

Pacification or Peacebuilding? Defence, Foreign Policy and Conflict Transformation

This is an unusual issue of the Review, being a record of an informal workshop, rather than a seminar. There was no paper circulated in advance and there were several, informal opening presentations. The first, by Diana Francis, was given on paper, since her voice was nearly gone. All others were delivered orally. In order to retain their immediacy, we have used direct rather than indirect speech in reporting them. However, they are not literal transcriptions of the talks.

In the discussion that followed the presentations several themes emerged and it is summarised under those headings.

Presentations

Presentation by Diana Francis

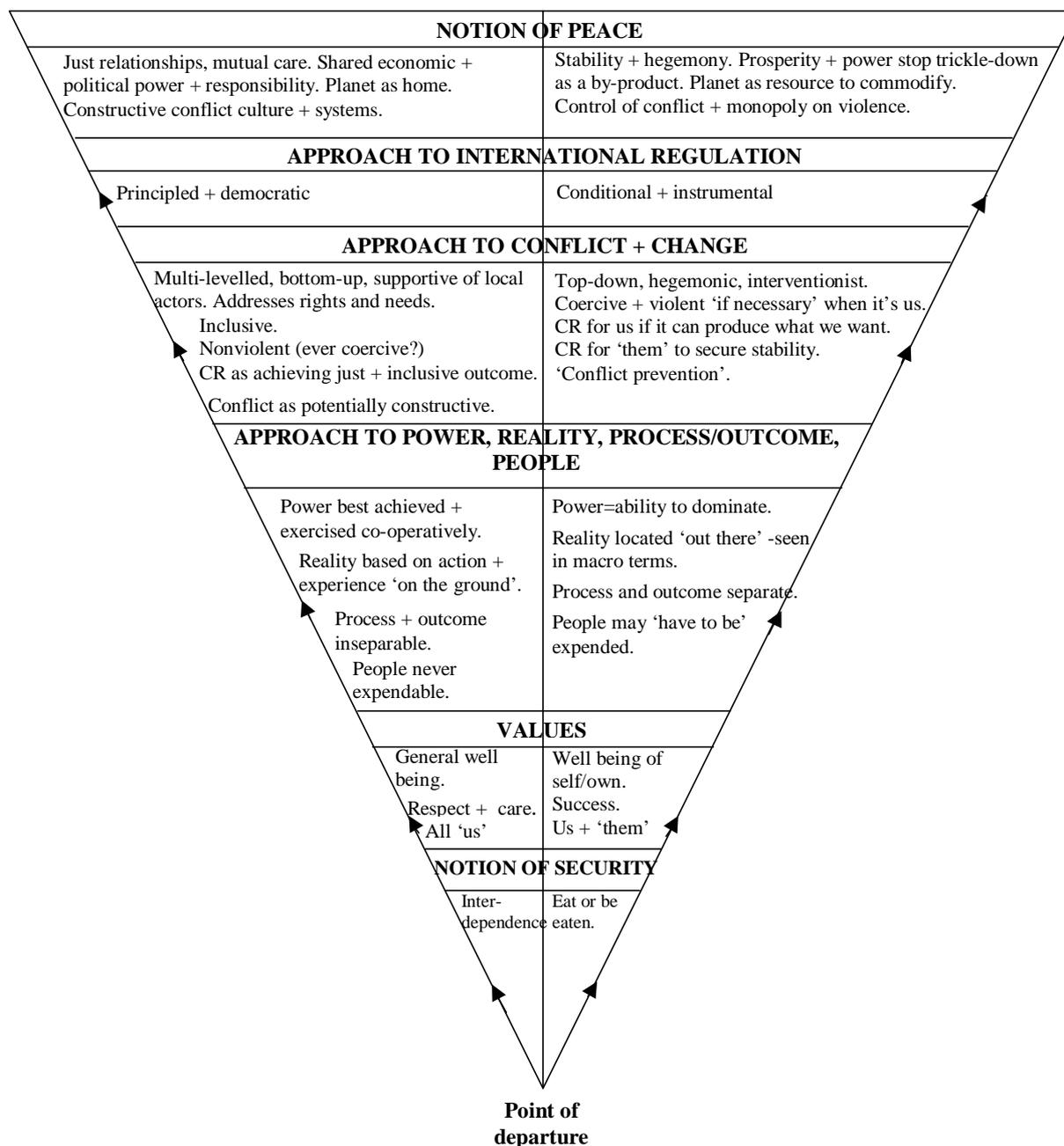
Diana presented the diagram printed overleaf and circulated the notes which follow:

1. I see pacification and peacebuilding as emanating from two world views and approaches to human security. They are not in reality pure forms and do not correspond with two sets of people. Different institutions or people will tend more to one than the other and most will mix them.
2. I believe they bear a relationship to gender and to constructions of masculinity on the one hand and femininity on the other. That does not mean they correspond with men and women.
3. On the whole, for all this disclaiming, as regards the governmental and intergovernmental bodies with which Britain is associated, I see the MoD as related closely to Pacification, DfID more to Peacebuilding, the FCO likewise, and the PM's office varying according to the tendency of the PM! The UN and the OSCE were both established to contribute to security through co-operation and can be seen as belonging mainly to the peacebuilding tendency.
4. The recently published study on global security attributes considerable success to international peacebuilding activities, intergovernmental and nongovernmental, in reducing the toll of armed conflict. But so much seems to be going in the other direction, on a massive scale.
5. Societies which may appear to be internally democratic and peaceful (in some respects if not all) may be the least democratic and peaceful – the most prone to pacification – in their external relations.
6. Those who are engaged in pacification often wear peacebuilders' clothes.

