioners in these countries. Instead, it will primarily demonstrate the opinions that are commonly shared by a collection of people who have a fairly clear understanding of the ideas and have explored how to adopt the ideas into their practice.

# 1. Local-International Friction as the Central Framework

Firstly, the interview participants point out that the discourse on the local turn over-emphasizes the significance of local-international friction. Although there are exceptions, an absolutely majority of the studies on the local turn have focused on the dynamic interaction between externally-imported peacebuilding models/actors/practices and their local counterparts. Moreover, the notion of "friction" in the dynamics has been offered as a central framework by which to understand the process and (hybrid) outcomes of the peacebuilding development (Millar, van der Lijn, and Verkoren 2013; Richmond and Mac Ginty 2014).

Although it is indeed an important concern, for most practitioners who were interviewed by the authors, it is obviously not "the" most important or urgent issue that should be immediately addressed. They rightly mentioned that there are many barriers that block the development of locally-driven peacebuilding practice, which are related to various factors like social structures, on-going security instability, and cultural contexts (Author's interview regarding Southern Thailand in Pattani, Thailand, November 2013). The power dynamics between different stakeholders is one such factor; furthermore, local-international friction is one of many issues relevant to the power dynamics.

In fact, many respondents singled out the critical (and frequently negative) roles played by local/national elites as the most important power dynamics related to the promotion of the local turn. The issue was repeatedly mentioned in most Asian countries which are undergoing peacebuilding/development processes, such as Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea, Cambodia, and Mindanao (the Philippines). These elites' rent-seeking behavior frequently goes against the needs and desire of local communities, and often generates violent resistance from social minorities. One such example is the ongoing social frictions in Cambodia over the government's ill-managed land distribution and registration process. In other cases, the central governments in deeply divided societies represent only one part of the population and other groups' voices are suppressed. For instance, in Sri Lanka, the Sinhala-centered policies of the government under Mahindra Rajapaksa restricted the scope of peacebuilding activities in Northeastern Sri Lanka to rehabilitation only. In these contexts, the friction between the elite groups and the peacebuilding communities is the primary issue, and the peacebuilding sector at both local and international levels is considered to be the same party that aims to protect local communities' interests (Author's interview regarding Sri Lanka in Coventry, UK, October 2013).

This issue has recently intensified due to the combined impact of the plunge in commitment from Western actors and China's increasing presence in the peacebuilding sectors, which has become

evident since the early 2000s. Firstly, international aid for peacebuilding in Asia significantly decreased in size and its direction turned to security-oriented programs after the 9-11 terrorist attack (Lee 2019). Hence, peacebuilding agencies at the local level have been desperate to securing funding sources for continuation of their programs. At the same time, China's rapidly increasing influence has transformed the power dynamics between the Western donor groups and national authorities. China is now by far the biggest donor country to many countries in the Asia-Pacific region, frequently offering more economic aid/investment than the combined amount from all European agencies. The availability of a funding source that does not apply any norm-based conditions or requirements for outcomes significantly strengthens the national elites' "political leverage in dealing with the powers traditionally dominant in the region" (Cheng 2019). Many field practitioners sense that the impact of this trend is real and huge. They see the people they worked with being forced to move out, new construction projects started (frequently by Chinese companies), and demonstrations by community members suppressed by security forces. For many field practitioners, the shrinking voice of the international (or Western) peacebuilding agencies is a frightening and immediate reality.

For the practitioners struggling in this context, it is concerning that the academic debates on the local turn focus most attention on the local-international friction. For instance, one interview participant said: "Many organizations, especially the ones working on human rights issues, have constantly been under the government's surveillance and intervention. One foreign NGO was closed due to the government's pressure in 2017. Why are you still talking about our problems while we are threatened to be, literally, kicked out?" (Author's interview regarding Cambodia in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, December 2019). Another interview participant also mentioned: "To me, China is the biggest threat to the promotion of local ownership. What do you say about it?" (Author's interview regarding Solomon Islands in Tokyo, Japan, April 2018).

In a sense, it is understandable in that researchers pay attention to the issues that are most relevant to their own societies. The issues of liberal peacebuilding models are mainly caused by the donor agencies, most of which are based in the Western researchers' societies. This framework offers people in the global North good opportunities for critical self-reflection on how "we" can improve "our" activities. As some of the main donor countries are former colonial powers, such self-criticism is also related to their efforts to prevent peace intervention from turning into a new method for expanding Western domination.

Nevertheless, it should be admitted that the dominant framework of the local-international friction reveals a bias in the academic debates. The framework offers researchers limited opportunities to accurately reflect the realities of peacebuilding in Asia and to incorporate the most urgent needs in

field practice. It encourages researchers to contextualize the theoretical debates and apply the debates on the local turn as "an" agenda that should be considered together with other major issues.

## 2.    The Agency of Locals

Another bias in the way academic studies approach the local turn is related to their emphasis on local agency. Local actors in many contemporary studies are depicted as the actors who want to make changes to their life conditions. It is assumed that local actors do have the capacity to develop and utilize their own resources to promote peacebuilding and development models that best fit their social context and challenge the external influence from liberal actors. Accordingly, many empirical studies tend to focus on discovering, examining, and whenever possible, further nurturing the local actors' agency (Chandler 2013; Schierenbeck 2015).

In the reality of their everyday practice, in contrast, a visible exercise of agency by local actors is very rare. Instead, practitioners face numerous examples that are contradictory to the core assumptions stated above. First, there are many occasions where local actors no longer have concrete knowledge about their traditional/inner resources that could be used for peacebuilding or conflict resolution. In the societies that have gone through a lengthy colonial history before the mass violence, even the most respected local elders may have limited memory of the traditions that had existed before and during the colonial period. Hence, peacebuilding agencies' efforts to rediscover local resources may struggle to get good responses from the communities. Things become trickier when raising the question of how to revive the tradition and contextualize it in a post-war setting in the 21st century, in that the revitalization and contextualization of tradition requires an even higher level of local mobilization. One interview participant mentioned: "When we ask what they want, we have hundreds of answers. When we ask how we and they together can get them, we receive almost zero answer… No, don't be pessimistic. But, you should accept that they sometimes really don't have clear answers" (Author's interview regarding Sri Lanka in Dunedin, New Zealand, October 2017). In other cases, local actors may decide to take non-action rather than agency to pursue their goals. The post-conflict societies are usually marked by a series of challenges: fear, mutual-mistrust, economic hardship, a lack of reliable leaders/seniors, and the involvement of local gangs. Non-action or silence is a type of strategy that many local actors choose in order to maintain their security and social stability (Eastmond and Selimovic 2012).

Second, local actors may not always want to make changes that strengthen their ownership of peacebuilding. There are many factors that discourage local populations from actively participating in

peacebuilding programs. Extreme economic hardship is one frequently raised factor; community members in poverty usually focus on managing their daily livelihood and pay little attention to the programs to transform the overall economic conditions. Some people simply cannot manage to join public activities due to the psychological trauma of experiencing/committing mass violence. People may argue that these are some challenges that should be overcome in order for locally-oriented peacebuilding to be implemented. However, the challenges are beyond the capacity of individual peacebuilding agencies to handle, and tend to persist for decades. Another set of widely reported examples indicates that local actors refuse to take up ownership of peacebuilding even when it is offered. There are many reasons that they feel reluctant or unready to be the owner. For example, the local population in some cases knows that ownership comes with responsibility and they do not want to assume it. Instead, they frequently express that they are happy to be the recipient of benefits or program operators. In other cases, there are more practical issues. For instance, local peacebuilders believe it is strategically useful to have foreign managers to protect the organization from political authorities' suppression and to attract more external funding.

Thus, the expression of agency is a rare event which, when it does occur, is usually presented by particularly outspoken individuals, local elites, or trained local peacebuilders. Facing these problems stated above on a daily basis, in contrast, practitioners' efforts to identify and support peace-supporting agency require extraordinary care and skills. Many interview participants wanted to learn more practical lessons on how to encourage local actors to be more proactive in developing and using their agency and capacity, as can be seen from one interview quote: "We have discussed the election of the local director. But, no one has applied yet. We understand that they fear the challenges that they need to face. The government's intervention will be a big issue. So, we think of some options for future protection. But, Cambodian managers simply don't want to become the director" (Author's interview regarding Cambodia in Battambang, Cambodia, November 2016).

It is disappointing to them that academic studies do not give useful information to the practitioners who want to realize the local turn. The ultimate takeaway message is no more than "here, I found another example" unless they explain "how these local actors handle the challenges and if the implications are relevant to other contexts of peacebuilding." Moreover, from the practitioners' view, studies in the critical scholarship (especially the ones with normative positions) seem somewhat naïve and biased in evaluating the realities. While attempting to identify the existence and (potentially) constructive roles of local agency, these studies pick up and magnify some relevant examples from the complex process of local actors' livelihood management. As similar types of findings are repeated in the academic debates, practitioners are concerned that academic studies give readers the wrong

impression that locals usually know everything and will be able to find their own solutions if they are given decent opportunities.

## 3. External Actors' Position

The third issue relates to the roles and position of external actors in the local turn of peacebuilding. Roughly speaking, the academic debates on the "local turn" can be interpreted as an endeavor to transfer the driver's seat from international interveners to local actors. Many studies in the critical scholarship share the assumption that the liberal peacebuilding models are the representations of Western power domination. The pursuit of the local turn is understood as a process of local actors' self-emancipation from imposed oppression and requires "transforming the relations of power between individuals and social groups" (Batliwala 2007, 560). Local empowerment or the localization in peacebuilding is, in this regard, a process where local actors become aware of the oppression imposed on them and strengthen their capacity to overcome the oppression.

Practitioners then ask the question, what roles are they expected to play during the promotion of and in the practice of such "emancipatory" peacebuilding? Theoretically, people pursue mutually respectful engagement between local and international actors without power imposition. In the ideal scenario, external actors support local peacebuilding practices "with their own knowledge, skills and experience" but use them to support the indigenous revitalization process as "facilitators, observers and inquirers" (Ervin 2016). If the mutuality between the insiders and outsiders advances, the interaction may bring about some hybrid peacebuilding models that successfully mingle both sides' strengths to consolidate peace in the local areas.

Nevertheless, the pursuit of this objective in practice can be significantly more complex than what is explained in theory. As the first step toward building a mutually beneficial relationship, many external practitioners want to find their "right" approaches to the local contexts and actors. They do understand that Westerners' self-centrism has been criticized and want to overcome their own limited perspectives. A few frequently discussed challenges are related to two particular questions: How should the issue of cultural relativism/universalism be understood? What position should external peacebuilders take in terms of their relations with the locality?

First, it is an axiom that external peacebuilders need to respect any local communities' values that are different from their own. However, is this still the case when such local practice is clearly contradictory to external peacebuilders' normative, religious or ethical grounds? Does respect of local cultures necessarily mean uncritical acceptance of local practice? Or, is there a more suitable way that

external actors can share their opinions without involving power-domination? Social and cultural contexts frequently buttress and intensify the sources of conflicts. One frequently raised cultural issue is that local narratives sophisticatedly justify discrimination toward outgroup or social minorities, especially women. When focusing on "practice," many people also expressed their anxiety regarding collective punishment that is widely accepted in many conflict-affected areas as a tool for promoting social justice. Both issues are against the principles of gender equality and non-violence, which most practitioners believe to be universally respected. Many peacebuilding agencies maintain different operational principles for handling such incompatibility, ranging from non-involvement to whistleblowing. These principles have been developed based on trial-and-error in their previous programs. However, practitioners wonder if the discourse about the local turn offers them any better ideas for handling these issues.

Second, related to the above point, practitioners also question what options they have for promoting local ownership. Although there are some exceptions, a majority of peacebuilding agencies have adopted various programs for capacity building/development, as a key method for local ownership promotion. The fundamental assumption behind them is that local actors need to be "empowered" to develop and consolidate local peacebuilding practice in the given social contexts and the global structure. Such technical approaches to empowerment unavoidably entail the idea of "we teach what you do." While there are many trainers and instructors who make efforts to inquire about and reflect participants' ideas, the core content and the modes of delivery are typically determined by the instructors. Even in successful cases, local actors are likely to internalize external ways of doing.

Practitioners are aware of this limitation. Hence, in the conversations, they asked questions like: how can this be avoided while they still contribute to the local peacebuilding practice? Is it more about the external interveners' attitude? In other words, are there any methods that practitioners can adopt in their daily practice for supporting the local actors' capacity building without imposing their ideas? Or, is it more about the technical approaches to empowerment itself? If this is the case, what alternative model is possible? For instance, what does "emancipatory empowerment" look like in practice and what can external peacebuilders do in the process of emancipatory empowerment? Should they just wait and see what locals do? They wonder what the academic debates over the local turn say about these challenging questions, which are critically important to their daily practice. If there is a limited range of studies that offer concrete insights on these questions, they hope to see more of such studies.

More importantly, practitioners hope the insights from the academic studies will be realistic. Here, they usually mean two things by realistic. First, they hope to see ideas that they can adopt as individual practitioners or organizations in the given conditions. While they appreciate the value of radical studies

as a guide for fundamental transformation in the field, the proposals in these radically critical studies are mostly about something beyond the capacity of these individual actors. Often, the studies make them feel helpless and anxious. One interview participant mentioned: "Yes, we give trainings on practical things about NGO operation like financial management and proposal writing. I think they are important skills for them (local peacebuilders) to keep their organization sustainable…They can't work without external funding. That's our reality" (Author's interview regarding Mindanao in Davao, the Philippines, November 2016).

Finally, practitioners often feel that academic studies do not closely follow what goes on in ground-level peacebuilding. In terms of the local turn, for instance, the identities of peacebuilding actors and their relations with local communities have rapidly transformed and diversified in many Asian countries. Many agencies that were once foreign-based have now become localized. In these organizations, most staff and volunteers are locals, and they make efforts to adopt more local communities' perspectives into their practice. Local actors' perspectives also change, often reducing the perceptual gaps between local and international actors (Lee and Park 2018; Lee 2019). Many local communities develop peacebuilding plans that assume the involvement of external agencies. In these communities, the Western peacebuilding principles and values are not necessarily "alien" anymore and the incompatibility between local and international is not as striking as described in the conventional studies on liberal peacebuilding (Author's interview regarding Cambodia in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, December 2019).

## 4.  Conclusion

This article has presented how practitioners perceive the academic debates over the local turn in peacebuilding by focusing on three thematic areas: local-international friction as the central framework, the agency of locals, and external actors' position. Firstly, it questioned whether the local-international friction that has dominated the academic debates does reflect the most important or urgent issue in the practice of peacebuilding. Secondly, from practitioners' perspectives, the emphasis on local actors' agency risks bias, as empirical evidence is chosen and magnified based on researchers' normative positions. Thirdly, regarding the roles and position of external peacebuilders, academics repeatedly emphasize "what should be done" without explaining "how it can be done." Due to these issues, a majority of the interview participants had difficulty relating to the debates on the local turn. The rather shallow application of the local turn in field practice is, this article argues, due to such perceptual gaps that practitioners feel exist between themselves and the academics.

This finding also reveals a more fundamental issue in the academic-practitioner divide. Apparently, this divide in the peacebuilding discourse relates to two major factors: a lack of communication and the trends in the mainstream debates. Firstly, many of the practitioners' concerns are due to a lack of communication between the two sides. Indeed, many studies have addressed the issues raised in this article. Regarding external actors' engagement without imposition, for instance, various methods for practice have been explored. Elicitive intervention models is one such example for conflict resolution (Behrendt and Kelly 2008; d'Estrée and Parsons 2018; Lederach 1995; Tan 2002), whereas learning process approaches that propose development agencies should drop the blueprint models for operation is an example in the ground-level development practice (Korten 1980; Oswald and Taylor 2010; Rudengren and Öjendal 2002). The risk of over-emphasis on local-international dynamics has also been pointed out in empirical studies of peacebuilding in Asia (Öjendal and Ou 2015). In terms of the agency issue, many studies attempt to balance this trend by highlighting the bias and restrictions that affect local actors' practice (Richmond 2009, 2011). However, field practitioners usually get the information on the academic discourse in a very concise manner from different trainings or introduced in a policy brief and do not have opportunities to learn these details.

At the same time, it should also be acknowledged that such reflective studies have not been incorporated into the mainstream debates on the local turn. Many early proponents who first introduced the local turn into the discipline, such as John Paul Lederach, Kevin Avruch, Kevin Clements and the like, aimed to improve peacebuilding practice. During the "first wave" in the mid-1990s, they were concerned with the "dead-ends in the process and the conditions" for peacebuilding (Pouligny 2006, xvii) and attempted to find "practical approaches and activities" that have "the greatest potential for…sustaining peaceful outcomes" (Lederach 1997, 150) by paying attention to the roles of locality. International peacebuilding organizations' active adoption of the relevant themes in the 2000s was partly due to active communication with these researchers. Nevertheless, as the academic debates moved into the "second wave" in the mid-2000s, the mainstream discussions leaned toward more conceptual/theoretical exploration or more radical normative debates (Paffenholz 2014, 2015). When considering and focusing on the most recent outputs, the questions and concerns raised by practitioners are fair and valid. Although the value of these studies is undeniably significant, this trend sets the academic as being more insulated from what's happening on the ground.

