

Chapter 3

Human Security as the Link Between Humanitarian Action and Peacebuilding

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3.1 Introduction

Humanitarian action is a needs-based emergency response aimed at preserving life, preventing and alleviating human suffering and maintaining human dignity, wherever the need arises, if governments and local actors are overwhelmed, unable or unwilling to act (Council of the European Union 2008).¹ Peacebuilding, on the other hand, is to be understood, according to the United Nations, as a comprehensive and integrated strategy that encompasses a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights programmes and mechanisms. This requires short- and long-term actions tailored to address the particular needs of societies sliding into conflict or emerging from it (United Nations Security Council 2001). This chapter seeks to underline the connection between humanitarian action and peace building, starting from the premise that in armed conflict and post-conflict settings the goal of each should be human security: the protection and empowerment of people.

Human security is commonly understood as prioritising the security of people, especially their welfare, safety and well-being. The human security perspective is reproached for wanting to be policy-relevant and problem-solving. In response to this assertion, this paper argues that human security provides a critical perspective and an emancipatory agenda. It suggests that the importance of the concept of human security lies in recognising that, when it comes to successfully protecting

¹ This is how, for example, the purpose of humanitarian aid is defined in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid adopted by European Union member States at the end of 2007. The statement forms part of an international global approach involving the United Nations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, humanitarian NGOs and other actors.

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and empowering people, there is an interconnection between security, development and human rights. It is not a question of whether security comes before development and/or human rights but of how people's security and wellbeing are ensured and what an expanded notion of security means in their everyday lives (Newman 2011, p. 1751).

This paper maintains that humanitarian action should aspire to ensure survival and protect people's fundamental rights and dignity. Seen from that perspective, humanitarian action becomes part of a broader and more holistic peacebuilding strategy. The interrelationship between humanitarian action and peacebuilding is therefore posited in light of the changes that occurred in the post-Cold War period when sovereignty was re-evaluated as meaning that the State had an obligation to take responsibility for the wellbeing and protection of its people and, if it failed to do so, the international community had a duty to take appropriate measures in that respect. The emergence of the concept of the responsibility to protect, known as R2P, emphasises the international community's responsibility to place all the means at its disposal in the service of human security. It should be noted that the original core idea of R2P was not to promote the humanitarian imperative or political regime change as suggested by NATO's recent armed intervention in Libya, but rather a comprehensive peacebuilding agenda. Against that background this paper highlights one aspect of humanitarian action's contribution to peacebuilding which has been largely overlooked: the development of the protection agenda.

The inclusion of protection as one of the pillars of humanitarian action means that humanitarian work should focus on those particularly vulnerable, such as internally displaced persons (IDPs). Ultimately, protecting IDPs means ensuring the realisation of their rights. The search for dignified, lasting solutions for IDPs is recognised as being one of the crucial elements required for peacebuilding and achieving sustainable and lasting peace. However, as will be shown, peacebuilding and the liberal peace project do not prioritise human security. This paper suggests that protection and the search for lasting solutions for IDPs should be a central issue on an international agenda that is at the service of human security. Lastly, it seeks to demonstrate that the relationship between humanitarian action and peacebuilding is not without tensions and challenges. Recognising the need to develop comprehensive or integrated approaches in order to secure stable and lasting solutions to crises and conflicts, and the fact that humanitarian action may be hijacked by political and security objectives, is problematic for humanitarian actors. Furthermore, the current tendency for crises to be manipulated and humanitarian action used for political and security ends in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq raises questions about the community's commitment to peacebuilding while at the same time jeopardising the independence and impartiality of humanitarian aid.

3.2 Human Security as a Goal of Humanitarian Action and Peacebuilding

Human security, as mentioned in the introduction, is generally understood to mean prioritising the security of human beings, especially their welfare safety and well-being over that of state. It is accepted as being an overall approach to protect people from whatever is threatening them—extreme poverty, deadly diseases, and environmental degradation—as well as immediate violence. The spread of the use of this term shows that the challenges in the field of international security today include protecting individuals from increasingly complex global threats and not just defending State interests by military means. The strength and appeal of the concept of human security lies not only in the fact that it challenges traditional ideas and studies of security by taking the individual as its point of reference but also in the fact that those ideas have become increasingly incapable of generating adequate responses to the new security environment.

