

Craig Zelizer(Ed.)

Integrated Peacebuilding: Innovative Approaches to Transforming Conflict
(Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2013, 336pp.)

Craig Zelizer of the Conflict Resolution Program of Georgetown University, Washington DC, and his colleagues have written a very useful book with extensive bibliographies and website addresses of organizations dealing with conflict resolution. As he points out, peacebuilding as a term “*originally referred to a distinct set of activities that took place at the end of a conflict in order to foster a more stable peace largely through reconciliation efforts and, to some degree, rebuilding (or creating) functioning institutions that society would see as legitimate. As the scope of the peacebuilding field grew, the term included a much broader set of processes that could take place at any stage of a conflict.*”

The book is largely devoted to multi-track peacebuilding techniques. In the background is the concept of “integrated” or “coordinated” or “holistic” approaches – what is called when there is a functioning government “public administration”. The idea is that there should be some relationship among education, employment, housing, health, transportation, the judicial system, tax collection and financial policy. But integration of efforts does not always work well, even with a functioning government with ministers who have regular meetings among themselves. France, where I live, has an education system which does not adequately train people for existing jobs or with the skills for individual job creation. Housing-transportation-health-crime control are not necessarily well integrated despite trained people in the civil service and political leaders who probably try their best. Government planning for the overall economy which existed in the 1946-1960 period and whose mechanisms had been transferred to French-speak Africa has largely disappeared.

When there is no functioning government or where the government is weak or corrupt, who is to coordinate, to integrate efforts? There have been proposals for a sort of “UN trusteeship” for “failed States” where the UN Development Programme might be a substitute government. Yet the idea has never really taken off because no matter how badly a State has failed, some government leaders think that they are still in charge and are unwilling to give up “national sovereignty”. We also have some examples of “one-State trusteeship” – the USA in Iraq and Afghanistan. Although there are Americans trained in public administration, the results of the US-led efforts cannot be called successful peacebuilding.

If integration cannot be done by a national government, by UN or other multilateral efforts or by a single government establishing a viceroy, can integrated peacebuilding be done by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) cooperating among themselves?

Much of the book is addressed to the ways that NGOs might integrate their efforts when government structures are not functioning. Such integrative efforts are not easy, in part as there is rarely one NGO in charge but a number of NGOs at work, each one of which considers itself as independent and “sovereign”. When I was in Cambodia in 1990 before the Vietnamese troops had left and before the UN moved in massively after the 1992 Paris accords, the NGO representatives and the two UN agencies present – Refugees and UNICEF – would meet on

Friday afternoon to compare notes, to exchange what information each had heard and to discuss “what might happen next”. Relations among the participants were good, but that was hardly “national planning.”

The UN operation in Cambodia after 1992 was one of the most complex UN efforts as State structures and much of civil society had been destroyed by the Khmer Rouge of Pol Pot. However, there was a “national government” largely put in place by the Vietnamese. This national government – largely with the same people – is still in place, but I would not say that “integrated peacebuilding” was the heritage of the UN effort.

As the authors point out, ideally, it would be good to have cooperation among all those working for conflict resolution: a national government, the UN system, NGOs. All sectors of the society should be called upon to contribute. Realistically, there has to be some mid-point between a checklist of groups that should be involved – women, youth, minorities, the military, the churches, the farmers, the trade unions, the informal economic sector, the foreign businesses and a highly structured national plan which cannot be put into practice.

Approaches and techniques need to be appropriate to the settings in which they are to be used. The book is rich with the descriptions of techniques. However, there are nearly no country examples given. Thus, it is useful to look at the five possible settings for peacebuilding efforts.

- 1) States where national conflict resolution measures work reasonably well and where there is a functioning government. Here the need is to encourage the government and national NGOs to be interested also in tension areas elsewhere. Switzerland would be an example of such a State.
- 2) States or areas where there are tensions but not open armed conflict. There has been armed violence in the memory of most of the leadership. There is a functioning government but with real weaknesses. Northern Cameroon would be an example. There is already some spillover impact from the Boko Haram conflict in Northern Nigeria, and many of the same conditions of economic stagnation as in Northern Nigeria exist. There was armed violence in the 1958-1960 lead up to Independence in the Cameroon so that we know that armed violence is a possibility. However the late 1950s violence was in another part of the country.
- 3) States where there is ongoing armed violence and where the government does not have effective control of parts of the country. The government is weak or ineffective in the parts of the country it does control. There are no effective peace negotiations going on. Iraq-Syria-ISIS – Kurds would be an example of this situation.
- 4) States where there is sporadic armed conflict with a lack of serious negotiations among participants. There is at a practical level no government administration. Somalia and the Central African Republic would be examples here.

- 5) States in “post-conflict” mode as the term “peacebuilding” is used in the UN's Peacebuilding Commission. Peace is fragile. The basic social structures have not been positively modified since the end of the armed conflict. Thus violence could break out again. Liberia and Burundi would be examples here.

Each situation requires a mix of appropriate techniques, skills and cooperation among a host of actors. As the authors point out *“Peacebuilding entails wide-ranging efforts to establish sustainable peace by addressing root causes of conflict through dialogue, institution-building, political and economic transformation, reconciliation, and empowering those who work on the ground. Peacebuilding also engages all actors working toward concrete structural transformations for peace and to prevent a relapse into conflict.”*

Each conflict situation requires a range of skills. Peace makers must use creativity and curiosity to identify and address the obstacles. There is no “one size fits all” possibility but certain skills such as strong communication skills are nearly always needed. There an an increasing number of university-level conflict resolution courses and an expanding number of books to help the student. Many are listed in the bibliography, but nearly all the books are by US and UK authors. There is a need for the presentation of other cultural approaches, but Craig Zelizer has given us a good overview of the field as it is now practiced.

Rene Wadlow



Drawing: Cecile WADLOW