Civilian Conflict Management

The Role of Scenario Building in the Structural Prevention of Electoral Violence

Civilian Conflict Management

The Role of Scenario Building in the Structural Prevention of Electoral Violence

By

Dr. Zsuzsanna Kacsó

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

Civilian Conflict Management: The Role of Scenario Building
in the Structural Prevention of Electoral Violence

By Dr. Zsuzsanna Kacsó

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Reaching Positive Peace: Four Preconditions for Constructive
and Sustainable Conflict Solutions
> Setting the vision: from negative to positive peace through emphasis
> on human security
> Reaching the optimal combination for constructiveness: gaining
> knowledge of context through the understanding of the conflict –
> violence relationship
> The dialogic multi-stakeholder approach – assuring sustainability
> through legitimacy and ownership
> Programming for sustainable peace: matching instruments, measures
> and tools to phases of the conflict life-line
> Conclusions

Dismantling the Justification for Violence: Processing, Programming
and Infrastructure Building for Structural Prevention in the Case
of Electoral Violence
> Violent structures – the hidden conditions behind election-related
> violent acts
> Structural violence prevention within the electoral cycle
> Conclusions

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is the result of the joint work and support of mentors, colleagues, friends and family who have been there throughout the lengthy information gathering, processing, and writing processes.

Thus, I would like to express my gratitude to all my PATRIR colleagues who have provided me with guidance and opportunities to learn about peacebuilding and violence prevention, and who have shared their experience with me so I may grow as a practitioner of the field. Special thanks go to Mr. Kai Frithjof Brand-Jacobsen and Mr. Denis V. Matveev, the two people with whom I have shared the majority of my field experiences.

Furthermore, I am grateful to my PhD thesis coordinators at the Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, for guiding my theoretical development.

Special thanks to Dr. Marshall Conley, Ms. Adelina Decean and Mr. Lloyd Barton, who have taken it upon themselves to proofread and edit the content of this book.

The support of family and friends was invaluable throughout the writing process, so deep recognition goes to all for standing beside me and believing that I could finish this book.

Finally, appreciation goes to those individuals and organizations that are active in peacebuilding in war-torn and post-violence societies, who, through their work and writing, have developed the very important pool of knowledge and resources from which inspiration was drawn for this book.

INTRODUCTION

Former UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold wrote "*The pursuit of peace and progress cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and its errors, its successes and its setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned.*"

Contemplating the theoretical and practical journey leading up and contributing to the development of this book, a clear path may be discerned, a perpetual pursuit like that highlighted in the above paragraph. The topic, tackling the role of scenario building processes in successful structural violence prevention programming with the aim of free, fair and peaceful elections, has benefitted from a long crystallization process, both through academic endeavors and practical work. These efforts were built around the vision well expressed by Archbishop Óscar Romero of El Salvador in 1979: "*I will not tire of declaring that if we really want an effective end to violence we must remove the violence that lies at the root of all violence: structural violence, social injustice, exclusion of citizens from the management of the country, repression. All this is what constitutes the primal cause, from which the rest flows naturally.*"

This book contains the aggregation of the challenges, achievements, best practices and lessons learned of international, national and local actors active in peacebuilding, conflict transformation, violence prevention, development, good governance and elections, scenario development, strategy development and several other related fields, together with the practical experience I have acquired through eight years of activity as a member of staff of the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR). The conceptual elements, pioneered and promoted widely by the individuals and organizations referenced throughout, were linked in order to create a coherent strategy to be followed when selecting customized prevention tools for various violent, conflict-driven electoral contexts, while also understanding the usefulness of one particular tool: scenario building.

As such, the book represents a rearrangement and customization of already existing theoretical and practical knowledge, mechanisms and

tools that serve the purpose of constructive and sustainable prevention of electoral violence.