After three decades of development, it is time to critically reflect on where the discourse on the local turn is heading. Of many features, this article demonstrates the discourse's tendency to intensify the academic-practitioner divide, which is caused by a lack of sound communication and the recent trend in the academic discourse. Moreover, it calls for more proactive effort to address the gaps. While

the divide itself is nothing new in the academic disciplines, this challenge is concerning when we consider that the initial objectives set in the discourse on the local turn were to contribute to the field practice. The findings presented above demonstrate a few major issues that academics can consider as starting points. This does not mean that academics should bolster every point made by field practitioners. Indeed academic debates pursue different goals and the goals should not be limited to serving field practice. Some of the practitioners' views reflect the so-called "problem-solving approaches," the very perspectives that many critical scholars aim to challenge (Gnoth 2020). However, the first step to addressing the divide should be academics' understanding of what challenges the practitioners face and what they hope to learn from the academic studies related to these challenges. Then, further efforts should be made to build platforms for enhancing the communication and encouraging collaborative research between the two sides.

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# Contextualizing the Sustaining Peace Approach in Contemporary Armed Conflicts: From High-Level International Mediation to Pragmatic Peacebuilding Initiatives in Syria

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## Abstract

As violent protracted and recurring armed conflicts are increasing in number and complexity, it became a pressing need to shed light on contemporary forms of international cooperation to resolve conflicts and build peace while examining its respective challenges and limitations. In this context, the United Nations (UN) launched the sustaining peace agenda, presenting a new narrative and approach focused on a long-term comprehensive vision of development, humanitarian, and inclusive peacebuilding activities across the peace continuum. However, the operationalization of sustaining peace is still largely untried while the full variety of assistance in complex conflict-affected situations remains unrevealed. This paper considers the importance of pragmatism and adaptiveness amidst the changing nature of violent armed conflicts, and recognizes that peace needs to emerge fundamentally from within conflict-affected situations while being assisted by international actors such as multilateral organizations, bilateral agencies, and international non-governmental organizations. Through the examination of international cooperation for peace in the context of the Syrian armed conflict, between 2011 and 2015 when no ceasefire or dominant party was foreseen, this study argues that due to the complexity and ineffectiveness of high-level international mediation, pragmatic peacebuilding initiatives represent an alternative along Syria's pathway to sustaining peace.

**Keywords:** Protracted Conflict, International Mediation, Peacebuilding, Sustaining Peace, Syria

## 1. Introduction

Since 2010, trends in violent armed conflicts have been shifting significantly, causing an impact on the inability of international peacebuilding actors to effectively prevent and respond to related crises. Quantitative data also demonstrates that since 2010, there has been a relative increase in the number of intra-state conflicts, the number of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs), as well as civilian casualties and battle related deaths in urban areas. In addition, current trends also demonstrate that armed conflicts are changing in nature: they are increasingly protracted, more complex, and recur more often (UN and WB 2018). On average, civil wars last 7 years and require 14

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years to recover from it economically. Chances of relapse are high, and it can take up to 25 years to rebuild lost state systems and institutions (SIPRI 2017). The protracted nature of today's complex and multidimensional intrastate wars is often the result of the fragmentation and mutation of involved parties. While a civil war is prolonged over time, the original drivers of conflict are more likely to change and require adaptive responses. The constant mutation of protracted conflicts entails a geographic dimension (the region where conflict occurs is constantly changing) and a dimension related to its intensity level (e.g., the number of battle-related fatalities varies considerably in a 7-year period). As a result, once a country or society is on a violent path, changing its trajectory towards peace becomes more difficult with time (UN and WB 2018).

Taking into consideration current conflict trends, one of the underlying assumptions is that violence will generate violence, i.e., conflict recurs in cycles resulting from seeds of violence being sown during war. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program (UCDP) has identified 159 recurring conflicts from 1946 until 2016. Around 60% of the total number of conflicts have recurred, and 135 different countries have experienced conflict recurrence during this period. Conflict recurrence has been even more common since the mid-1990s due to structural changes and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Consequently, the average duration of post-conflict peace is only 7 years and two regions in particular accounted for increasing recurrence in the post-Cold War period, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region (Gates et al. 2016).

The regional concentration of violent armed conflicts shifted after the invasion of Iraq in 2003. South Asia became the center of gravity with the intensification of the conflict in Afghanistan, in 2006-2007, and the escalation of the conflict in Pakistan, in 2008, and later the Middle East, with the escalation of the war in Syria, in 2012. Overall, the majority of violent conflicts today occur in the Middle East, in South Asia, and in Africa. (Allansson et al. 2017; Sundberg et al. 2012). Another relevant fact is that armed conflicts today take place in middle-income countries, e.g., Syria and Iraq, and have much higher intensity levels and consequently much longer recovery times. This demonstrates that wealth and related indicators do not necessarily prevent conflict and when conflict occurs in middle-income countries, it dramatically reverses previous achievements in human development (UN and WB 2018). In 2017, 51% of all humanitarian funds were requested by the United Nations for crises in middle-income countries. Much of today's violence continues to be entrenched in low-income countries; however, more than half of fragile contexts are to be found in middle-income countries (OECD 2018).

Increasing complexity is another element of contemporary conflict trends. Since the end of the Cold War, the predominant form of conflict has not been between states but intrastate, often involving

the intervention of external state actors. As 18 in 47 intrastate violent conflicts were internationalized in 2016, the complexity of today's civil wars derives partially from its internationalization (Dupuy et al. 2018). Another element related to complexity is the rise of non-state actors, i.e., an increasing number of conflicts with armed groups that are not directly linked to states (e.g. violent extremist groups, armed trafficking groups, militias, etc.). In fact, non-state actors have been growing in influence and impact, claiming economic and political resources, and moved by issues related to identity and ideology. Non-state actors are also transnational, forming coalitions across states and aiming at controlling regions with unrecognized borders. This leads to the rise of cross-border conflicts, another element related to increasing complexity (UN and WB 2018). Complexity as a conflict setting or peacebuilding setting is often represented by a system that is in fast and continuous change, but whose components also have the ability to adapt. The traditional peacebuilding programming culture is not effective in such complex environments, requiring a shift from program designing to contextual adaptation, results-based monitoring, and continuous evaluation (Brusset et al. 2016).

As contemporary armed conflicts have become increasingly complex, the number of civilian victims has doubled, resulting from indirect causes, such as water contamination, lack of appropriate shelter, food and medical care. Though the number of losses has been relatively lower than the large-scale interstate wars of the 20th century, the Syrian conflict resulted in the highest number of fatalities among all the conflicts in the world in the 21st century (Pettersson and Wallensteen 2015, 539). In addition, the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees also has increased; e.g., in 2017, 68.5 million people were displaced due to persecution, conflict, and generalized violence (UNHCR 2018). Furthermore, the relation between conflict and terrorism also underlines the complex nature of contemporary trends. Ten countries under conflict accounted for 84% of all deaths from terrorism in 2017 and armed conflicts are considered a major driver of terrorist activity today (Institute for Economics and Peace 2018).

In the last decade, intrastate conflicts have become longer (protracted) and more complex, and recur more often, both in low-income and middle-income countries. The current international order remains a system based on principles of collective security attempting to respond to or prevent violent armed conflicts through shared peace mechanisms and shared values. However, this collective desire to achieve sustainable peace has been challenged on many fronts, in a world that is more interconnected but also more complex than ever before. Current armed conflict trends demonstrate that emerging challenges to peace in several regions of the globe are not effectively addressed by international peacebuilders and demand innovative peacebuilding strategies. New policy trends, such as the United Nations (UN) sustaining peace agenda, are attempting to develop new peacebuilding

narratives and techniques to cope with current challenges. In this article, we explore the case of complexity and international mediation in Syria and the need for pragmatic, contextualized, and local peacebuilding solutions with the potential for effectiveness in contemporary conflict-affected situations.

## 2.   The Sustaining Peace Approach: A New Peacebuilding Narrative at the United Nations

Since its creation, the UN has been one of the main actors involved in prevention of and responses to violent armed conflicts, and the UN Charter enshrines the norms and mechanisms to achieve peace collectively. The objectives related to prevention are clearly stated in the preamble as a foundational value of the UN: "We the peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war" (UN 1945, 2). In addition, the Charter underlines that in order to maintain international peace and security, the UN will take concrete actions through "effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace" (UN 1945, 3). However, the UN's ability to use its full potential to respond to and prevent conflicts has often been conditioned by systemic dynamics of power. Historically, the capacity of the UN to act has been strongly conditioned by the interests of its member-states, especially the major powers with a permanent seat at the Security Council. During the Cold War, its institutional focus was to respond to armed conflicts related to decolonization and interstate conflicts that were outside the orbit of Cold War dynamics. The post-Cold War period demanded the UN to engage more actively in responses to violent armed conflicts and realize the objectives of the UN Charter. Thus, the 1992 Agenda for Peace revived the UN mechanisms to address conflict-affected situations and introduced to the policy arena the concept of 'post-conflict peacebuilding.' The 1992 Agenda emphasized a sectorial approach to conflict resolution based on four categories of interventions at different stages of the conflict cycle: 'preventive diplomacy,' 'peacemaking,' 'peacekeeping' and 'post-conflict peacebuilding' (UNSG 1992). This sectorial approach remained until several reforms were initiated in 2015 and despite the changes previously introduced by the 2000 Brahimi Report, the establishment of the 2005 peacebuilding architecture, and the development of the 2008 Capstone Doctrine. The division between development, humanitarian, and peace actors continued until the conception of the sustaining peace agenda (UN and WB 2018).

The 2016 twin resolutions on 'sustaining peace', adopted by the UN Security Council (S/RES/2282) and General Assembly (A/RES/70/262), were inspired by the need to redirect the

collective efforts of the international community to respond to today's complex and interconnected crises, moving away from linear understandings and fragmented responses to armed conflicts. The UN defines '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, 'sustaining peace' emerged as an umbrella concept and policy framework that encompasses all activities aimed at "preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict" (UNSC 2016, 2); i.e., it incorporates, in a 'whole-of-system' approach, humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, political mediation, peacebuilding, and development assistance.

The original concept of sustaining peace can be traced back to the idea of 'positive peace,' as first introduced by Johan Galtung. Positive peace results from the attitudes, institutions and structures that create and sustain peaceful societies, as opposed to 'negative peace', the mere absence of violence. (Galtung 1969). Accordingly, the sustaining peace agenda attempts to go beyond ad-hoc responses to conflict and provides a roadmap for the UN and its member-states to synergize their efforts towards a culture of prevention. The new narrative also focuses on peacebuilding at all stages of the conflict cycle, underlining that additional and urgent efforts are fundamental in contexts where the risk of crisis is heightened and where collective efforts will effectively address risk factors that may cause violence. Enhanced coordination and coherence among humanitarian, development and peace actors, presents opportunities for mitigating risks and fostering more effective and sustainable outcomes in international peacebuilding (UNESCO 2018). For instance, peacekeeping within the sustaining peace agenda will contribute to peace efforts as a security umbrella for other actors to achieve peacebuilding objectives. Peacekeeping operations will implement early peacebuilding tasks, generating the momentum and laying the foundation for broader peacebuilding and development efforts. Therefore, peacekeeping missions will be deployed as part of a broader and longer-term strategy to support member-states in preventing conflict and sustaining peace (Guterres 2018; UN 2018).

In relation to the link between development assistance and sustaining peace, the coordination between the 2030 agenda for sustainable development and the sustaining peace resolutions represents a system-wide framework centered on long-term approaches that address the root causes of fragility and aims at building societal resilience. The SDG 16+ targets violence, abuse and exploitation; highlights the need for safe and inclusive environments; and offers a more holistic approach to good governance and institutions. The delivery of SDG 16+ requires a multi-sectoral approach that brings together various actors in different areas, e.g., governance, justice, public health, education, social welfare, livelihood, and protection. Both the 2030 Agenda and the 2016 sustaining peace resolutions offer a holistic approach that emphasizes the link between peace and sustainable development.

Because positive peace is both an enabler and an outcome of sustainable development, the 2030 Agenda also becomes a strategic entry point for sustaining peace (Mahmoud et al. 2018; UN 2015; NYU-CIC 2016). Besides the integration between peacebuilding, peacekeeping and development, the sustaining peace resolutions are also calling for all humanitarian actions to be closely coordinated with development and peace actions, in order to achieve lasting positive impacts on conflict-affected situations (DNH 2019).

In June 2015, the Report of the Advisory Group of Experts (AGE) introduced the concept of sustaining peace, leading to concrete actions to review and strengthen the UN's approach to peacebuilding. Historically, the UN has been the main international organization involved with prevention and responses to conflict; however, the 2015 review accelerated the momentum to redefine the narrative and implement international peacebuilding. In the sustaining peace agenda, peacebuilding covers all actions to respond to and prevent conflicts. Furthermore, the 2016 sustaining peace resolutions reveal an innovative organizational culture that may eventually also be assimilated by other peacebuilding actors. The fact is that the reality and practice of peacebuilding today encapsulates a variety of approaches and understandings developed by multilateral and bilateral agencies, and civil society organizations. In addition, the operationalization of the UN sustaining peace agenda remains largely untried and the full variety and characteristics of peacebuilding interactions between international, national and local actors in complex conflict-affected situations remains unrevealed. Thus, 'peacebuilding' stands today as an evolving concept in continuous transformation and depends on the interpretation of all those involved, including both external and domestic stakeholders.

Emerging peacebuilding narratives and current armed conflict trends are leading peacebuilding actors to highlight the need for coordination, pragmatism, adaptation to complex situations, and the inclusion of national and local actors. In the face of challenging trends, sustaining peace and peacebuilding require greater flexibility and politically viable short-term and medium-term actions. Traditionally, development and peacebuilding actors tend to decrease any form of engagement when violence escalates, an approach that has been proven ineffective. Therefore, building peace today implies that all related actors have a role to play during and between conflict cycles. In this context, continuous coordination within long-term actions have become essential to achieve actual peace on the ground. The 'humanitarian-development-peace nexus' and the 'peace continuum' are key terms that express this emerging policy trend. In summary, the concept of peacebuilding has become broader and wider; it was turned into an umbrella concept that integrates humanitarian assistance, political mediation, peacekeeping, development assistance, and traditional 'post-conflict peacebuilding'

interventions. However, the realization of sustaining peace depends on innovative peacebuilding techniques that allow peace to emerge from within rather than to be imposed by external actors undermining the self-organization capabilities of conflict-affected societies.

## 3. The Case of Complexity and International Mediation as Peacebuilding in Syria

Complex, protracted and recurring intrastate conflicts remain as the biggest contemporary threat to peace, requiring pragmatic and context-specific peacebuilding approaches to be implemented at all stages of the conflict cycle. Recognizing the context also underlines the importance of pragmatism in peacebuilding interventions by external actors, as well as the need for the inclusion of national and local actors in the peacebuilding process. The issue of context recognition is particularly relevant considering the case of international cooperation for peace in Syria, one of the most challenging political and humanitarian crises since World War II. As mentioned above, peacebuilding became an umbrella concept, which also includes, e.g., humanitarian assistance and peacemaking (international mediation). However, mediation in the context of the Syrian conflict has been described as a mission impossible where some of the world's most experienced mediators have failed. The Syrian conflict contextual analysis should not remain only inside Syrian borders. Overlapping complex contexts coexist at international, national, and local levels since the outbreak of the conflict.

In March 2011, the international community considered the Syrian civil demonstrations in Dara'a, a city in the Southern region of the country, to be the spillover of the so-called "Arab Spring," the movement of anti-government protests that resulted in the fall of various authoritarian regimes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). The Dara'a demonstrations were reported to have started peacefully, yet they have spread beyond Dara'a because of brutal suppression by the regime (Marsh 2011; Human Rights Watch 2011). On the other hand, some reports mentioned that the opposition to the regime was to some extent armed from the initial stage of the demonstrations (Narwani 2014; Rosenthal 2014). The opposition groups, said to be in the thousands, were roughly divided into domestic and exile groups, and armed and non-armed groups. However, they were not able to unite themselves. The main domestic opposition group, the National Coordination Body (or Committee) for Democratic Change (NCB/NCC), formed in the spring of 2011, did not accept any violent fight, foreign military intervention, or the president's resignation. In contrast, the Syrian National Council (SNC), the main opposition group in exile, was against NCB/NCC's stance (CMES, 2012). Officially established outside Syria in October 2011, the SNC needed both the support of external actors,

including foreign governments, and the endorsement of Syrian domestic actors as it was meant to become the umbrella organization for opposition groups. However, considering that SNC efforts had failed, after the call by the United States (US) for re-examining the opposition structure (Quinn 2012), the SNC joined the National Coalition of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces (SOC), launched in Qatar, in November 2012.

The response by the international community was developed in this complex context. Moreover, in August 2011, the leaders of the US, the United Kingdom (UK), France, and Germany called for Syria's president Bashar Al-Assad to step down (BBC 2011; CNN 2011). After the failure to adopt the UN Security Council resolutions accusing the regime, by veto of Russia and China (Gutterman 2012), eleven countries[3] formed the Friends of Syria Core Group (hereinafter referred as "Core Group") in the beginning of 2012, supporting the SNC first and the SOC afterwards. At the fourth ministerial meeting of the Friends of Syria, attended by more than one hundred countries in Morocco, in December 2012, the SOC was acknowledged as "the legitimate representative of the Syrian people and the umbrella organization under which Syrian opposition groups are gathering" (Al Jazeera 2012; Morocco World News 2012).

