

The Handbook of
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COEXISTENCE

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Beyond Violence: Building Sustainable Peace

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I have been asked to reflect with you this morning on the challenges and dilemmas posed in building sustainable peace in the context of what has come to be known in international circles as the "postaccord" or what some of you here are calling the "postconflict phase." I am honored to be here with you, to be afforded such a privilege, and especially honored to have the opportunity to think with you, people for whom I have longstanding respect and admiration. I must say, however, that it is much easier to expound on these questions in the safety of the classroom back in America. In my experience, it seems that the further you get from a problem the easier the answers are. There are two things I have learned over the years in my line of work: (1) Never offer answers. Offer to think with people about ideas. (2) Learn to appreciate and to live with ambiguities. Ambiguity is good for your soul. It keeps you honest. It keeps you humble. It keeps you searching. So, I come this morning without pretensions, willing to wade with you in thick waters of wonderful Irish ambiguity, and hoping not to drown.

When I was first contacted about this conference by Dr. Fitzduff, she suggested I reflect on experiences and observations emerging from parallel postconflict situations. As I approached it, what seemed especially relevant was not the comparison of cases as much as the initial development of a set of lenses that might permit us to identify the broader patterns and dilemmas posed by a postconflict phase, which is a bit of a misnomer. Postconflict does not mean conflict has disappeared by some miraculous stroke of luck or genius; rather it simply indicates that the conflict has taken a new expression and is changing. And it is the changes of context, people, expectations, possibilities that is new, and as such creates a new phase. For this morning, I would like to make my observations based on two assumptions. *First*, we need a set of lenses to look at the peace-building process that can help us identify the problems and dilemmas posed by the particular moment in the process. *Second*, we must approach peace building like a system, a system with a design and architecture. The lenses, then, are used to look at this building. To draw a metaphor: we can approach peace building somewhat like a building inspector might approach a house. More specifically, I would suggest, we approach it like an inspector who has been tasked with discovering the heating patterns within the building. He is interested in knowing where the heat is going: is it sufficient? is it efficient? In our case, the lenses are focused on where energy in the peace-building system is expended. Is it spread evenly? Is it "overheating" some places and "under-

heating" others? With these energy-seeking lenses on, and looking not specifically at the Irish context but broadly across similar settings, I would offer three initial observations about postconflict peace building.

The system focuses enormous energy on immediate tasks too often decoupled from longer-ranging design of social change necessary for creating and sustaining a comprehensive approach. The system is driven by a hierarchical instead of an organic focus on political process. It moves with increasing narrowness, at times almost myopic, focus, on the technical tasks of political transition over the social, economic, psychological, and spiritual processes of transformation. I would like to look at each of these observations in more detail, providing some ideas and illustrations that I hope contribute to our discussions today.

Time Frames for Peace Building

Immediate and long-ranging peace building is a complex endeavor due to three phenomena: simultaneity of activities, gravity of issues, and the pressure for rapid response. Everything is happening at once. Everything is of critical importance. And everything is urgent. This is further exacerbated by the CNN effect. As described by Ernie Regehr: "Foreign problems not in the headlines should be ignored, but once they have the attention of CNN they should have been addressed yesterday." These characteristics point us toward the question of time, and more specifically how we think about time and our actions. I have found it useful to have a conceptual framework for thinking about time and action. My basic concern is to develop a mechanism that permits us to look at immediate needs as embedded in a longer-ranging design. In peace building I would propose a nested paradigm as illustrated in Figure 1.