The motivation behind the development of the chapters lay in the desire to:
- emphasize that peace and security can be achieved only through a multi-stakeholder approach which offers a broad participation base to civilian stakeholders;
- highlight once again the utmost importance of treating conflict as a phenomenon that may lead to development and positive value creation, if its crisis points and the periods leading up to them are managed through constructive, transformative means;
- emphasize the importance of a country's, state's and society's structural elements in bringing about sustainable positive peace, or, in the worst case, creating protracted conflict and violence situations;
- put the governance and electoral cycle in the middle of a good service provision process, contributing to the achievement of positive peace, while raising awareness that the governance – election relationship may produce good service delivery only if structural fault lines are bridged by adequate, long term strategies;
- lobby for early preventive action, in the form of structural reforms and policies, as the main avenue through which free, fair and peaceful elections may be attained and legitimate service delivery actors may be granted access to decision making levels;
- identify and scrutinize an appropriate tool that may fit the needs and challenges involved in such preventive actions, while also assuring that the produced outcomes are both constructive and sustainable.

To that end, the hypothesis of the research is represented by the following affirmation: *scenario building is a valuable tool of the election-related structural violence prevention toolbox, as it brings about constructive and sustainable conflict solutions as the results of a complex navigation process between the risks and opportunities of a given conflict life-line, while adhering to the process, content and infrastructural needs and best practices of early prevention programming*.

The book has put forth a series of questions as guides for the argumentative process and structural pillars of the research process and output.

Chapter 1, assigned the task of set the general conceptual and paradigm framework, was guided by the question: "What are the preconditions of constructive and sustainable conflict solutions?"

Chapter 2 was guided by three clusters of questions, each cluster directed towards one of the innovative elements mentioned above. These four clusters and the related research questions are:
- Considering the architectural elements of conflict and violence that interplay to bring about violent behavior, what is the role of state and social structures in generating violence and sustainable peace?
  - What does the concept of "structure" mean in the context of state and society?
  - What is the relationship between structures and sustainable peace?
  - What are the factors conferring violent tendencies on any kind of structure?
  - Which are the effects of violent structures on the state, society and the relationship between them?
- Narrowing the scope of the research, what does structural violence mean within the electoral cycle?
  - What does an electoral cycle look like and what are its structural components?
  - How widespread is the phenomenon of electoral violence, what structural fault lines lie at its roots and which are the risk factors enabling violent acts?
  - How has structural violence manifested itself during the electoral history of Nepal and what is the risk profile of the country before its upcoming elections?
- Having examined the meaning of structures and structural violence within the electoral cycle, what therapy/prevention programs may be operationalized to transform these structures into peace generators?
  - What is the meaning of structural violence prevention, and which principles guide its operationalization?
  - How do these generalities translate into the prevention activities employed in the electoral cycle?
  - What are the specificities of the structural violence prevention programs within the electoral cycle from a process, content and capacity building point of view?
- What are the major challenges and needs of structural violence prevention operationalized within the electoral cycle?

Chapter 3, which aims at measuring the warning, strategizing and prevention capacities of scenarios and scenario building processes against the preconditions of positive peace and challenges of structural prevention programs, was built on the following research questions:

- What does the concept of scenario building stand for, and are there consistent practical examples that underpin its usability and utility for the overall field of violence prevention?
- Does the practice of scenario building abide by the preconditions of constructive and sustainable conflict solutions?
- Are there adequate process, content and infrastructural characteristics through which scenario building exercises may cover the crucial areas identified within structural prevention programming to aid in reaching sustainable conflict solutions for electoral violence?
- What does the structural violence prevention focused scenario building process look like and contain in the case of the Nepali electoral cycle?

The literature and information sources accessed to formulate the answers to the various research questions stretch across the primary, secondary and tertiary categories.

Access to primary sources of information was facilitated by research and practical work implemented within the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR), and relates to various country engagements, capacity building programs, consultancies and derived outputs. For the formation of the conceptual base, information gathered through first-hand experience in Moldova-Transdniestria, Northern Ireland, Liberia, Singapore, Cambodia and Nepal were crucial. These engagements allowed for widening the perspective of peace. At the same time they facilitated ample learning processes in stakeholder mapping, risk assessments, early warning practices and systemic peacebuilding activities, and contributed to distilling a clear understanding of the best practices for assuring the sustainability of conflict solutions. The capacity building programs, engaged in over the period of the research and writing processes, represented optimal methodological toolboxes for information gathering on structural fault lines hindering the positive and negative peace, international, regional, national and local violence prevention practices and program examples. High level consultancies narrowed and specialized the topical focus, allowing for the in-depth analysis and development of prevention guidelines for general conflict contexts, and for the particularities of free, fair and peaceful elections.

