

Introduction

Bridging the Conceptual and Theoretical Divides on Peace and Peacebuilding

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The debate internationally on the conditions for peace and for sustaining peacebuilding has been characterized by a considerable degree of conceptual confusion and theoretical disagreements. There is a great need for clarification – or even a need to find common grounds to avoid gratuitous or rhetorical differences and to search for more broadly perceived practical recommendations. Although policy makers and practitioners may not ordinarily benefit from theoretical debates among academics, especially if conceptualization is quite abstract, the assumptions and conclusions of these debates can and often do affect public discourses. The current volume attempts to bridge what appear to be six or seven paradigmatic differences founded on different assumptions, questions, and conclusions about what is significant about the peacebuilding efforts that developed since then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* in 1992.

As envisaged by Boutros Boutros-Ghali peacebuilding was a concept related to peacemaking, peacekeeping, and so forth. He refers to “peacemaking” as “efforts aimed at resolving the issues that have led to conflict”; “peacebuilding,” as efforts that include “rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war.”¹ However, these missions are interlinked and inseparable, as they both aim at eliminating the various causes of a conflict (economic, political, social). This is the approach that many contributors to this volume adopt, that the concepts of peacebuilding and peacemaking be examined together, as part of the same whole.

* Henry Carey would like to thank the International Studies Association for its generous workshop grant and all the participants at that gathering in 2016 in Atlanta on the very day that my mother passed away. I dedicate this book to her memory and to that of my father, who also left this earth three years later. They both have continued to inspire me to seek justice and build peace. I also would like to express my sincere and enormous debt of gratitude to my co-convenor of that workshop, Susanne Schmeidl, and to my two-decade colleague and friend Oliver Richmond, who first put the two of us together to work on this project. While Susanne was unable to continue on this book project, both of them were important inspirations for the development of this project.

¹ Ghali Boutros Boutros, *An Agenda for Peace: Preventative Diplomacy, Peacemaking and Peace-keeping. Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to the Statement Adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, A/47/277-S/24111* (June 17, 1992), 3–4.

However, other contributors, such as Louis-Alexandre Berg, discuss the conceptual confusion and practical implications that arise when peacebuilding is not clearly defined by scholars and policy makers.

This essay summarizes a research agenda aimed at identifying, comparing, and contrasting the arguments about peacebuilding that have been made by seven paradigms: realism, liberalism, constructivism, cosmopolitanism, critical theories, local/comparative, and policy analysis (and their subparadigms). Most of this literature within each paradigm has been firmly grounded in the theoretical assumptions of each approach. Interestingly, scholars within each separate paradigm seldom recognize the commonalities that their paradigm shares with other paradigms. For example, a number of scholars in this volume make the argument that realism and liberalism rely on the importance of Western ideals of governance and economy to gauge state interests in peacebuilding projects, oftentimes to the detriment of the target state (as Oliver Richmond and Ioannis Telledis argue in this volume).

The absence of intertheoretical sharing among scholars is unfortunate, because there have been many lessons learned from rich case studies and analyses. This book seeks to tie all the paradigms together, most importantly, by finding common conclusions, but also clarifying disparate and incompatible perspectives about what affects and is affected by peacebuilding.

We will state up front that this is a difficult task. As James Rosenau contends in his analysis of foreign policy behavior of states, one cannot merely explain and interpret external policy behavior using a macro-level analysis alone. Rather, foreign policy is an outcome of domestic factors and dynamics, which are innumerable and complex. So, how does the researcher explain policy outcomes? On this point Rosenau states:

The best technique for moving ahead is that of specifying what independent variables seem especially relevant to the phenomena to be explained even as one acknowledges that the sum of the variance they account for may fall short of one hundred percent. . . . The goal is not to account for all of the variability, but to explain enough of it to enlarge our understanding of the key dynamics at work in the examined situation.²

The authors of the essays in this volume examine variations in peacebuilding outcomes and potentials through the lenses of the seven paradigms mentioned above. Each essay provides an explanation of the assumptions of the paradigmatic perspective primarily used by the author, with particular emphasis placed on how that author defines “peace,” which places constraints on what strategies peacebuilding is expected to utilize. If peace is defined purely as the absence of war, strategies aimed at achieving security will be the primary focus. If, on the other hand, a broader positive peace is being sought, this means more than just the establishment

² James N. Rosenau, “Foreword.” In *International Politics and Foreign Policy: A Reader in Research and Theory*, ed. Rosenau, viii–ix (New York: The Free Press, 1969).

of rule of law, but necessitates efforts geared toward achieving social justice, economic, and political equality. If peace is assessed in negative terms, does this take into account lower levels of intergroup violence as a spoiler of peace, a question Michael Fowler raises in his contribution to this volume.