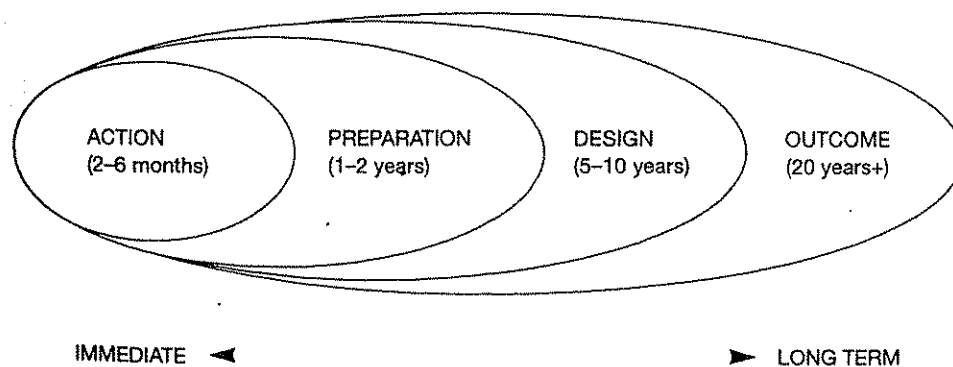


Figure 1. Time frame for peace-building © John Paul Lederach

The immediate, often crisis-driven, component is represented here by the word "action." It refers to the need we feel to respond to the evolving events. In the

international NGO [non-governmental organization] community, recent crises like those of Bosnia, Somalia or Rwanda, have made popular the term "disaster management." In postconflict phases action is seen in terms of responding to emerging crises that put the peace process in jeopardy, often calling for crisis negotiation or mediation. The time frame of the "action" component is short-term, a matter of months. The driving question is "How do we respond to these immediate needs in order to keep the process alive?" Action is embedded, however, in the notion of "preparation." Here we refer to the need for equipping people to undertake better action. In a peace-building endeavor this is the component related to training and preparing the way. Preparation evolves into a more extended unit of time, often conceived in terms of projects that lay-out plans for one to three years.

At the far end of the paradigm is "outcome." I use outcome as a way of talking about vision and desired change. This refers both to structural as well as social change. What visions do people have for a given setting? For example, in a peaceful Ireland how would politics, economics and social systems be constructed and function? How would people relate? What would characterize their relationships? This "outcome" component of peace making is obligated to reflect in generational blocks of time, twenty to forty years. Between the two extreme ends of the paradigm we find the idea of "design." This component of peace building is characterized by its operational function of linking immediate action and long-term goals. Its primary task is to develop a conceptual plan, a peace-building architectural design for social change. It compels us to think in decades. Decade thinking is not easy, but in my mind, is absolutely critical for peace building. The design component pushes us to grapple with tough questions. How is our immediate action linked to desired social change? What are the steps we follow to move from where we are now to where we want to be?

Three keys are important for understanding this paradigm. *First*, it suggests that different activities related to peace building require distinct units of time within which we reflect and act. *Second*, the units of time are related to each other and must be seen as connected rather than isolated. *Third*, it is crucial that we develop the capacity to think operationally in decades in order to link immediate action, shorter term preparation with longer-ranging desired changes.

Taking this a step further, in Figure 2 I have devised a little scheme based on a set of questions that I find helpful as I think about specific pieces of work. The scheme is built as a matrix that cross-references time/relationship with purpose of the activity. There are four basic questions. What are we trying to accomplish? What is the nature of our relationship? What is the unit of time within which we can think and plan? How much do we know about the context?

In response to the first question I suggest three categories that form one side of the matrix. *Purpose* refers to the bigger picture of what we are attempting to accomplish in the context or setting. *Goals* relate to narrower aspect of what a particular event is attempting to achieve. *Objectives* refer to the more specific activities within the event. These three categories can be cross-referenced with perspec-

	PURPOSE (within context)	GOALS (for events)	OBJECTIVES (within events)
EVENT (hours-days)			
PROJECT (1-2 years)			
PROGRAM (10 years)			

Figure 2. Matrix for peace-building activity © John Paul Lederach 1994

tives emerging from the nature of the relationship and the unit of time within which we plan. An event is a one-time activity that may be conducted for a few hours to a few days. A *project* refers to a series of events taking place across a year or two. A *program* connects the projects into a longer-term decade-length effort.

We can now return to our original point. If we overlay our two schemes we are situated to describe what typically happens in peace building and to suggest what should happen. Typically, the process of peace building is driven by a crisis orientation responding to immediate needs in the form of events with narrowly defined and short-term objectives. Projects and programs that relate to the longer-term agenda for social change are defined by what is necessary and possible emerging from the crisis. The suggestion of what should happen is the inverse. Peace building, I have argued, needs a social architectural design that thinks in decades and in which specific events and responses are defined by a measured understanding of the context, purpose, and program.