The secondary sources of information were either freely available or have been received and consulted under confidentiality clauses. Under this category fall UN resolutions and prevention strategies, EU electoral monitoring reports, Nepal related constitutions and legal documents, and handbooks, manuals of major peacebuilding, electoral, development and future forecasting organizations such as UNDP, USAID, IFES, Shell International and many others. The information gathered through such means were used to strengthen the conceptual and theoretical base, and serve case study examples for the various prevention practices discussed. Their main function, however, was to draw the theoretical and practical parts of the book closer together, by narrowing the usual gap created between the two sides. This was possible through the fact that most of the secondary sources were built on the first hand experiences, lessons learned, good practices and failures of the issuing organizations, in projects where the theory was translated into practice, and customized for the contextual needs.

The tertiary sources of information represented the widest category of the three, contributing to the general, theoretical framework onto which information obtained from primary and secondary sources was placed. The books, analyses, and reports making up this category defined and underpinned the paradigms governing the research – positive peace and the peace culture school of thought - while offering comprehensive definitions and action proposals that may be challenged or confirmed by the research process. Several criteria were applied in the selection of tertiary sources of information:

- The breadth of the presented perspectives, to assure that the research and resultant outputs are not based on narrow points of views, but are inclusive and dialogue generating;
- The reputation of the author and organization standing behind the publication, so as to ensure that the conceptual and theoretical base is thorough and balanced;
- The timeliness of the information, so that all proved hypotheses and conclusions are drawn based on the latest theoretical and practical findings and cutting edge knowledge;
- The practicality of the information provided by the information source, i.e. whether the information has a purely theoretical use or its translation into practice is possible.

Investigation methods

The research and information gathering process made use of both qualitative and quantitative investigation methods, each of the methods underpinning the findings of the other.

Quantitative analysis was used to identify the most important variables underpinning the main hypothesis, understand the relationships between these variables, formulate generally usable work frames and bring forth future prognoses where needed. This type of analysis was used in the following instances:

- Understanding the content of and relationship between the key concepts of conflict, crisis and violence vis-à-vis the independent variable of time units within the life-line of the conflict. Mapping the development of a conflict life-line along different time-frames has allowed a better understanding of the development path of a conflict from a peaceful, stable situation to all-out war and violence, contributing to correcting the drawbacks of situation analysis and the diagnostic and strategy development processes working towards constructive and sustainable conflict solutions.
- Understanding the links and differences between conflict and violence based on the dependent variables of culture, structure, contradictions, attitudes and behaviors. The aim of this analysis was to highlight the causal effect between the mentioned variables and their roles when choosing engagement strategies with conflict and violence situations,
- Comparing conflict management mechanisms based on the independent variables of the dialogic approach and the principles of: inclusiveness of participation; created space; the formality/informality of the used approach, and the enforceability of the outcomes. This process was employed for the selection and highlighting of the most appropriate conflict prevention mechanisms, so its constituent principles may be integrated in the preconditions of constructive and peaceful conflict solutions.
- Measuring the magnitude and impact of electoral violence based on the dependent variables of frequency, time, continent and country. The process was employed to establish the need for and importance of electoral violence prevention programs, their direction and depth.
- Exemplifying scenario building practices within different organizations and projects in order to offer an overview of scenario building endeavors in international practice.

- Developing an understanding of the structural risks and opportunity factors touched upon in various scenario building exercises in order to analyze the adherence of scenario building to the established preconditions of constructive and sustainable conflict solutions.

The research was built on the following qualitative research methods:
- Interviews: elite interviews, structured, semi-structured and unstructured
- Focus group activities
- Non-participative observations and field work
- Document, discourse, case study and text analysis
- Printed, online and social media monitoring

The interview process*:* Interviews were conducted with all tracks of society, and amounted to more than 1,000 individuals within the last six years of the practical work, research and writing processes. The interviews made use of the structured, semi-structured and unstructured forms.

The elite interviews were facilitated by engagements in various countries and comprised a group of people representing ambassadors and consular envoys, military and paramilitary leaders, government officials, heads of donor and UN agencies, and heads of other intergovernmental organizations in each of the countries visited. The interviews targeting Track 2 and 3 representatives engaged NGO and community workers (both international and national), civil servants of different sectors of the government, UN and other intergovernmental organizations' staff, military personnel, and police. The aim of these interviews was to gather information on country contexts, understand the role of different stakeholders in the risk perpetuation and opportunity creation processes within conflict areas, learn about national, regional and local peace endeavors, gather best practices and challenges faced in prevention programming and explore strategy options that may counter the identified challenges. The interviews also offered the opportunity of facilitated network creation between participants, as they were part of not only the research process, but ample country programs developed within PATRIR.

