

## Editorial: The Culture and Context of Peace

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As I write, the Millennium Summit Five year review draft outcome document is being circulated as part of the global preparations and negotiations for the September Heads of State Summit in New York. Emerging from the same process that produced the 2005 Secretary General's Report 'In larger freedom: Towards development, security and human right for all' (<http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/>), it is an important summary of the key interests of the multilateral agenda. Whether or not all the wording of this draft outcome document is accepted on 16 September 2005 by the Heads of State gathered at the United Nations Headquarters, it is an important political statement of what the UN would like to be agreed upon.

In terms of the ongoing debate in *Development* volume 48, the UN Secretariat's proposed 'Outcome Document' underlines how the security agenda 'the multi-faceted and interconnected challenges and threats confronting our world' is dominating the development agenda, and is one that we have to consider as determining the fate of global development policy. The proposed statement underlines:

...more than ever before, we live in a global and interdependent world. No State can stand wholly alone ... collective security depends on effective cooperation against transnational threats. ... we all share responsibility for each others' security ... development, security and human rights form the indispensable foundations for collective security and well-being and that they are the pillars of the United Nations system. ([www.un.org](http://www.un.org))

In contrast President Bush is reported on 18 May 2005 in the *NewYorkTimes* (Stevenson, 2005) as celebrating the role of the US military in 'nation-building' built on 'freedom of speech and assembly, a market economy and the rule of law'. He is quoted as saying that while 'the main purpose of our military is to find and defeat the terrorists overseas', members of the armed forces are also 'undertaking a less visible, but increasingly important task: helping the people of these nations build civil societies from the rubble of oppression'. In Afghanistan, he noted, 'Provincial Reconstruction Teams' were 'helping the Afghan government to fix schools, dig wells, build roads, repair hospitals, and build confidence in the ability of Afghanistan's elected leaders to deliver real change in people's lives'. In Iraq, the First Cavalry Division has begun 'Operation Adam Smith' – setting up local chambers of commerce, providing Iraqi entrepreneurs with small business

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loans and there are plans for a US civilian Active Response Corps to help newly formed governments build institutions, including courts and tax systems. In this way the US is filling 'political vacuums and instability' and helping to 'isolate and defeat the forces of terror, and ensure a peaceful future for our citizens'.

It is difficult to predict the outcome of the Summit, but like the debate over the Millennium Development Goals, many within the international system are fearing that this Summit is one of the last moments to defend the multilateral development agenda and the role of the UN in peacekeeping. The Summit holds out the hope that conflict, poverty and social injustice can be tackled through multilateral institutions coupled with a belief in human rights for all and transnational solidarity. They are well aware they are flying in the face of an aggressive US economic and military agenda, the unbridled acceptance of neo-liberalism and a global North marked by growing insularity, deep pessimism and sense of insecurity.

In this edition of *Development* we explore how the security agenda is intertwined with the development agenda. They are not only two pillars of the multilateral system, along with human rights, but development and peacebuilding are both riddled with growing pessimism and a sense of mistrust in transnational institutions being able to deliver. The edition's title peacebuilding through justice rather than through nation-building or good governance underlines how the optimism (or what Necla Tschirgi, Alejandro Bendaña and Jennifer Pearce in their articles see now as excessive optimism) of the 1992 Agenda of Peace has turned into a much more cynical and wary agenda.

The articles in this journal edition are written by those involved in conflicts and in the politics of post-conflict reconstruction in regions of the global south as well as in the East and Middle East (Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region, Southern Africa and West Africa, Central America, Peru, Colombia, the Caucasus, Central and South East Asia – Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Sri Lanka, Indonesia and the Philippines and the Middle East). They raise many of the issues familiar to

*Development* readers. Given the concerns to be raised at the Millennium Summit, it is critical that the links between the poverty trap and what the World Bank in 1997 labeled the 'conflict trap' (see Pearce) are explored.

As the lead article by Alejandro Bendaña states, external strategic and economic interests overtook the notion of peacebuilding. The liberal peacebuilding of the mid-1990s slipped after 2001 into 'nation-building' following an economic and political blueprint largely designed by the multilateral financial institutions in Washington followed by military and strategic intervention. He thus argues that the peace agenda shifted from one of optimism and faith in a democratic agenda set by the people living through the conflict and negotiating the terms of peace to post-conflict reconstruction of neo-liberal national states at the service of the market and structural adjustment and the expanded strategic reach of the US Government.

Even if UN agencies have tried to tackle the political aspects of peacebuilding alongside the humanitarian agenda, despite rhetoric there has not been, as Pearce calls it, an economics of peace. The World Bank, the IMF and market interests have determined the economic agenda imposed from above and which often runs counter to local democratic expressions. Shalmali Guttal puts it bluntly:

The success and failure of these reconstruction efforts are not assessed by the economic, social, political and physical security of domestic populations, but by the speed and extent with which an affected country complies with externally determined standards for establishing a market economy, good governance and liberal democracy. Conditions for 'national sovereignty' are determined by those who front the cash for reconstruction rather than by democratically elected governments and empowered citizens, and ensure continued control by external powers over the affected country's resources and political direction.