Aside from putting effort into the adoption of Security Council resolutions, the UN also endeavored to carry out a highly complex mediation of the conflict. It appointed the 'Joint Special Envoy of the UN and the League of Arab States on the Syrian Crisis,' Kofi Annan, and under his coordination dispatched the UN Supervising Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), in April 2012, which due to the complexity of the situation on the ground, resulted in the withdrawal of the peacekeeping mission after only four months. Moreover, the ceasefire agreement based on the Geneva Communiqué led by Annan, in June 2012, collapsed after several hours. Hence, the UN was not able to hold the Geneva II Conference on Syria until January 2014. In this context and as it became impossible to adopt Security Council resolutions accusing those responsible for the conflict (Borger and Inzuarralde 2015), the "Core Group" framework was established as an international initiative separate from the UN Security Council.

Despite the achievements at the Friends of Syria conference in Morocco, there were some questions about what followed (Pierini 2012). The recognition of SOC was not the result of a vote or consensus. Before and after the conference, there was a wide variation of recognitions depending on each country. Firstly, some recognized the SOC as "the sole legitimate representative of the Syrian people," while others acknowledged it as the "legitimate representatives of the aspirations of the

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[3] Egypt, France, Germany, Italy, Jordan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, UK, and US.

Syrian people" (Talmon 2013, 227). Secondly, this recognition might have encouraged the SOC as a legitimate political actor; however, it did not guarantee an effective change of the regime. Though some countries (France, Qatar, UK and others) appointed an ambassador of the SOC, no government ended its diplomatic relations with the regime (although some declared Syrian representatives as "persona non grata"). Thirdly, the SOC was not able to attain a seat at the UN. Instead, it obtained a seat in the League of Arab States; however, it did not replace the regime, as the seat for Syria remained vacant (The Daily Star 2014). This exemplifies that the SOC was not able to evolve from a position of legitimacy toward acquiring state sovereignty. At the time of writing, the ministerial conferences of the Friends of Syria have been organized only among "Core Group" countries.

Besides the mentioned dynamics at the international level, the SOC also faced challenges from inside Syria. For example, the NCB/NCC kept its distance from the exile oppositions and decided not to become part of the SOC (IRC 2013). Moreover, it was not clear at this stage to what extent the Syrian regime relinquished its sovereignty in the country. In the 2012 Doha Debates, a member of the Qatar Foundation conducted an opinion poll covering Syria and the Middle East. Although Qatar was a member of the "Core Group", the poll demonstrated that 55% of the Syrian people supported Bashar al-Assad (Steele 2012; McDonald 2012). This poll was featured in the debate from a critical perspective, underlining its small samples and other related issues. Furthermore, the SOC was criticized for not having the intention to move its base to the opposition held area in Syria (Sayigh 2013, 29). To overcome those challenges, the SOC focused its efforts on increasing its legitimacy inside the country with the support of the "Core Group" and other member countries of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD). It established the Syrian Interim Government (SIG) in Turkey and tried to build a democratic institutional structure by setting up local councils (LCs) under the Ministry of Local Administration, SIG (CHD 2014, 6; Khalaf 2015, 24).

The LCs have been set up to fill administrative gaps in areas where the regime has withdrawn and at the local level. The LCs were considered to be the emergence of civil society in Syria (CHD 2014; Brown 2018; Favier 2016; Khalaf 2015). Some countries belonging to the "Core Group" conducted training for democratic institution building, justice, media, and others, directly given to the LCs before the establishment of the SIG. Because of such an environment, not all LCs have gathered under the umbrella of the SOC and the SIG. For example, only 15% of the LCs implemented legal regulations related to the SIG's Ministry of Local Administration (LACU and NPA 2013, 16), though the Ministry managed to supervise 760 LCs in all 14 governorates in Syria (CHD 2014, 16). Some LCs maintained relations not only with "Core Group" countries, the SOC and the SIG, but also with armed groups that directly controlled the community. Such groups respected the role of LCs and

"served to protect them from criminal elements and predatory bands of fighters" (CHD 2014, 19-20). Other LCs remained connected partially with the regime. In fact, the regime supported bakeries, garbage collection, and kept control of provision of electricity, water or other services in areas where negotiation was conducted with the offices of the governor (CHD 2014, 13-14). The regime also continued to pay the salaries of some public officials (Favier 2016, 9; Khalaf 2015, 59). Although conflict divided Syria, it became almost impossible to break-up the regime's network, as the lifeline infrastructure system remained the same as before the conflict.

The LCs as local actors, worked to build a constant relationship with the regime, the SOC, the SIG, and armed groups, so that they could maintain peace within their communities regardless of which party was in control. Simultaneously, as the SOC was based in exile, it is still unclear if it fits the categorization of 'local actor.' The "Core Group" expected the SOC to be the umbrella organization to confront the regime. However, the SOC could not provide incentives to unify opposition groups under its umbrella organization. The normative background related with the "Core Group" resulted in an attempt to implement a liberal peace approach, distant from pragmatism and planning that derives from the local context. The international community provided the SOC and opposition groups with limited support, which resulted in weakened legitimacy to exercise effectively state sovereignty when compared with the capacity of the regime.

As mentioned above, the complexity of the Syrian conflict context derives from three levels: international, national, and local. First, the complexity at the international level arose through a double framework, i.e., the UN and the "Core Group" frameworks. The UN, as in other conflict cases, took the lead for the mediation process. However, its mediation proved ineffective, as it could not coordinate the contested interests of the Security Council permanent members. This approach also did not result in a sustaining peace pathway in Syria. On the other hand, the "Core Group" alleged the illegitimacy of the regime, while its response involving opposition groups was not monolithic. The recognition of the SOC and related support depended on the political stance of each country. Nonetheless, they kept up de facto relations with the regime, respecting it as a sovereign state (Talmon 2013, 247). In sum, the "Core Group" was not able to develop a coherent mediation structure, instead backing the oppositions in a piecemeal fashion. Second, at the national level, the SOC was not able to strengthen its roots inside Syria. Although expected to become the broader representative of opposition groups (instead of the SNC), the SOC based in exile was not able to develop a strong connection with domestic oppositions and the LCs (Sayigh 2013). The SOC's legitimacy was built through providing humanitarian assistance but not all LCs relied on it. Third, at the local level the LCs maintained a direct connection with armed groups, and even with the regime, to sustain people's lives and the basic

functions of vulnerable communities living under the fragility of the conflict situation (CHD 2014; Khalaf 2015; Favier 2016).

In 2014, after formation of the so-called "Islamic State" (IS), the international community prioritized targeting IS, calling for the fight against terrorism while it suspended its mediation and support to resolve the Syrian conflict. The Geneva III conference was not held until the beginning of 2016. Meanwhile in 2015, Russia, kept supporting the regime, started bombardment in the IS controlled area, and was criticized for attacking the whole opposition held area (Cooper et al. 2015; The Guardian 2015). Later in 2015, the UN Security Council resolution 2254 was adopted, which commits to "the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic." It encourages "the establishment of an inclusive transitional governing body with full executive powers, which shall be formed on the basis of mutual consent while ensuring continuity of governmental institutions," and supports "the diplomatic efforts of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG)[4] to help bring an end to the conflict in Syria" (UNSC 2015, 1). The resolution was understood from both the side of the regime and that of the opposition. It neither called for the resignation of the President nor guaranteed support to the opposition groups. A similar approach was also presented in the Geneva Communiqué (UN 2012). Moreover, prior to the discussion led by the UN regarding resolution 2254, Saudi Arabia hosted a meeting with rebel groups to decide which groups would be represented among 15 delegation members participating in the discussion. The SOC joined the meeting as the major faction but not as the representative of the dissidents (Lund 2015). The complexity of the Syrian peace process at the level of international mediation as an element of the peacebuilding process has often been challenged by contextual dynamics occurring at all three levels: international, national, and local. Taking this into account, localized, people-centered and apolitical peacebuilding initiatives might hold the potential for increased effectiveness in complex and protracted intrastate conflicts.

## 4.   Conclusion: Toward Contextualized Local Peacebuilding Initiatives

As contemporary intrastate conflicts tend to be increasingly complex, protracted and recurring in a variety of different contexts, how would peacebuilding actors be able to respond to these crises more effectively? Taking the complexity of the Syrian conflict case into account, three elements require further exploration and consideration. First, the international community should pragmatically

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[4] The ISSG members consist of the "Core Group," China, Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Oman, Russia, the Arab League, the EU and the UN.

recognize the difficulty of dismissing the legitimacy of the de facto government, particularly if that does not correspond with the thorough and apparent will of the whole population. Even in the case of the wide dimension of the Syrian conflict, with more than 10 million people remaining in Syria, a considerable part of the population may not aspire to regime change. Moreover, taking into account the current international order, changing the regime does not necessarily lead to a ceasefire and may actually intensify the conflict. In fact, the Syrian government continued to exercise its national sovereignty while the "Core Group," the SOC, and other opposition groups have failed to achieve regime change. In situations where the government is officially recognized by the UN, respecting the de facto sovereignty exercised by the government remains as a valid starting point for negotiations towards a ceasefire and laying the foundations for a pathway to sustaining peace in which, at least, physical violence may be halted. Furthermore, respecting the principle of state sovereignty might represent a compromising but effective, contextually-adapted, and pragmatic peacebuilding approach that takes into account current conflict trends and distribution of power in an increasingly multipolar international system.

Second, the involvement of local actors in the peace talks and peacebuilding initiatives should be based on the conflict context and the environment of each community. The value and significance of their involvement is fundamental for the effectiveness of the peacebuilding process. Conflict trends demonstrate that contemporary civil wars often involve not one but various rebel groups and non-state armed actors actively participating within conflict-affected situations. Thousands of armed and non-armed rebels coexist inside and outside Syria in continuous integration and fragmentation. Current conflict analysis tools are still not able to provide the full description of all rebel groups and their continuous change and engagement in contexts like Syria. The constant fragmentation and complex characteristics of these actors result in an inability to gather full support from a wide majority of the population affected by conflict, consequently making any agreement ineffective. While some suggest that the participation of all groups should be possible in the peace process, others defend the exclusion of extremist or terrorist groups from the peace process as inevitable. In this regard, a clearer definition and assessment tool to determine what consists "extremism" or "terrorism" depending on each context should provide extra room for increased effectiveness in the mediation process. As local actors will inevitably have to deal with extremist groups, if the international community actively negotiate with these groups, this will increase the chances of effectively supporting the people that remain unwillingly under their control.

Third, the realization of the sustaining peace agenda in a multipolar world requires the international community to recognize that a unified direction or common understanding of

peacebuilding is currently nonexistent. Sustaining peace will depend on the adjustment to this reality and the self-interest of all involved stakeholders before facing peace talks. In the case of the Syrian conflict, international mediation attempts through the UN were ineffective. Simultaneously, the "Core Group" attempted to foster a regime change, while Russia, China, and Iran continued to support the regime. In the Syrian case, peace was not yet able to emerge from within, i.e., not all Syrian parties have been involved in the ongoing and complex pathway to sustaining peace. Furthermore, a formal or informal structure to coordinate the interests of all involved stakeholders is strongly needed. In this study, the case of the complex and protracted armed conflict in Syria served to demonstrate the need to refocus international peacebuilding during conflict, from ineffective high-level international mediation to contextualized local peacebuilding initiatives, particularly during the stage when the dominant party of the conflict and the direction of ceasefire are unclear. Thus, this study does not cover the whole period of the conflict, which is still ongoing at the time of writing. Further analysis of peacebuilding programs at all stages of the Syrian conflict and its aftermath will shed light on how local people on the ground are allowed to actively join the peace process and benefit fairly from the peace dividends based on each context. This will enrich and deepen the adaptive approach toward sustaining peace in contemporary complex, protracted, and recurring conflicts.

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# Buddhism and Post-Liberal Peace: Creating a Holistic Peace Model by Connecting Liberal Peace and Buddhist Peace as a Foundation for Sustainable Peace

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## Abstract

Since the end of the Cold War, the international community has been committed to a peacebuilding enterprise to respond to complex violent conflicts and liberal peacebuilding has assumed the central role. However, the critique of liberal peacebuilding has required us to build a complementary relationship between the liberal peace thesis and non-Western vision(s) of peace in post-liberal peacebuilding. This paper seeks to be an exemplar by offering a hybrid peace model that integrates Buddhist peace and liberal peace. While liberal peace is structurally and institutionally oriented, Buddhism has developed internal peace. Through the critical analysis of the cores of liberal peace – human rights, democracy, and market-oriented economy – from a Buddhist perspective, the research offers a post-liberal hybrid holistic peace model formed by four elements: the promotion of human rights; promotion of dialogical and transformative democracy based on self-critique and mutual learning; economic system sustaining and furthering material promoting philosophical and spiritual fulfillment of citizens based on social justice and equity; and inner peace characterized as reflective self-awareness, non-dualistic thinking, a multi-perspective approach, and compassion.

**Keywords:** Liberal peacebuilding, Post-liberal peacebuilding, Buddhism, Inner Peace

## 1. Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, the international community has been committed to a peacebuilding enterprise to respond to complex violent conflicts, and liberal peacebuilding has assumed the central role. However, the critique of liberal peacebuilding has required us to build a complementary relationship between liberal peace thesis and non-Western vision(s) of peace in the post-liberal peacebuilding. This paper seeks to be an exemplar by offering a hybrid peace model that integrates Buddhist peace and liberal peace. While liberal peace represented by democracy, human rights, and market economy is structurally and institutionally oriented, Buddhism has developed internal peace. This research aims to build a complementary relation between Western structurally oriented liberal peace and Buddhist inner peace to produce a post-liberal hybrid holistic peace model.

The first section of this paper discusses the hallmarks of liberal peace, its critique and the

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background of the emergence of the concept of post-liberal peace. After introducing the basics of Buddhism and its core teaching, that is, the Four Noble Truths doctrine, the second section analyzes a Buddhist view of conflict dynamics and its concept of inner peace. The third section examines a holistic peace model that interconnects the spirits of liberal peace and Buddhist inner peace. The section will make a critical analysis of the core themes of liberal peace – human rights, democracy, and market-oriented economy – from a Buddhist perspective. Finally, the research will offer a post-liberal hybrid holistic peace model formed by four elements: the promotion of human rights; promotion of dialogical and transformative democracy based on self-critique and mutual learning; economic system sustaining and furthering material promoting philosophical and spiritual fulfillment of citizens based on social justice and equity; and inner peace characterized as reflective self-awareness, non-dualistic thinking, multi-perspectival approach, and compassion.

## 2.   Methodological Considerations

Though there are many Buddhist groups, they can be categorized into three major schools: Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana schools. Each of them has sub-schools that have respectively developed distinct teachings, traditions, and customs, along with the shared doctrines. It is beyond the scope of this paper to examine all those schools and sub-schools and their teachings in detail.

Therefore, this research employs the following texts and teachings to elucidate a type of Buddhist inner peace and develop a holistic peace model that is connected with the spirits of liberal peace: Dhamapada,[2] Surangama-Sutra,[3] and Suttanipata[4] and the Four Noble Truths doctrine. However, it needs to be emphatically noted that although this paper embraces those texts and teachings to develop the argument on conflict dynamics, inner peace, and the post-liberal hybrid peace model, the concept of inner peace explicated here is merely one of the possible ideas of what is means to find inner peace in Buddhism, as other texts and teachings would produce inner peace(s) distinct from the one examined.

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[2] Dhamapada is a collection of sayings of the Buddha.
[3] Surangama Sutra is a sutra in Mahayana Buddhism. Especially it has been influential in Chinese Chan Buddhist school.
[4] Suttanipata is a Buddhist scripture, the fifth book of the Khuddaka Nikaya of the Pali Canon of Theravada Buddhism.

## 3. Liberal Peace and Post-liberal Peace

### 3.1 Hallmarks of Liberal Peace

The liberal peace thesis posits that states that employ democracy and develop economic interdependence based on free trade secure stable domestic politics and peaceful international relations (Richmond 2014). Those who advocate liberal peace claim that democracy and free-trade economic interdependence consolidate both national, regional and international order and stability.

The international community managed by liberal states has come to connect peace and security with market-oriented development, democracy, rule of law, human rights and a vigorous civil society (Richmond 2005). Based upon this liberal hypothesis, liberal peacebuilding promotes democracy, human rights principles, and market-oriented economic reform for a lasting peace because it is assumed that the transfer of liberal systems would empower people to resolve their differences of interests, goals, and values non-violently and make governments accountable and responsive to peoples' needs (Newman et al 2009).

### 3.2 Critique of Liberal Peace and the Rise of Post-liberal Peace

However, liberal peacebuilding invited criticisms for its universalistic pretentions, along with its concomitant failure to engage with local cultural practices of peacemaking and conflict resolution and with the manifold insecurities of everyday life in local societies (Selby 2013).

