



EDITORIAL

PEACE OPERATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT INTERVENTIONS: EXPANDING FOCUS ON CONTEXT, POLITICS, PARTICIPATION AND TRANSPARENCY

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In *JPD* tradition, this issue offers in-depth case analysis, sharing new thinking on recurrent themes at the intersections of peacebuilding and development. Specific efforts in historically tough cases for the international community are examined in this issue – Rwanda, Western Sahara and Israel/Palestine – and while some progress can be identified in each, persistent challenges are more apparent, suggesting the need to pause and ask: are lessons being learned and incorporated in peacebuilding and development interventions? Several of the articles indicate ways in which certain international efforts are having unintended consequences of stagnating peace efforts and may even be contributing to entrenching structural sources of conflict that led to war in the first place and have not been soundly addressed. As our cases in this issue illustrate, there is a need for renewed vigour by international and national actors alike towards:

- Putting context- and conflict-sensitive concerns into practice;
- Ensuring politics and political analysis serve peacebuilding and development; and
- Fostering participation and transparency in assumptions, roles and agendas.

Other common themes that run through the issue include: how to ensure that peacemaking transitions to peacebuilding and fostering forms of development will reinforce the peace rather than undermine it; international community behaviour (i.e. in the levels, frequency and types of aid) in protracted conflicts that persist over years if not decades; the role of natural resources in each phase of conflict and peace; and the need to develop coherent peacebuilding processes and frameworks to address these issues. As in all *JPD* issues, innovative tools and approaches that can support better integration in the analysis and practice of peacebuilding and development are discussed.

Two articles in this issue highlight extremely challenging peace operation contexts where international peace efforts led by the United Nations are not sufficiently learning or incorporating lessons needed to consolidate peace: Rwanda and the Western Sahara. In the first case, *Sebastian Silva Leander* examines international efforts in post-war Rwanda, arguing that the missing institutional linkages between the global development and security architectures have undermined the effectiveness of the international community's efforts in the Great Lakes region. He tracks the flows of aid, illustrating that while the quantity of aid has not significantly changed, the donors supporting recovery efforts have. There are now more Anglophone donors, reflecting the changing geo-strategic balance in the region as a result of the victory of the largely English-speaking Rwandan Patriotic Front over the

Francophone regime of President Habyarimana. This has resulted in a lack of continuity and undermined lesson learning. Silva Leander argues that the aid system still suffers from the problems that contributed to fuelling the Rwandan conflict in the years leading up to the genocide: inadequate analysis of the socio-political context in which aid is being allocated and, where analysis does exist, it is ad hoc and not systematically linked to the aid allocation process.

There are also important lessons from a case long forgotten by many: the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). *Charles Dunbar* and *Kathleen Malley-Morrison* delve into the history, drawing on Dunbar's prominent role as the UN Secretary General's former special representative for Western Sahara. They cite MINURSO as one of the UN's longest and least successful peace operations. The stagnation of this 20-year effort to settle the conflict between Morocco and the Polisario and their competing claims for Western Sahara, they argue, is a result both of a lack of a 'hurting stalemate' and the UN's inability to effectively move this process forward and hold a referendum, a central part of its mandate. They place the blame on an environment of secrecy and mistrust fostered by the approach of former Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar and the lack of pressure from the Security Council, as well as the geopolitical relationships that have undermined action – especially as Morocco and Algeria are seen to be allies of the United States, Spain and other European countries in the 'war on terror'. Despite a lengthy ceasefire, the undetermined political fate of the Western Sahara deters foreign investments and prevents any form of human development for Sahrawis while also diverting development resources in Morocco, but also in Algeria, a long-time supporter of the Polisario. At the same time, Morocco is benefiting from the lucrative fishing industry it controls in Western Sahara, which comprises a significant share of its export earnings. The authors argue that the case illustrates that the end of armed violence does not automatically mean that development will begin – an ill-fated assumption that the international community often makes. It also illustrates the different economic and political cost to the parties and stakeholders, depending on their power bases and their level of vulnerability, over time in a stagnated process.

