The Ends of the Spectrum.

Although we all use the term 'peacebuilding', there are significantly different perspectives on peacebuilding, with fairly different implications of what one actually does, or whether one sees an intervention contributing to peace or not. These –mostly implicit- debates therefore are not 'academic'. This handout looks at some of the big issues around which there are quite different perspectives. It acknowledges it has a position in these debates.

1. Peacebuilding takes place post-conflict – peacebuilding can take place any time;
2. Peacebuilding is anything that is done post-conflict – peacebuilding must address the drivers of conflict;
3. Peacebuilding must address root causes- peacebuilding must also focus on the now and the future and should not be too ambitious about 'resolving' all root causes;
4. Peacebuilding is about (tangible) deliverables – peacebuilding is ultimately about intangible but no less real social and political compacts;
5. There is a major role for external actors in building peace - peacebuilding is about strengthening the capacities throughout a society to deal with its inevitable conflicts constructively and without violence;
6. Peacebuilding can be structured in sectoral/thematic fields – peacebuilding is as much about the 'how' than it is about the 'what';
7. Statebuilding is peacebuilding –statebuilding is typically a conflict generating process;
8. Development is peacebuilding- economic development also causes dislocations and new inequalities.

The above are not totally separate debates. They are really expressions of larger perspectives that can be tentatively sketched as follows:

One perspective seems to focus on the overall destruction and disarray caused by violent conflict. Peacebuilding then is reconstructing an environment with significantly reduced violence and where things start functioning again so that people's life becomes once more 'normal'. If the starting point is the destruction and disarray caused by the violence, then peacebuilding becomes very much a 'post-conflict' (or rather 'post-large scale violence') undertaking. Recovery and development here, certainly in terms of basic services, livelihoods and economic opportunities, are then highly relevant for two reasons: they enable people again to have some control over their lives and hence contribute to that 'normalisation', and also create disincentives for violence as people now have greater 'economic wellbeing' to lose. Statebuilding is also seen as particularly important because the state has an

important role to play in providing security and delivering basic social services. This perspective puts quite some emphasis on the 'tangibles'. Its analysis tends to be more generic and its intervention design is also more likely to be 'one-size-fits-all'. It also tends to assign quite a significant role to the international assistance actors.

The other perspective not only uses the word 'peacebuilding' in a narrow sense but also has a different starting point than the destruction and disarray caused by large scale violence. First of all it notes that in some places people for quite some time seem to have been unable to develop fairly functioning societies. There is either persistent instability or only an appearance of 'stability' caused by a strong hand. The DRC, Burma, Haiti and in a certain way even Lebanon or Sri Lanka could be examples of this. But this other perspective is particularly intrigued by how apparently functioning societies, in which people were leading fairly 'normal' lives, collapsed into large scale violence. Yugoslavia, Algeria and perhaps in future Mexico might be such cases. Although a lot of wars are being fought out in underdeveloped and poor countries, not all poor countries collapse into war. Wealthier countries are also involved in wars, though usually outside their own territories. There is not a direct correlation between poverty and underdevelopment and large scale violence. Hence while the relevance and importance of material-economic recovery and development to the people of violence-affected societies are undeniable, that by itself is not enough for 'peace' to be sustainable. This perspective is also more cautious about 'strong states'. It points out that in many instances the abuse of the state by a ruling elite or clique has precisely been one of the causes of war. Merely (re-)building the state without addressing the question of coercive 'elite-capture'[1] can simply recreate the conditions for violence. This perspective puts quite some emphasis on the 'intangibles'. Its analysis tends to be very country/regional specific and its intervention designs more tuned to the specific dynamics. It also tends to assign the most significant role to the national actors.