Proponents of human security argue that poverty, population displacement, hunger, disease, environmental degradation and social exclusion, for example, all bear directly on human and hence global security. These kill far more people than war, genocide and terrorism combined. Therefore the recognition that development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing is considered as being encapsulated in the concept of human security. Since the end of the Cold War a consensus has emerged at international level around the central messages of human security (Tschirgi 2006). The fact is that, despite significant differences in interests and perspectives, all member states of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) endorsed the inclusion in the 2005 *World Summit Outcome Document* of the dual aim of human security, recognising freedom from want and freedom from fear as being core values for international relations in the twenty-first century. In particular, this means “the right of people to live in freedom and dignity, free from poverty and despair” and has implications for the State: the responsibility to protect (UNGA 2005). Although by the end of the decade the term ‘human security’ seem to had fallen in disuse (Martin and Owen 2010) in 2012, the UNGA adopted Resolution 66/290 entitled ‘Follow up to paragraph 143 on human security of the 2005 World Summit Outcome’. In this Resolution, the UNGA confirmed human security ‘as an approach to assist Member States in identifying and addressing widespread and cross-cutting challenges to the survival, livelihood and dignity of their people’. paras. 138 and 143).

Although the concept of human security has been gradually incorporated into international relations, its use as a policy instrument and its operationalisation as well as its academic value have been questioned (Churruca 2007). Academics interested in human security have been viewed as insufficiently critical and reflective (Newman 2010). Conceptual critiques of its practical and theoretical use are

grounded in the same arguments: the absence of a commonly accepted definition of human security and the weakness of its analysis.²

The notion of human security has been questioned first of all because of the absence of a commonly accepted definition. Most definitions concur in recognising the existence of a vital core of people's rights and safety. However, the consensus breaks down when considering the threats from which individuals should be protected. Depending on what "people's rights and safety" is deemed to mean, the scope of the definition is either broad or narrow. The concept of human security therefore remains a subject of debate between the so-called "broad" and "narrow" approaches, as if the two were separable. Each emphasise one aspect of human security. The broad approach focuses on "freedom from want", namely, the satisfaction of human development and a minimum level of wellbeing (food, health and environmental security, etc.).³ The narrow approach, on the other hand, focuses on "freedom from fear", namely, protection from physical violence in conflict settings.⁴ Nevertheless, the advocates of both approaches agree that the main goal of human security is the protection of people.

Beyond discussion of the absence of theoretical and political agreement on its definition and content, human security is best understood as being a goal to be attained. The Commission on Human Security (CHS), in its important report *Human Security Now*, published in 2003, offers a dynamic definition of human security based on the initial formulation used by the UNDP in its 1994 *Human Development Report*, namely protection of "the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment" (CHS 2003, p. 4). This definition is broad enough to encompass the various concerns and narrow enough to have technical credibility as an analytical framework. More important than the broad meaning of human security is what people living in situations of insecurity want. The imperfect but operational response is therefore to maintain a self-consciously vague, wide working definition of human security (CHS 2003, p. 3). The CHS definition does not specify which rights, capabilities and needs belong to the above-mentioned vital core other than identifying the basic elements of survival, dignity and livelihood. The task of prioritising between rights, capabilities and needs is both a value judgment and an exploratory exercise, and something that depends on both governments and international agencies and the people affected.

² Analysis of the concept of human security has been extensively addressed in many publications, for example, in the monograph entitled "Seguridad humana: conceptos, experiencias y propuestas" in the *Revista CIDOB d'Afers Internacionals*, No 76, coordinated by Grasa and Morillas (2007); the monograph on the subject in *Security Dialogue*, vol. 35, No 3, September 2004, and on the origin of the concept and critiques of the same in Churrua (2007, pp. 15–35).

³ This corresponds to the initial formulation of human security made by the UNDP in its 1994 *Human Development Report*, upheld also by the Commission on Human Security, headed by Japan, and in its report *Human Security Now*, published in 2003.

⁴ This was championed by Canada, which launched the Human Security Network made up of several countries, and by the *Human Security Report* published by the Center on Human Security.