Eric Abitbol's article is a critical examination of phase 1 of the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal (RSDSC) project and its claim to result in a 'peace dividend' for the region. The RSDSC involves Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian West Bank in the context of an escalation in violence and political stalemate since 2000 (the start of the second Palestinian *Intifada*), as well as a political and economic embargo on the Hamas leadership in Gaza. To date, as a result of the conflict, the Palestinians have no access to or control over the water of this region, which is a major component of sustainable development, and their continued lack of access has the potential to exacerbate the conflict and lack of development. While it is expected that the RSDSC will transform the region physically and could help stabilise it through revitalisation of its water sources (assuming that sustainable and cooperative relationships are established among the three entities), the process instead obfuscates the political issues underlying the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Abitbol argues that the current approach does not go beyond the minimal acknowledgement that the project is taking place in a 'disputed area' (as opposed to 'occupied territories'). It also prioritises the RSDSC project ahead of the beneficiary parties and the human security of their populations. For example, there is a lack of involvement of Palestinian representatives in the early stages of the design, a lack of input by the local communities that will be affected by the RSDSC, and a lack of joint forums to explore political possibilities (statehood, refugees, settlements, etc.). While the face of the RSDSC intervention is that of a natural resource, the political dimensions of the conflict are deeply intertwined. There are also regional implications for any proposed solution.

Hussein Tarabeih, Deborah Shmueli and Rassem Khamaisi explore the potential application of *sulha*, an ancient method used in Arab and Islamic societies to settle disputes among individuals or community groups, to environmental and resource-based conflicts. The authors seek to build on the strengths of *sulha* – which is rooted in the Arab cultural and social fabric, has strong social legitimacy due to its bottom-up methods, and holds promise for producing viable agreements that have a greater chance of achieving sustained resolution than verdicts issued by Israeli civilian courts – and address its weaknesses. They outline a proposed *sulha* process that would allow further integration of professional peacebuilding mechanisms to enhance sustainable outcomes of these local disputes. Embodying a commitment to foster inclusion of all stakeholders, the intervention process they propose would commence at an early stage, before the dispute escalates, would seek to expand the range of possible agreements acceptable to all stakeholders rather than imposing a solution, and would be facilitated by a neutral professional body. However, establishing a recognised environmental *sulha* process would also require the support of religious scholars and officials in drafting a religious environmental codex.

Other authors in this issue also explore tools to promote conflict prevention. *Andrew Sherriff* describes the process undertaken in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2006 to develop the United Kingdom's integrated country conflict prevention strategy. At the heart of the approach was a conflict assessment process involving civil society actors. Despite the assumption that this is good practice, civic actors are often not included because of time pressures, political sensitivities, donor control and a lack of commitment to consultation. The result in this case was an agreed operational conflict analysis, one that had greater national ownership and that was jointly owned across UK government departments. Sherriff argues that some rigour may have been sacrificed for joint UK departmental buy-in; however, he points out, 'any analysis, however rigorous, is pointless if it cannot be used', and therefore a 'good enough analysis' is more effective in promoting implementation if it is practicable. For Sherriff, the process illustrates a donor trend towards 'light' conflict assessments that are better linked to strategy and programming than longer analytical or academic assessments conducted by external experts.

Kofi Nsia-Pepira and Frederic S. Pearson draw on a database that tracks legal and illegal arms transactions in Southeast Asia from 1990 to 1999 to illuminate the relationship between weapons acquisition and the escalation, or de-escalation, of regional conflicts. Coordinated international action is needed, they argue, to track, if not restrict, the unofficial trade in small arms and related equipment given the ways in which unregulated flows of weapons across porous borders severely weaken and threaten fragile states, creating a culture of cyclical war and spin-off wars. This method could serve as an early warning system and allow peacekeepers to have a better sense of the relative arms balances and concentrations. In the first such analysis on Southeast Asia, the database has revealed a complex interaction of multiple partners and intermediaries that make up clusters of regional arms networks, involving many illegal transfers, surreptitious transit points especially evident for states under international restriction or sanction. The authors point out that these networks depend on mutual trust, interdependence among actors and redundancy of supplies – all of which can be considered in developing strategic responses and highlighting the need for alternative economic opportunities for those engaged in the war-supporting economy.

Two theoretical articles in this issue examine relationships between the theories and practices of peacebuilding and development. *Terrence L. Jantzi* and *Vernon E. Jantzi* tackle an important and under-researched theme in peacebuilding and development – the implicit theoretical assumptions that guide practice in both fields. The authors set an ambitious goal of classifying and categorising peacebuilding processes of intervention into three major frameworks that

have shaped development discourse from the early 1950s through today: modernisation, growth with equity, and liberation from dependency. They argue that practitioners in both fields would communicate better if they became aware of their embedded assumptions, and they suggest a common framework for analysing operating assumptions.