Understanding how the concept of peace is explained in scholarship and policy-making needs clarity and specificity, rather than caricaturing how the dominant analytic approaches diverge and converge. This also means that International Relations research, which discusses peace using quantitative and qualitative methods, should not directly study peace as an independent or dependent variable, as generally Peace Studies adherents worldwide approach the subject of peace and peacebuilding. Rather, the essays in this volume attempt to encourage practitioners of different paradigmatic methods to study peace as both a cause and an effect, along with issues of power and interests, regimes, local actors, and other units of analysis that directly and indirectly affect the prospects for peace.

Moreover, comparison between the different paradigmatic approaches is essential. All authors in this volume examine their particular peacebuilding paradigm in relation to the others. State-centric analytic peacebuilding models, like realism, which assumes an objective reality, must contend with the internal dynamics (subjective realities) of target states, as critical theories and cosmopolitan models would suggest. Constructivists fall into both camps, meaning they assume an objective reality but also take the subjective into account. This volume assumes that *both* forms of knowledge tell an important part of the story and any one paradigm is incomplete in answering the question of what does or does not build peace.

Many of the authors in this book argue that paradigms are not monolithic entities, but contain subparadigms, which aid in establishing the link between these macro- and micro-level causal factors. Again, an examination of the work of Rosenau is instructive on this point. His “pre-theory” of foreign policy, which outlines the possible sources of policy fragmentation at four levels of analysis, demonstrates that there is not one explanatory element (or level of analysis) that can fully account for state behavior and its outcomes. Rather, multiple combinations of elements at different levels produce variegated results.

Any paradigmatic approach to peacebuilding must in some way contend with both the endogenous and exogenous factors that lead to unintended and intended peacebuilding consequences. Liberalism, for instance, focuses on the internal aspects of peace – whether these are considered property (First Image Lockean), a capitalistic economy (Second Image Commercial), or a representative system of government (Third Image Kantian). To some extent, these three images complement each other; they are all premised on a rational coexistence of free individuals. At the same time, in their different recommendations to achieve peace, they raise certain epistemological concerns.

As Doyle argues: “Authentically liberal policies should in some circumstances call for attempts to secure personal and civil rights, to foster democratic government, and to expand the scope and effectiveness of the world economy.”³ That being said, and looking strictly at Kantian liberalism, for example, the drive for representative government as a precursor to domestic and international peace encounters problems when one assesses the impact of democracy on a case-by-case basis. Democracy in Iraq is not the same thing as democracy in Sweden, which raises certain questions. How do institutional legacies and foundations for democracy factor into the equation? Where do local cultures and historical experiences fit in? Is it enough to just maintain stability, as is the case with Rwanda or hopefully Iraq? In particular, how are the top-down positivist approaches, traditionally advocated by realists and liberals (for different reasons) perceived by internal actors? Absent a domestic normative and institutional foundation for democratic rule, how will democratization, or power sharing (in all its various forms), succeed?

As Doyle argues, for the intervening states, the limits come in with respect to costs. How far are liberal states willing to go in terms of expanding the number of liberal states in the international community? When it comes to the use of force, force should be reserved for “clear emergencies that threaten the survival of the community or core liberal values.”⁴ Short of that, liberalization requires prudent policy-making strategies.

While some subparadigms complement the larger peacebuilding paradigm, others create a host of problems, which have negative implications for a policymaker’s approach to peacebuilding. Take defensive realism, for example, which argues that certain conditions within states mitigate the system of international anarchy, such as technology and the presence or absence of nationalism. Offensive realism, on the other hand, contends that the threat potential posed by the system of anarchy can never really be lessened, rather, “states could never be certain that any peace-causing condition today would remain operative in the future.”⁵ Here we have two subparadigms of the same larger paradigm of realism (or as an offshoot of the subparadigm of neorealism), with nearly opposite prognoses for the potential for peace. Similar issues arise when some of the many other subparadigms of realism are considered: hegemonic stability theory, balance of threat theory, and power transition theory, each of which add another layer of complexity to our understanding peacebuilding, or in this foreign policy-making behavior more broadly. As Wohlforth argues, what is more important are the questions these theories ask about the role of internal versus external factors in foreign policy making, for

³ Michael Doyle, “Liberalism and Foreign Policy.” In *Foreign Policy: Theories, Actors, Cases*, ed. Smith et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 62.