1. <u>Peacebuilding takes place post-conflict – peacebuilding can take place any time.</u>

The view that peacebuilding can be relevant at any time and is not limited to the 'post-conflict' 'phase' builds on two arguments:
- The term "post-conflict" is misleading. In practice it really means 'post-violence'. A significant reduction in large scale violence doesn't mean the conflict is over – only that there are now conditions in place to begin to tackle it in other ways than with guns.
- 'Peacebuilding' is also about preventing and about reducing large scale violence. While 'preventive diplomacy' is a widely accepted undertaking, 'preventive peacebuilding' unfortunately still is not. And yet while preventive diplomacy will engage 'leaders', the behaviour of leaders cannot generate large scale violence unless they can mobilize 'followers'. It is therefore relevant to do wider preventative peacebuilding among the potential 'followers'. Although the violence creates seriously constraining conditions, peacebuilding work can also be

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[1] To a degree, elites capture the state machinery everywhere or controlling (part of) the state machinery is often a gateway to elite-status. The questions is to what degree these elites maintain that control through a perceived legitimacy or through coercion.

undertaken in the midst of war, in complement of formal 'peace making/peace negotiating' efforts. It is about strengthening 'constituencies for peace' and local capacities for peace.

2. <u>Peacebuilding is *anything* that is done post-conflict – peacebuilding must address the drivers of conflict.</u>

"*Because there are multiple contributing causes of conflict, almost any international assistance effort that addresses any perceived or real grievance can arguably be called 'peacebuilding.' Moreover, anyone invited to imagine the causes of violent conflict might generate **a rather expansive laundry list of issues to be addressed in the post conflict period**, including income distribution, land reform, democracy and the rule of law, human security, corruption, gender equality, refugee reintegration, economic development, ethnonational divisions, environmental degradation, transitional justice, and on and on.*" (Introduction to Peacebuilding p. 16)

The narrower perspective that peacebuilding must address the drivers of conflict ('root causes' and 'drivers of conflict' are not the same), does not deny that when the guns fall silent there often is a huge amount of need for all sorts of things. It doesn't deny that the multitude of interventions and efforts to address that wide spectrum of needs is highly relevant – only questions a too quick claim that all of them would substantially contribute to sustained peace. This perspective prefers to see most activities contribute to 'stabilisation' and 'normalisation'. Both are highly valuable to the people that have experienced the large scale violence, but are by no means sufficient to guarantee sustainable peace. Restoring services, rebuilding infrastructure, returning displaced people, demobilizing combatants etc. undo consequences of the violence and take away some of the instruments of violence. They therefore again create more favourable conditions to begin to address the central issues that drove the conflict – and the additional grievances that the violence has created, but they do not really address the central issues.

The distinction between 'stabilisation' and 'peacebuilding' may be gaining some ground: there are now postholders whose title is 'stabilisation advisor' as well as 'stability assessment frameworks' and manuals on 'stabilisation and reconstruction'.

3. <u>Peacebuilding must address root causes- peacebuilding must also focus on the now and the future and should not be too ambitious about 'resolving' all root causes.</u>

References to 'root causes' and the need to address them are sprinkled copiously throughout much peacebuilding discourse, but often without little reflection.

Ignoring the root causes of a conflict is likely to hamper political but especially social reconciliation. There will be many actors that feel they took up arms for a good reason, and they will want to see fundamental issues certainly recognized and at least partially addressed. Yet that doesn't always happen: notwithstanding its very comprehensive 'Peace Accords' (1996), Guatemala 15 years later has hardly made any progress on the deep-seated issues of inequality and discrimination that fueled a 36

year civil war. There is no perceived risk of a new outbreak of 'civil war' yet Guatemala is in the throes of a tidal wave of violent crime that is engulfing several other Latin American countries.

Yet focusing heavily on the 'root causes' can be equally problematic:

> "…*the frequent claim that there is a need to tackle the "root causes" of conflict may run the risk of having interventions misdirected to addressing past problems rather than those that shape the immediate post-conflict condition*." (Introduction to Peacebuilding p. 15)

Peacebuilding requires attention to the past, but must engage with the drivers of conflict now, and also help a society develop a shared vision for a future in which they can see themselves co-existing as a viable political community.

External assistance actors must realize their limitations in addressing 'root causes'. A society cannot be 're-engineered' by outsiders – it will be up to its members to 're-invent' their society, and transform more negative patterns into more constructive ones.

In practice some of the root causes will persist for quite some time, others may get addressed partially, and yet others will simply stop being relevant for today's and tomorrow's generations.

This is not an argument against attention to 'root causes', but a word of caution about too exclusive and over-ambitious concentration on them.