The fact that prioritising between rights, capabilities and needs relies on the making of a value judgment means that the concept of human security has been seen as analytically weak, since if there is no agreement about what should or should not be prioritised, how can it be a useful concept for decision-makers? How can it be reliably measured? The criticism made by Mack in the prologue to the *Human Security Report* is that seeing anything that presents a threat to survival, dignity and livelihood as a threat to human security has limited utility for policy analysis (Mack 2005, p. viii). However, the question is whether trying to create a hierarchy and prioritise among human security goals is the right approach to human security. As Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh rightly points out, “the fallacy is in assuming that viable policies are to be made by top “political actors”, who sift through competing demands in order to choose one or two suitable targets for attention and resources; their decisions ignore that reality may in fact be many-faceted, involving a host of interconnected factors. Policy-making should not be a vertical process but a networked, flexible and horizontal coalition of approaches corresponding to a complex paradigm” (Tadjbakhsh 2005, p. 8).

Indeed, to try to create a hierarchy and prioritise among human security goals is the wrong approach to human security. It is not only that the concept is based on the assumption that all threats are interdependent and should be addressed comprehensively. It is also that human security focuses on the human being, not on the threats. This means that the threats should be viewed as challenges. Rather than prioritising between competing goals, policy makers should focus on identifying thresholds of survival, livelihood and dignity. A threshold-based approach to human security requires choosing policies based on the specific effect they have on people’s wellbeing and dignity (Alkire 2003, pp. 35–36).

Human security is normative; it argues that there is an ethical responsibility to re-orient security around the individual in line with recognised standards of human rights and governance (Newman 2010, p. 78). This means assuming that the protection of people has become an international problem and a crucial element of not only humanitarian action but also peacebuilding. Humanitarian agencies throw themselves into humanitarian action by following their most important guiding principle: *the principle of humanity*. The principle of humanity recognises that human beings are more than physical organisms in need of the means to survive. In the classic formulation of the humanitarian principle, Jean Pictet pins down the essence of humanitarian action when he defines its purpose as being “to protect life and health and to ensure respect for the human being” (Pictet 1979, p. 12). Humanitarian work therefore goes beyond providing physical assistance; it seeks to protect the human being as a whole. Understanding humanitarian action in this way makes it clear that preserving people’s dignity and wholeness is just as valid a goal of humanitarian work as ensuring their physical safety and resolving their material needs. Seen in this way, the goal of humanitarian action is simply to ensure and safeguard human security. Peacebuilding, for its part, as Goodhand emphasises, based on his experiences in Afghanistan and other conflicts, is ultimately “the construction of human security” in the sense of democratic governance,

human rights, the rule of law, sustainable development and fair access to resources (Goodhand 2006, p. 12).

3.3 The Responsibility to Protect

The increasing incidence of gross human rights violations and human suffering caused by mainly internal armed conflicts and the growing acceptance in international policy circles of the responsibility to protect meant that humanitarian action and peacebuilding were high on the international agenda during the 1990s and the first decade of the twentieth century. This coincided with more long-term trends which, from the perspective of international law and international relations, development and security, began to prioritise people (their rights, development and security) over States and put them at the centre of debates and, therefore, to question the principle and traditional conception of sovereignty.

In the face of the massive population movements and refugee flows caused by the conflicts in Iraq, the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda during the 1990s, States were reminded of their responsibility for protecting their populations and this led to humanitarian crises being increasingly seen as a question of international peace and security. In a series of resolutions adopted after 1991, the Security Council began to demand international access to populations affected by conflict and mass human rights abuses, sometimes authorising the use of force to ensure that help could be provided. For the first time the Security Council showed a willingness to authorise the use of armed force to ensure the distribution of humanitarian aid, but this fell short of a readiness to directly protect the population that was being targeted or who were the victims of the conflict. The endeavour to support survival “in situ” is posited by some as a covert means to avoid or ‘prevent’ mass cross-border displacement, seen by neighbouring States as a threat to their security (Peral 2001). Despite the selective nature of what are questionably termed humanitarian interventions, this development paved the way for seeing State sovereignty as a matter of responsibility and not just of power.