⁴ Doyle, “Liberalism and Foreign Policy,” 62.

⁵ William C. Wohlforth, “Realism.” In *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations*, ed. Reus-Smith and Snidal (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 139.

example, with the correct procedure being the use of that theory which fits your research question.

Peacebuilding can be seen through a number of lenses:

- Is it a process (building peace), whose success depends on attempting several processes, and if so, does the intensity of pursuit or achievements of results matter?
- Is it a policy outcome (building peace), whose success depends on objective results?
- Is it a perception (building peace), which depends entirely on subjective factors?
- Does it imply a positive peace as opposed to the mere absence of violence (whether in process, results, or perceptions)?
- Does it imply a process of pacting and maintaining consensus and reconciliation (regardless of whether or not a comprehensive menu of pursuits are demanded or perceived)?

How we study peacebuilding is also an analytic construct. A variety of “paradigms” regarding peacebuilding have emerged since the policy was launched by the United Nations twenty-five years ago. Distinct research communities appear to divide along the lines analyzed by Thomas Kuhn into separated, though not necessarily incompatible groups. Yet, it is not widely known, despite the plethora of his citations, that Kuhn maintained that his historicist approach only applied to natural, not social science. This is because equilibrium of a dominant paradigm can be sustained for long time periods in the natural sciences, where as in the social sciences, they coexist and compete. Yet, as Kuhn observed and anticipated in the natural sciences, the social sciences even more so maintain distinct research communities.

An ISA-sponsored workshop, for which we are grateful, attempted to cross-fertilize interested participants from different research approaches derived ostensibly from theories of international relations (which had originated in the social contract or other political theories of Hobbes, Locke, Kant, Rousseau, Marx, and Foucault). In terms of research communities and methodologies, the paradigms seem to diverge. However, in terms of analytical findings, agreements exist on the shortcomings of the policy, even if no common definition of peacebuilding exists, and differences of opinions vary as much within the paradigms as across them. An implicit consensus across the interpretive frameworks is that peacebuilding scholars generally ignore the empirical findings of not only other paradigms, but also ignores many literatures relevant to political transitions, especially on nation and state building, democratization, and human rights protection, along with public policy and management generally. What they also do not realize that the challenges of peacebuilding reflect an implicit consensus that critiques of locality, hybridity, complexity are analogies for more conventional arguments about democratization, nation and state building, power sharing, and institutionalization.

We will consider seven major paradigms:

- realism
- liberalism
- constructivism
- cosmopolitanism
- critical theories
- local approaches
- policy analysis

The paradigms vary ideologically:

- state versus society
- neoliberal versus progressive
- pragmatic versus utopian
- left versus right
- analytic construct or policy
- rational versus nonrational assumptions

The paradigms vary epistemologically, with some adopting and cross-fertilization:

- monist description
- monist causality
- dualist description
- dualist casualty
- Realism says that security, hard power, and deterrence produce peace but then can draw from liberal and constructivist ideas and concepts to support “pluralistic security communities”
- Peace studies, constructivism, and some critical theory view peace as the independent variable that needs to be the causal unit of analysis.

They have many common themes, despite having different languages, terminology, and theories:

- hegemony (critical, constructivism)
- hegemony (liberalism, realism)
- dependency, world systems (critical)
- power, interests (realism)
- distribution of power (realism)
- geopolitics (cosmopolitanism)
- agency (critical peacebuilding)
- hybridity (critical peacebuilding)
- locality (critical peacebuilding)
- international institutions (liberalism)

And the paradigms vary normatively:

- hegemonic primacy versus legal world order
- peace versus justice
- economic growth versus social equity
- present versus future generations
- tradition/consensus/order versus rights of marginalized
- geopolitical realities versus collective security

The essays will show remarkably similar conclusions despite some critical and cosmopolitan methodologies of monism, which rejects the notions of objectivity, distance from the object of study, while emphasizes locality, uniqueness, and *Gestalt*. Yet, dualist approaches, typical of realism and liberalism, have reached some of the very same conclusions about needing to understand local conditions, the peril of Western ideas traveling distances geographically and culturally, as well as the tendency to resist perceived injustices. Just as foreign policy experts stressing the liberal universality of modernization, with a teleological evolution toward democracy, secularism, and free markets, the reality of sustaining peace is complicated by resistance to these perceived alien impositions and the necessity of attempting to “nudge” societies toward local authenticity, ownership, decency, and incrementalism.