4. <u>Peacebuilding is about (tangible) deliverables – peacebuilding is about intangible but no less real social and political compacts.</u>

One 'school of thought' looks at peacebuilding work in terms of 'deliverables'. Its 'results' or 'outcomes' therefore are expected to be 'measurable'. There are significant practical and methodological difficulties in robustly 'assessing' peacebuilding results or impacts, but that is not the point here. The point is that such perspective tends to favour interventions that produce more 'tangible' and hence more 'countable' or 'measurable' results. The other school of thought argues that 'peace' – or the viable functioning of a society internally and/or in relationship with other societies – is ultimately a question of relationships. Relationships are shaped by interests, experiences, perceptions, imaginations, emotions etc.

Relationships and their quality are not as 'tangible' as say the creation of a 'constitutional court' or a 'human rights commission'. The existence of a 'tangible' (e.g. a constitutional court or a human rights commission) also doesn't tell us very much about the quality of its functioning or the public's trust in it. In other words, 'tangibles' do not automatically deliver 'intangibles', while the 'intangibles' do become visible in the functioning of the 'tangibles'.

The quality of the functioning of an institution can be assessed: its accessibility, its responsiveness, its transparency, its accountability etc. But certainly external peacebuilders cannot guarantee that quality: that depends on the people staffing and directing the institution and the public's ability to effectively demand a quality performance.

The quality of relationships, particularly between 'groups that matter' is much harder to influence and impact on – and harder to assess. Maintaining peace also cannot just be a task of the law enforcement agencies – the transaction costs are huge. Sustained peace is very much shaped also by the broad acceptance among the population of certain norms, self-discipline in abiding by these norms and trust that others by and large will do the same. Very real – but very intangible.

> Dermot Ahern, Foreign Minister of Ireland speaking at the UN in September 2006
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> "*Peacebuilding and conflict prevention are ultimately about psychology: addressing fears, perceptions, beliefs about the past and about the future. A conflict does not begin when the trigger is pulled. It begins in the heart and mind of the person who pulls the trigger*."
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> Quoted in Europeaworld 29 Sept. 2006

Another highly important 'intangible' is that of 'legitimacy'. There is of course a 'formal legitimacy' in the first place of a government that has come to power in free and fair elections. But even then it can do things that make it lose its perceived legitimacy even if its term of office hasn't yet come to an end. 'Perceived legitimacy' is an important aspect in socio-political dynamics, but again not very tangible.

The 'Peace Dividend'

The original meaning of the concept of 'peace dividend' tends to be forgotten by contemporary peacebuilders. The term appeared as a political slogan popularized by US President George H.W. Bush and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in the early 1990s, purporting to describe the economic benefit of a decrease in defense spending. It is used primarily in discussions relating to the guns versus butter theory. The term was frequently used at the end of the Cold War, when many Western nations significantly cut military spending.

 The concept has now acquired a different and much looser meaning to refer to providing quick and tangible benefits to the populations affected by war. In practice these tend to be concrete material-economic benefits, although it can also mean e.g. that people again see police out on the streets, ensuring security and providing law and order. 'Quick impact' projects can now be claimed to be 'peacebuilding projects' if they are counted as 'peace dividend'. Why the same time of project outputs that 30 years ago would have been referred to as 'humanitarian' or 'development' work, and now perhaps as 'early recovery' should today also present a 'peace dividend', remains unclear.

The use of 'peace dividend' in both discourses is evidently not the same. In the original one it meant a reallocation of national funds from military/defense expenditure to social investments; in the contemporary discourse it largely refers to international aid expenditures. But the notion of 'peace dividend' seems to imply more than just material or fairly tangible benefits. There seems to be an assumption that it also sends an important psychological and public message: "the war is over". It is expected to build confidence among people that a page has been turned and a new chapter is starting. Like the use of aid to 'win hearts and minds' there seems to be very little serious examination of whether that assumption really holds: do these 'tangible' project outputs significantly boost people's confidence that the violence is really over? Or do many people hold more deep-seated uncertainties and suspicions that do not disappear even if their daily environment seems to have 'normalised'?