Through socialization within their culture, individuals understand what the world is like, employ a set of values, and grasp the meaning of events and actions (Fry and Fry 1997). The meaning of conflict and peace and approaches to conflict resolution would vary according to cultures. Post-liberal peacebuilding claims that peacebuilding is a cultural phenomenon since the ways in which conflict is perceived and dealt with reflect a culturally shared set of beliefs. Culture contains valuable knowledge, wisdom, and methods to achieve peace. Achievement of sustainable peace hinges on the acknowledgement of the knowledge and wisdom developed in culture and religion.

However, while cultural wisdom should play a main role in peacebuilding, it also needs to be recognized that culturally-oriented peacebuilding is not a panacea. Neither a liberal peace nor a culturally-oriented peace framework can create a sustainable peace alone. The core of post-liberal hybrid peacebuilding is that both internal and external commitments are indispensable: the spirits of liberal peace and cultural wisdom need to work together (Richmond 2011). Post-liberal hybrid peacebuilding should be enacted as an opportunity for the promotion of empathetic relations between the liberal peace frameworks and the cultural wisdom to co-construct peace that gratifies the needs of

local people as well as empowers them to develop new ideas and visions to address local problems. Post-liberal hybrid peacebuilding is a dynamic process in which liberal international norms are reconsidered and modified according to different cultural contexts to help the grass-roots and the marginalized members in local political spheres to contribute to peace formation (Richmond 2014).

Post-liberal hybrid peacebuilding is an intercultural or inter-civilizational dialogical process. The main objective of dialogue is to consolidate mutual respect and a sense of solidarity in the middle of diversity while exchanging and sharing diverse information (Der-lan 2006). Dialogue requires the openness to be challenged and transformed by encountering others' viewpoints and values, as well as the willingness and ability to engage in active listening and understanding of them (Ferrer 2002). This paper stands by the ethos of a post-liberal hybrid peace vision that builds a complementary relation between liberal peace and Buddhist peace. Though Buddhism has developed its own peace theory, this paper, through a dialogical and mutual learning process with a liberal peace thesis, seeks to propose a hybrid holistic peace model for a future sustainable peace.


## 4. Buddhist Peace Model

### 4.1 Introduction to Buddhism: Human Mind on Focus

The focus of Buddhism is human internal dynamics causing human suffering including conflict or violence, and liberation from the suffering to achieve inner peace. Dhamapada states: "All experience is preceded by mind, led by mind, made by mind" (Fronsdal 2005, 1). Further, the Surangama Sutra states, "The Tathagata has always said that all phenomena are manifestations of mind and that all causes and effects including (all things from) the world to its dust, take shape because of the mind" (Luk 2001, 16). These statements do not deny the existence of objects outside our minds. Rather, the qualities and attributes of things and objects are mental constructs.

As the condition of mind shapes the state of our reality, the root cause of problems facing us is attributed to our minds as stated in the Dhamapada: "Speak or act with a corrupted mind, and suffering follows as the wagon wheel follows the hoof of the ox" (Fronsdal 2005, 1). However, when we overcome the cause of internal suffering, we can realize inner serenity and well-being: "Speak or act with a peaceful mind, and happiness follows like a never-departing shadow" (Fronsdal 2005, 1). Buddhist philosophy is a critical study of the structure of the human thinking process: knowing, first, reality as a human-thought construct; examining how thought construction morphs into the cause of suffering; and contemplating and enacting the way to resolve it (Matsuo 1981).

### 4.2 Analysis of the Four Noble Truths Doctrine

The Four Noble Truths Doctrine is the Buddha's foundational teaching for every school in Buddhism (Yun 2002). The Four Noble Truths are "truths of pain, origin of pain, suppression of pain and the way to suppress pain" (Pereira and Tiso 1988, 172).

The first noble truth is that our life is filled with suffering and trouble (Rahula 1974). However, this is neither a pessimistic nor a nihilistic view of reality. The acknowledgement of our reality being full of suffering leads us to deeper question: "What is the root cause of suffering?"

The second truth presents the cause of suffering. It is craving, that is, a mental state of attachment – the tendency of mind to cling to specific objects or views (Burton 2002). Besides craving, ignorance is proposed as a fundamental cause of suffering. It is our basic misapprehension of the nature of reality (Geshe Tashi 2005). In an ignorant state, we tend to see things, including human beings, as having a permanent nature and stick to anything that reinforces our concept of permanence, pushing away those views that deny it (Geshe Tashi 2005). Further, craving and ignorance arouse three mental defilements: greed, anger, and delusion. The human mind itself is the locus wherein the gap between reality and the human hermeneutical reality represented in conceptual or linguistic rendering accompanied by desire takes place, which results in suffering (Park 2008).

The third truth is that a human being will be inspired to overcome suffering by knowing its root cause (Yun 2002). Since our own craving and ignorance are the causes, we can resolve suffering when we properly address them. Both suffering and liberation from it rely on our minds. The fourth truth is the way to address suffering and reach mental well-being and serenity, which is called the noble eightfold path (Rubin 2003). It is: right view,[5] right thought,[6] right speech,[7] right action,[8] right livelihood,[9] right effort,[10] right mindfulness,[11] and right concentration.[12] The gist of the fourth truth is that when we resolve our suffering, three angles – ethical conduct (right speech, right action, right livelihood, and right effort), mental discipline (right mindfulness and right concentration), and wisdom (right view and right thought) – need to be considered (Rahula 1974). When wisdom (an insight into the nature of reality), mental discipline (to monitor our internal dynamics), and ethical conduct

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[5] Yun (2002) defines it as a correct view of reality, that is, mutual interdependence and ultimate empty nature.

[6] Yun (2002) explains that it refers to a correct perception that our bodies will eventually decay and disappear and that our emotions and thoughts are temporal and impermanent.

[7] Rubin (2003) explains that it means speaking trustfully, sincerely, and compassionately.

[8] It refers to refraining from needless killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct.

[9] It means living a reasonable economic life, an altruistic life, and a harmonious communal life.

[10] It means correct diligence in developing wholesomeness that has not yet risen, increasing wholesomeness that has already arisen, and preventing unwholesomeness from arising.

[11] It signifies constant awareness of phenomena that are happening at present and careful recollection of phenomena that occurred in the past.

[12] It refers to spiritual concentration and mental tranquility achieved through the act of meditation to recall the actions and thoughts in the past, perceive the dynamics of mind at present, and cultivate goodwill and compassion.

(practicing a moral life with honesty, altruism, and compassion) are well integrated, we can stop suffering and build a harmonious relationship.

### 4.3 Buddhist View of Conflict Dynamics

The implication of the Four Noble Truth Doctrine is that our way of understanding the world affects peace and conflict dynamics. In a Buddhist view, one of the critical causes of conflict is belief and enactment of our values, worldview, or perspective as absolute or complete. Human beings develop conceptual thought, or linguistic knowledge, as the tool to make sense of the world and to communicate with fellow human beings (Ichimura 1997). We inhabit socially constructed and historically evolved life-worlds that form certain cultural patterns – identities, beliefs, and values – as scaffolding for meaningful experience (Reysen and Katzarska-Miller 2013). We build certain frame of reference – pattern of worldviews, cultural values, political ideologies and religious doctrines – to lead a meaningful life (Mezirow 2003). Culture molds us to conform to certain norms and determines the appropriateness of a given state of awareness or communication in the collective setting (Goleman 1993).

Constructing a certain frame of reference is connected to our eagerness for psychological security in the face of the uncertainty of practical life (Gordon 2006). According to Loy, security refers to "the conditions where we can live without care, where our life is not preoccupied with worrying about our life" (Loy 2002, 8), and that entails stabilizing ourselves by controlling and fixating reality with certain attributes.

However, while building a frame of reference is essential to us, its fundamental problem is our propensity to privilege our frame of reference as absolute, reifying our understanding of reality and objectifying the other (Zajonc 2006). That causes us to be dogmatic and exclusive of other views or thoughts (Ramanan 1978). Further, we are prone to feel threat, anger, or hatred toward others with distinct frames of reference, which becomes our self-serving justification for discrimination and impedes constructive communication with those having different views and perspectives (Der-lan 2006).

What should also be noticed is the mode of thinking in an absolutizing frame of reference. Though becoming conditioned by a social frame of reference is natural to us, it is fundamentally based on a dualistic nature of thought (right/wrong, good/bad, black/white, to name a few) and divides the world into in-group and out-group (Wade 1996). Dualistic thought is informed by the principle of the excluded middle (Nicolescu 2006). When a frame of reference conditioning us becomes absolutized, the dualistic thinking comes to be believed as the only way of thought. As the dichotomous relationship

between in-group and out-group gets sharpened, an imbalanced attitude invested by extreme in-group self-interest and desire are favored and pursued at the expense of others (Nagatomo 2000).

Once we see others as something disconnected from us due to the dichotomous thought pattern, it becomes easier to propagate violence upon those outside the boundary. The mind in dualistic stance swings from extreme to extreme, and sticks to dead-ends, whereby values, ideas, or norms of our own group are not viewed as one of many alternatives, but the only right one. Other possibilities are dimly conceived or denied as wrong or inferior.

Building a provisionally coherent thought system is inevitable to human life. However, when a dualistic thought mode controls our understanding of reality, it causes us to exaggerate differences between people and create supposedly fixed boundaries between in-group and out-group by imputing intrinsic and insurmountable differences (Waldron 2003). Whereas a cultural frame of reference and dualistic logic foundation is useful in some circumstance, it becomes the crux of the problem because of its very nature (Wilber 1993).

### 4.4 Buddhist Inner Peace

The first aspect of Buddhist inner peace is reflective self-awareness. It is the practice to step back from our frame of reference to examine our pattern of thought, values, and logics shaping our experience (Park 2008). Dissemination of a certain philosophical framework as complete in the life-world becomes a constitutional power of institutional violence in the human social and global arena (Park 2008).

Reflective self-awareness helps us to recognize that all ways of thinking and knowing are constructed and contingent. Through the awareness, we learn to know that alternative ways of thinking and knowing are available and to be open to others' views and values to explore more inclusive ones. The development of self-knowledge through reflective self-critique generates pliability and flexibility with thoughts (Schliz et al 2010). We can sharpen the capacity to simultaneously hold multiple perspectives and patterns of thought that depends on an awareness that embraces all perspectives without adhering to a position in any form as complete to approach the reality. The practice of reflective self-awareness stimulates worldview transformation since it can bring us back to square one, from which revision of our model of the world becomes possible (Schliz et al 2010). The practice of reflective self-awareness for constant critique of our values and assumptions will empower us to approach the phenomenal world from multiple perspectives.

The second aspect of Buddhist inner peace is the practice of non-dualistic thinking. It means to understand the interdependent and interpenetrating nature of conceptual thoughts that frame different

views of reality. While the logic of the excluded middle staticizes and fixates differences or oppositions, non-dualistic thinking sees them as dynamical relationality and temporal phenomena (Hershock 2012), whereby prima facie opposing views and perspectives are not seen as fixed pairs of opposites but as inter-relational and interpenetrating constructs. This refers to neither total erasure of difference nor demise of all distinctions into all-frozen sameness. Rather, it transforms how we view differences and oppositions beyond dualistic understanding.

Non-dualistic thinking is the consciousness of the interminable conflict in conceptual thought claiming its complete status and the recognition that the harmony of the world is a harmony of opposites and contradictions. The transcendence of dualistic thought empowers us to appreciate that the opposite of a deep truth is another deep truth and to hold multiplex and complementary both/and thinking (Braud and Anderson 1998). Consequently, the capacity for synthetic, integrative thinking and appreciation for the diversity of values and perspectives can be honed. However, non-dualistic thinking does not deny the logic of the excluded middle. The relationship between non-dualistic thinking and dualistic thinking is complementary and not mutually exclusive. By utilizing both dualistic and non-dualistic thinking according to distinct circumstances, we can sharpen flexibility in our thinking and creativity in managing differences.

The third aspect is the practice of compassion. Compassion is an acknowledgement of shared humanity and the commonalities in both suffering and aspiration among those having different identities (Pruitt and McCollum 2010). It is to feel others' pain, sorrow, or suffering as our own as well as to have clear awareness of interdependent origination of phenomenon of any kind (Hoyt 2014). A compassionate mind inspires the development of a quality of loving kindness, a universal and unselfish love that extends to friends and family, and ultimately to all people (Pruitt and McCollum 2010).

The practice of compassion also refers to the practice of a unity-based worldview. The unity-based worldview is the consciousness of the oneness of humanity (Daneth 2006). It is an awareness that our well-being and others' are interdependent and interpenetrating: Our own peace of any kind would be impossible to achieve without considering and acting to promote that of others. It is a transition from the self-centered and dichotomous tensions of an in-group and out-group process to an all-inclusive state of awareness of our fundamental interconnection.

The recognition of the interconnected nature of human relation arouses a sense of responsibility to act in interdependent ways and drives us to make an effort to gratify the basic needs of all beyond group boundaries and promote justice for others as well as for ourselves. This does not mean that all of us achieve qualitatively the same well-being, basic needs, and justice. It rather emphasizes that we become conscious of the interdependent and interpenetrating nature of different ideas and goals of

peace, basic needs, and justice and make a mutual contribution to help achieve each other's ideas of peace.

Buddhist inner peace is the development and practice of multiple functions of mind beyond but also including the cultural purview of thinking and knowing with a holistic view of reality. Undergirded by the enactment of multiple functions of mind, peace means that people having different or even opposing values or goals see their differences as an opportunity for mutual learning and to jointly construct new values or goals that reflect a fundamentally interdependent and interconnected relationship. At the core of conflict resolution and peace lies the practice of mutual self-critique and transformation by those in conflict. Conflict needs to be understood as an interdependent and interpenetrating phenomenon.

Valuing diversity and participating in mutually transformative activities beyond individuals' own social and cultural framework would not be easy. However, human beings and socio-cultural frames of reference are a complex system that keeps incorporating the histories of their constitutive dynamics into the continuously ongoing process of their own environment and contextually responsive self-transformation and evolution (Hershock 2012). As there is no closure of meaning-making, changing our values, visions, and actions is a possible means to embody interdependent and transformative relational dynamics.

## 5. Exploring a Complementary Relation between Buddhist Inner Peace and Liberal Peace for Hybrid Holistic Peace

### 5.1 Limits of Buddhist Inner Peace and Need for Hybrid Peace Model

Buddhist inner peace is the empowerment of human beings with multiple functions of mind to become critical and transformative agents. Increasing the number of citizens empowered with skills and abilities of multiple ways of thinking and compassionate mind would help society be filled with conscious citizens capable of creating positive change.

However, a critical problem with the proposed inner peace is that it does not consider the macro economic and political structures that frustrate people's ability and opportunity to satisfy their basic needs and pursue their envisioned life (Brantmeier 2007). The presented inner peace could neither be appreciated nor applied to those without adequate food, clothing, and shelter, nor to those with no access to basic social services such as education and health care (Hershock 2006). Unless the social and political system consolidates the humanity and dignity of citizens and invites anybody having different views and goals to discuss social and communal issues in a symmetric environment, it would

be difficult to cultivate the skills and abilities to practice multiple functions of mind. Buddhism should learn the spirits of liberal peace. In that way, Buddhist critical analysis of human rights principles, democracy and market-economy can be applied to create a post-liberal hybrid holistic peace model.

## 5.2 Buddhism and Human Rights

It has been claimed that human rights is a Western value imposed on non-Western zones. However, Buddhist teachings contain the spirit of human rights principles. Human rights are rights that everyone has because she/he is a human being (Donnelly 2013). The promotion of human rights means the promotion of the human equality, dignity, and worth inherent in all human beings, which enhances positive conditions for human development (Jeong 2000).

Though Buddhist holy texts do not directly mention human rights, ideals in Buddhist teaching show the spirits of modern human rights. One of them would be the doctrine of Buddha-nature. The Buddha-nature means that all people regardless of social status have the Buddhahood or divinity and the potential to embody what the Buddha, the Gautama, was awakened to do, that is, liberate himself from suffering and spread wisdom and compassion to the society. It is widely acknowledged that the historical Buddha criticized the social discrimination and caste system of his age (Shiotsu 2001), which is stated in Suttanipata: "People are not born base. Nor are they born Brahmins. By their actions they become base, and by their actions they become Brahmins." The doctrine of Buddha-nature implies the natural rights concept of people being born free and equal. Being born free and equal, the Buddha-nature doctrine claims that all human beings have equal potential for self-realization even though the way to achieve self-actualization differs according to people (Shiotsu 2001). The ethos of human rights underpinned by the principle of inherent equality and dignity of all human beings along with diversity of human characters is to be found in Buddhism.

What should be emphatically suggested is that the enhancement of human rights helps to develop Buddhist inner peace. As explained, the core of Buddhist inner peace is the development and enactment of multiple functions of mind founded upon a holistic view of the interdependent and interconnected nature of our world. It is qualitatively enriched human development not only physiologically, and psychologically, but philosophically and spiritually. However, internal enrichment would be impossible without a proper external environment.