The book attempts to find how the different interpretations of different peacebuilding phases provide richer descriptions of reality, when taken together, while admitting where the interpretations are incompatible. By combining the compatible and compelling arguments from ostensibly opposing interpretive frameworks, this book’s essays will present a more complicated, but arguably, more accurate depiction of the quarter-century of formal peacebuilding policies, along with the various forms of complex, multidimensional peacekeeping which preceded it. As Albert Hirschman argued, complexity sacrifices some of the oft-claimed, social science capability in predictability of theories in order to gain a more accurate truthful depiction of the world by combining what otherwise seems like incompatible claims of opposing theories. Clifford Geertz argued that so much of different contexts’ responses depends on deeply rooted cultural differences, embedded in interacting international, national, and local contexts. However, our view toward the clear utility of theory embraces what Charles Tilly has suggested, that we can move from Geertz’s “thick description” to explanation based on combining theories, while depending on some of the cultural, ideational, political, religious, and economic theories that do establish a possible trajectory for possible, if not likely scenarios of peacebuilding policies.

Does this open the door potentially for the use of a cross-paradigmatic approach to explain peacebuilding? As some of the authors in this volume contend, valuable insight from the assumptions of behavior (state, institution, individual) can be derived from other theoretical models. Such is the desire for the use of hybrid “cross-paradigmatic” models as an appropriate means of gauging peacebuilding success.

Reliance on a hybrid model creates its own methodological issues, however. For example, is a cross-paradigmatic model that addresses peacebuilding sufficient if it only examines peacebuilding from a macro-level perspective or must it consider micro-level factors? If a hybrid model does account for micro-level concerns, is a greater focus on the local merely descriptive or does it assess the local as a causal influence on peacebuilding outcomes? Moreover, to what extent can an analysis claim that observations conducted at the micro-level provide an objective perspective on peacebuilding? Can peacebuilding ever be objectively explained, when the real determining factor of its success may well be how it is subjectively perceived by those most affected on the ground.

Tschirgi, for one, defends the hybrid approach to peacebuilding. To her,

hybridity in peacebuilding can be described as the process and the outcome of the contestation between different normative and socio-political systems which lead to the creation of a new system which is sufficiently distinct from its progenitors. In other words, hybridity occurs in the contested interaction between the domestic and the international peacebuilding agendas.⁶

Because it focuses on local actors and contexts, hybrid approaches do not necessarily seek to achieve efficiency in peacebuilding, but rather legitimacy. The needs and interests of domestic actors are necessary for peacebuilding to work, but external actors cannot be dismissed. Instead, the process of peacebuilding should be seen as being a matter of a “continually-negotiated political processes . . . that need to be dynamic, conflict-sensitive and locally-grounded if it is to capture entrenched interests as well as changing realities in countries emerging from conflict.”⁷

From an epistemological standpoint, however, there are remaining questions about whether or not such an approach can ever really be distinct from the other paradigms, as the above definition suggests. Is hybridity really another version of constructivism, which places strong emphasis on the interactive relationship between international and domestic actors, as can be inferred from the work of some of the authors in this volume? In the alternative, if hybridity can be correctly considered separate from the other theories of peacebuilding, and given its potential for success, this suggests that the other paradigms (and their subparadigms) which continue to dominate peacebuilding discourses and policy-making do so for political rather than practical reasons. This latter issue is a point to which authors in this volume frequently return.

That being said there is the matter of how to achieve the type of multilevel engagement a hybrid approach suggests, what types of strategies are most effective and so forth. The authors in this volume who adapt some type of hybrid approach contend that hybridity cannot be divorced theoretically from one or more of the

⁶ Neela Tschirgi, “Bridging the Chasm between Domestic and International Approaches to Peacebuilding: Conceptual and Institutional Tools,” *RCCS Annual Review*, no. 7 (2015): 80.

⁷ Tschirgi, “Bridging,” 81.

major paradigms, lest the peacebuilding action lose legitimacy and/or fail. However, demanding greater multilevel action is not something easily done; particularly, if the basis for the multilevel endeavor requires norm change and transfusion. This is a dilemma with which authors who argue from a constructivist or cosmopolitan perspective have to contend.

Tschirgi highlights the efforts of the UN's Peacebuilding Commission and the New Deal for Engagement of Fragile States⁸ as potential ways of achieving greater peacebuilding sustainability, by connecting the variety of interests, agendas, and perspectives between international and domestic peacebuilding actors.