TWO WORLD VIEWS:

Peacebuilding

Pacification



7. Although coercion presents no problem on the pacification side, its place in nonviolent action is disputed and arguably finds its most appropriate and effective form in nonco-operation.
8. Both pacification and peacebuilding are confronted with the dilemma of uncontrollable violence.
9. The pivotal notion and structure of the state as the unit of monopoly of interest and violence is problematic for peacebuilding.
10. The separation of outcome from process that is favoured in the pacification paradigm is bound to present problems for those engaged in peacebuilding.

11. The all-embracing compass of peace suggests that although 'peacebuilding' in the conflict transformation field has the particular focus suggested in the interim levels of the 'fan' there should really be a story line also about economics, the environment, human rights and political participation: action and systems. This suggests that working for radical change is essential if we are ever to get beyond fire-fighting; by the same token it reinforces the need for 'constructive conflict'. At the same time, it is clear that a degree of stability is needed for lives to be lived and the show to be kept on the road. 'Building' is therefore an important but problematic word.
12. Both nonviolent and military approaches to security are challenged by situations in which they fail to find any effective response to disastrous violence. (Think of Oliver Ramsbotham's hour glass, where the tight bit represents all-out violence.)
13. Although coercion is not violence, it sits uneasily with Conflict Resolution, though it is a recognised element in Nonviolence. The challenge is to find effective ways of acting (within human limits) within situations dominated by the pacification model while not becoming part of it and perpetuating it – rather leading away from it.

PS I found the following in a piece I wrote for The CCTS Review, on Evaluation. It doesn't fit the form of the notes I have written but it is relevant to notions of peace so I quote it here:

While we were in Sarajevo, one of our team met an old man in a meeting who came back to see her later on his own, to tell his own story and press his concern. He had been 'somebody' in his younger life – had worked for the government in Africa and elsewhere, owned a nice apartment and was widely known and respected. Then in the war he had been forced to flee. When he returned, he found his flat occupied by strangers. They would not even allow him to collect his personal papers, let alone his other possessions. He was now without property or status, floating on the edge of a society of which he had once been an integral and respected part. He argued that if human rights were important to peace, then the plight of old people like him was important and should receive concerted attention.

In any general and generous view of peace and stability, this man matters. The sad truth is that at the strategic level, in terms of Peace and Stability with capital letters, his plight is unimportant. It is a truism that young people 'are the future'. Top politicians or the economically powerful are seen as important because they are the ones who wield power on the large scale. An old man without power is, by definition, unimportant. Many of the refugees who have not been able to integrate themselves into new contexts or to return to their original homes are not 'important' people, except in so far as they provide grist for the political mill or can be manipulated to fuel resentment. Yet I would argue that the foundations of peace are laid in respect for the weak and that, without that respect, what I want to call peace cannot exist. Without the values that would give such members of society a dignified place within it, the only stability that can be achieved is the stability of control – a contradiction in terms. But in the short term, which must be secured if the long term is to be reached, do there have to be other priorities? That would be hard to accept, and maybe we should resist the idea that a choice has to – or can – be made. Can peace exist within a society without compassion at the individual level?

Presentation by Celia McKeon

I am particularly interested in the place where pacification and peacebuilding meet. Many peace processes provide examples of this. At one end of the spectrum you have the negotiations that led to the Dayton Agreement, where coercive military action forced the parties to a negotiating table dominated by power-backed mediation. At the other end of the spectrum, you have peace processes characterized by internal dialogue and negotiations, or local civilian-led talks. Most frequently these different approaches and activities overlap towards the middle of the spectrum.

What makes many peacebuilding practitioners uncomfortable is that we are small players, and that the dominant paradigm of pacification appears overwhelming. It is hard to find space in which to operate without real concern at being co-opted or instrumentalised, as part of a process with very different goals.

This leads me to pose three questions:

1. To what extent does peacebuilding rely on or need the hard instruments from the pacification toolbox in order to be viable?

The tools of pacification range from financial and legal sanctions through to the deployment of peacekeeping forces to full scale military operations. Many people argue that these measures are sometimes necessary to create the conditions to end overt violence – they can restrain the violence, remove the financial or logistical ability of actors to commit atrocities, or act as leverage to bring parties to the negotiating table.

But such coercive methods can be deeply problematic, especially as they are mostly deployed by a state-centric international system which tends to privilege the dominant state party in a conflict, rather than any non-state party or opposition. They are also inconsistently applied.

Over the previous year in Conciliation Resources' Accord programme, we have been looking at the engagement of armed groups in peace processes, and particularly at how some state-centric measures affect their ability to engage in negotiations. In particular, the use of proscription against armed groups is essentially about trying to punish bad behaviour in the hope that this will change the dynamics of the violence. Paradoxically, what has occurred in a number of contexts is that, far from providing an incentive to the groups to engage in a political process, it has created legal and practical obstacles to it. The proscription of the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) in Sri Lanka is a case in point.

The dilemma facing Conciliation Resources, and similar bodies trying to influence these situations, is whether to focus its efforts on trying to improve tools of coercion in the pacification toolbox, so that they do not have such a negative impact on the peace process, or to work to develop alternative options from within a peacebuilding paradigm.

2. Where do international conventions – human rights and international humanitarian law – fit in on the pacification to peacebuilding spectrum?

Many of the conventions signed over the last 40 years support a principled approach to peacebuilding – like the Covenant on Civil and Political rights that provided the framework for political participation in decision-making, and UN resolution 1325 on women's participation in peacebuilding. Unfortunately, however, they are often ignored, or inconsistently applied. Some, indeed, have been deliberately undermined in the conduct of peace processes. Recent developments, such as the first indictments of the International Criminal Court, are also playing out in perhaps unintended ways. The indictments issued against the leadership of the Lord's Resistance Army in northern Uganda are to be welcomed for their intent to hold the perpetrators of atrocities to account. However, it is arguable that they act simultaneously to dissuade the LRA leadership from engaging in peace talks and coming out of the bush. So far, it appears that the indictments have not acted to restrain the LRA leadership from committing atrocities; and undermined their already fragile interest in the prospect of a negotiated solution. For the people of northern Uganda, the war continues.