The role of human rights is to secure the conditions for human flourishing and fulfillment (McCarthy 2001). The promotion of human rights creates social conditions that help us hone the skills and abilities for multiple ways of thinking and compassionate mind that appreciates the unity in diversity. Human rights and Buddhist inner peace form a cycle of building a harmonious and

sustainable society. To guarantee human rights principles and a social environment in which citizens can enrich their minds holistically would contribute to increasing self-reflective and transformative agents who further human rights more widely, which becomes a foundation for sustainable society.

## 5.3  Buddhism and Democracy

The foundations of democracy are also the equal dignity and liberty of the citizens, the equality before the law, and pluralism (Crick 2002), and Buddhism contains the spirits of democracy. The early Buddhist community was open to all people beyond caste, class, ethnicity, culture, and gender, and its emancipatory and compassionate philosophy excluded none (Hershock 2012). The Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination, that is, the teaching of interdependent relationships, underpins the horizontal and symbiotic relationships between people having different backgrounds and values. This shows the basic compatibility between Buddhism and the principles of democracy.

While Buddhism acknowledges democracy as an ideal system, Buddhist inner peace and democracy can complement each other to strengthen democracy in realizing what it aspires to achieve. As Sen (1999) points out, democracy cannot be identified with majority rule and voting. It entails multi-faceted demands, which include voting and respect for election results but also the protection of liberties and freedoms, respect for legal entitlements, and securing free discussion (Sen 1999). Public reasoning is the core of democracy. In the broader perspective of public reasoning, democracy needs to guarantee free public discussion and deliberative interaction of political thought and practice (Sen 2003). Democracy means to give citizens an opportunity to learn from each other and contribute to the construction of social values and priorities. Engagement in dialogue and accepting the change of one's viewpoint or adding new perspectives to one's original values and goals constitute the core of democracy.

Buddhist inner peace as the practice of multiple functions of mind and complex view of reality can be of help in enacting democracy as public discussion based on value diversity and appreciation of change. What needs to be avoided in deliberation is the attachment to any form of extreme position as absolute. And free and constructive public dialogue requires its participants to possess the capability to transcend their positional confinement, for public dialogue to freely and creatively occur, there is a need for citizens to be capable of going beyond the limitations or the purview of one's positional perspective (Snauwaert 2010).

Political efficacy in democracy, that is, the capacity to engage in critical and transformative political action, is dependent upon the cognitive, ethical, and self-reflective capacities of citizens (Reardon and Snauwaert 2011). Empowerment of citizens with multiple functions of mind facilitates

perception of the wider scope of the systemic and dynamic inter-relationship of diversity of values and interests, which creates space for the recognition of human dignity of all participants and moral inclusion beyond differences and more complex and integrative forms of reasoning. Beyond simple majoritarianism and balloting, democracy is not the suppression of differences or disagreements, but rather our readiness to accord with differing situational dynamics, responding without exclusive reliance on fixed views and principles to amplify and boost relationally mutual appreciation.

Valuing diversity and participating in public reasoning for mutual transformation is not an easy task, as we are not totally free of the influence of the social and political environment. However, a critical aspect of authentic democracy is enhancement of the ability of individual citizens to engage in critical evaluation of existing knowledge and values and creation of new ones (Feucht 2010). The achievement of such ability emerges out of the practice of reflective self-critique and analysis of views and values from multiple perspectives based on non-dualistic logic. Internal maturity of individual citizens will bring about the maturity of democracy. The sharpened ability to exploit multiple functions of mind – reflective, compassionate and multi-perspectival functions – will contribute to strengthening dialogical and transformative dimensions of democracy.

### 5.4 A Buddhist View of Market-Oriented Economy

What needs to be noted is that Buddhism does not deny economic activity itself. The Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination implies that physiological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of human beings are interdependent for their maturity. Individuals need a proper economic circumstance to gratify basic physiological needs and achieve spiritual development (Mosler 2011). Deprivation of basic human needs will prevent any individual from being able to sustain bodily functions in order to consolidate psychological health and realize philosophical and spiritual maturity. A minimum economic well-being must be established for inner peace.

However, Buddhism also takes a cautionary stance towards the market-oriented economy that liberal peace advocates. While the Western model of market-oriented economy creates certain profit and could boost the macro economy, it opens the system to a multiplicity of interests and encourages social competition. It can also exacerbate the clash of different stakes without accommodating those differences for far-sighted mutual benefit and worsen the gap between the rich and the poor. Excessive reliance on market-economy could lead to inequality and social injustice. In his religious journey, the Buddha started his mission of reforming the unjust social order based on loving-kindness, equality, and solidarity (Badge 2014). Anything that ignores human welfare cannot be accepted as the message of the Buddha. Economic system that degrades human dignity and deprives citizens of their

opportunity for self-actualization cannot be acknowledged as legitimate.

What Buddhism seeks to achieve through an economic system is spiritual wealth as well as material wealth (Mosler 2011). While showing a critical stance toward Western market-oriented economy, it is a mistake to assume that Buddhism denies market-oriented economy categorically. What Buddhism critiques is the lack of a spiritual aspect and holistic view for social justice. In principle, in the Western discourse, individuals are assumed to be rational, self-interested beings who are prepared to act justly but who are more prone to seek their interests regarding wealth (Mosler 2011). In Buddhism, human beings are perceived as potentially compassionate individuals who have an insight into reality including human relationships as mutually interdependent and who exercise restraint against an excessively self-centered view and behavior because it causes problems, including violence. Founded upon the understanding of human relationships as interdependent and interpenetrating, and a compassionate mind-set to respond to others with empathy, respect, and care as well as commitment to promote dignity of all and spiritual fulfillment, Buddhism envisions an economic system that sustains and promotes social justice and equity.

Buddhists envision an economic system that does not deny individuals working for their own self-interest, since spiritual fulfillment requires a proper physiological and socio-economic condition. However, Buddhism also warns that if individuals work exclusively for their own self-interest and benefit at the expense of others, that would end up causing moral corruption of society and conflict. In a Buddhist view, market-oriented economy, while creating certain benefits and improving the macro economy, needs to integrate a moral and philosophical foundation that helps individuals engage in economic activity with a holistic view of mutual interdependence and interpenetration of all participants and promote both material and spiritual achievement. The kind of economic system that is required in post-liberal peace is one that undergirds human physiological, psychological, and spiritual maturity. Citizens empowered with multiple functions of mind, while gratifying basic human needs and engaging in economic activity, can exercise self-restraint and control to prevent themselves from indulging in pursuing their own interests excessively.

## 5.5 Post-liberal Hybrid Holistic Peace Model

As shown, Buddhist inner peace and the pillars of the liberal peace thesis – human rights, democracy, and market-oriented economy – can build a complementary relationship to strengthen internal and external aspects of peace. As the Figure 1 below illustrates, four elements constitute post-liberal hybrid holistic peace: Enhancement of human rights principles; promotion of dialogical and transformative democracy based on self-critique and readiness for mutual learning; an economic

system that sustains and furthers philosophical and spiritual fulfillment as well as material fulfillment based on social justice and equity; and development of inner peace founded upon multiple functions of mind represented by reflective self-awareness, non-dualistic thinking, compassion, and a multi-perspective approach.

All four aspects are interconnected and complementary to each other, and together they pave the way for sustainable society and human relationships. When we delve into the concept of peace on physiological, socio-political, economic, philosophical, and spiritual levels in an integrative way, we can make optimal development of our potential to become a critical and transformative agent for a peaceful world.
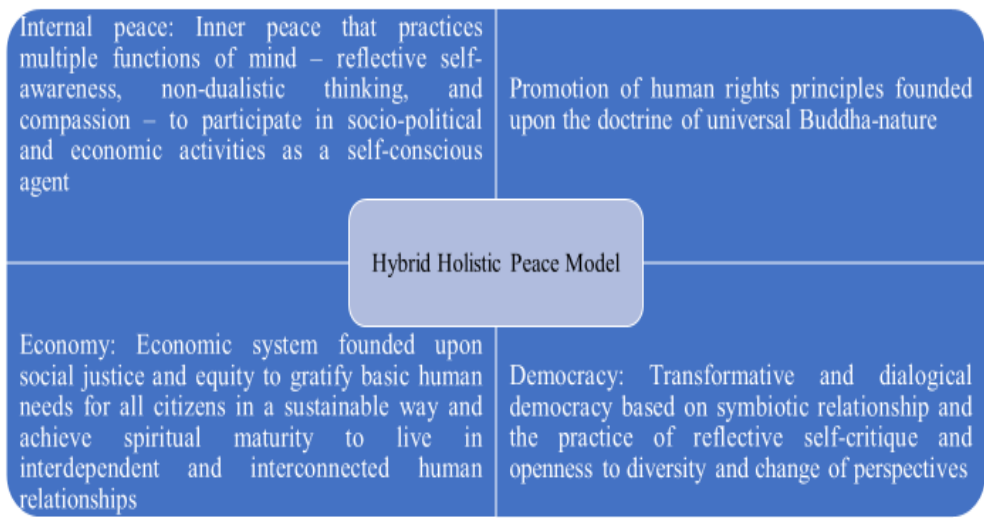


**Figure 1 Post-Liberal Hybrid Holistic Peace Model (Original model by the author)**

## 6. Conclusion

Seeking to show itself as an exemplar of a post-liberal hybrid peace model, this paper has explored a holistic peace model that combines the spirits of liberal peace and the elements of Buddhist inner peace. Constructing a complementary relationship between different visions of peace is not easy. However, it also needs to be recognized that every peace view is partial and that transcending one's purview of peace and learning from each other will be of great benefit in the long-run.

Given that the peacebuilding enterprise is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon that demands creativity and flexibility of those engaged in it, it is certainly not the time to make a clear and fixed demarcation between Western and non-Western blocks but, more importantly, a time for

each of us to rid ourselves of narrow self-imposed perspective or boundaries and initiate a dialogue within the larger context that includes both West and non-West.

Before concluding the paper, the next step for future research should be mentioned. The proposed post-liberal hybrid holistic peace model has been developed exclusively from the critical literature reviews of liberal peacebuilding, post-liberal peacebuilding, and Buddhist peace theory. Empirical evaluation has not yet been conducted. However, peace research is a practice-oriented intellectual enterprise, the aim of which is to contribute to achieving a more just and peaceful world (Rogers and Ramsbotham 1999). The practical application and the analysis of the application allow us to refine theory.

For instance, though four dimensions have been proposed as the core elements of a post-liberal hybrid holistic peace model, the concrete methods to achieve them have not yet been illustrated. Only critical examinations of the model in concrete practical contexts would enable the author to show how it can be modified in a way that responds to the distinct contexts of peacebuilding. However, the author will leave the examinations and revised proposals to other occasions after engagement in practical applications of the model.

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# Human Security in Post-Conflict Central America:
# Lessons on Peacebuilding from El Salvador

Hazuki Matsuda[1]

## Abstract

At the time the concept of human security began to expand internationally, Central American countries were ending a period of severe civil wars and were initiating a new era of reconstruction. The armed conflicts in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala that ended in the 1990s, opened a new path to joint efforts in consolidating democracy, development, and the reconciliation process in the region. However, despite the political and recent economic progress, the social element remains an inexhaustible problem, menacing the human security in the region. The purpose of this article is to examine how peace and security can be achieved and maintained to ensure the nation's stability in the aftermath of armed conflict. It is recognized that the peacebuilding process is a crucial factor in ending war; nevertheless, the attainment of sustainable peace is a challenge for some countries. The case of El Salvador demonstrates that despite the successful conclusion of peace agreements, the root causes of war were not completely addressed in the transition period, and as a result new internal social conflicts emerged because of poverty and migration. Although the consolidation of peace by political means is critical, it is necessary to recognize that other issues such as the development of the *maras* phenomenon or youth violence can hinder the sustainability of peace in post-conflict countries. This study concludes that the actors involved in peacebuilding must address the security dilemma at the reconstruction stage and that a power sharing mechanism in key areas associated with the root causes of war can probably help to prevent the recurrence of new social violence.

**Keywords:**    Human security, Integration of Central American region, civil wars, El Salvador, peace and security, *maras* phenomenon, power sharing, peacebuilding

## 1.    Introduction

When the concept of human security began to expand internationally, Central American countries were closing a period of severe civil wars and were initiating a new era of reconstruction. The armed conflicts in Nicaragua that ended in 1990, and the Peace Accords signed in 1992 by the government and the revolutionary party of El Salvador, and of Guatemala in 1996, opened a new path to joint efforts to consolidate democracy, development, and the reconciliation process in the region. However, despite the political and recent economic progress, the social element remains an inexhaustible

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problem, menacing the human security in the region. The purpose of this article is to examine how peace and security can be achieved and maintained to ensure the stability of the nation in the aftermath of armed conflicts. It is recognized that the peacebuilding process is a crucial factor in ending war; nevertheless, the attainment of sustainable peace is a major challenge for some countries.

The role of the United Nations was crucial for the ceasefire in El Salvador. It contributed to advancing the political negotiations between the parties by acting as mediator, and participated in ensuring the compliance with the resulting peace accords through the deployment of the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador (ONUSAL). This mission is considered to have helped to reduce the level of human rights abuse, building confidence in the country. Despite the achievement of a political peace agreement, El Salvador had to face the consequences of armed conflict, that is, the accentuated poverty and the increase in migration to neighboring and foreign countries. This migration, which in turn marginalized the young generation of Salvadorans in the hosting countries, particularly in the United States, has led to the creation of a group of criminals renowned as *maras*, which has become one of the major human threats in the country. The deportation of these youth gang members to El Salvador has generated a new social menace not only to the society, but also to the entire Central American region.

The case of El Salvador is a lesson that allows us to discuss the effects of the peacebuilding process and debate about how to prevent the resurgence of internal social conflicts such as those that have emerged because of poverty and migration during war and post-war. Although the consolidation of peace by political means is critical, we need to recognize that other issues such as the *maras* phenomenon can hinder the sustainability of peace in post-conflict countries. In particular, citizen insecurity caused by youth crime can be a factor that induces social instability. This study introduces the historical background of the Central American region from the security perspective and explains the transformation process from the conception of state security to the human security paradigm. It examines the case of El Salvador, identifying the causes of impediments to sustainable peace and concludes that the actors involved in peacebuilding must examine how to address the security dilemma in the reconstruction stage. Furthermore, it points out that a power sharing mechanism in sectors associated with the root causes of war can probably help to prevent the recurrence of a new human security threat.

## 2.   Foundation of Central American Countries: Toward a New Regional Integration

Geographically, the Central American region is located in the isthmus between North and South America that stretches from southern Mexico to Panama. This region remained under Spanish rule until September 15, 1821, when member countries of the Federal Republic of Central America comprised by the then Provinces of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua declared its independence from colonial domination (Turner 2013, 429-430). Between 1838 and 1840 (Hussain 2006, 133), due to differing interests and discrepancies in the course of its governmental policies, the Federation was dissolved and the Provinces were separated into five independent republics (Cardenal 2004, 227-250).

However, despite its independence, integration as a region has prevailed. Central American countries have strengthened their political relationships acting collectively in solving common problems and promoting economic, social, and cultural development at the regional level (ODECA 1951) over the years. In 1951, as a first collective action, its member countries founded the Organization of Central American States (ODECA), creating the basis and an institutional framework to cooperate and organize the regional instrument. In 1960, under the Treaty of Managua, the Central American Common Market was established to reinforce the economic relations amongst ODECA Member States, promoting in this way its regional integration process (De Lombaerde and Norton 2009, 1074). Two years later, ODECA was reorganized as an economic and political community to build a more effective organization, establishing institutions that include a Central American Court of Justice, Economic Council, Cultural and Educational Council, and Defense Council to ensure the stability of and expand the industrial sector of Member States (ODECA 1962).

The integration process was evolving; however, it came into crisis when conflicts occurred between neighboring countries (El Salvador and Honduras over migratory disputes) and because of the onset of civil war in Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. The civil war or internal armed conflict that began in the 1960s in Guatemala, and in the 1970s and 80s in Nicaragua and El Salvador, were influenced largely by the Cold War polarization. However, while the armed conflicts were occurring in the region, in the mid-1980s, regional countries and high representatives of Central American countries sought to resolve the armed conflicts and to bring regional stability by political means. Hence, in 1986, the Esquipulas Declaration (Esquipulas I) was signed, reaffirming their commitment to reinforce its political dialogues to attain peace, democracy, and reconciliation in the region (SICA 1986).

In August 1987, the Esquipulas II Declaration was signed to ratify the final commitment of Central American countries to end the armed conflicts and consolidate peace (SICA 1987). In this way, the process to ceasefire was concluded, and to adapt the ODECA's Charter to global circumstances, the Central American countries ratified the Tegucigalpa Protocol, establishing the Central American Integration System (SICA)[2] replacing ODECA. According to the Tegucigalpa Protocol (Article 3) signed in 1991, SICA Member States shall foster political, social, economic, cultural, and ecological integration to consolidate Peace, Freedom, Democracy, and Development in the region. Furthermore, the Tegucigalpa Protocol established that SICA shall create a New Regional Security Model based on a balance of powers; strengthen civil capacities; promote sustainable development; protect the environment; and, halt the extreme poverty, as well as eradicate violence, corruption, terrorism, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling (SICA 1991).