The research also made use of tertiary interviews available online with lead practitioners engaging on the topics of human security, non-violent communication, prevention and several others.

Focus group activities: Facilitated through the various workshops and capacity building programs from which this research drew some of its information, focus groups were moderated through several approaches, among which were: practitioners' forums, expert task forces, working groups, and collaborative brainstorming. Each type of focus group activity benefitted from a senior moderator and group facilitator, and was based on a mix of structured, semi-structured and unstructured interview principles, which helped to generate discussions on either pre-established topics or those customized to the needs of the participants and the overall process. These focus group activities generated the below theoretical and practical information clusters. Please note that the list is not exhaustive.

- General information:
  - Introductory elements related to the various interpretations of the concept of "peace";
  - The content of the architectural elements of "conflict" and "violence";
  - Knowledge, skills and capabilities needed to respond to conflicts and peacebuilding;
  - Historical, contextual and electoral risk factors affecting free, fair and peaceful elections.
- Nepal conflict mapping:
  - The ABC triangle: conflict behaviors, attitudes and contradictions in Nepal;
  - Peace Profile:[1] implemented peace efforts and their impact in Nepal;
  - Electoral, geographic and thematic risk factors and dynamics affecting the electoral cycle of Nepal;
  - Electoral violence prevention objectives of Nepal;
  - Fire scenarios for the Nepali elections.

Observation and field work: While a full observation process requires substantial time allocation and several layers of approval, this research has benefitted from short-term country context observations though on-site engagements in various countries and field work facilitated by the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR). Though the time spent in each country was short, some engagements allowed for several visits and a larger opening for familiarization with the conditions in the country in question. As each of PATRIR's engagements is conducted following the principle of non-engagement unless local invitation is issued, observing country and community conditions was made possible by the guidance of our local

partners. These short term observations and field work opportunities have allowed me to deepen my understanding and widen my perspective of conflict causes, dynamics, manifestations and prevention strategies that impact in a particular manner the societies visited, while making possible their generalization based on the frequency of occurrence in each space encountered.

Case studies: Case studies were drawn both from the practice of international, national and local organizations active in the thematic areas addressed by the book, and personal experience gathered during my time with PATRIR. The main case study representing Nepal is from the second category. It needs to be mentioned that the Nepal case study follows and covers the country's events up until the autumn of 2012, when the research process ended.

Document, discourse, case study and text analysis: Representing the widest used investigative method, the analysis of documents, discourses, case studies and various texts generated both theoretical and practical input into the research and writing process. Using books, documents and reports available in hard copies and online versions, from primary, secondary and tertiary sources, this analysis helped in creating the general, theoretical frame, giving content to the explorative and argumentative processes put in place. The process of analysis also allowed for the setting up and demonstration of various hypotheses and construction of new definitions, principles and categories which were missing from the overall bibliography of prevention practice. For more information on the topic please see the section "*Literature and information sources*".

Printed, online and social media monitoring: All the literature used was the most up-to-date, and in order to offer the very latest developments in the field of structural violence prevention, electoral violence prevention and scenario building, monitoring the events of the main case study, Nepal, was done through printed, online and social media. Newspapers accessed were a mix of international and Nepali ones, while YouTube provided various interviews, and LinkedIn Groups and Facebook pages the real time events. In order to be sure of the correctness of the information, each piece of information provided by the various media outlets and used for the completion of the research has gone through a verification process which involved compiling three sources.