In light of these challenges, it seems that there is far greater scope and need for joint analysis by peacebuilding and human rights agencies, in order to work through some of the challenges of complementarity in particular and in general, and identify approaches which can uphold the twin principles of ending war and promoting human rights.

3 The problem of scale: does the comparatively tiny scale of non-state peacebuilding activities condemn us to work forever in the shadow of pacification?

The government-led Utstein review of peacebuilding conducted a couple of years ago identified a "strategic deficit" in the connections between what are often micro level peacebuilding activities and the big macro political picture. Many of us aspire to connect the micro and macro levels, but given the lack of resources and the level of vulnerability of this work, how realistic is that aspiration? And, in moving from a micro to a macro level, do institutionalized ideas, or mass movements, take on attributes associated with a pacification paradigm?

I hope the brief articulation of these three questions indicates some of the strategic challenges and dilemmas facing our field. One factor that I find it important to keep in mind is the human dimension of all these issues. Lederach in his recent work explored how personal shifts can affect the potential for macro change. Pacification and peacebuilding approaches are ultimately driven by people, whatever their institutional setting. The possibility for human connections that shift attitudes and policies remains important, particularly when it takes place at the centre of Diana's fan diagram, at the meeting point of different tendencies.

Presentation by Alan Pleydell

Diana's diagram is about alternative – and maybe connected – attitudes to human security. We are dealing here with huge forces of government and international coalitions. She remarked in her notes on how soldiers see themselves when they are trying to engage in peacebuilding operations. Soldiers as human beings may well be decent people with good intentions. But, like us, they are embedded in highly structured forces which are much larger than themselves. These forces, which we feel we are partly working with and partly struggling against, are actually rather incoherent.

Underlying the different attitudes to human security are different conceptions of democracy. There is general agreement about the fundamentals of the paradigm, namely that it concerns human autonomy in one form or another. But is democracy to be understood as the same thing as collectively articulated control in different localities of the world which are relatively autonomous?

Ever since the Berlin Wall came down there has been a triumphant victor that regards itself as having the right to democratize the world. Soviet communism has disappeared, and certainly that was a very dangerous and anti-human system that exercised control in undemocratic ways and was responsible for the violent deaths of millions of people. Now there is a return to the notion of making the world safe for democracy, but with democracy defined in a semi-articulate way as having to do with world integration, globalisation, and markets. This conception of democracy is powerful, but also totally instrumental. There is an assumption that we, the powerful, know what democracy is, and that we are democratic because our governments have been elected. This, we feel, entitles us to do what we want to secure democracy where it exists, and to advance it where it is judged not to exist.

Where then does local autonomy fit into the paradigm of control? Local autonomy in much of the world means control by thugs and warlords. That fact feeds, pragmatically, the conception that international intervention – pacification – is legitimate. If a country is ruled by thugs, what else can one do but go in and put things right? Having done that, our declared intention is to withdraw – except that we then discover that there are all sorts of problems and dilemmas about doing so.

At the heart of the problem, then, is the assumption that we, the powerful countries, know what democracy is, and that this entitles us to intervene without ever re-examining the coherence of our own concept of democracy. A dialogue is needed about the content of democracy and how far control, or even coercion, may be legitimate in certain circumstances, without assuming that the powerful nations know best and are entitled to do whatever they think fit.

Presentation by Michael Hammer

Many of the terms the three speakers have introduced in their presentations are reflected in the work that CR's partners are doing in West Africa. I want to emphasise that the work of actually building peace is being done, and needs to be done, by Sierra Leoneans, Liberians, Guineans and Ivorians themselves. I hope it will never be the case that someone like me comes into a country to build the peace for the people there and then moves away again, with the house probably falling down again afterwards. Building peace in West Africa is a huge task, and the potential for conflict and violent conflict remains very high in all affected societies.

The work CR is supporting in West Africa raises questions about the boundary between peacebuilding and policing, which also reflects the topic we were looking at before: the tension between pacification and peace building. The word 'police' derives from the Greek *polis*, which has to do with the

community and the interplay of forces within it. In my view there is frequently a very limited perspective on what policing consists of, and it is mostly associated with the use of coercive force. However, it is not necessarily about a baton being applied against people who are transgressing but, for me, it is as much about relationships. When we encourage and support peacebuilding work, how do we define what it consists of? Where do its boundaries lie, and what are the overlaps with what people might call policing, in the sense of regulating power relationships within the community in a way that is productive and nonviolent?

In West Africa, conflicts were and are regionally interlinked, often rooted in decades of exploitation and discrimination, exacerbated by the fact that, as part of the dynamics of war economies, large sections of society are involved in the exploitative circuits of arms trade and illicit trade in resources, mostly for want of alternatives but also because many people are actively recruited as forced labour by the warring factions. There have been massive interventions in the form of peacekeeping operations, by the United Nations and also by Nigeria and Britain. We should not close our eyes to the fact that what is labelled peacekeeping very often involves military operations, and sometimes the use of mercenaries.