In the 1990s, with the end of the Cold War and the ratification of peace accords in Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala, it appears that the integration process was reinitiated in the region, leading to the inducement of socioeconomic and security integration of SICA Member States. As White Gómez asserted, other regional alliances were created such as the Alliance for the Sustainable Development of Central America, the Central American Social Integration Treaty, and the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America. A new regional security model emerged to reformulate the concept of security, now integrating a wide range of global issues such as extreme poverty, violence eradication, and protection of the environment (White Gómez 2004, 40). Therefore, gradually, the concept of security changed to a more integrative security adapting to the international environment.

## 3. Human Security and Central American Democratic Security

Since the signing of the Tegucigalpa Protocol in 1991, Presidents of SICA Member States have sought to reformulate the notion of security from the concept based on the National Security Doctrine, which consisted in protecting the State from communist-oriented insurgencies or dissidents through military forces action (Leal Builtrago 2003; Chinchilla 2003, 242), to a more integral security based on democratic principles. In view of the need to democratize and integrate the region, the Heads of SICA Member States adopted a new concept of security, the "democratic security" to promote political democracy, conciliate disputes or conflicts, and guarantee a basic quality of life to individuals under

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[2] SICA member countries as of 2019 are: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras, Panama, Dominican Republic, and Belize.

a democratic system (White Gómez 2004, 13-14). Therefore, we can argue that the concept of security also evolved in Central America mostly influenced by the changes in the international arena and the conclusion of civil wars in the region, gradually positioning people's security as one of the priorities in its regional security agenda.

In December 1995, after the emergence of the human security paradigm, SICA Member States signed the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America (SICA 1995). This Treaty proposed to establish the Central American Democratic Security Model to promote democratic institutions and the rule of law, the security of people and their properties, and other human centered security policies. Regarding the section of the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America titled, "Security of Individuals and their properties," the Treaty, outlined the importance of ensuring human security and promoting and reinforcing public security to deter criminal violence (Article 14). According to Article 15 of the Treaty, poverty undermines people's dignity, threaten citizens' security, and deteriorates the democratic stability of the region; thus, to enhance the livelihood of its citizens, Member States pledged to "give priority to initiatives to overcome the structural causes of poverty and improve the quality of life of their peoples" (Article 15). Articles 17 and 18 of the Framework Treaty on Democratic Security in Central America reaffirmed that cooperation will be promoted for the eradication of drug trafficking and related activities, as well as for the prevention of criminal practices that may endanger regional and international security such as terrorism, sabotage, and organized crime (SICA 1995). This new Treaty can be considered congruent to the human security paradigm that emphasizes the importance of ensuring the citizens' security.

Therefore, the narrow notion of security as a State's responsibility to protect itself from insurgencies and communist ideologies shifted to the conception of security as an instrument of the State to guarantee the livelihood, freedom, dignity, and integrity of its people and community. Thus, we can argue that, gradually, Central American societies were recognizing that the concept of security has a broader implication, which was not about the absence of armed conflicts, but another type of security. This other type of security was needed to protect humans from threats to individuals and communities: criminality, degradation of the environment, natural disasters, pandemic diseases (White Gómez 2004, 15), economic downturns, and so forth, which transcend borders and menace humankind.

## 4. Implications of Criminal Violence to Human Security in Central America

Despite the ceasefire agreements, for Central American countries that suffered the aftermath of internal armed conflicts, the main threats to security, in a narrow conception, were particularly against

its political system and economic order, whereas nowadays threats are against individuals and the security of their property due to the increase in criminality (White Gómez 2004, 21). As De Lombaerde and Norton noted, this new social dilemma has emerged even in countries such as Honduras, Costa Rica, and Panama, which have not suffered the scourge of armed conflicts. Even though each nation faces its own social challenges, regional menaces are also emerging in Central American countries through transnational criminal networks (De Lombaerde and Norton 2009, 1066-1067).

The Report on Human Development for Central America 2009-2010 revealed that the homicide rate in Central America reached 29.3 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2004, registering the highest number of homicides in Latin American and this number is second in the world after the South African region. The report estimates that from 2003 to 2008, homicides took approximately 79,000 Central American lives, and three countries (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) are amongst those with the highest crime rates in the Latin American region. Furthermore, other violence such as crimes against people and their properties (robberies, extortion, and corruption) prevails in the Central American region (IDHAC 2009, 63-89).

Drug trafficking, organized crime, and violence associated with *maras*, or young gangs, are the main concerns of and threat to Central American nations (IDHAC, 2009:99). As De Lombaerde and Norton state, geographically, the region is positioned as a route of the main drug-producing countries, functioning as a bridge to transport and trade illegal products from south to north. Moreover, the weakness of its rule of law and the ease with which weapons could be obtained made it easy for crime to become pervasive in the region, converting it into one of the most insecure places for human beings. Mostly, *maras* are involved in these criminal activities, including homicides and violent attacks (De Lombaerde and Norton 2009, 1067).

The *maras* phenomenon emerged in Los Angeles, California, in the United States, among a group of migrant young men from Central America who fled to the north, especially during the civil war in Central America, to find a better life. However, many members of this group were deported to their home countries, leading to expand their criminal activities in Central America. This new social violence can be considered one of the factors undermining the sustainable peace in the region. In other words, even though peace accords were signed and civil wars ended, the consequences of violence have continued menacing the lives of local citizens in the region. Presently, the society is not threatened by political conflicts but by social violence. The sustainability of peace does not mean that durable peace was achieved because the civil war ended; it should be understood that complete peace has not been found yet in Central American countries. To analyze one case, this article presents a lesson on peacebuilding in El Salvador.

## 5.    From Civil War to Peacebuilding in El Salvador

It seems that, from the political perspective, stability has been maintained in El Salvador. The recent accession of a neutral ruling party to power in June 2019 demonstrates this fact. However, the country continues to struggle to overcome a lasting social dilemma: the prevalence of social insecurity, most likely as a consequence of internal armed conflict, poverty, and migration.

The civil war in El Salvador occurred from 1979 to 1992, between the government and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN) insurgency group. The root causes of the civil war were multiple, but academics and analysts on this issue have identified mainly, four major root causes that can be summarized as follows:

1.  Socioeconomic inequalities: Orr (2001), Wade (2008), and other scholars have noted this common fact. This issue comes from the land ownership problem: historically, since colonial rule, the coffee oligarchy has controlled communal land in El Salvador, leading to exploitation of the rural population working in poor conditions (World Bank 2000, 17).

2.  A matter of political space: The military and the oligarchy governed the country for 60 years, and there was no political space for other parties to participate in presidential elections. It seems that the military junta was connected with the oligarchy to dominate the nation for a long time as happened in other Latin American countries (Orr 2001, 162-164; Wade 2008, 19).

3.  Repression and reform by the military junta: Wade states that reforms conducted during 1948 and 1979 were made to control the population (Wade 2008, 19).

4.  The use of violence to repress the dissidents: Orr also outlines that abuses of human rights and an inefficient justice system prevailed in El Salvador, oppressing the freedom of speech and press (Wade 2008, 19; Orr 2001, 157).

In addition to the above mentioned root causes of war, it seems that external support facilitated the civil war. There was international support regarding the supply of arms and logistics due to the Cold War; on the one hand, the United Stated provided economic assistance to the military sector, and on the other hand, Nicaragua and Cuba played an important role in supporting the insurgent FMLN with war instruments (Orr 2001, 158; Castañeda 1993, 97-98). The root causes show that besides the discontent of the civil society regarding the socioeconomic circumstances and the political system, the repercussions of the international environment with the polar division also led to the onset of the civil war. However, with the help of regional organizations and international communities, the long lasting

armed conflict ended after twelve years of violence in El Salvador.

Although peace talks began as a regional initiative, it is recognized that the intervention of the United Nations was important in ending the internal war. In 1990, the United Nations was called in to mediate and facilitate the peace process by political means. In that year, the then United Nations Secretary General, Pérez de Cuellar, became involved in the talks and initiated the negotiations to finalize the peace building program (Orr 2001, 159; Whitfield 2001, 33-36). According to Wade (2008) and other scholars, the United Nations' involvement was successful in the peace resolution process. Nonetheless, it is argued that several factors, including the following, facilitated the peace negotiations:

1. The government and the FMLN insurgency sought to end the armed conflict due to various domestic factors. It was necessary to rebuild the country instead of using its resources to conduct the war. The environment of both parties was optimal because, from the government side, the elected leader of El Salvador was not a traditional coffee land owner. Furthermore, the FMLN was interested in participating on the presidential elections that seemly coincided with the fact that the arms supply from the allied countries to the FMLN was reduced (Holiday and Stanley 2000; Wade 2008).

2. It was not an ethnic and territorial conflict, but was more related to political and economic discordances (Holiday and Stanley 2000; Wade 2008; Borgh 2005).

3. The Cold War ended, and globalization began to expand internationally (Holiday and Stanley 2000; Wade 2008)

We can argue that the above three conditions, coupled with the internal efforts to advance the peace talks, led to the final resolution to sign the peace accords in Chapultepec, Mexico on January 16, 1992, after two years of intense negotiations between the parties and the United Nations officials. The peace agreements addressed primarily the demilitarization and public security reform (Whitfield 2001, 34). That is, according to the government of El Salvador, the structural reform of the armed forces and its national defense role; the creation of a new National Civil Police (PNC) composed of civilians and former adversaries; democratization of the institutions; the independence of the judicial system from the government and political parties; and an electoral reform. The disintegration of the insurgency and the reintegration of members of the FMLN into society were also included in the agreements, recognizing and legalizing the FMLM as a political party. From the socioeconomic point of view, there was a proposal to work on reforms to resolve the agrarian situation based on land

transfers and the reconstruction of devastated areas (Gobierno de El Salvador 1996).

To verify the compliance with the provisions of the accords, a human rights mission, ONUSAL, was deployed in 1991. In the same year, the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ), an institution composed of governmental and opposition party members responsible for overseeing the implementation of all political agreements reached by the parties was created. In 1995, the verification process apparently concluded, despite the fact that some provisions were not applied fully (Gobierno de El Salvador 1995). We can argue that even though some agreements were left unresolved, such as several social and economic issues, the ceasefire agreement remained as negotiated.

## 6.    Unresolved Factors Impinging on the Sustainable Peace

Theoretically, there are the two approaches to conflict resolution from the anthropological point of view: the bilateral approach, or negotiation, and the trilateral approach discussed by Fry. He argues that negotiation brings disputants to interact with each other to settle compromises or solutions between the parties (Fry 2006, 23). To end the conflict in El Salvador, the government and the revolutionary party implemented this by means of peace dialogues. The trilateral or mediation approach was also adopted, and it facilitated the negotiation process, involving the United Nations as a key actor to resolve the armed conflict. Therefore, politically, the peace talks were successful, leading to an agreement from both parties.

However, some studies indicate that the main root causes of the conflict were not completely resolved (Wade 2008; Whitfield 2001), pointing out two weak areas of the accords:

1.  Socioeconomic inequalities: it appears that the neoliberal model adopted in the post-war period, which continued for decades afterward, has benefitted only a small segment of the society. Whitfield notes that the economic agreements focused on reintegration issues (Whitfield 2001, 37), leaving out the equitable social and economic components.
2.  Judicial reform: Even though it is reported that the human rights abuses had been reduced significantly (Gobierno de El Salvador 1995), social violence (such as homicide and crime) remained a pervasive problem. Wade noted that the judicial system was still politicized and ineffective (Wade 2008, 21).

It seems that the weaknesses of those above mentioned areas of the accords have threatened the sustainable peace in El Salvador. Orr argues that poverty alleviation and equity issues were addressed

through foreign development assistance, but the results of the development assistance soon after the war were minimal. Moreover, according to Orr, despite the fact that new criminal laws were passed at that time, criminal violence remained (Orr 2001, 166-170). Therefore, we can presume that even though the armed conflict ended, the socioeconomic instability and the lack of an adequate establishment of the rule of law prevailed, leading to the generation of other social dilemmas threatening human security. The following are the social dilemmas generated:

1. Migration

Studies indicate that over 25% of El Salvador's population migrated or fled during the civil war (1972-1992) (Gammage 2007), and that since the war, Salvadorans have been leaving the country in greater numbers in search of better living conditions (Wade 2008, 24; Gammage 2007). Los Angeles, California, in the United States, and neighboring countries such as Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica are the main destinations (Gammage 2007). By 2005, nearly 2.5 million Salvadorans were living and working in the United States (SICREMI 2011, 137). In 2007, the population of El Salvador was 5.7 million (Turner 2012, 429), indicating that the Salvadoran population in the United States is almost half the size of that in El Salvador.

However, the migrants, who included young men that had fought on the government's side or on the side of the insurgents during the war, were poorly educated and only a few were able to find jobs (Boraz and Bruneau 2006). These young men, who were marginalized from the society started to engage in criminal activities (Nowalski 2006, 205 and 218) and created their own organization, menacing the citizens' lives. After the war in El Salvador ended and the enacted Illegal Immigration Reform was implemented in the United States in 1996, many gang members were deported to their home countries (Wade 2008, 26).

2. Social violence: *maras*

That deportation from the United States became a new social threat to the Salvadoran civil society. The *maras* phenomenon emerged in Los Angeles in the 1980s, and young men aged from 16 to 21 (Nowalski 2006, 218) who joined the criminal organization called Mara Salvatrucha (MS) 13 or Barrio 18 (Falkenburger and Thale 2008, 48) comprised its members. With the deportation, they created an extension of the original organization, engaging in violence and criminal activities in their home country.

These deported young gangs brought their criminal and violent norms to Central America, establishing an ethnic culture and a robust international criminal organization (De Lombaerde and

Norton 2009,1067). Therefore, the new crime wave that emerged as a migration phenomenon tended to undermine the achievement of sustainable peace in El Salvador, affecting the Central American region itself.

Power sharing can be an important instrument in achieving peace and ending civil war. It can likely lead to a sustainable peace depending on its political, economic, security arrangements, and commitments. According to Hoddie and Hartzell, power sharing institutions or rules and policies can provide procedures and measures to manage conflicts and reduce the risks of relapse of war. In the case of El Salvador, the authors explain that the central power sharing provided political power to disputants in the peace settlement, such as with the creation of COPAZ composed as mentioned previously by representatives of both parties to monitor the political agreements (Hoddie and Hartzell 2005, 86-91). Apparently, this mechanism has functioned well, leading to ceasefires. However, regarding economic power sharing, even though some rules have been settled, such as rules on land transfer and economic subsidies to former combatants, it seems that the allocation and distribution of power in this area was not done equally and fully.

In terms of public and internal security power sharing, the military in El Salvador has been dismantled and reformed, and the new PNC agency was created integrating former National Police officials, former FMLN guerrillas, and some civilians. However, studies reveal that, in practice, many of the personnel were still linked to old security forces by the mid-1990s, although they were becoming more cohesive after that period (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 1998). Moreover, the increasing crime rate after the civil war probably resulted from the lack of an effective police system (Wilkerson 2008), insufficient funds to equip local patrol operations, weak crime investigation sources, and a lack of cooperation from residents for fear of being threatened by the criminals (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1998).

We can assume that socioeconomic inequalities and problems within the judiciary system have been unresolved and that weaknesses in power sharing in these sectors after the civil war might have led to the onset of other social dilemmas. Therefore, these prevailing deficiencies, especially, in the security system, seem to hinder sustainable peace in the country.

## 7. How to Control Social Violence: Authoritative Measures or Community Cooperation?

Authoritative and coercive measures to mitigate social violence can create resistance from

criminal organizations, worsening and increasing insecurity and crime. The government of El Salvador implemented some repressive and authoritarian policies to confront the crime wave. In 2003, policies such as the *mano dura* (hard hand) project were carried out to reduce the *maras* operations. The latter led to the arrest of most of them, due to their easily recognizable clothing and tattoos on their bodies. However, many of them were released due to a lack of evidence (FESPAD 2004). Moreover, criticisms have arisen in terms of human rights violations and the ineffectiveness of the repressive projects to deter the expansion of *maras* violence (De Lombaerde and Norton 2009, 1068). Therefore, crime and violence caused by *maras* are continuing to grow and expand throughout the region. Other government-led policies and programs were implemented in El Salvador, for instance, *super mano dura* in 2006, the *mano amiga* (friendly hand), and *Homies Unidos* to provide rehabilitation to *maras* members. However, it has been difficult to evaluate the results (Nowalski 2006, 224-225). Although, since the mid-1990s, the public security agenda has become an important issue to combat criminal violence and enhance human security, police forces and criminal justice institutional systems are still weak in the region (Chinchilla 2003, 245).

It appears that the authoritarian measures used to repress the gang crimes have not been effective. The studies of Falkenburger and Thale reveal that the repressive measures led the groups of gangs to become more organized and expanded their networks to other Central American countries instead of decreasing their activities. According to the authors, integral strategies should be formulated, including preventive and rehabilitation programs with the support of the community, local institutions, and public organizations. Moreover, international actors such us the United States can play a significant collaborative role in designing programs from their experiences (Falkenburger and Thale 2008, 47-51, 54). Other international funds, including those from Japan, can also help to create institutions for improving educational capacities and internal security mechanisms. Regarding the latter, for instance, the government of Japan, through its Official Development Aid has conducted projects to apply the Japanese *Koban* (local neighborhood police stations) in Salvadoran communities, which will continue to be provided in the future (MOFA 2017).