Main findings and conclusions

From the utilization of the above mentioned methodology and sources of information, the main findings are:

- There are four major preconditions for constructiveness and sustainability to be taken into account when envisioning, strategizing and implementing conflict solutions:
  a. The set vision of the peaceful future should build on the optimal combination of negative and positive peace elements, so that strategizing, planning and programming may address the core needs and expectations of a set of well-defined actors in a given situation.
  b. The chosen strategy for the attainment of the set vision should be developed after a clear diagnosis of the present situation within a clearly defined conflict context; an understanding conferred by an early and conscious analysis of conflict generating attitudes and contradictions for each conflict strand brewing, and the cultures and structures in which they are immersed.
  c. The chosen strategy for the attainment of the set vision, developed upon a clear diagnosis/analysis of the conflict's context, should rest upon a dialogic, multi-stakeholder approach; a safe space and a transparent process that - through their inclusive principles and commonly accepted ground rules - will: open the way for trustworthy communication and open dialogue, legitimize the vision of peace, confer national ownership of the developed peace strategy, and result in a number of mutually acceptable outcomes for all stakeholders involved in the conflict.
  d. Strategies and the related programming for the attainment of the set vision should match each phase of the conflict life-line with the optimal mix of measures and tools, building on the particularities of the context, e.g. traditional/indigenous conflict management methods and the results of previous programming efforts.

- In the analysis of the structural fault lines lying at the root of various conflicts and violence outbreaks, the following six major categories should be considered:
  a. Overall state-, country- and society-wide systems
  b. Laws and other similar sources of rights and responsibilities
  c. State- and society-wide processes, procedures and policies

d.Infrastructural elements of state and society

e.Conflict management capacities and mechanisms, raising the state and society's resilience in addressing emerging and existent conflict issues

f.Internal geographical configuration/strategic delimitations of the country

- Elections should be looked at not as an event, but as a "continuum"[2] a cycle which is made up of six phases, linked together over a maximum of a 48-month timeframe:
  a. Stage 1: Pre-election preparation
     i.   Phase 1: Governance and development phase
     ii. Phase 2: "The short run-up to elections
  b. Stage 2: Electoral period operations
     i.   Phase 3: Electoral campaign
     ii. Phase 4: Voting operations and election day
  c. Stage 3: Post-election strategies
     i.   Phase 5: Between voting and proclamation
     ii. Phase 6: Post-election outcomes and aftermath"[3]

- Electoral violence, as a subtype of political violence, is an extremely widespread phenomenon, affecting on average more than half of the elections held worldwide. Using as a source of information the elections observed by the EU between 1993 and August 2012, 90% of Asia's observed elections had experienced outbreaks of violence, followed by Africa with 77.5%, the Americas and Europe with 50% each, and the Middle East with 37.5%. Oceania was the single region which did not experience violence in any of the analyzed cases.

- The structural fault lines affecting the freedom, fairness and peacefulness of elections may be categorized into three major risk categories: historical risks and causes, contextual realities of the state and society, and contradictions to the electoral cycle and process.[4]

- Structural violence prevention strategies and efforts targeting the electoral cycle need to approach the concept of prevention from three angles: the process of early warning and early response, the program/content, and infrastructure.

- The areas that an optimal prevention tool would need to cover in order to enable prevention programs to reach sustainable solutions for electoral violence are:
  a. Systemic intelligence acquisition on conflict contradictions, attitudes (root causes) and violence sustaining pillars within a given context and timeframe, complemented by a recognized analysis of existing capabilities and resources in order to address the risks and opportunities presented by the assessed components;
  b. The implementation of complete, dialogue-based future forecasting processes through which comprehensive mixes/variations of risks and opportunities may be predicted;
  c. Measuring the hazard level of each variation, the structured approaches to mitigating foreseen hazards and maximizing identified opportunities in order to prevent the emergence of violence in any given component of the violence triangle: the direct, structural or cultural dimension;
  d. Mutually agreeable spaces and processes for election-related structural violence prevention planning that foster shared analysis, joined-up, inter-organizational cooperation and the cumulative impact of prevention programs;
  e. Functional communication mechanisms/avenues between the warning and response capabilities, with integrated multi-stakeholder participation, where both the warning and response capabilities have ownership of the outcomes of their assessment and planning processes, this quality enhancing the efficiency of the preventive action;
  f. Quick and efficient dispatch mechanisms for prevention programming mandates from the decision makers to the implementing stakeholders;
  g. Robust implementation capabilities in place and ready to activate upon announcement of a mandate.