CR supports what is called 'peace monitoring' in communities, though this term reflects only part of the activity. A better description of what is actually going on would be community based conflict identification, mediation and, in some cases, adjudication. Essentially, we are talking about a volunteer-based group of people, who co-ordinate their efforts, going round neighbourhoods in a rural and urban setting, identifying where conflicts are happening, and having the approach that no conflict is too small for their attention. In a context where there is discrimination, where institutions are weak and arms are plentiful, something happening in a domestic setting could quickly get out of hand and result in armed violence. The peace monitors of the Bo Peace and Reconciliation Movement (BPRM), or the Sulima Fishing Community Development Project (SFCDP), which are community based organisations or umbrella groups, go round to get a feel of what is happening in the neighbourhood. And, with the consent of the community, they approach and engage with the people involved in conflicts – not only conflicts that have already become violent, but also ones that are below that threshold. The starting point of regarding nothing as too small is very important for the effectiveness of this work, and for the acknowledgement that the process receives from local people.

When CR talks to its local partners, their responses show that increasingly there is a pattern to the way they approached things. This is an important factor in the progress they have made over the last eight years. For instance with the Bo Peace and Reconciliation Movement, something approaching a system is emerging – from good practice rather than from someone having an idea which is then applied across the board. In principle it entails, after the identification of a conflict, sending in a group of people who are considered to be peers of those who are involved in the conflict. If you are working on what appears to be a domestic conflict, you try to ensure that you bring in a woman and a man of an appropriate age, people who might have links through doing the same kind of work, or through belonging to the same religious community – not coming in with an external institution or the big, respected community leader, to deal with, say, a poor woman who is having a problem with her husband. You try to bring in people at peer level, and not just one individual but, where possible, a group of two or three people, so that those you are meeting can choose the person with whom they want to build up this link of confidence. And one of the good things, but also a challenge for the future, is that women and younger people, 20, 18, even 16 year-olds, are more and more taking on the role of peace monitors. It means young people are involved in the process, rather than feeling that this again is a kind of generational power play.

Once relationships have been established with the different parties, the problem is discussed in ever larger groups, until it reaches a critical threshold and becomes a public process, but in this case one where people talk not about their grievances but about their ability to come together. And that tipping point is one that in each individual process has to be determined by the peace monitors. So you try to keep matters in the smaller group until this point is reached, then with the consent of the group, you move into the wider public arena. It is important in this context to recognise that many oral societies in Africa do not work on the basis of written contracts, but of agreements made publicly, involving witnesses from the wider community.

Now even political leaders are recognizing the possibilities of this approach. For instance, over the last two and half years, BPRM has been asked to mediate in conflicts over chieftaincy positions, including that of a paramount chief, and in land conflicts involving vast resources. Political actors who want to sort out who has the right to put up a candidate for the chieftainship position, and at what point they should go public about doing so, also seek advice and help. There is still a political contest, but one that should result not in confrontation but in a joint solution. So the system that worked successfully at the small scale has proved useful also at this larger level, where the stakes are often higher.

There is clearly a need for impartial groups in society. That is the role the peace monitors are playing. The composition of the teams is an important factor in their success because it enables them to reach across gender, age and economic divides. It is not a case of the rich mediating in conflicts between poor people, or solely men mediating in conflicts between men and women, or older people in conflicts among the youth.

How does this approach interface with the re-emerging role of the state in post-war societies? The police are coming back into communities where they have been absent for ten years and, before that, for a period of forty years, and did not have any legitimacy or credibility. There is a new justice system again. The traditional authorities and the court system is changing, and offering its services again – and there are political parties putting themselves up for election on a regular basis at local and national levels.

The big question is – what does policing mean here, and how does this fit with community peace monitoring? Is the work CR is supporting a form of policing, and, if so, should there be limits on what the peace monitors undertake? Should people intervene, for example, in criminal cases? Sometimes the police do not want the monitors to intervene because they are potentially destroying evidence, perverting the course of justice, covering up crimes and so forth. This is true in some cases. I am not very confident that the whole system is working in the way that it should – for instance in relation to accountability in rape cases. There are questions also about the limits to the mediation approach in the political process. With mediation at the chieftaincy level there is still a strong link to the community. But could BPRM be asked at some stage to mediate between two candidates of the same political party? Or should they mediate in a conflict between the leaders of rival political parties where there have been violent clashes between supporters?

CR's big task for the future is to help clarify where the interface lies between peace monitoring, the work we have been supporting, and the role of the re-emerging state institutions, so that there is co-operation and complementarity rather than rivalry. If this were clearer, people would know whom to go to for which issues. The legitimacy of the state in carrying out certain functions would also be strengthened, including on the issue of the use of coercive force, and who is entitled to apply it, and how this role interlinks with the role of other, new actors in the scene of policing, that is negotiating and regulating conflict-prone power relationships in a community or society.

The transformation of societies in West Africa towards a greater pluralism of ideas and interests has been a visible and accelerating trend for some decades. Young people challenge the dominating interests of authority: of traditional authorities, the state and established circuits of social and economic redistribution; new political movements challenge domination by the few big parties and their figureheads. This is also strongly felt at community level and in many ways has been thrown into relief by the wars.

I would probably say it is fine and even necessary to challenge the monopoly of the state on representing interests in a society, but I am not sure whether the challenge to its monopoly of violence is to be encouraged. That is exactly what happened in West Africa. Many people thought that diversification of interests also legitimised diversification in the use of violence, and the result was a series of disastrous wars.

Presentation by Paul Clifford

I will draw on my experience of working in the Middle East, Mindanao and Sierra Leone. These are hugely complex conflict situations, to which it is impossible to do justice in a short talk. What I am presenting is a personal analysis and personal view, in which I will try to pick out some of the pacification and peacebuilding elements in the various processes in these countries.