This seems especially true of the postconflict phase. The entire social, political, and economic system is changing. New realities and shared futures seem almost within reach. Yet the context is that of people who are emerging from years of stagnated cycles of violence, who by basic human nature find more security in hanging on to what is known and understood than by moving toward the unknown even if it promises to be qualitatively better. In this context, peace builders feel over-responsible to take care of every detail, lest the process fail. While vigilance is necessary, it is far more important to develop the capacity to think about immediate action as embedded in broader context and program developments.

Let me draw a brief analogy. I received a wonderful journal entry from my good friend Ron Kraybill written after election day in South Africa. Among other things

he reported on this activity as a crisis mediator for the day. He and others were outfitted with cellular phones, connected to a central location. At a moment's notice they could be called on to respond to emerging conflicts, from any part of the city of Capetown and out into the Province. The effort was monumental, aimed at providing conciliation resources to deal with the potential sparks that could, if left unattended, rage into a fire. For election day it worked wonderfully, but is not recommended as an approach to the broader phase of postconflict peace building. It does suggest, however, an analogy. Too much of postconflict peace building is based on a cellular phone approach to social change. It can deal with sparks, but is incapable of generating and sustaining the broader context and design necessary to move fully toward desired goals.

In sum, let me make two points about time frame. First, peace building in postconflict phases must explicitly think about and develop the capacity of social change design as a discipline and responsibility. Second, we must learn to think in decades in order to contextualize our immediate actions. Notice that I am not suggesting what actions should be taken. I am suggesting that we need to develop the ability to think about social change as a *process needing a design* and that we need to think in longer units of time in order to locate the why, when and where of immediate action.

Levels of Peace-Building Activity

There are two main levels of peace-building activity, the hierarchical and organic. In the first section we made reference to the simultaneity of activity at various levels, and it is to this idea of levels that we now turn our attention. Figure 3 presents a conceptual framework that outlines three levels of peace-building activity: The top, middle, and grassroots. The top level of peace-building is what we could consider the official "table talks." My observation, stated earlier, suggests that during the postconflict phase the peace-building system is driven by a hierarchical instead of an organic focus on political process. In other words, the approach to peace building is top-down, where system energy centers on top-level leaders and activities. This is taking place at a time and in a context of significant and far-reaching change. Consider for a moment some of the dilemmas posed by this evolving contextual change.

(1) People experience a contradiction in terms of the pace of change. Simultaneously, the postconflict phase can be experienced as moving too slowly and too rapidly: too slowly because expectations have been raised by the possibility of peace; too rapidly because reformation of perspectives and concessions offered to create movement can feel like we have given away too much and received too little. We may feel like we are swept along by the rapid evolution of events.

(2) Everyone feels the identity dilemma, but it is especially critical for leaders who are caught in the public limelight. The identity dilemma struggles with the question