Even civil society, those concerned with worthy concerns such as immediate health needs and emergencies, small arms, child soldiers, landmines, women and violence and, somewhere down the line, development (see John Tirman),

have entered in such a way as to weaken rather than strengthen local capacities. Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake writes pointedly about how the Tsunami relief operations ignore and undermine the local organizations in Sri Lanka, flying in inexperienced volunteers from big overseas charities. She argues this reflected the same logic as post-conflict reconstruction aid that is spent on 'administrative charges, salaries and maintenance and protection of internationals whose lives appear to be more highly valued than the locals that they are supposed to protect and develop'. She labels this an 'institutionalized apartheid' and asks whether 'the peace dividend' will become available to those marginal communities and social groups that were most brutalized in the conflict? Rama Mani adds: 'Even if efforts to restore justice seem to threaten negative peace in the short-term, for example by provoking the military or economic elite, they must be undertaken, albeit with caution, to consolidate positive peace and avert a relapse into hostilities further down the road'.

The articles reflect a strong political agenda and in discussing frankly the power politics underlying the situation they bring out the counterdiscourse emerging peace building from below based on the reality of how it is local communities and their representatives that can maintain a 'sustainable peace'. They are deeply worried about an interventionist political agenda that is building mistrust rather than peace. Even if many point to how the postconflict period opens up possibilities for change, too often local people are not engaged as partners but rather are expected to be integrated into the hegemonic mainstream defined from the top. (see Andy Higginbottom, Rajasingham-Senanayake, Pearce, Bendaña and Guttal). In her discussion on the different forms of justice in postconflict situations, Mani argues that international peacebuilders have imposed rather than proposed and facilitated solutions. She, like others such as Michael Karadjis writing about Kosovo, asks for a 'social compact' forged between all stakeholders in postconflict societies: civilians and combatants, citizens and governments, international peacebuilders and national recipients. Throughout the edition the resounding questions

are: whose agenda, whose democracy and whose peace?

From very different conflict situations and perspectives the authors show how external intervention is not building a culture of peace. They, like those disillusioned with the development agenda and the attempts to end poverty that contributed to *Development* 48.2, question if UN agencies and civil societies entering the peace building process reflect too much the western procedures of the organizations and states from which they mainly come. As Bendaña states:

Multilateral policies today are clearly contaminated and conditioned by Washington's war on terrorism on one side and the longstanding ideological partiality to the neo-liberal economic development model. Either is sufficient to undercut efforts to build new forms of global political legitimacy. In this context state-building translates into little more than imposing new political leaders loyal to military victors and to the neo-liberal economic development model. Genuine self-determination or the space to pursue it is ruled out.

He is joined by Mark Duffield who observes:

The will to govern that mobilizes aid policy is continually repulsed and frustrated by the reflexive or actual development that it encounters in the world's conflict zones. The outcome is a history of uncertainty, equivocation and policy setback... While promising something different, reinvention leaves underlying assumptions and relations unchanged. It also leads to a deepening normalization of the violence around us.

The articles taken as a whole reveal how the different players have different interests: from ordinary people seeking to survive and rebuild their society, to military and economic elites seeking to protect their interests and power, to international civil society UN agencies making a professional living to the naked interests of foreign economic and political powers. The playing field is hugely uneven; what is at stake is survival for some, but for those making the rules, power and access to resources, opportunities to invest, economic interests, open new markets and new profits, which have little if anything to do with how people living

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in these countries would rebuild their lives if given the political and economic space, resources, and autonomy to do so.

The underside of this fraught and complex political agenda is community breakdown, trauma, violence, fragmenting sense of identity, loss of livelihoods and cultural continuity. These losses are played out into the wider world through a global mass media that thrives on simple images of 'good and evil', 'us and them', and delights in horrific images of victims in need of external aid of all sorts, creating a vicious cycle that justifies outside intervention rather than of empowerment and self-determination.

The stories the media do not tell, of the work of the local women and men, particularly the women who keep the community together in the absence of men, fighting for survival, are told partially in this journal (see Sanam Naraghi-Anderlini, Dianne Rocheleau and Valentine Moghadam) although the story is also about the violence experienced by women, their misrepresentation in the justice process, and their silencing in the peace process. They point to the importance of recognizing women's work in holding communities together and for support with health centres, trauma counseling and opening up political spaces to women. The Security Council Resolution 1325 on 'women peace and security' is the institutional expression of women's struggle in building sustainable peace based on more equitable distribution of political, social or economic power among women and men.

As Jos van Gennip, Tirman and Duffield point out, the developing community needs to dialogue

with those determining the security agenda, and be far more accountable to the people of the countries involved, and *cognoscenti* of the politics determining both the development, security and UN agenda. Otherwise the proposal by the UN Secretary General of a Peacebuilding Commission to provide sustained international attention and support to countries in the transition from post-conflict situations to recovery and long-term development will fail.

The journal concludes with an open letter to Christina Rocca, US Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs, by a leading human rights activist and Mathura P. Shrestha, in hiding in his own country since February 2005. The Nepali King Gyanendra is waging a war against the Maoist insurgency and also against the seven democratic parties. Since February many of their leaders have been arrested, or are in hiding in India. The people are out on the streets in protest, which offers hope for the democratic parties; however, the fear for many is that Nepal will inevitably succumb to outside intervention, US military aid to defeat the Maoists, and set up fake guided democracy by the King no doubt with the US military corps helpfully filling in the 'political vacuum and instability'. The only way intervention can help as Shrestha argues is to respect democracy and human rights as the first step to peacebuilding. Whether the results of the September Summit can help Nepal, and other so called 'failed states', as the Cairo and Beijing agreements did for Nepali women's reproductive health and rights as Aruna Uprety illustrates in her contribution to this issue, remains to be seen.

### References

Stevenson, Richard W. (2005) 'Bush Says Patience Is Needed as Nations Build a Democracy', *New York Times*, 19 May.