In Israel and Palestine, the Israeli government, with the backing of the US and others, is clearly attempting to pacify the Palestinians. There is little evidence at government level of any genuine attempt at peacebuilding. It is about attempting to pacify by superior military and economic power. Sharon was very quick, after 9/11, to categorize the Palestinian struggle as part of a global terrorist threat to Western democracies. With US backing, Israel is attempting to put the conflict into that frame, rather than the one in which the Palestinians see it, as a fight for justice and their rights to a state.

The civil society groups I work with in both societies do not believe that violence will ever resolve the problem. Not surprisingly, the Palestinian groups are more organised than the Israeli ones, much clearer about what they are trying to do – as is often the case with oppressed groups. The Israeli groups are younger, in terms of their origin and development, and are attempting to find their own identity and their own place in this field. Both groups are trying, within their own societies, to promote the notion of a just peace, in the terms they see it.

Michael made an important point when he said the role of an outsider is not to make peace for parties in a violent conflict but to provide support, when it is requested by the people within the societies working to bring about peaceful change. However, the issue is not simply about what we want to do as practitioners, but about what it is possible to get funding for. Some funders expect to see peace break out in the course of the three-year project they are funding. You attempt to say to them that maybe that is not a realistic time scale.

Another popular notion amongst funders is that the way to go about ending the violence is by bringing together the two sides in a conflict. I and my colleagues have been strongly resisting that notion, in relation to the work in Israel and Palestine, because what the people on the ground say to us is that, while the Palestinians are ready for a dialogue with their Israeli counterparts, the Israeli groups are not yet ready for it. It would not be right to say to the Israelis that they have to go and talk to the Palestinians. At the moment we are working separately with the two groups. If at some time in the future they both express the desire to come together, this can be facilitated.

An issue that arose in all the three places in which I was working was whether the groups themselves believe that violence could ever get them what they want. When work began with the Palestinian group, it was clear that some of them thought violence could be part of the answer. But in the process of looking at the problem they have changed their minds and now believe that change has to be achieved by nonviolent means.

In Mindanao, the Philippines government also seized the opportunity provided by 9/11, to get funding from the US for what they describe as the fight against the terrorists infiltrating from Indonesia. The Philippines government is receiving a lot of US support, to assist its efforts to defeat and pacify the groups which hope to set up an Islamic state in Mindanao. However, there is widespread corruption within the Philippines' government and, because the so-called war on terror is deemed more important than anything else, the US turns a blind eye to it. Unless it is dealt with, there will never be a just peace.

The conflict I am engaged with in Mindanao is between one of the revolutionary communist groups, the Revolutionary Workers Party of Mindanao (RPM-M) and the government. This has been going on for over thirty years, and what is particularly interesting is that the RPM-M is looking for a solution based not only on politics but also on community development. They want to improve the situation of some of the poorest communities in Mindanao and ensure that they are provided with basic services. But it should not have taken a revolutionary war to get a government to meet its basic obligations to its citizens. The RPM-M are attempting to change the situation from the ground upwards, working

with communities and trying to help them to prioritise what they see as the most important development issues. That process has been going on for some time. At the macro level, the government is pursuing contradictory policies; it is attempting to pacify and defeat some of the groups, while simultaneously engaging in discussion with the RPM-M, as part of a community peacebuilding process.

My recent work in Sierra Leone was with the Red Cross. Sierra Leone is one of the few places where it is a bonus to be able to say you are British, despite the fact that we were the colonial masters for many years. People for the most part are grateful to Britain for sending in its forces and driving out the RUF. If a country is faced with a guerrilla army committing all sorts of atrocities, should that be allowed to continue for years on end? Or should an armed force be sent in to bring the slaughter to an end?

During my last visit I was working on a project to rehabilitate former child soldiers, and young girls who had been taken and used as sex slaves by the rebel forces. The aim of the work is to help them to come to terms with their experiences, to give them a basic education, and to teach them a trade so that they can earn their own living. Peacebuilding, in the long term, is not simply about bringing armed conflicts to an end. A large part of the problem in Sierra Leone is due to the fact that the youth felt completely disengaged from society and had no place in it. The government now realises, however belatedly, that unless you integrate your young people into the society, they are liable to join the next armed group that comes along, with the result that the cycle of violence begins again.

Discussion

The interface between Pacification and Peacebuilding

There was broad agreement that the interface between pacification and peacebuilding was a crucial area where peace practitioners had to engage and work, however difficult that might be. It would be a kind of luxury to refuse to engage. One speaker said that neither the pacification nor the peacebuilding paradigm offered all the solutions, and those working within one paradigm were tending to introduce some of the techniques and strategies of the other. The MOD, for example in some of the operational aspects of their deployment, were thinking of so-called 'softer' strategies. The risk for practitioners was co-option, but if you did not take that risk, and the opportunity to do the dialogue-related work which the government were putting out to tender, the armed forces would undertake it within their own paradigm.

It was pointed out that people engaged in humanitarian work faced similar dilemmas. They could see the advantages of receiving assistance from the military, but felt uneasy about it. For instance, in Aceh, after the Tsumani, there were debates about the Indonesian military delivering humanitarian aid. The military had logistical capabilities which were important, but their involvement gave the aid effort a certain Khaki coloration.

One speaker expressed concern that we might have created a divide in which governments did pacification, and ordinary people did peacebuilding. The US/UK approach now seemed to be that they would go in and do the pacification, and then think about peacebuilding. In the workshop we were posing the question in terms of where these two approaches met, whereas they were seeing pacification and peacebuilding as sequential, as if you had to do one before you did the other. Some contributors, however, thought that this might in fact be the case in some situations, where it was necessary to put an end to the indiscriminate killing before peacebuilding could begin.