The approach developed by Francis M. Deng for addressing the IDP issue was key to moving forward with the idea of viewing sovereignty as responsibility. Deng argued that, in order to be legitimate, sovereignty has to show responsibility, which means at least ensuring a certain degree of protection and providing for people’s basic needs, and if governments are unable to do so because they lack the capacity, then the international community will have to take the necessary remedial action (Deng 1995; Deng et al. 1996). The idea of sovereignty as responsibility would have implications beyond the protection of IDPs. In the Secretary General’s reports of 13 April 1998 on “The causes of conflict and the promotion of lasting peace and sustainable development in Africa” (S/1998/318), 22 September 1998 on “Protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situations” (S/1998/883) and 8 September 1999 on “the protection of civilians in armed conflicts” (S/1999/957), concern for the protection of the civilian population and

the particular vulnerability of refugees and IDPs is evident and the primary responsibility incumbent on states to guarantee their protection is reaffirmed.

In this context, and in response to the controversy sparked both by the military interventions supposedly carried out for the purposes of protection in Somalia, Bosnia and Kosovo as well as by the failure to respond to the genocide in Rwanda and the massacre in Srebrenica, Secretary-General Kofi Annan appealed to the international community to try to reach a new consensus on how to reconcile respect for the sovereign rights of states with the need to take action in the face of mass violations of human rights and humanitarian law (Annan 1999). In response to this challenge, the report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) adopted the concept of the “responsibility to protect”, known as R2P (ICISS 2001; on the adoption of this concept and its institutionalisation, see: Thakur 2009, pp. 308–340). In line with the principle of state sovereignty, that responsibility rests, in the first instance, with the interested state and only if the state in question is unwilling or unable to halt such suffering, the principle of non-intervention yields to the international responsibility to protect (ICISS 2001, p. xi). According to the report, that duty comprises three kinds of responsibility: to prevent, to react and to rebuild (ICISS 2001, pp. 38–45). Seen in this way, the responsibility to protect is tantamount to a comprehensive peacebuilding agenda. The core idea of R2P is not the right of humanitarian intervention but the state’s obligation to take responsibility for the wellbeing and protection of its population and, in the event that it fails to do so, the international community’s duty to take the necessary appropriate measures. In other words, the idea is that sovereignty, rather than being an absolute right, is an instrumental and contingent notion, the validity of which relies on it being a state tool that serves the interests of the population.

In paragraphs 138 and 139 of the final document from the United Nations World Summit in 2005, the governments of the member states agreed that they had a “responsibility to protect” their populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity. In doing so they underlined that their main concern should be to ensure people’s safety (human security). They also recognised that the international community has a responsibility to use humanitarian as well as diplomatic and other appropriate means to help do so. Although R2P is confined to the four crimes mentioned and can be interpreted in a regressive manner by just emphasising the possibility of military intervention, it can also be interpreted more broadly to include all issues related to the protection of civilians and with a focus on prevention (United Nations General Assembly 2009). The Secretary General’s report from January 2009 on implementing the responsibility to protect suggests “broadening” the concept to include international aid and capacity-building with regard to a range of development areas and good governance (a competent and independent judiciary, human rights, security sector reform, a robust civil society...) that may also help to serve objectives relating to the responsibility to protect (United Nations General Assembly 2009, para. 44). In this regard the emphasis on capacity-building echoes the peacebuilding initiatives suggested in the ICISS report (ICISS 2001, pp. 25–26).

3.4 The Protection of Persons as an Essential Component of Humanitarian Action and Peacebuilding

A heightened awareness of the suffering of millions of civilians in armed conflict situations during the first half of the 1990s forced humanitarian and human rights agencies to examine aspects that went beyond people's immediate material needs and to ask wider questions about personal safety and people's dignity. It led many humanitarian actors to question the role of humanitarian aid in conflicts and to consider the need to incorporate human rights protection into the humanitarian response. Incorporating a rights approach into humanitarian action meant recognising the victims as rights holders with the right to assistance and protection. Unlike an approach based solely on needs, an approach based also on rights generates responsibilities and seeks to ensure people's protection and wellbeing (for a discussion of new humanitarianism, see Macrae 2002; Pérez De Armiño 2002; Darcy 2004; Lages 2006, pp. 15–36).⁵

The realisation that for many people the reality of war, over and above their paramount right to life, means the utter mass violation of all of their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights led to consideration of the concept of protection. The challenge from a human security perspective remains how such violations and suffering can be prevented, alleviated and redressed beyond offering “aid only” or “physical protection only”, understood as restricting the use of force in accordance with the provisions of international humanitarian law (Slim and Bonwick 2006, p. 14).