From a policy perspective, any hybrid approach requires a great deal of flexibility and adaptability, not to mention continual reassessment of the peacebuilding approach's goals, and not merely country wide, but regionally and locally. Additionally, there is the problem of local co-option by international aid institutions. If international institutions are merely using local agents to push their international peacebuilding agendas, this creates crises of legitimacy for the overall peace process.

Susanna Campbell tackled this very issue in her assessment of peacebuilding success in Burundi. To Campbell, peacebuilding works best when organizational learning takes place, when peacebuilding institutions within a country, international nongovernmental organizations, international organizations, and donor country organizations, "*reduce the gap(s) between the country office's aims and outcomes* [italics in original], which requires that the organization receive feedback about the outcomes it has, or has not, achieved."⁹ When an organization achieves formal and informal local accountability, it improves outcomes. She found that those organizations that thought outside of the box, whose members exercised to some extent "shirking," tended to achieve better results, compared to those organizations that constrained agency and focused largely on formal accountability and maintaining the sovereignty of the target state.

One of the more important aspects of her study is the integrative approach she uses, which relies on country-wide data, as well as micro-level data from interviews and surveys she conducted with country office workers across regions in Burundi. Rather than approaching peacebuilding success using top-down measurements, she is able to successfully link formal organizations to the people they are meant to help. The use of an integrative approach and/or process tracing is preferable as a means to establish agency, and is one general criticism that could be applied to some of the studies in this volume. To be fair, however, when norm change is your dependent or independent variable, how is this measured? When it comes to the use of process

⁸ The New Deal for Fragile States was created at the G7+ countries (fragile developing countries) in November 2011. The New Deal seeks to restructure the relationship surrounding international aid for peacebuilding as one that premised on a greater foundation of equality, with donors and recipient countries seen as partners in the peacebuilding project. Tschirgi, "Bridging," 87.

⁹ Susanna P. Campbell, *Global Governance and Local Peace: Accountability and Performance in International Peacebuilding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 6.

tracing, as Jeffrey Checkel contends, few studies that rely on constructivist logics, for example, successfully make the connection between larger-scale factors (e.g., hegemonic belief systems) and the actors they are meant to impact, without losing sight of the question the study is trying to address.¹⁰

Our volume adds to a growing body of literature that addresses the successes and pitfalls of peacebuilding. Most of these books examine peacebuilding from these representative paradigms, even if others only implicitly assume an interpretive framework, each with its own set or type of questions, methods, and answers. For example, *The Peacebuilding Puzzle: The Political Order in Post-Conflict States* by Nazneen Barma¹¹ adopts a realist/Weberian approach to explaining the perceived peacebuilding failures in Cambodia, East Timor, and Afghanistan. The argument focuses on how traditional elites are empowered to pursue the same practices of patrimonial access to state resources, leading to an incomplete transformation of neopatrimonial states after formal peacebuilding commences. One could argue that a realist, above all other paradigms, would accept that history shows that improbable state transformation from a patrimonial to a rule-of-law state is an uncertain, uneven, multidecade project, when it manages to succeed after many varied challenges in political-economic development, not only in states, but for society too.

The incomplete transformation is a frequent criticism leveled by many impatient analysts from other paradigms as well. Instead of a modern rule-of-law state, peacebuilding funding becomes another way to reinforce incentives for patronage and rent-seeking by reempowered, traditional elites. Accountable governance in the case of peacebuilding projects also extends to international financial agencies and governments, who have their own agendas and tend to ignore shortcomings in their peacebuilding projects, lest they be held to account for these frequent failures.

Peacebuilding in the African Union: Law, Philosophy and Practice by Abou Jeng¹² addresses the question of why international law is frequently unable to create a sustainable peace in African conflicts. The current liberal approach integrates great powers, often in their former colonies, to reproduce essentially neocolonial domination, which encourages communal conflict. The liberal peace is an ethnocentric policy solution that is not appropriate beyond the developed metropolis where this approach found some success. The subaltern status of African states requires a different legal formulation, based on true sovereignty from outside domination. The false assumption of universality results from the lack of experience of dominant cultures of their own legal inexperience as a culture apart, with being a subject of their laws. Moreover, the assumption that peaceful interstate relations

¹⁰ For a thorough discussion of the “Methodological Gaffes” of constructivism, see Checkel, “Constructivism,” 79.

¹¹ Naazneen H. Barma, *The Peacebuilding Failure: Political Order in Post-Conflict States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

¹² Abou Jeng, *Peacebuilding in the African Union: Law, Philosophy, and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).