Sticks and carrots

Should carrots be used rather than sticks, where a state was abusing its citizens or otherwise grossly offending accepted norms of behaviour? If the stick implied military intervention, that, in the view of some participants, was ethically questionable because of the loss of life, including civilian life, it entailed. But carrots were morally ambiguous, too, in that they could be seen as a reward for violent

behaviour. In the case Saddam Hussein, for years Western governments had expressed their disapproval of him – while at the same time arming him. Still, if there were big international incentives for states to behave democratically, that seemed at least as likely to succeed as going round attacking people. That was not a democratic way of doing things and it was hard to believe it could succeed in the long run.

It was pointed out that carrots could also be a form of pacification. NGOs in Kosovo had learnt to speak the approved international language of values and human rights, and were rewarded with all sorts of carrots. Kosovo was an extreme example of international imposition, as it was a small territory which had received more money and more trainers per head of population than anywhere else. The most solidly grounded groups in Kosovo were those that were largely self-reliant and were setting their own agenda.

The community peacebuilding work with ‘peace monitors’ that Michael Hammer had described had striking similarities with the campaign in Kosovo between 13 and 15 years ago to reconcile blood feuds. At the time about 15,000 people were confined to their homes to avoid being killed in the blood feud system, and a group of students decided to address the issue. They turned to various people for help and, in the end, with the help of a Catholic priest and a folklorist who had a deep knowledge of the culture, began going round the villages – always in a group, as in Michael’s example. Initially, the young people would go in to investigate the situation, and then bring in the elders when more serious persuading was needed. The young people would go to the kitchens and talk with the women and hear their side of the story, whilst the elderly men would spend time with the family decision-makers. The process would conclude with a public ceremony. All this took place in face of harassment by the Serbian police and without any external funding, and it resulted in the reconciling of 2,000 blood feuds in a two year campaign. Unfortunately, the blood feud had now returned to Kosovo and Albania, though in a different form. It was not ritualised any more; you could just pay a gangster to do the killing.

Dilemmas of scale

Various problems related to scale and effectiveness were considered. One aspect of the problem that Celia had raised in her talk was that peacebuilding efforts were often on too restricted a scale to have a major political impact. In contrast, the pacification approach was normally backed by the resources of one or more governments. The potential of alternative peacebuilding methods, including non-violent civilian intervention, could not be properly tested if they did not have the resources to be sustained over a reasonable period of time, and on a sufficiently large scale.

However, another speaker raised a different issue relating to scale. If, in order to engage with those who had the power or the money, you had to institutionalise and become more like them, that could be self-defeating. In Sierra Leone, if the peace monitors approach became institutionalised, it might lose its capacity to build peace at the community level. People asked whether the aim with community peacebuilding was to make it a nation-wide system. That question was still unresolved. If the work was institutionalised, it would probably lose much of its power.

One of the frustrations felt by many people working at the community level in Sierra Leone was that there didn’t seem to be anything in between their own powerlessness to deal with things that were detrimental to their community life – crime, an emerging conflict – and a retributive way of dealing with it, namely calling in the police and taking the matter to what, in Sierra Leone, is still called a Native Court, working on the basis of 1920’s legislation. This involved lots of fees, and in the end everybody was poorer and nobody was wiser. Community peacebuilding work occupied a certain ground and opened up the possibility of resolving problems without applying the stick. The challenge for the state authorities was to accept that this process was pushing the retributive instruments a little further back and required them be patient for a while. If we for our part could be more articulate in expounding the benefits of the community peacebuilding approach, the state authorities might feel more comfortable about accepting it.

Was the implication of that, one participant wondered, that you needed to have two separate levels; the community level at which CR's partners worked in an informal way, and a more official level which involved the police, the judicial system, maybe also the army? The crucial question was how far institutionalised force was necessary for the informal peacebuilding to get under way and to be sustained.

Coercion and the role of the state

A recurrent theme in the discussion was coercion and the role of the state. One speaker said he appreciated the distinction that had been made between peacebuilding, as something people had to do for themselves, and pacification, which always involved an interventionist or external element. However, this contrast, though useful, was not absolute. He had recently returned from Eastern Congo, which was flooded with troops; but if there were no troops there, people would still be killing each other on a large scale. For him the second World War was another example of where the use of military force had been necessary to build peace.

Another speaker responded that in theory military force was the instrument of last resort between nations, but that increasingly it was being used much earlier, and powerful states were not making any serious attempt at resolving or transforming conflict through nonviolent means. The Iraq war was the most obvious example of this. This proposition was contested by the previous speaker, who felt it did not stand up when examined from a broader historical perspective. In Sierra Leone, military intervention occurred only after a long delay and after many people had been killed. That was true in other instances, too. Even in the case of Iraq there was a long delay before military intervention took place. There may have been all sort of reasons for the delay, including calculations of expediency, and fears that it might lead to civil war and the break-up of the Iraqi state, but it was a fact.

The key question for another participant was on whose authority a military intervention took place. There was a clear articulation of the principle of collective security in 1944-45, at the time of the foundation of the UN. However, starting with the Kosovo intervention, we had seen the wholesale erosion of that notion of collective security inherent in the decision-making procedures of the UN and the Security Council. There were two key questions to be asked about any military intervention. First, had the proper procedures been followed? This was important because it impinged on the issue of collective ownership and collective security. Second, was there consent from within the state? However, if the state had fallen apart, and all you had were warring factions, consent became problematic. Who was welcoming the intervention and who was opposing it?

The following speaker agreed that there was a particular problem in dealing with countries where the state had collapsed. It meant that there was no process to confer legitimacy on the actions taken, and no process to establish accountability. Legitimacy and accountability were the corner stones of democracy – the rest was process around these, which could be socially or culturally dependent. If it came to making policy recommendations, we needed to make a clear distinction between situations where a state existed but did not satisfy the basic norms of how the state should behave, and situations where instead of a state there were multiple power groups competing against each other.