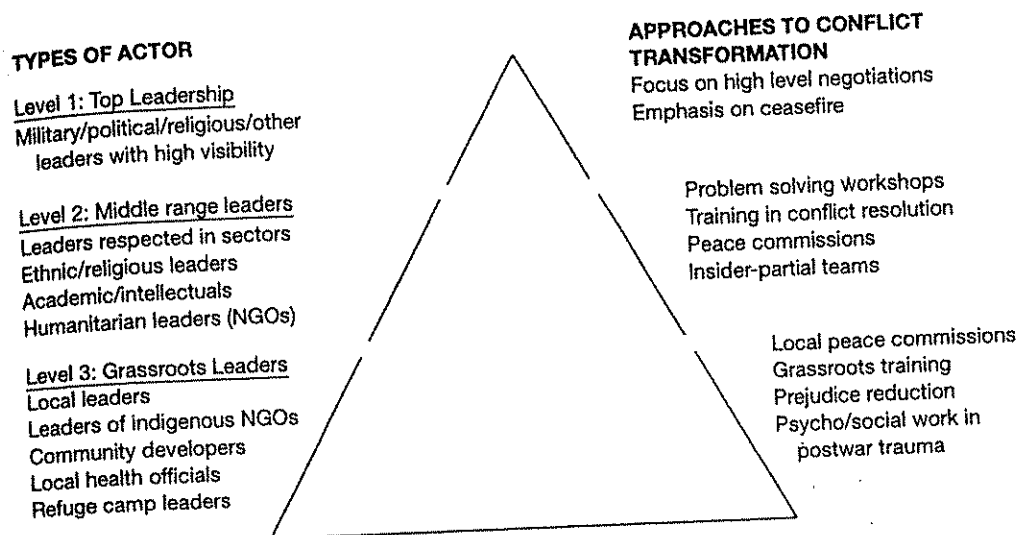


Figure 3. Actors and peace-building foci across the affected population
 © John Paul Lederach

of how to change and yet hold onto our core purpose. In settings of deep-rooted conflict identity is shaped in large part by defining ourselves against a clear sense of the enemy. "Clear" means that we have little room for ambiguity or gray areas. Postconflict processes change this clarity. Things become more ambiguous. Old answers no longer explain everything that is happening. Leaders, then are caught in this struggle: How may they create the space for remolding and shaping an identity not based exclusively on the enemy, yet clearly articulate the core purpose of who we are, and what we are about?

(3) People across the broader population, particularly at the grassroots level, not only feel the identity dilemma, but in addition are caught in a process paradox. They pay enormous attention to the official table as the measuring stick of personal and group validation, where their identity, sacrifice, and years of struggle are validated or invalidated by what happens at the "table," and simultaneously feel marginalized because they do not have direct access to the table.

All three cases can easily produce a sense of insecurity and disillusionment. It is in the postconflict phase that the past bumps up against the future. I have long carried with me the words that I once read on the walls of West Belfast. "While Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace." I am not so interested here in the partisan view the phrase expresses as I am in the metaphor it weaves about conflict. Across our globe, across the thirty-five armed conflicts the

graves are held present in people's minds because they represent the loss, the trauma, the deep pain, of years and generations of conflict. And here precisely is the dilemma that the image weaves: In the postconflict phase, the graves and great-grandchildren meet together. How can we change for the good of our children yet not forget the sacrifices of our parents?

As is the case with most dilemmas, we must not permit ourselves the luxury of choosing one over the other. We cannot afford to pursue a simplistic "forgive and forget" approach, nor be stagnated in a remember and refuse to change" cycle. The challenge of postconflict peace building lies in creating the individual and collective mechanism that provide us the space to remember and to step toward change.

I would suggest that enormous, nearly impossible, pressure be brought to bear on the official, top-level process to accomplish this task. The top level, "official" process is asked to bear fruit that it is incapable of delivering on its own. This is the weakness of the hierarchical approach to politics in the postconflict phase. As such we could suggest worst-case, postconflict scenarios emanating from two sources in other settings. The first are cases where the leadership is able to manipulate the context for personal gain because there is little or no accountability. In other words, power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. The second is that people feel a lack of genuine access, participation, responsibility, and ownership in the process. In this case, on the other side of the coin, powerlessness is the seedbed of violence. Both are forerunners to the collapse of peace.

I believe the conceptualization and development of an organic rather than a hierarchical approach to politics is needed. An organic view of political process, or what Harold Saunders calls "whole body politic," envisions peace building as a web of interdependent activities and people. The web links and cuts across levels, types of activity, and time. It creates a binding effect, holding people and processes together. It is systemic in orientation, understanding that changes in one component of the system affect the whole system, but no one component controls the process of change in the whole.

In my view, the single most important aspect of encouraging an organic perspective of peace-building politics is creating a genuine sense of participation, responsibility, and ownership in the process across a broad spectrum of the population. People must move from sitting back and reacting toward a proactive engagement that helps shape and define the process. In other words, I would suggest that one of the key tasks of people in this room today is to seek the ways to engage and inspire others to a sense of their own responsibility and validation rather than turning it over to a process that is too often remote, rife with pitfalls, and incapable of meeting their needs. Peace building and politics in the postconflict phase must be seen as an open, accessible system that rests on a broad base of participation rather than the narrowness of official table.