The response was the development in 1999 of a very clearly summarised concept of protection based on rights, after a consensus was reached by a wide range of humanitarian and human rights agencies that are regularly brought together in Geneva by the ICRC. That consensus resulted in the definition of protection that is widely accepted today and which has been adopted by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, made up of United Nations agencies and the main international NGOs, as well as the Protection Cluster Working Group. According to the latter, protection is:

all activities aimed at ensuring full respect for the rights of the individual in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the relevant bodies of law, i.e. human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law. (Giossi Caverzasio 2001, p. 19).

This definition, rather than focusing on the threats facing civilians (*protection from what?*), focuses on the fundamental rights of civilians from a human security perspective. Protection is thus perceived as being a comprehensive and integrated framework beyond what is strictly humanitarian. The rights-based approach to protection places the emphasis on people's security, dignity, integrity and empowerment (Hughes et al. 2005). It focuses on realising the rights of excluded and marginalised populations, and of those whose rights are at risk of being infringed.

⁵ The change from an approach based on the satisfaction of needs to one based on the fulfilment of rights is considered to be a key feature of what has been called the “new humanitarianism”.

The aim is to ensure that protection is not merely “a legal and programming conversation between agencies, states and armed groups that takes place over the heads of protected persons” (Slim and Bonwick 2006, p. 33).

Rights-based protection has to do with developing and strengthening people’s capabilities. It is therefore “important that people in need of protection are not seen just as the objects of state power but also as the subjects of their own protective capabilities” (Slim and Bonwick 2006, p. 53). In this context the community-based approach aims to develop the capacity of individuals and communities to make “informed” decisions and to take action on their own behalf in order to realise their rights to security, assistance, reparation, recuperation and compensation (UNHCR 2008). As Lederach points out, local participation, capacity-building and accountability have the potential to transform societies (Lederach 1997):

The concept of rights-based protection has been extensively developed in manuals and guides on protection in general as well as protection for specific population groups such as IDPs. Protection is thus defined as any activity that is directed towards effectively realising people’s rights. Protection therefore can be seen as having a triple role: as an objective, as a legal responsibility and as an activity. Protection is an objective that requires full equal respect for the rights of all individuals, without discrimination, in accordance with national and international law. Protection is also a legal responsibility, mainly of the state and its agents. As we pointed out, the approach developed by Francis M. Deng for addressing the problem of IDPs was crucial for furthering understanding of states’ responsibility to protect. When national authorities have neither the capacity nor the will to provide such protection, international humanitarian organisations and other relevant actors also have the responsibility to protect and provide assistance. Especially in situations of internal armed conflict, governments are often indifferent or even hostile to providing protection and assistance. In such cases, protection and assistance from the international community are required, often as a matter of urgency, but are frequently hard to provide (Deng 2007, p. 1).

However, protection is mainly an activity because steps need to be taken to make sure that rights are enjoyed. Humanitarian agencies identify three kinds of protection activity which, starting within the personal environment and moving outwards to the institutional environment, can be carried out simultaneously. These are, firstly, response actions that seek to halt, prevent or alleviate the worst effects of abuses; corrective actions to ensure redress for the violations and restore people’s dignity, including access to justice and reparation; and environment-building action that support political, social, cultural and institutional norms that are conducive to the protection of human rights (Giossi Caverzasio 2001, pp. 19–21).

In questioning the relationship between people and institutions, the rights-based approach to protection has the potential to pose important challenges for the existing power structures and may result in significant changes to the established order. Viewed in this way, protection thus becomes a peacebuilding agenda in the service of human security.

3.5 The Protection of Internally Displaced Persons and Peacebuilding

The alarming gradual rise in the number of displaced persons has led the international community to focus growing attention on the issue. Supporting and protecting displaced persons are not seen solely as a humanitarian and human rights imperative but also as a regional and international security problem and an essential component of peacebuilding (Newman and Van Selm 2003; United Nations General Assembly 2010).

IDPs are, “essentially, ‘internal refugees’, people who would be considered refugees were they to cross an international border” (Mooney 2003, p. 159). There are many reasons why IDPs remain in their country and they vary from situation to situation and from person to person. In conflict situations, for example, displaced persons may be unable to reach the border safely. Sometimes IDPs cannot leave their country because they have no transport. Geographical obstacles, such as mountains or rivers, and factors such as age, disability and health may stand in their way.