The view that military intervention was justified in some circumstances was not unanimous. One speaker asked those who took it to agonize a bit more about the moral dilemmas it entailed. Like everyone else, she was aware of the dilemma when ghastly things were taking place. But, as conflict transformation practitioners, we would not be called upon to go in and do the fighting alongside the armed forces, so supporting military intervention was a bit like being an armchair freedom fighter. She did not take for granted the justification of World War II. Forty million dead was not self-evidently a brilliant outcome. Even the imposition of no-fly zones in North and South Iraq had entailed a lot of deaths.

For her, the state issue and the coercion issue were closely related. The state was where the big resources lay and there was a huge gap, certainly in the case of the UK, between the levels of expenditure on peacebuilding and on military preparations. Some of the work of the military might be directed towards peacekeeping, but the bulk of the expenditure went on preparation for massive

hegemonic wars. Even in situations where intervention to stop something happening seemed to be required, the military did not always have an answer. The issue was about states and scale. You had a pre-existing system in which the military was dominant, and it was a huge challenge to think out how you could ever have the opportunity and resources to test out other options. It would be instructive to investigate what enabled military peacemaking and peacekeeping operations to be successful. Iraq was certainly not any kind of a model here.

For another speaker the state/non-state dichotomy in relation to peacebuilding was being exaggerated. A lot of civilian crisis management could be regarded as peacebuilding – institution building, setting up a judiciary and a civilian administration. Institution building was part of peacebuilding and complementary to the community-based work. He referred also to the European-wide training programme for civilians to go on EU, OSCE or UN missions where an element of peacebuilding was creeping in. In Britain the state's link with non-state actors on peacebuilding was most evident, since the training work sponsored by the state was being undertaken by Peaceworkers UK. Elsewhere the implementing bodies were almost all state training institutes or governmental bodies.

The erosion of civil liberties by the state in the name of security was also raised. One contributor commented that the rhetoric was all about protecting citizens and telling them they would have to forego certain things so that the state could protect them. So not only were states pacifying other people – increasingly they were also pacifying their own citizens, excluding them from decision making on the grounds that it was for the government to make decisions and for the citizens to turn out once every five years to vote. Another speaker said this observation reminded him of traditional characterisations of the state as embodying a social contract, and of having a monopoly on the use of violence. The description he liked most was that the state was the largest protection racket. You gave up certain things and, in return, the state protected you. That was linked to the monopoly of violence.

Accountability of intervenors

One speaker argued said that, even where there had been a strong case for a UN military operation, the intervention itself had always been accompanied by human rights abuses and a lack of accountability. In Kosovo, in the period immediately after the war, when the Kosovo Albanians were expelling the Serbs and the Roma, the international forces were largely ineffective. And when they did try to get active, they were kicking down the doors of innocent people. In their ignorance of how to police in that environment, they acted in a stupid and arrogant fashion, violating every principle of good procedure. Institution building that followed war took place in a power vacuum, and therefore the issue of accountability was crucial. In Kosovo the new institution that was agreed by all sides at Rambouillet was the office of Ombudsperson, yet this was the last institution of all to be set up by the UN. It had few resources and a low profile, but had done excellent work.

Sustainability

It was remarked that the sustainability of work at a non-governmental level depended very much on secure funding. However, there was a risk that the longevity of a project could give it a spurious legitimacy. Outside funding might keep it in being without its having much support at the local level. At the macro level the sustainability of, for instance, the left-wing governments in South America, would depend on whether their economies proved viable. But there was also the question of what the US or other governments might do to undermine them.

Community peacebuilding was stronger when it was supported by funding from local sources. But in a desperately poor country like Sierra Leone, how much could you ask local residents to give to the peace monitors to enable them to fix the tyres of their bicycles, or from time to time to buy a new bicycle, so that they could go out of that village? As long as these things depended on Conciliation Resources having to discuss with DFID in Glasgow whether to buy 79 bicycles or 81, and whether it was transgressing current budget limits, the process would be vulnerable.

Another speaker, however, noted that there was a big middle-class business interest in Africa, which had not been addressed by the NGOs or the donors. We didn't appear to see them. We talked of the

bad state or the good community but not about these people in between, who either fan the conflict or have an interest in stopping it. Their interests would determine which way a conflict went. If their interests lay in prolonging the conflict they would perhaps support an intervention. If their interests lay in a peaceful outcome, they would support grassroots work and get local people to set up peace groups. He did not believe in volunteerism – you needed to tap into people’s self interest. Why were the people doing the peace monitoring, not farming or doing other work? Was this the only work they could do? The reason the reconciliation process had worked in South Africa was that people were persuaded that it would be in their interest to support it, because anything else could have been chaotic.

Another speaker responded that there were various layers of motivation behind people’s actions. They did not always act out of material self interest as defined by the hierarchy. She agreed that we needed to broaden our view of who was a peacebuilder. It wasn’t just states, or just Civil Society with capital letters, nor was it simply grassroots activists. We needed to include people who were not obviously political but had an impact: financial actors and so on.

Subsidiarity

The principle of subsidiarity, it was suggested, should apply in the way a society was run. If one could positively say that something could be done without the state taking responsibility for doing it, like exercising social pressure at the local level, then it should be done that way. So the approach would be to take action at the lowest possible local level and work up, rather than assuming that the state had to come in always with the big stick or the coercive carrot.

One speaker said conservative governments ought to be open to the idea of subsidiarity because, ideologically, conservatism was about local autonomy, local power, and minimum government. It verged on anarchism. Military intervention was built on a model of external control more akin to communist thinking. The paradox was that it was conservative governments, or governments that were moving in a conservative direction, which were supporting military intervention.