- Scenarios and the scenario-building process are valuable tools of the election-related structural violence prevention toolbox because of their ability to enhance the adherence capacity of prevention programs to the preconditions of sustainable conflict solutions by attenuating the effects of challenges, and bridging process, content and infrastructural gaps with lessons identified and consecutively transformed into best practices. The characteristics that confer this

capacity to scenario building processes, making them fit for prevention efforts, are:

a. They are developed based on the setting of a future vision and mission, as per their theoretical definition;

b. The processes engage in vision and mission implementation in a manner that stimulates constructive and creative thinking on strategic solutions for a better future, trust building among participants and empowering the wider stakeholder group to take on the implementation of the sustainable outputs;

c. The scenarios tackle and integrate systemic risks and opportunities along with the operational, structural and cultural elements of peace, thus enabling optimal combinations that may bring about both negative and positive peace;

d. Scenarios and scenario building processes have the potential to provide a clear diagnosis of a conflict's context through timely, comprehensive and systemic information gathering and conflict intelligence generation, contributing to useful strategies for a peaceful future;

e. Due to the flexibility of the scenario building methodology, the tool may be customized to the different needs of a set context, in accordance with the particularities of the conflict targeted;

f. Scenarios integrate dynamical drivers and structural shapers[5] that generate different variations, and advocate for preventive measures that might push the development of such drivers and shapers in more favorable directions, steer an unfolding conflict away from a potential crisis point, or once such a point reached, provide constructive and transformative alternatives for de-escalation;

g. Scenarios are developed with the help of an integrated, multi-stakeholder project group that is representative of the diverse state and social structures and points of view within the given context;

h. Scenario building processes foster a series of principles that uphold the dialogic character of the exercise and promote trusted, transparent and open dialogue between the participating stakeholders. Among these we may find credibility, informality, openness, reflectiveness, respect between participants, systemic inclusiveness, representativeness, long term perspective and contextual thinking;

i. Based on the above, scenarios have the capability to match the different phases of a conflict to adequate conflict management mechanisms;

j. Based on theoretical and practical evidence, we may easily recommend scenarios and scenario building processes as adequate for bridging the challenge of "insufficient time allocation for conflict intelligence generation". Also, the conclusion may be drawn that scenario building processes do cater to the need for acquiring intelligence early enough in the electoral cycle so that reforms and policies developed as responses to this intelligence may generate appropriate structural shifts and guide any existing conflict away from possible crisis points and the possibility of escalating violence;

k. Scenario building processes have the methodological endowment and openness to produce scenarios with early warning potential, as they are: i) able to identify the different factors, events, processes, programs leading up to elections and map/construct scenarios based on the different development patterns of these identified elements, and ii) showing potential to confer on the developed scenarios the accuracy and reliability needed for early warning generation through producing critical information on the possible development of electoral risks and opportunities, the hazard level of their different combinations, and mitigating strategy options. Combining the identified potential of the normative methodology and illustrative capacities with fitting variations of risk and opportunity mapping exercises existent within the wider knowledge pool of the tackled expertise domain raises the profile of scenarios as not only early warning providers, but also strategic option generators for structural prevention in general and for elections in particular;

l. The theory of scenario building offers the possibility of enhancing the cumulative impact of prevention programs within the electoral cycle by building trust between stakeholder organizations with the aim of information sharing and linking them on common platforms and program frameworks;

m. Regarding the capability of scenario building where the guarantee of proper, functional communication and links between warning, decision making, and prevention capabilities is concerned, we may conclude that the process itself does contain elements that can contribute to the enhancement of

these communication lines and ensure that between warning and response capabilities there are few but strong and reliable links. This is made possible through the last two steps of the scenario building process, which require competent lobbying, external support that may provide entry points to decision makers, and an inclusive vision of monitoring, navigation and prevention, which carves out specific active roles for decision makers beyond their mandate and resource generation role.

Based on the overall findings, we may state that scenario building is a valuable tool in the election-related structural violence prevention toolbox, as through its theoretical build-up and practical implementation it has managed to bring about results complying with the utmost necessities of constructive and sustainable conflict solutions in all kinds of context, not just the electoral one, while bridging the identified major areas that an optimal tool would need to cover in order to enable successful prevention programs. Its role in the structural prevention of electoral violence is thus one of transformation and strengthening, enhancement of the adherence capacity of prevention programs to the preconditions of sustainable conflict solutions, and attenuation of challenges and gaps that may hamper free, fair and peaceful elections.