Adriana Salcedo also examines development theories and practice, interrogating the intersections between culture and conflict. She argues that power relationships and political agendas are at the heart of development, resulting in insufficient attention being paid to the goals, cultural values and agency of those for whom development support is intended. To ensure that development interventions support the 'do no harm' principle, she suggests that interventions should be informed by careful cultural mappings that reveal the 'dynamic, heterogeneous and complex nature' of what may well be hierarchical or asymmetric power arrangements at the local level. Salcedo suggests that development practitioners can learn from conflict resolution practitioners, who rely on holistic approaches to restoring relationships within and among communities, to create a more humanistic vision of development.

Finally there are two informative book reviews that illustrate and build upon themes in the issue. **Teresia Wamuyu Wachira** appraises Tim Murithi's *The Ethics of Peacebuilding*, which examines issues of marginalisation and exclusion and the need for bottom-up approaches, focusing on local ownership and the ways in which indigenous value systems can facilitate forgiveness and reconciliation. **Lydia Gitau** reviews *War to Peace Transition: Conflict Intervention and Peacebuilding in Liberia*, a volume edited by Kenneth Omeje that offers deep insights into the historical context, the role of politics, and contemporary peacebuilding strategies in Liberia.

Putting Context- and Conflict-sensitive Concerns into Practice

In 1998, Peter Uvin published his pathbreaking work, *Aiding Violence in Rwanda*, which illustrated how the development community not only missed the signs of impending violence, but also contributed the conditions that made the genocide possible by exacerbating inequalities and failing to be aware of the social and political context within which they were working. It is disheartening to confront the fact that genocide has not been able to catapult international actors into effectively incorporating lessons and significantly changing their approaches. This of course does not mean that good intentions are not present; some progress is visible.

Enhancing our understanding of local contexts with a view to improving context and conflict sensitivity in peace operations and development interventions is a topic increasingly discussed in international organisations, yet institutionalisation remains distant. Despite the Paris Declaration signed in February 2005 by more than 100 signatories, which outlines principles for international aid effectiveness, there remain major challenges in fostering aid coherence as the case of Rwanda in this issue illustrates. Donors need to make much greater efforts to subsume their national interests in shared context and conflict assessments to guide strategy towards fostering genuine peace dividends. Sherriff illustrates the challenges of simply getting the different departments of one government working together for such a starting point. Such examples may provide lessons for facilitating similar efforts between governments. The UN is similarly confronted by challenges in bringing its myriad of funds, agencies and programmes together as it begins to incorporate these considerations into its strategic assessments and frameworks. The linking all of these efforts, however, requires much greater intention and commitment by all.

Linking to our third major issue below, several authors see participation, and having the right stakeholders involved, as being at the heart of conflict and context sensitivity. The *sulha* process rests on the assumption that local third party members and the parties themselves have the intimate knowledge of the context and the values and interests of all the stakeholders. Tarabeih, Shmueli and Khamaisi point to the need for intervention panels to be professionally trained in conflict analysis frameworks, thus potentially integrating local indigenous processes with the professional outside experts to form a stronger framework to tackle any resource-based conflict. Several authors, however, caution against processes led by external experts. Salcedo argues that external expert-led efforts mostly reflect development goals rooted in a Western paradigm and lack sensitivity to cultural values, priorities and expectations of local communities. Abitbol asserts the pressing need for integrating a conflict-sensitivity framework in the World Bank feasibility study process to clarify basic questions of what is 'social feasibility' in a conflict region and what are the socio-political implications of the RSDSC.

Delving deep within issues of context, Salcedo makes a case for rethinking development with 'full awareness not just of each actor's point of view, but more fully of the context from which those views emerge', which we can refer to as their 'contextual standpoint' or culture. She argues that universally espoused paradigms run into difficulties when they are inserted into local dynamics, and that there must be greater reflection about the 'geopolitics of knowledge' in advancing development more promotive of peacebuilding.

Ensuring Politics Serves Peacebuilding and Development

In many conflict situations, political elites are preoccupied with narrow interests that consolidate their power, extend their influence or increase their wealth. Such dynamics can be particularly apparent when natural resources are involved. This is illustrated in the case of the Red Sea-Dead Sea Canal project, where political and ideological interests threaten to dictate the processes of development in a way that perpetuates destructive conflictive relations. The World Bank should work to ensure transparent, participatory and conflict-sensitive processes and that the project accurately represents issues at stake and is not marginalising particular stakeholders.

In the Western Sahara, donors and member states of the United Nations, individually and collectively, have allowed geopolitical interests to undermine the progress of the political process. In such cases, given the existing power imbalances, international efforts can contribute to stagnation by reinforcing the status quo and further harming relationships, skewing the balance of power and limiting access to resources. The Palestinians in the case of the RSDSC project and the Sahrawis in Western Sahara both illustrate how this can occur. Both case studies effectively make strong arguments for the need for transparency and participation to counter politics.