Selling ourselves

A question that came up at several points during the day was why we were not better at convincing people of our successes. Was there some way in which organisations involved in CCTS could bring together cases sufficiently comparable to lend themselves to joint analysis and prove that investing in peace had proved worthwhile?

The difficulty lay in being able to demonstrate cause and effect. We could say a violent conflict had not occurred, but it was much harder to prove that this was the direct result of things we had done. You could see a correlation, but not necessarily cause and effect. But this was also true of wars, and one speaker wondered if it would be ethically acceptable for us steal some of the government’s clothes by making unequivocal claims about our successes. In the US, the Department of Homeland Security claimed to have foiled several attempted attacks on the US. This they ‘proved’ by the fact that they had not taken place. Similarly, the Metropolitan police claimed to have foiled numerous terrorist attacks on London and this too was ‘proved’ by the fact that they had not taken place. We were much more tentative in our claims, but bold, unequivocal claims were what convinced people.

It was pointed out by other speakers that governments could claim they had conclusive evidence from their intelligence services that an attack had been planned and thwarted, though for security reasons they could not say more than that. They might or might not be telling the truth, but the claim could not be convincingly challenged. If we made a claim we had to be able to provide the evidence for it.

Another speaker drew attention to the Human Security Report by Andrew Mack published by the University of British Columbia at the end of last year which purported to prove that there had been an average diminution of violence worldwide over the last 40 or 50 years and that there was a causal link between that phenomenon and the peacebuilding and peacemaking work of the UN. So perhaps there was evidence that over a longer period these things were having an effect.

Engaging with policymakers

One speaker said he was disturbed by the fact that on the government side there was no recognition of the possibility that they might be wrong. Did they always have to pretend that they were in possession of the answers? In this meeting, even though there was a divergence of opinions, we could exchange views with each other. Was it possible, in public or private dialogue with the government, for them to acknowledge that they did not necessarily know all the answers? It seemed that, in politics, once you adopted a position you felt obliged to defend it to the hilt, whatever the circumstances.

Others argued that there could be good reasons for the government not publicly to acknowledge any doubt or uncertainty, for instance because of not wanting to undermine the position of its military forces. There would be other reasons too. It was much more difficult for people in authority to express doubts. There were logics here that one needed to understand. Privately, government people could admit to all kinds of things, but publicly not.

Another contributor said there had been doubt and confusion in official circles in 1990, in Britain and the USA, over what to do about Bosnia, and the Balkans in general. And there was a lot of pressure from various critics who were talking about condemning Bosnians to a slow death. But when a government decided on military intervention, it had to do so wholeheartedly. It was true, however, that official bodies sometimes claimed success on the basis that violence had not occurred in a given period of time. That was what the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) were doing in March 2004, until suddenly there was a lot of violence, which was a huge shock to their self-confidence. At moments like that, there would be people searching their souls, and probably even before that point. The Iraq war should not overshadow the genuine soul-searching there had been amongst policymakers. In the Netherlands, Srebrenica had caused a lot of self-doubt.

Another speaker agreed that there were many factors that made it difficult for a government to recant or admit they were mistaken. But that should not affect private conversations, and we should be looking for some modification of public policy over time. She wondered about joint research as a possible endeavour in which there could be a structured engagement.

Several speakers expressed the view that there were opportunities to dialogue with government. One example given was that the Ministry of Defence had signed a contract with the Department of Peace Studies at Bradford University for them to do training in peacebuilding; this implied a degree of openness to ideas from our milieu. There were some open doors, but maybe we were not very effective in pooling information about the opportunities that arose.

One speaker suggested that at the level where the Great Game was being played out – in the Middle East, Iraq and Afghanistan – it was difficult to have much influence. But in other contexts, which had a more marginal importance in foreign policy, there probably were opportunities. There had been new policy initiatives across Whitehall related to conflict over the last several years, but only very rarely had conflict transformation practitioners managed to have an input into them. Currently, at Westminster, there was a Parliamentary Select Committee looking into the place of conflict in development policy.

Peacebuilding and structural change

One speaker expressed disappointment that gender issues had little profile in our discussions. UN Resolution 1325, on the role of women in peace processes, was being used as a rallying point in lots of contexts and it ought to be part of our discourse, for example when we talked about subsidiarity, and who that included. We needed to consider gender in relation to democracy and who democracy was for. There were still too few women in the UK parliament and if you looked at assembled politicians in any newspaper photograph, you would see maybe one or two women amongst all the males. It mattered and it changed things, and unfortunately it changed those few women because it was about co-optation all the time. Structural change was required. Without it, the work was always going to be about who would rescue these or those poor unfortunates, or who would stand up for whom. We were poles away from doing the things we would like to see done.

Another speaker said we should be more prepared to spell out an agenda for social change. Sometimes people feared that if you did that others would be offended and not be willing to work with you. However, if you did not state what your social project was, people would find it very difficult to situate you or to work with you. And whether it was a gender issue, or a youth issue, or an issue of discrimination or marginalisation, one could defend a reasonable base line for the position one was promoting.

Concluding remarks

The chair of the final session concluded by saying that CCTS was not a group that could formulate a common policy on which to act or make recommendations to government. People in the committee could not commit their organisations in that way. We could usefully explore the issues but, if action was to be taken, it had to be by the organisations or individuals themselves. The seminar had raised a number of issues and it was now for each of us to go away and ask what they meant for our work, and what could be brought back to our organisations. There was not one kind of action that could come out of the day, but hopefully there would be many different actions, and perhaps some joint action.

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Editors: Diana Francis and Michael Randle

Layout: Anne Rogers

Distribution: Conciliation Resources