CHAPTER ONE

REACHING POSITIVE PEACE:
FOUR PRECONDITIONS FOR CONSTRUCTIVE
AND SUSTAINABLE CONFLICT SOLUTIONS

During the last eight years, a period which provided many research opportunities for this book, I have had the chance to visit as many as three continents and get acquainted with more than 1,000 people who live and work in countries immersed in the various stages of conflict. Reflecting back on the outcomes of these journeys, I find that one of the biggest assets I gained is a strengthened mindfulness of the implications that a concept's definition has; of how I, as a researcher and practitioner, define concepts and values governing the lives of my fellow human beings, as those definitions contain within themselves the seeds of action towards their attainment.

In 2006, under the supervision and through the work of senior peacebuilders within the Peace Action, Training and Research Institute of Romania (PATRIR), I came in contact with my first violent conflict setting and its representatives: Oaxaca, the poorest state in Mexico. In a context where the intense social movements demanding economic equity and the upholding of human rights were met with continuous reprisal from the military junta in place at the time, people envisaged peace as "respect for the rights of others", "an end to falsity", "taking responsibility for what has been done and what needs to be done for peace", "engaging in reconciliation after violence through dialogue processes" and building local and state level infrastructural elements of peace.[6] A special focus was placed on children and their sense of security, the majority of the population envisaging peace as a milieu where children may leave the house without the fear that they might not return the same day unharmed.[7] The mainstream idea was that, through empowerment, the community can play a vital role in reaching a vision of peace.

The research on the meaning of peace continued in the following years while I visited and worked in Moldova-Transdniestria and Northern Ireland. In the first instance, peace and its assurance was conceived as the role of the political elites, neighboring powers and the international community present on the ground. The three-layered security zone between Moldova and Transdniestria, controlled by the Moldovans, Russians and Transdniestrians, assured the citizens that mutual territorial invasion would not happen, while contact between the parties for the purpose of sustainable peace was reduced only to the political leadership and a handful of NGOs, and even then, quite sporadic. Looking at the drivers of peace, interlocutors from both banks of the Dniester identified as key aspects the need to overcome stereotypes and enemy images, and bridge the informational war between the banks by using capacity and confidence building programs and engaging civil society in dialogue and joint developments.[8]

The 2007-2008 engagement in Northern Ireland added to my knowledge of the multi-faceted nature of peace through the utilization of a systemic view of the engagement of actors in peacebuilding processes. By linking together all relevant actors from the three tracks of society, the aim of the systemic peacebuilding approach is to address the root causes of conflict and build peace, taking into account the societal systems that gave birth to the conflicting issues in the first place. If the root causes - structural, cultural or any other form - came into existence due to an existing system of interacting actors, activities, rules, and so forth, the transformation of these root causes and the non-violent reply to their manifestations must be developed within the same system that gave them birth, linking together the peacebuilding efforts of the actors from all the different tracks of society.

Later engagements and research conducted in Liberia, Singapore, Cambodia and Nepal deepened my understanding of peace and my knowledge of the processes, tools and mechanisms available to reach it. In the case of Liberian society, upholding sustainable peace – hindered by land disputes, youth unemployment, religious differences, boundary settlements, competition over natural resources, and the lack of local/national capacities for peace – required the generation of national ownership of an integrated road map and strategy towards peace. Such a strategy needed to be underpinned by the recognition of existing peace capacities on the ground, which, linked together with international experiences and lessons learned in state building, violence prevention and

peacebuilding, would form a Liberian national infrastructure for peace. For such an endeavor, international donor engagement and local, independent capacity building proved to be crucial.[9]

Research and engagements in Singapore[10] and Cambodia[11] focused on structural elements of peace in societies with multi-ethnic configurations and genocidal histories. It was proposed that the sustainability of peace was to be achieved by early analysis of conflict root causes and risk factors that might generate later escalation of violence, the results of the analysis contributing to early policy and reform generation at the legislative, political, economic and social levels of the society and country – the development and implementation of early warning systems and related prevention mechanisms. Peace was seen as an aggregated result of direct and operational violence prevention efforts, developed and implemented within the framework of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle of the United Nations, with great emphasis on its third pillar: timely and decisive response. Pillars one and two – "the protection responsibilities of the state, and international assistance and capacity building"[12] – were mostly left outside of the discussion.