In addition, according to Falkenburger and Thale, civil organizations such as the Church can participate in rehabilitation activities (Falkenburger and Thale 2008, 61), creating a dialogue space for gang members willing to leave the group and criminal activities. In 2018, a local church group in El Salvador gathered and launched an ecumenical pastoral initiative to support them, aiming at building a national understanding about *maras* organizations. This activity has actively promoted the pacification process in the country (InfoCatolica 2012). The church can provide refuge for those members willing to start their lives over in society. However, despite the important contribution to

crime prevention and rehabilitation, their ecumenical activities can be at risk of serious threats. Gang organizations murdered a local pastor for protecting and helping 10 young members (Evangélico Digital 2018). Therefore, although civil society can cooperate with the government to reduce crime, a careful plan to contend with this issue should be formulated, such us including public security organizations and other local and international community actors.

## 8. Conclusion

In the 1990s, the ratification of peace accords opened a new path in the Central American region. Post-conflict democracy and national reconstruction began in affected countries; in addition, with the collapse of the Cold War and the progress of globalization, the international political environment also started to change. The concept of security evolved from one focused on territorial protection to a more human centered security. In El Salvador, the peacebuilding process ended successfully, and changes in the international arena contributed to the signing of an agreement between the disputants under the United Nations mediation. Critics argue that even though from the political perspective the peace talks led to mutual consensus to sign an agreement, the root causes of war, including economic instabilities, inequality, and a weak judicial system were not addressed fully. This is evidenced by the emergence and expansion of a new social threat, violence promoted by *maras*, or young gangs that originated in the United States with the migration of Salvadorans during and after the civil war. The deportation of *maras* from the United States back to their home countries led to the creation of an extension of the crime organization in El Salvador, inducing the younger generations in the country to join the group. At the same time, when the studies of war analysts are examined, it can be estimated that the origin of the emergence of the new crime wave started not only because of the local economic uncertainties, but also as a result of the migration induced by the civil war.

Based on the latter circumstances, migration and the consequent deportation of criminals can at times undermine sustainable peace in post-conflict countries, as the case of El Salvador shows. However, social violence can be mitigated by integrating civil society in the activities to reduce such social violence. Instead of repressive policies, the participation and voices of civil society in decision-making can help to introduce new strategies to tackle security issues at the national level. In the case of El Salvador, it seems that the church has played an important role in integrating the *maras* members into the society. However, a more cooperative effort from public security agencies could reinforce the protection of those stakeholders involved in programs reintegrating gang groups into the society.

An important lesson learned from the peacebuilding efforts is that despite the fact that the

recurrence of armed conflicts has ended, if the core root causes of war are not addressed effectively, those root causes of war in war-torn countries can lead to a relapse into another type of violence. Power sharing mechanisms in key areas associated with the root causes of war at the reconstruction stage should help to prevent the recurrence of a new social violence. Therefore, power sharing and the commitment of involved institutions in complying with the peace accords effectively, aid from international actors for socioeconomic development, the rule of law, and institution building, particularly in the area of security, can be critical instruments for mitigating the effects of civil wars and poverty to attain a sustainable peace.

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# Non-Military Transnational Networks of Armed Group:
# RCSS/SSA in Burma and Shan NGOs in Thailand

Hideyuki Okano[1]

## Abstract

This article examines the transnational networks of rebel groups, especially in their non-military aspects. Neighboring countries are often used by rebel groups during civil wars, and some rebel groups set up bases in border regions for easier access. Rebel groups use neighbors for procuring goods, mobilizing combatants, and communicating with supporters. Some scholars argue that "bad neighbors" extend civil wars. However, the purposes of a rebel group's ties with a neighboring country is not limited to military action. In order to elucidate the non-military networks of a rebel group, this article considers the case of the involvement of the Shan people in the Burmese civil war. The Shan have migrated to neighboring Thailand; NGOs helping Shan migrants have been particularly active in the Northern Thai city of Chiang Mai. On the other hand, a Shan rebel group, the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), is active on the side of Burma, especially in the border area. This article describes the relationships between the NGOs in Chiang Mai and Shan rebel groups, especially the RCSS/SSA. It points out that non-military officers of Shan rebel groups were involved in establishing the Shan NGOs and their expansions, and that NGO workers have been also involved in the Shan rebel groups, engaging in non-military works.

**Keywords:** NGO, Rebel Group, Shan, Thailand, Burma

## 1. Introduction

Neighboring countries are often used by rebel groups during civil wars. In particular, rebel groups commonly set up bases in border regions in order to access neighboring countries. They use neighbors for procuring goods, mobilizing combatants and communicating with supporters (Hazan 2013). Some scholars have elucidated how rebel groups use neighboring countries, especially for military purposes, and argue that "bad neighbors" ultimately prolong civil wars (Hazan 2013, 181; Lischer 2005).

Like those previous studies, this article examines the transnational network of a rebel group, but my focus is not on a military network. The military would be just one part of a rebel group's larger network, which may include migrants who live in neighboring countries and are engaged in a wide range of activities; some are laborers, some are traders, and some are part of NGO staffs. All of these have their own transnational networks, which incorporate those who live in neighboring countries as

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well as their home country; for them, ties with officers and combatants in rebel groups are only part of their network. The aim of this article is to understand how a rebel group connects with non-combatants (civilians) in a neighboring country.

This article focuses on the case of the Shan people in Burma and in neighboring Thailand. In Burma, a Shan rebel group, the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army (RCSS/SSA), is active, with bases established along the border with Thailand. On the other hand, a flow of migrants from Burma into Thailand has been observed for over a century. Especially, during the late 1990s, large numbers of Shans were displaced in Burma due to the deterioration caused by the civil war, entering Thailand. However since the early 2000s, the majority of migrants are economically motivated. In Chiang Mai, a city of northern Thailand, local NGOs managed by the Shan people (hereafter, "Shan NGOs") have been actively providing support both to migrants in Thailand (refugees and economic workers) and to internally displaced persons (IDPs) living on the Burmese side of the border, mainly in areas controlled by the RCSS/SSA. In this article, I explain how these Shan NGOs in Thailand are connected to the RCSS/SSA, and reveal that the birth of Shan NGOs was initiated by an officer of a Shan rebel group. Since then, Shan NGOs have maintained their ties with Shan rebel groups, including the RCSS/SSA.

## 2.   Previous Research

The roles of neighboring countries are important for understanding civil wars. Salehyan argues that a government of one country would support rebel groups in neighboring countries in order to undermine the influence of those neighboring countries (Salehyan 2008). Hazan points out that most rebel groups have transnational dimensions; cross-border trade of goods, selling of natural resources, movements of refugees and combatants, and patronages of neighboring states (Hazan 2013). Lischer states that refugees in neighboring countries escalate civil wars when militarized (Lischer 2005). Their research is representative of the kind of studies that have attempted to explain the relations between rebel groups and neighboring countries.

The primary focus of that research is on military actions. However, in order to fully understand influences from neighboring countries, non-military aspects must also be examined. For analysis of this paper, a work of Benedict Anderson is helpful. According to his concept of "long-distance nationalism," exiles and immigrants around the world link themselves to their homeland through a shared sense of "peoplehood." They engage in ongoing political support for the political affairs in their home country (Anderson1992; Glick-Schiller and Fouron 2001, 20-22).

Long-distance nationalism can clearly be observed in countries in the midst of civil wars: on one hand, support from diaspora communities may intensify civil wars through the financial support of rebel groups and the intensification of hostile discourses; but on the other hand, diasporas can encourage the peace process and engage in humanitarian assistance (Demmers 2002). That is, the role of diaspora is not confined to only *intensifying* civil wars.

I also should mention that patterns of long-distance nationalism are not limited to far-separated communities, but can be seen in neighboring countries. Populations in neighboring countries are still "diasporas" in the sense that they are separated from their home country, while maintaining connections across borders and sharing peoplehood with political actors in their home country. That is to say, "long-distance nationalism" does not have to be distant. This article examines how diaspora populations in neighboring countries connect to rebel groups in home countries, and how this affects civil wars, by using the case of the civil war of Burma, especially the relations between Shan immigrants in Thailand and a Shan armed group, the RCSS/SSA in Burma.

## 3.   A Brief History of the Burmese Civil War

Burma is an ethnically diverse country. While the Bamar (the ethnic majority in Burma, consisting of 70% of the population) reside in the geographically central part of the country, most ethnic minorities live in peripheral areas of the country that share borders with China, Laos, Thailand, Bangladesh, and India, (Kramer 2009, 4). The civil war in Burma began in 1948 – the first year of independence from the United Kingdom – with a Communist revolt, and it continues to this day. One of main characteristics of the civil war is confrontation between the national government and various ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). After the 1949 uprising of an EAO of the Karen people against the Bamar-dominated central government, several EAOs followed of Mon, Kachin, Karenni, and Shan minority groups, seeking independence or autonomy for their respective ethnic groups.

After a military coup in 1988, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC, initially called the State Law and Order Restoration Council, or SLORC) was established, replacing the one-party system of the Burma Socialist Programme Party. This coincided with the end of the Cold War, as China decreased its support for pro-communist groups, such as Wa and Kokang. Thailand, which had supported EAOs for their anti-communist goals, also changed its strategy and began focusing on strengthening economic relations with Burma. The SPDC itself signed a series of 17 ceasefire agreements with EAOs, which were not intended to be political solutions, but instead were economically motivated: they were intended to improve the development in border regions and to

allow for the extraction of natural resources. The EAOs were provided economic opportunities, such as large-scale development projects and business opportunities (Kramer 2009), while being allowed to govern their territory and remain armed.

This "ceasefire capitalism" did not last long (Wood 2011). In 2009, the EAOs which had already signed ceasefire agreements were asked to transform themselves into Border Guard Forces (BGFs), under the command of the national army. Some smaller groups agreed, but larger EAOs did not, worsening relations between the central government and EAOs.

A change occurred when President Thein Sein assumed office in March 2011. He actively engaged in the peace process with EAOs, signing new bilateral ceasefire agreements with 14 of them. This peace process extended to inaugurating a national ceasefire agreement (NCA). The NCA is single document establishing a national ceasefire agreement that enables EAOs and the central government to integrate into a single scheme for promoting dialogue towards political solutions. In October 2011, the NCA was signed between the central government and 8 of the 15 largest EAOs. Under the NCA, EAOs were officially recognized by the government to maintain their territory and stay armed. EAOs established liaison offices in government-held territories to maintain open channels for political dialogue, and to monitor the ongoing ceasefire. Though sporadic clashes occurred between the government and several EAOs, the political process has progressed (albeit slowly) (Institute for Security and Development Policy 2015). The newly established government of Aung San Suu Kyi, the National League for Democracy (NLD), took over the dialogue in 2016. As of the writing (1 December 2019), 10 EAOs have signed the NCA and continue the dialogue for political solutions.

## 4. Shan people in Burma and Thailand

### 4.1 Who are the Shan?

The Shan people live primarily in Shan State in Burma and in northern Thailand.[2] The culture and language of the Shan are relatively similar to those of Thai people in Thailand, due to a shared ethnic origin: when the Kingdom of Nancho in the present Yunan Province, China, fell to Kublai Khan circa 1253, the people fled southward. In their long march, they established kingdoms intermittently at various locations.[3] The Thai people residing in the present Thailand, integrated some of these kingdoms, establishing the modern state of Thailand (Diller 2002). This process also established a

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[2] The Shan people call themselves "Tai," while the Bamar people call them "Shan" (Takatani 2007, 178).

[3] Except for Shan State of Burma and northern part of Thailand, Shan people also inhabit parts of Mandalay Region, Kachin State, and Kayin State in Burna, the southeastern part of China, Laos, and Assam State in India (Sao Saimong 1965, 5-14).

national idea of "Thai-ness," and an "imagined community" as part of the process of modernization (Tongchai 1994).

In contrast, the Shan who reside in what is now Burma were integrated as one of the ethnic minorities in the modern state of Burma; the Shan population in Burma is 3-4 million, which accounts for 9% of the entire population (Ekeh 2007, 3). This resulted in a different kind of imagined community. The identity of ethnic Shan have been established within the political process within Burma (Lintner 2000).

Some of the Shan people moved to present Thailand from present Burma before the two countries were established as a modern nation-state (Tongchai 1994). It is recorded that Chao Kaeo Muang, prince of Chiang Mai, sent a survey team in 1831, which found settlements of Shan in the present province of Mae Hong Son. The flow of migrants to this area continues to this day. While the older generations of migrants assimilated into Thailand – acquiring Thai citizenship, receiving formal education, and working legally (Kaise 1999, 37-42) – newer generations of migrants do not. In the 1990s and the early 2000s, large numbers of Shan people were displaced from Burma into Thailand due to deterioration of their living conditions resulting from the civil war. From the later 2000s to the present, migrants are more likely to go to Thailand seeking jobs. Nowadays, these newcomers populate low-paying sectors in Thailand, especially in northern area, working illegally or with work permits as foreign laborers. One study shows that the Shan occupy one sixth of the population of 1.2 million people in the town of Chiang Mai (Amporn 2017, 9).

## 4.2 The Shan People and the Burmese Civil War

The RCSS/SSA is one of the Shan EAOs presently active in Burma.[4] Looking back in history, the Shan have been involved in the civil war since 1958 when the first Shan rebellion, *Noom Suk Harn* ("Young Brave Warriors" in the Shan language), rose up seeking an independent Shan State. Since then, a number of Shan EAOs rose and fell, integrated and disbanded, aligned and realigned (Lintner 2000, 184-190). During the 1970s and 1980s, many of these groups were gradually integrated into a single group led by Khun Sa, a well-known figure known as the "drug kingpin in the Golden Triangle" (McCoy 1999). Khun Sa, who was born to a Chinese father and a Shan mother, first made his name as the head of an opium-financed private militia during the 1960s, and later identified himself as a leader of the Shan nationalist movement. He strengthened his power by controlling the opium trade and integrating other Shan groups under his control. The Mong Tai Army (MTA), which was

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[4] Except for the RCSS/SSA, Shan State Progress Party/Shan State Army (SSPP/SSA) which based in Wan Hai, Shan State, is another very large Shan EAO. Other small or inactive groups also exist.

established in 1985 after continuous merging of Shan groups, became one of the largest groups of EAOs at that time. The MTA had up to 20,000 combatants at its peak (McCoy 1999). However, in 1996, following a weakening of the MTA, Khun Sa surrendered to the central government and the MTA was disbanded. A group of 500-1000 combatants led by Colonel Yawd Serk refused to lay down arms and continued their fight; the RCSS/SSA was formed by them. The RCSS/SSA have established five bases along the Thai-Burmese border since 1999 including their headquarters at Loi Tai Laeng, located opposite the province of Mae Hong Son in Thailand. It is estimated that their manpower is currently about 8,000 people (Burma News International 2019, 149; Dukalskis 2015, 856-857; Kramer 2009, 13).

The RCSS/SSA signed a bilateral ceasefire agreement with the Thein Sein government on December 2, 2011, and later joined the NCA as one of the original signees in October 2015. The RCSS/SSA is allowed to hold their own territory and stay armed as with other EAOs. They established liaison offices in major towns such as Taung Gyi, Keng Tung, Tachilek and Mongton in Shan State to maintain a dialogue with the central government (Myanmar Peace Monitor n.d.).

Though located on the Burmese side of the border, RCSS/SSA bases are accessible by car from Thailand (Yasuda 2008, 80-81). Since the RCSS/SSA procure goods from Thailand (Author's interview with an anonymous official of the RCSS/SSA),[5] Thailand is necessary to sustain their bases. Therefore, the RCSS/SSA have maintained a good relationship with Thailand. For example, contrary to Khun Sa's MTA, the RCSS/SSA distanced themselves from drugs. Their anti-drug policy is beneficial to Thailand. The RCSS/SSA patrols the Burmese side of the border and hands over captured smugglers or drug manufacturers to Thai police (Titiwut 2018). The RCSS/SSA also appears frequently on Thai media; Yawd Serk is often interviewed on TV programs, during which he respond in Thai.[6]

## 4.3  Shan Immigration from Burma to Thailand

During the late 1990s, Shan migrants inflowed into Thailand massively. The numbers of Shan migrants were relatively smaller before the 1990s. Most were engaged in small trade or seeking employments, and easily assimilated into existing Shan communities (Amporn 2017). However, the pattern of immigration changed during the 1990s. The numbers increased. Due to its demand for cheap

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[5]  I also visited Loi Tai Laeng, the headquarters, observing that most daily goods come from Thailand while some come from Burma, especially goods only available in Burma, such as local drugs, cosmetics, and sauces.

[6]  For example. Thai Public Broadcasting Service (Thai PBS) shot a documentary of Loi Kaw Wan, one of bases of the RCSS/SSA openly stating that the base is accessible by car ("Rat chan matu phumi thaiyai," Spring Report, Thai PBS, 24 February 2018).

labor, Chiang Mai was a common destination; as mentioned above, Shan now constitute one sixth of the city's population of 1.2 million people.