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5. <u>There is a major role for external actors in building peace - peacebuilding is about strengthening the capacities throughout a society to deal with its inevitable conflicts constructively and without violence;</u>

That external actors have a very important role to play is underscored e.g. by their value in political mediation, acting as guarantors of agreements, providers of forces that can establish the security that enables recovery, funders of fledgling new public administrations, 'technical' advisors on a wide variety of issues etc. The manifestly important roles that external actors can and do play should not distract from the reality that it is ultimately the people of the society that has been at war with itself who have to make 'peace' with each other. External actors can encourage them to do so, but cannot do it for them.

In any case, conflicts are inevitable in human relations and in the life of any society. The question is how they are dealt with: can they be managed constructively, without recourse to (larger scale) violence? That requires a multitude of formal and informal 'capacities' throughout the society as a whole. This can range from formal platforms for negotiations, to networks of people that cut across the main dividing lines, to a general mindset that is largely oriented towards dealing with disputes and conflicts verbally and if need be through mediation and arbitration, and that only accepts violence or the threat thereof as a last recourse. By and large such 'capacities' have to do with mindsets and skills (if there are formal mechanisms but not the favourable dispositions, people will not use them or not effectively). These take a long time to develop at a societal level, not in the least because they require among a majority of people a modicum of trust in their fellow members of society and in the formal institutions that regulate the interactions. The 'assistance' provided by external actors need to be such that it strengthens the capacities of the society to manage its own affairs well.

6. <u>Peacebuilding can be structured in sectoral/thematic fields – peacebuilding is more about the 'how' than the 'what' and about 'societal capacities'.</u>

There is a quite strong practice of organizing peacebuilding efforts along sectoral and thematic lines or programming domains. With some variations in the wording and structuring, common broad programming areas are 'safe and secure environment', 'the organization of political competition and governance', 'rule of law and human rights', 'livelihoods and the economy' and 'social well-being'. There is an assumption that if major objectives in all these areas are achieved, this will add up to 'sustainable peace'.

Various reflections are in place here:
- Violence, particularly on a societal scale, often relates to power and power struggles. In the power struggle, elements from all these different sectors get dragged together: social identities are manipulated, economic resources diverted, legal frameworks created to legitimize bad behaviour, violent repression excused in the name of 'law and order' etc. There is always a risk that sectoral/thematic approaches drift towards the technical-pragmatic and go blind on the issue of power.

- Making 'progress' in any of these areas will not be universally welcomed. There will be very sensitive and controversial issues that need to be handled with great tact. Additionally, with any change there will be those who, rightly or wrongly, perceive that they are losing more than they are gaining. They will resist change or try to obtain cosmetic changes that do not really change the existing power balance. Therefore 'how' these objectives are pursued is extremely important. The linear programming logic from input—output---outcome is not very inviting of attention to process.
- We tend to ignore the fact that relatively functioning and democratic societies can regress. Tilly has referred to this with the term of 'de-democratisation' (Tilly 2007 ch. 3). That suggests that even if there are significant achievements in many programming areas, this does not as such guarantee that their cumulative effect will be sustainable. Possibly the key factor then are going to be the capacities of the society to promote and protect these gains. If we accept that line of reasoning, then a critical objective is not just achieving certain programming outcomes but above all strong capacities in the society.

In short, the 'how' one goes about advancing is as important as the 'what' one seeks to achieve. And the 'how' will have to be very situation-tailored.

7. <u>Statebuilding is peacebuilding –statebuilding is typically a conflict generating process.</u>

The extensive focus particularly after 9/11, first on 'failed states' and now on 'states in situations of fragility', has generated a strong interest in 'state building'. 'Statebuilding' has become a new over-arching concept. There also tends to be a strong assumption that 'statebuilding' itself is a form of 'peacebuilding'. That assumption tends to find support in the belief that 'failed states' become an international security problem as they become a haven for terrorists, drugs, arms and people traffickers, a sort of 'outlaw country'. Somalia furthermore is typically cited as the most prolonged case of state-failure, and its endless violence seen as an expression of the consequences of such.