Sherriff argues similarly for the potential contribution of conflict assessment where it has local ownership and consensus and is linked to strategy. Such an approach may help to ensure that conflict assessment processes succeed where they have failed before by promoting changes in donor behaviour where priorities have been politically or bureaucratically defined. Silva Leander's important recommendations to extend the UN's political monitoring functions to non-crisis countries where the UN operates without an explicit political mandate of the Security Council would serve a similar function: putting research and analysis at the service of wider strategic coordination and programming. In this case, the important political analysis undertaken in one part of the UN can better

work to ensure that development serves, rather than undermines, sustainable peace.

The politics of inclusion and exclusion manifest in other ways and at different levels. Considering community-based disputes among Arabs in Israel that often can involve Israeli government development policies, for example, the success of the third party panel in the environmental *sulha* intervention depends on the level of their inclusion and the exclusion of the primary stakeholders and how they deal with the Israeli government policies in any environmental conflict. Avoiding direct confrontation with the government policies by involving only leaders who are approved by the government and excluding local leaders who are in constant political confrontation with government policies can result in outcomes that are not sustainable. The more inclusive these panels are, the more their resolution is sustainable and can transform the communities involved.

Fostering Participation and Transparency in Assumptions, Roles and Agendas

As illustrated throughout this issue, at the heart of both context sensitivity and the role of politics in peace and development interventions lies the need for the effective participation and transparency of stakeholders in their assumptions, roles and agendas. This is of course directly counter to traditional notions of diplomacy and statecraft.

Highlighting the links between the themes of context, politics and transparency in assumptions partnered with genuine participation of all relevant stakeholders, the Jantzis' article shows the need for development and peacebuilding fields to uncover their operating assumptions and explicitly link and articulate their practices in the light of certain theories of change. In both development and peacebuilding, they illustrate how practitioners and policymakers are guilty of implementing theories and projects without sufficient reflection on the assumptions underpinning them, at times with destructive consequences for local contexts.

Many articles in previous issues of *JPD* have similarly sought to illustrate the consequences of such miscommunication in the field when two agencies are working in the same area with minimal coordination or even understanding of each other's objectives or rationale. The Jantzis suggest that practitioners also focus on the need to incorporate conflict analysis in the process of every peacebuilding intervention, especially in development policies, which are often shaped by various contradicting theoretical principles.

As alluded to earlier, a lack of transparency in political processes and/or peacebuilding and development projects can have adverse affects: creating mistrust that undermines a process (Western Sahara); creating contradictory and/or ill-conceived strategies that undermine peacebuilding or actually aggravate the conflict (Rwanda); or serving the status quo by ignoring geopolitical power asymmetries (RSDSC). In the RSDSC case, the heavy reliance on external technical experts, Abitbol argues, is unlikely to produce a sustainable arrangement. Donors and third party interventions ensure a process that goes beyond simple and technical community consultations and substantially engages all stakeholders, especially disadvantaged groups like Palestinians, who have less access to the international resources to facilitate their effective participation. This point again illustrates linkages between the themes. In the RSDSC case, the process is not simply technical but deeply political. In such a setting, donors and third parties must take into consideration the conflict context – the reality of occupation that hinders the equal participation of the Palestinians in this process.

Several authors emphasise that an inclusive intervention design is a key tool in increasing

the transparency in conflict and development contexts. The Jantzis view this as being characteristic of a *transformative* process. Tarabeih, Shmueli and Khamaisi, in seeking to adapt the *sulha* process for environmental conflicts, underscore the importance of this dimension, which has not been adequately embedded within the traditional *sulha* model. Inclusive intervention design should start with systematic and participatory conflict assessment. As Sherriff observes, locally owned and locally led processes of conflict assessment can potentially inspire a wider constituency and build consensus around strategy. International peacebuilding mechanisms are also needed to address the moral exclusion of sub-national conflicts, as Wachira highlights in her review of Murithi's book.

It is likely that the issues of context, politics, and transparency and participation will remain challenges for both international and local actors alike, although our awareness of their importance and the tools to ensure that they support rather than undermine peacebuilding are developing. The fact that they often intersect and overlap should be seen as beneficial, for it means that by addressing any one area, there is potential to positively impact the other two. This should be a focus in new peacebuilding and development projects, and perhaps be underscored in protracted conflict situations, where stagnation over time highlights the need to redouble efforts to ensure that the fundamentals, and better practices, are adhered to.