Changing country focus in 2011, from countries that have been experiencing at least negative, if not positive, peace for more than a decade to those dealing with recent cease fires, lead research into Nepal. Here, through the institutional invitation received by PATRIR from Alliance for Peace Nepal, I had the opportunity to learn about the deep commitment of the local and national civil society sector to working on the transformation of the structural and cultural aspects of conflict, while concentrating on a very narrow definition of peace for the implementation of the current peace process: the reintegration of former combatants and reconciliation processes. Forging a democratic, multi-party country after a monarchical history based on an entrenched caste approach to the societal system proved to require a much wider understanding of the concept of peace and a strong cooperation between local, national and international actors working on the ground to forge a common vision and a strategy for working towards it.

As later sections will show, in the case of peace initiatives, peacebuilding programs, development work etc. implemented in a given country context, there is always a wide range of actors involved, both nationally and internationally. Thus my acquired experience and research would have been incomplete without the vision of peace nurtured by

international and intergovernmental organizations such as the UN, the Commonwealth Secretariat, or the OSCE. These organizations have taken it upon themselves to promote a peace that is based on assuring human security through early violence prevention, engaging increasingly in peacebuilding activities, structural analysis of conflicts with violence eruption tendencies, and developing strategies and programs with the involvement of national and local stakeholders. Thus, they are taking the lead in generating and supporting legitimate, nationally owned prevention efforts.

The above experiences and several similar ones, though presented in a very succinct and simplified manner, offer a variety of possibilities for understanding peace and acting towards its achievement. Both understanding and action were conditioned in all cases by a set of assumptions, objective or subjective observations of the actors, community values handed down through generations that shape the individual's action in a conflict situation, or learned behavior conditioned by formal education processes.

Thus the following question seems legitimate: how do we really define peace and what do we need to do to achieve it? And once it is achieved, how can we ensure its sustainability?

The objective of this chapter is to establish a sustainable vision of peace through the identification of preconditions to be met by each conflict management strategy that aims at constructive and sustainable results. It explores the relationship between positive and negative peace, highlighting conflict life-cycle phases that may foster an environment where, even in the absence of negative peace, elements of positive peace may be found and acted upon.

The chapter recognizes that the specificity of the context of each conflict comes from a mix of exposed behavior patterns which in turn are generated and conditioned by the underlying consciousness of contradictions and related attitudes imbedded in the structural construction and cultural heritage of the conflict's context.[13] Thus, it explores an array of strategies and actors that are mandated to mitigate different conflict behaviors throughout the conflict life-cycle in order to recognize the few that meet the identified preconditions for sustainable peace generation:
  • A vision for sustainable peace, based on a mix of its negative and positive elements, aimed at achieving both national and human security;

- An early and conscious process of diagnosing the conflict context, highlighting the root causes of the conflict and their conditioning factors and supporting timely transformative processes;
- A safe space and a transparent process that, through their inclusive principles and commonly accepted ground rules, can: open the way for trusted communication and open dialogue; legitimize the vision of peace; confer national ownership on the developed peace strategy, and result in a number of outcomes mutually acceptable to all the conflict's stakeholders;
- An optimal mix of conflict management strategies, measures and tools in place that can meet the particularities and needs of the different phases of the conflict life-cycle, taking into consideration traditional/indigenous conflict management methods and the results of previous programming efforts.

Setting the vision: from negative to positive peace through emphasis on human security

"[…] defining the nature of that peace is what brings one to the matter of identifying a clear objective and the strategies required to realize it."[14]

As the above examples show, peace is a complex concept with a wide array of interpretations depending on the historical background of the context, the political, economic, social and security realities of a geographic area and its inhabitants, and the group of actors included in the situation.

Currently available literature identifies the end of the Cold War as the breaking point between the traditional interpretation of peace and a new, more human-centric understanding. If before the end of the Cold War, western peace was identified with key Kantian notions such as "republican Constitution, freedom and legal equality of subjects, representative government, separation of powers, cosmopolitan law, international commerce, free trade and pacific union through treaties based on international law",[15] the years after required a widening of the conceptualization of peace. Seen as a given in fitting the needs of the majority of European and western democracies, the Kantian definition was either sought to be exported to foreign nations as a measure of the civilization and democratization of traditional societies, or used as a legitimizing principle during the economic depletion of colonized countries. Either way, the conceptual definition which, at its base,