An alternative perspective doesn't deny the risks associated with state-failure, both for its own citizens and those in the region and more widely, but cautions against a too optimistic assumption that 'statebuilding' automatically equates with 'peacebuilding'. There are various reasons for this:

- Statebuilding involves establishing a monopoly over the use of violence, which typically requires quite some centralization of power. That may go together with hegemonic aspirations of a majority group. Not surprisingly, the historical record of statebuilding experiences is a violent one. Many of the countries with weak and fragile states are still in a process of 'state formation'. So-called 'civil wars' can be an expression of a contestation of the centralizing authority. The wars of the break-up of Yugoslavia can be seen in that light, the violent struggle of the LTTE in Sri Lanka as well. Statebuilding support seems an attempt to significantly shorten the historical duration of a state formation process, and to take the violence out of it. That is a very serious undertaking that may require not only significant but also sustained engagement;

- Civil wars can also be an expression of a contestation of 'state authority', by certain groups, after the state apparatus has been captured by an elite that is serving primarily its own interests and that of its 'constituency'. Somalia collapsed into violence in response to the clan-based repressive politics of the Siad Barre regime; Liberia in response to the ethnic politics of Sam Doe. In such instances a population will remain very cautious and suspicious about 'rebuilding the state', because they fear the resurgence of an exclusionary and repressive state;
- Other civil wars and persistent levels of political violence relate to internal elite in-fighting for control of the state apparatus – particularly where the state institutions provide the best opportunities for social prestige and economic benefit. That has been the case for example in Burundi and in Guinea Bissau. Here again the key issue is not the effectiveness of the institutions of the state, but coercive elite-capture and abuse of the state apparatus. Peacebuilding efforts that would focus on the capacities of the institutions and not on e.g. changing the political culture, creating channels for alternative leadership and a greater distribution of power that can create a system with more effective checks and balances, may be missing the point.
- Effective governance doesn't just depend on institutions – it requires a level of trust of people in the institutions. That is hard to generate if 'institution building' is very much driven by external actors and their blueprints, and not organically connected to the population they are supposed to serve.

All of this suggests that accelerated state-building without much attention to 'elite-behaviour' and how elites establish and maintain their hegemony, can recreate many of the conditions that led to much political violence in the first place. There is also a dilemma of speed: the international community is impatient to see all territory under the effective control of a state, because states are the cornerstone of the international system. But speedy state (re-) building is more likely to be experienced as a top-down imposition, where people do not feel that the institutions that govern them are actually theirs.

The international community also has difficulties acknowledging its own shortcomings and failures. Somalia is not only the quintessential example of a 'failed state' – it is also the quintessential example of failed international peacebuilding. The persistent top-down approaches to internationally sponsored peacebuilding, the discord among the international actors, regional interference and internationally-sponsored invasions, have contributed significantly to the recurrent cycles of violence of which the Somalis are the primary victims. An even larger accelerated statebuilding failure seems to be building up in Afghanistan, where the repeated calls for Afghans to take responsibility for their own affairs conveniently masks the year-long reality that internationals were actually calling the shots and dictating the decisions.

8. <u>Development is peacebuilding- economic development also causes dislocations and new inequalities.</u>

There is significant research about the direct and indirect costs of war (though wars also generate economic opportunities and can be an economic stimulus) that demonstrates how war undoes years of

development efforts and can set a country significantly back economically. Many especially civil wars also happen in the poorer countries of the world.

Hence, there tends to be an assumption that economic development (especially if accompanied by 'human development') in itself is a form of peacebuilding. Reasons invoked are that people have more (material wellbeing) to lose, and that ambitious individuals can find an outlet in the private sector and not only in politics. At the same time there has been quite a lot of research that denies a direct correlation between poverty and large scale violence. The key issue is not 'poverty' but inequalities, exclusion and discrimination. This creates resentment and anger that provide fertile ground for conflict entrepreneurs to exploit.

If that is the case then the peacebuilding concern is not 'development' as such, but how the opportunities and benefits of developmental efforts are distributed.

Some relevant reading:

Introduction to Peacebuilding 2009 www.peacebuildinginitiative.org

OECD-DAC 2008a: From Fragility to Resilience. Concepts and dilemmas of state building in fragile situations. Paris, OECD

OECD-DAC 2008b: Statebuilding in Situations of Fragility. Initial findings. Paris, OECD (short briefing paper)

Tilly, C. 1992: Coercion, Capital, and European States. Oxford, Cambridge MA, Blackwell Publishing

Tilly, C. 2007: Democracy. New York, Cambridge University Press

US Institute of Peace & US Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute 2009: Guiding Principles for Stabilisation and Reconstruction. Washington D.C. USIP Press