Processes of Transformation

The final observation I suggested was the tendency of a postconflict peace building system to focus its energy on the technical tasks of transition over the broader

processes of transformation. This is not easy to grasp purely at a cognitive level, and so I offer an attempt to visualize a postconflict paradigm in Figure 4. Again, this is best depicted as a web, made up here as a nested paradigm involving four related peace-building activities. Consider for a moment each of the four.

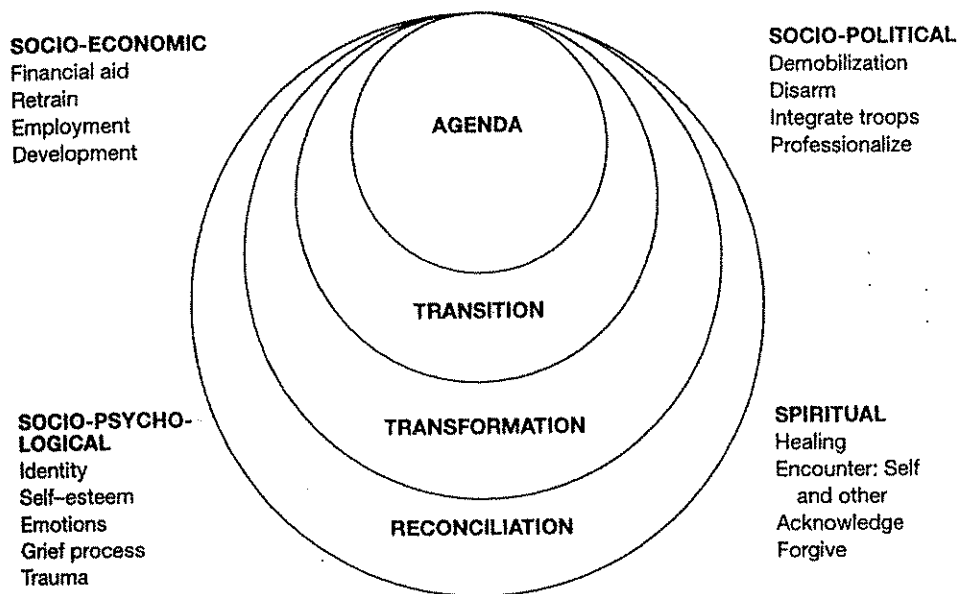


Figure 4. The web of reconciliation © John Paul Lederach

At its most immediate level, *defining the agenda* of the postconflict phase involves identifying the various tasks that need to be addressed. These include dealing with people, structures, and processes. Tasks may involve everything from demobilization and disarmament to governance and employment, as they relate to movement from destructive conflict toward redefinition of the relationships.

The second circle, *transition* suggests that each of the identified agenda tasks will move through a technical, logistical component of implementation. The technical aspect of repatriating refugees, for example, is the transport, location, and aid provided to them as they return to their country of origin.

This transition is embedded, however, in the third circle, the *transformative processes* that go beyond the technical aspect and reach toward the deeper questions. The technical side of disarmament, for example, is to remove the gun. The transformative side raises the question of the role and place of the military in a new context, under a newly formed structure of governance.

Finally, all of this takes place within the broadest circle involving the *search for relational reconciliation*. I say search because I believe that reconciliation represents a dialectic. It is both a place toward which we journey, and the journey once

initiated opens a social space. In both instances, reconciliation is oriented toward restoring relationships, not merely resolving issues.

To this paradigm we can add four distinct and necessary dimensions in postconflict peace building: the *sociopolitical*, the *socioeconomic*, the *social-psychological*, and the *spiritual*. When I observed that many postconflict peace-building systems focus their energy too narrowly on political transition, I am referring to the top part of the paradigm. In this instance, the focus is reduced to the technical tasks of transition related to sociopolitical concerns, and times crosses over into socioeconomic issues. As such, the system rarely moves to encompass the transformative and relational concerns, or the social psychological and spiritual dimensions of human experience. This is perhaps best understood by tracking a specific task, such as the challenge of how to address the situation of former fighters in places such as Nicaragua or Mozambique.