Previous research highlights two main reasons for this increase. First, the economic boom attracted foreign migrants to Thailand. With a slogan of "turning battlefield to market place," the government of Chartchai Chunhavan (1988-1991) promoted trade relations with neighboring countries mainly with Indochinese countries (Viet Nam, Cambodia, and Laos), but also with Burma (Pavin 2005, 65-69). The economy of Thailand grew rapidly, attracting foreign laborers from the neighboring countries, especially from Burma (Martin 2007, 1). Recent statistics shows that two thirds of foreign laborers are from Burma (Smith and Lim 2019, 17). Due to similarity of the languages, the number of Shan migrants is significant.[7]

Second, the situation of the Burmese civil war caused a massive inflow of refugees. After Khun Sa surrendered to the Burmese government, the government forcibly relocated over 1,400 villages (i.e., over 300,000 people) throughout central Shan State in order to suppress the resistance efforts of the remnant forces of Khun Sa's MTA. According to SHRF, over 150,000 of these Shan have been displaced into Thailand since 1996 (SHRF 2003). Since the Shan have not been granted official refugee status by either the Thai authority or the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), they cannot have official refugee camps in Thailand (Ting 2018, 5). Some have settled in unofficial refugee camps in the border region, others began to live in existing Shan villages in Thailand, and some began to work in Chiang Mai. On the Burmese side of the border, IDPs settled near RCSS/SSA bases in search of security (SHRF and Shan State Refugee Committee [Thai Border] 2019). In Thailand, it is difficult to discern between economic immigrants and refugees; the distinction between the two is a blur. Individuals in both groups circulate between different farms, factories, or other working places in rural and urban areas seeking better wages and a higher quality of living (Ting 2018, 7).

## 5.  Methodology

I have been researching Shan migration and the civil war of Burma since 2016, engaging in several periods of fieldwork, each lasting 1 to 1.5 months. I was based in Chiang Mai, visiting other parts of northern Thailand. Chiang Mai is the network hub of Shan people living in this neighboring country. First, not a small number of NGOs offer support to Shan migrants in Thailand and IDPs in

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[7]  Supang and Premjai show that 7.4 % of laborers from Burma are Shan (Supang and Premjai 2012, 220).

Burma. Second, Chiang Mai is one of the centers for political exiles for Burma as well. Third, the EAOs in Burma maintain offices there. Finally, a number of peace conferences for Burma have been held in Chiang Mai.

During my fieldwork, I interviewed NGO workers, exiled politicians, and officers of the RCSS/SSA in Chiang Mai, and also visited towns and villages in border regions. During the interviews, I listened to life histories, and tried to understand the experiences of each person. From these interviews, I reconstructed the course of the history that Shan NGOs in Chiang Mai have taken, along with the course of the civil war and the inflow of immigrants.

## 6. Local NGOs in Thailand and EAOs

In this section, I examine how Shan NGOs in Thailand arose, and how their activities developed.

### 6.1 Shan NGOs in Chiang Mai

Many local NGOs operate in the city of Chiang Mai. Some work for internal issues of Thailand, especially issues related to the hill tribes; some work for Burmese issues.[8] Among these NGOs, some are operated by the Shan. Below, I describe a few examples.

Shan Youth Power (SYP) provides education for adults. They teach English to improve working opportunities and the Thai language to better daily lives in Thailand. They also teach Shan scripts. The majority of students are laborers working during the daytime, driving by motorbike to visit SYP classrooms after finishing their work. The SYP also provides education for Shan children who came to Thailand with their parents. Since these children can attend Thai governmental schools, the teachers mainly teach Shan culture and writing systems[9]. In most cases, these children live in the construction sites where their parents work. Temporary shacks are built for laborers. Teachers are dispatched to the sites according to the requests by these laborers to teach their children.

Some NGOs promote human rights. The Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) distributes information about human rights violations that occur in Shan State. Reports and articles written by "correspondents" are posted on their website. These correspondents live in different towns in Shan State, Burma, working at their respective jobs, but when incidents occur, they write and send articles

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[8] The number of these NGOs is unknown, because some of the NGOs do not register under the law of Thailand, engaging in their activities without status as a legal entity, and because very small-scale organizations, which are managed on a volunteer-basis, have flourished.

[9] Shan have their own writing system, derived from the Burmese alphabet. Adult migrants and children can speak Shan language, but some cannot write. Author's observation of the SYP activities and interview with a staff member of the SYP (6/9/2019).

to the SHRF. Such correspondents receive training through workshops held by the SHRF in Thailand on information gathering and on writing news articles (Author's interview in Chiang Mai [4/3/2019]).

The Shan Human Rights Education Center (SHREC) (a pseudonym) provides education programs aimed at providing expertise for working in NGOs. The SHREC provides 6-9 month training programs including a "Social Justice Education Program" and a "Community Leadership Education Program" "to empower, educate and encourage young Shan State activists of different backgrounds and ethnicities to participate effectively in the struggle for true democracy, human rights, justice and gender equality." Students must apply to the programs, and those who are accepted stay in the SHREC dormitory, which provides food and accommodation. This organization was established by the Shan, but students are not limited to the Shan – "SHREC is the place different ethnic youth in Shan State can come and live together peacefully," they say – but the majority are Shan, according to a staff,, primarily because the majority of the population is Shan. Those accepted into the programs are young adults (18-26 years old) who live in Shan State or who relate to Shan State, including migrants who lives in Thailand and those who come to Chiang Mai from Shan State to study with the SHREC. Programs are taught in English, and subjects offered include issues of human rights, the peace process and sustainable development, and practical knowledge of administration, accounting, media creation, and outreach (Author's interview in Chiang Mai [12/9/2018] and brochures of SHREC). Both in Thailand and in Burma, I met and interviewed several people who worked in NGOs after completing SHREC education programs.

## 6.2　The Birth of Shan NGOs in Chiang Mai

Pioneering Shan NGOs were established in the early 1990s: the Shan Herald Agency for News (SHAN) and SHRF can be regarded as the first generation of Shan NGOs in Chiang Mai. These NGOs provided information on human right violations in Shan State through magazines, and later via websites. While engaging in publishing, these NGOs also trained the younger generation on news reporting.

SHAN was "a private, nonprofit, multi-media organization which was established in Shan State in 1991" (Shan Herald Agency for News n.d.). Currently, SHAN delivers news on their website and publishes a monthly news magazine. They are regarded as "ethnic media," not NGOs, but had an important role in the rise of the Shan NGOs. SHAN was established by Sai Khuensai, a former-spokesperson of the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), one of the Shan armed groups which later merged into Khun Sa's MTA. Sai Khunsai described to me the establishment of SHAN as follows:

The SHAN stems from the department of public relations of the SURA. After SURA was integrated into Khun Sa's force, we still worked for public relation for Khun Sa's MTA. But, in 1991, Khun Sa detached us. He proposed that media should not be under the movement [MTA]. Since he was infamous as "drug lord," he thought no one believed press releases from the MTA. He made a statement on our detachment on the 17th of December 1991, and we began our activities as independent media. We stayed in Homong [the headquarters of the MTA in Shan State]. Khun Sa provided us support, but we also could receive support from international foundations such as EBO [Euro Burma Office] and BRC [Burma Release Center]. After Khun Sa surrendered to the Burmese government [in 1996], we moved our office in Chiang Mai. From 1996, we were funded by George Soros's Open Society Institute. While we delivered news, we trained young people as news writers. These trainees, living in Shan State, provided us information (Author's interview in the Office of EBO in Chiang Mai [26/2/2019]).

SHAN is a news agency, but their activities have been widely shared by Shan NGOs, which were established later.

As mentioned above, SHRF operated similar activities. Actually, Sai Khunsai said that he had a lot of experience working together with the founder of the SHRF, Khun Kya Oo. According to Sai Khunsai, Khun Kya Oo worked as a human rights activist in Chiang Mai, but was not successful. He visited Khun Sa in Homong and Khun Sa promised cooperation and support for the SHRF.

## 6.3 The Growth of Shan NGOs since the Late 1990s

Shan people who already lived in Chiang Mai and in northern Thailand established NGOs to help Shan refugees. More Shan people began to engage in the activities of NGOs after larger numbers of Shan people in Burma were displaced to Thailand in the late 1990s.

The Shan Women's Network (SWAN) is one of largest NGOs established in this period. Established in 1999, SWAN has worked towards equality and justice for Shan women by providing education and empowerment programs. One of founders of the SWAN described to me the formation of SWAN:

When the massive inflow of the Shan occurred during the 1990s, we were already in Chiang Mai. During that period, the displaced Shans settled in informal displaced camps. At that time, I worked as a translator for the Human Right Watch [an advocacy NGO] and news agencies [from developed countries]. I also worked in a humanitarian agency. At that time, the Shans in Thailand volunteered for meeting the needs in the border region. Teachers went to the borderlands and taught children during their holidays. Medical workers who worked in border regions also helped the displaced Shans. Through these activities, we thought that Shans had to organized themselves for assisting our people (Author's interview in a coffee shop in Chiang Mai [8/3/2019])

Her narrative is consistent with what is written on the SWAN homepage

> [B]efore the formation of SWAN, Shan women in various locations had already been active in a number of projects to assist women. Even though informal networks were in place, it was felt that more could be achieved, in addressing both practical and strategic needs of Shan women, if a more concrete network among the various women could be formed (SWAN n.d.).

SWAN formed as type of network by integrating already existing small NGOs. As mentioned above, those who previously migrated to Thailand established NGOs in Chiang Mai, which were integrated into larger organizations, in part because a larger NGO is more easily supported by international aid organizations. During the 1990s, refugees from Burma caught the attention of foreign donors, who provided support to local NGOs (Decobert 2016, 68-73). Therefore, managing a local NGO began to be a sustainable "job" at that time.

Though SWAN currently focuses on education and empowerment programs, in its initial stage, SWAN engaged in news publication. After testimonies were heard from Shan refugees, several reports were published on human rights violations by Burmese soldiers, some of publications of SWAN were co-published with SHRF (SHRF and SWAN 2002; SWAN 2003; SWAN and SHRF 2002).

Thus, the inflow of the Shan refugees triggered the establishment of more Shan NGOs in Chiang Mai. Previously mentioned NGOs were also established in this period. For example, SYP was founded in 2002, and SREC was established in 2001. In these NGOs, many of the Shan work as NGO staff. Among them, some have a relation with the EAOs, especially with the RCSS/SSA.

## 7.  The Relationship between Shan NGOs and the RCSS/SSA

In order to understand relations between Shan NGOs and the RCSS/SSA, it is first necessary to understand that the EAOs needed the expertise of the NGOs. The RCSS/SSA and other EAOs receive aid from international aid agencies and local NGOs for the people living under their control (Yasuda 2008, 83; Decobert 2016, 68-73). RCSS/SSA bases in the border area govern local IDPs (SHRF and Shan State Refugee Committee [Thai Border] 2019), and attempt to provide social services to them (Prawit 2008). To fill the necessary roles, some individuals with work experience in NGOs have been employed in the RCSS/SSA.

## 7.1  Career Transitions from NGOs to the RCSS/SSA

Larn Tai, Chairman of the Education Commission of the RCSS/SSA, had almost 15 years' NGO experience before being headhunted by the RCSS/SSA. The Education Commission manages about 300 elementary schools, 5 secondary schools, and 1 high school in the area controlled by the RCSS/SSA. Larn Tai said that his work is "quite the same as my work before."[10]

First, the commission produces textbooks in the Shan language by coordinating Shan intellectuals in Thailand and in Burma. One of the history textbooks was written by Sai Khunsai, a founder of SHAN. Other textbooks were written by teachers of the Shan Culture and Literature Association, a civil society organization in Burma. Second, the commission has to acquire new teachers. Some teachers of the RCSS/SSA are volunteers from Thailand and from Burma. Others became teachers as a form of "military service" (People in the controlled area of the RCSS/SSA are required to complete five years' military service. Some of this service can be allocated to non-military work according to expertise, as teachers, medics, or administrators). Third, the commission holds workshops in education, agriculture, and other subjects for "civil society members" coming from both Thailand and from Burma, sometimes inviting lecturers from Thailand and other countries.

Larn Tai works mainly in Chiang Mai, saying that the "Education Commission should be in Loi Tai Laeng [the headquarters of the RCSS/SSA], but for the sake of communication with foreigners [international aid agencies and other supporters] and of the internet connection, we have [our] office in Chiang Mai."

Larn Tai also told me about his life history. He moved from Shan State to Thailand in the early 1990s after finishing his lower secondary education. As the situation of the civil war deteriorated, his parents sent him to live with his grandfather and grandmother who already lived in Thailand. Since he did not have Thai citizenship, he could not attend upper secondary school.[11] Instead, he received a non-formal education provided by Shan NGOs, including SHREC. After finishing the SHREC program, he worked with SHREC as a member of staff. He also works for the SYP. SHREC was assisted by international donors and his job was a paid position, but SYP activities depended entirely on donations, and almost all staff are unpaid. He said he continued his activities nevertheless, because he wanted to help his people.

In 2015, he was asked to work for the RCSS/SSA, and switched his job:

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[10] I conducted interviews with him twice (9/5/2018 and 9/4/2019) in Chiang Mai.
[11] Due to Education for All campaign worldwide, children of foreign workers and displaced persons can receive formal education since the early 2000s including stateless persons.

At that time, I was already 35 years old. Not young any more. I cannot help by working in Shan Youth Power. The RCSS/SSA was thinking about education reform, and I was called to work for the reform. In this reform, we planned to establish a college and a vocational training school (Author's interview in Chiang Mai [9/5/2018]).

### 7.2 Two Classmates of the SHREC Program

Other cases I would like to share involve two Shan men whom I met during my fieldwork. They were classmates from SHREC education programs, but one is now an NGO staff member, and the other is an officer of the RCSS/SSA. One of them is Sai Lek (a pseudonym), whom I met in Chiang Mai through the introduction of a Thai scholar who is a specialist on Shan immigrants in northern Thailand. Sai Lek took a Master's degree under the advice of this scholar. When I first met him, he was an NGO worker. He assisted me in my fieldwork, helping me make connections with Shan NGOs and the RCSS/SSA.

Sai Lek first came to Thailand in 2002, when he was in his early 20s, seeking further education after finishing secondary school. After working as a petty laborer for a few years, he took the SHREC entrance examination and was admitted. After finishing the program, he worked for NGOs in Chiang Mai. He also obtained a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in social science during his stay in Thailand. His life course is typical of Shan elites who seek better salaries and better positions by switching NGO jobs. In early 2019 he shared on Facebook that he moved to Taungyi, capital of Shan State, for his new position: a researcher on human right violations in one of the more prominent Shan NGOs. For his new working position, he went back to Burma.

Sai Lek helps the RCSS/SSA on a temporary basis. He told me, "Since I can speak English, I was involved in the RCSS/SSA as a translator. I sometimes translated for the chairman [Yawd Serk] before."

I observed Sai Lek working for the RCSS/SSA during my visit to Loi Tai Laeng, the headquarters of the RCSS/SSA. In Loi Tai Laeng, the festival of Shan National Day is held every February. During this days-long festival that I attended, music concerts were held all night long. The border remained open during the festival, and Shan in Thailand came by car, carrying as many people as possible, including families, relatives and friends. A military parade was also held, to which guests were invited from other EAOs and the Burmese government (after the ceasefire in 2011), as well as foreign diplomats. Sai Lek, who normally lived in Chiang Mai, came to Loi Tai Laeng as a translator for representatives from European countries. After finishing his work, he said, "I work for the RCSS/SSA when it is necessary, but did not think of working for the RCSS/SSA, because salary is not so good, and I would have to move between Chiang Mai, the headquarters, and cities in Burma."

The other Shan man with whom I became acquainted is Sai Oo (a pseudonym), an officer of the

RCSS/SSA. I met him during my stay in Loi Tai Laeng for the Shan National Day. During our conversation, we discovered that Sai Lek is a mutual friend. Sai Oo said he met Sai Lek during his studies with the SHREC. Sai Oo said to me that he was a training officer of RCSS/SSA, but he was ordered to study with the SHREC. After finishing the program, he went back to RCSS/SSA and worked as an account officer. The case of Sai Oo shows that the RCSS/SSA send their personnel to the NGOs in Chiang Mai in order to train their officers.

## 8. Conclusion

This article examined non-military networks of a rebel group, by examining the case of the RCSS/SSA and the Shan people in neighboring Thailand, especially Shan NGOs in Chiang Mai. The RCSS/SSA relies on the expertise of NGOs to complete necessary administrative work, and to help them provide social services to people living in areas they control. Responding to these needs, some NGOs cooperate with the RCSS/SSA, and some ex-NGO workers are employed by the RCSS/SSA.

During one interview, the chairman of the SHREC said to me, "improving the rights of minorities in Burma is our common goal, regardless of NGOs, EAOs, and those who live under the Burmese government." The chairman continued:

> Among our students, some are educated in Thailand, and some are educated in Burma. Armed groups also send their people for training. We have not taken the sides of any parties. Therefore, everyone can study here without any worries. We expand the network of the students. And we believe that it will help to achieve peace (Author's interview in Chiang Mai [12/9/2018]).

The chairman's words represent a reason why NGO workers have close ties with the RCSS/SSA, despite the fact that the latter are agents of violence.

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