From the sociopolitical perspective this is referred to as the process of demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration. The technical side involves the logistics of keeping troops encamped and separated, and simultaneously disarming them. The transformative aspect of the process is whether, how, when, and where the militias form part of a national defense or a policing force, and the nature and role of those institutions.

The socioeconomic perspective of the process is concerned with providing the demobilized soldiers with a fresh start, often in the form of financial aid or providing training for new vocations. The transformation aspect of the process is how a postconflict economy should be conceived, how to deal with unemployment, and how to pursue development and distribution of resources in ways that support the peace-building effort. For example, in some conflictive situations in the Horn of Africa the use of microenterprises development provided to small groups made up of people from different ethnic backgrounds, were strategically aimed at promoting interdependence, such that the success of one group is contingent on the success of the other.

The social-psychological dimension deals with a different set of concerns, aimed more at transformation and reconciliation. Here the demobilized soldier is seen as a person who is dealing with accumulated emotions and intense trauma. For this person, there are significant personal questions about identity and self-worth. The person may be resented by others for their actions, and likely carries deep feelings of anger, resentment, and loss attributed to others. There is a need to mourn and grieve loss of family, of friends, of youth and time. In other words, this phase represents more than the transition of social roles, it involves the transformation of the person.

This is coupled with what I have referred to as the spiritual dimension. Spiritual for me signifies moving beyond the issues and toward an encounter. It is a journey toward an encounter with self and the other. The purpose of the reconciliation journey is healing. Healing is in constant movement between self and the other, or in the case of postconflict peace building, between myself and my former enemy.

This involves a willingness to acknowledge the Truth and the pain of injustices experienced, and the openness to offer and accept forgiveness. The encounter with self raises the difficult question: What have I done? The encounter with the enemy raises the equally complicated question: What have they done to me? Both are necessary questions on the road to healing.

In our application here, the spiritual dimension suggests we see the demobilized individual, not merely as a soldier to be disarmed or retrained, nor as a person with psychological needs, but as a person on a journey to seek restoration and healing, embedded in a society that is seeking the same. The challenge posed by reconciliation is to open up the social space that permits and encourages individuals and societies as a collective, to acknowledge the past, mourn the losses, validate the pain experienced, confess the wrongs, and reach toward the next steps of restoring the broken relationship. This is not *forgive and forget*. This is not remember, justify, and repeat. True reconciliation is to remember and change. I see this as spiritual, because I have not found a better term to describe this search that goes beyond the political, economical, and psychological, and because, from a personal faith viewpoint, the journey toward reconciliation is necessarily a journey toward self, the enemy, and God.

In sum, I am suggesting we must extend our focus to include a broad set of dimensions that push us to operationalize the possibility of transformation.

This ultimately compels us to build a web of reconciliation aimed at sustaining the constructive initiation of change and builds toward the restoration of relationship.

The title of this conference is "Beyond Violence." I am suggesting that a sustainable approach to postconflict peace building requires moving beyond a number of frontiers. We must move beyond a short-term, crisis orientation and toward the development of our capacity to think about social change design in terms of decades. We must move beyond a hierarchical focus on politics and toward the construction of an organic, broad-based approach that creates space for genuine responsibility, ownership, and participation in peace building. We must move beyond a narrow view of postconflict peace building as a political transition and toward the formation of a web that envisions a whole body politic, whole persons seeking change in a radically changing environment.

Notes

1. Ernie Regehr, "War after the Cold War: Shaping a Canadian response," in *Ploughshares Working Paper* 1993, 3, Waterloo: Project Ploughshares.
2. This is articulated in *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, United Nations University in Japan, 1994.
3. Harold Saunders, *The Concept of Relationship*, Columbus, Ohio: Mershon Center, 1993.