IDPs may have their freedom of movement denied by their own government or face restrictions on their right to asylum from foreign governments. This was the case with Turkey when the Iraqi Kurds fled from the repression in Iraq in 1991. Ten years later, in the wake of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States, while the Taliban were preventing Afghans from moving freely within their country, neighbouring countries were closing their borders. As a result, in neither case did the mass refugee flows that were anticipated materialise. However, unlike the refugee population, which has an established system of international protection and assistance, people who are displaced within their national borders remain under domestic jurisdiction and state sovereignty, and the international community does not have the necessary legal or institutional grounds to come to their aid (Mooney 2003, 2005; Puong 2004).

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) operated by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), at the end of 2010 the number of people displaced from their homes because of armed conflict, generalised violence or human rights violations was 27.5 million (IDMC 2010, pp. 8–9). This figure represented an increase of almost one million by comparison with the estimates for 2007 and 2008. Over half of IDPs are located in five countries: Sudan, Colombia, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Somalia. The region with the most displaced persons is Africa, with 11.1 million, or 40 % of the world’s IDPs. Around 2.4 million people remain displaced in Europe, most of them having fled their homes over 15 years ago as a consequence of armed conflict, violence and human rights violations in Turkey, the Balkans and the Caucasus.

The rights-based approach to protection recognises the particular protection needs of specific groups of people, such as IDPs using a rights approach, the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement have created a single, comprehensive protection framework which, by linking to the different provisions of humanitarian,

human rights and refugee law, determines how IDPs should be protected at every stage of their displacement. They protect them from arbitrary displacement, determine the grounds on which they should be protected and helped and establish guarantees for their safe return, resettlement and reintegration (Kälin 2008; Puong 2004, pp. 39–74). From the framework established by the Guidelines, three fundamental and interdependent areas for protecting the rights of displaced persons can be inferred as being crucial for peace building: prevention of displacement; effective reparation for the victims of displacement; and their integration into society.

The protection of IDPs ultimately means ensuring that they can resume a normal life as a result of having secured a lasting solution (IASC 2010, p. 5). Lasting solutions are understood to mean achieving the voluntary, safe and dignified return of the internally displaced to their homes or place of habitual residence, or their sustainable integration in the place where they had sought refuge (local integration) or in another part of the country. According to the *Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons*, IDPs achieve a lasting solution when they no longer require specific assistance or have protection needs related to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without suffering discrimination because of it. Those rights include the right to security, property, housing, education, health and a livelihood. It is possible that they will have to assert their rights to reparation, justice, the truth and the rectification of earlier injustices by resorting to transitional justice or other appropriate measures. The search for lasting solutions for IDPs should be seen as a gradual and often prolonged process, a complex one which addresses any difficulties that may arise with regard to human rights, humanitarian, development, reconstruction and peacebuilding issues.

Despite their existence being acknowledged in virtually all transition and post-conflict situations, IDPs are the forgotten and marginalised ones in peacebuilding processes. Although there have been some normative and conceptual advances with regard to finding durable solutions (IASC 2010) the fact that at least 40 countries have people living in situations of protracted displacement suggests that no actual progress has been made and that these people are living in marginalised conditions. However, unresolved displacement problems can cause instability and thus jeopardise peace processes as well as peacebuilding efforts.

Peacebuilding is supposedly intended to address the particular needs of societies that are emerging or have emerged from conflict. Nevertheless, in peace operations and conflict zones in general following the end of the Cold War, the focus of what has been called “liberal peace” has not been local actors and communities or, of course, the most marginalised groups such as IDPs.⁶ Critical peace research studies

⁶The liberal peace consensus is characterised by the widespread belief among political leaders and “peacebuilders” that the promotion of democracy, the market economy and the raft of institutions associated with the modern state are the motor for peace building. This refers to a combination of theory and policy. Underlying the liberal peace consensus is a liberal peace idea. The idea that certain kinds of state, those with a liberal constitution based on liberal democracy and a market economy, tend to be more peaceful.

have shown that liberal peace has been directed at states, elites, international actors, security issues, liberal institutions and laws (Newman et al. 2009).

The few studies that have looked at the involvement of IDPs in peace processes and peacebuilding have found that the internally displaced are not usually consulted. Their particular circumstances are often overlooked in the language of peace accords, and they are often forgotten or marginalised in peacebuilding initiatives (Koser 2007). At best they are only recognised rhetorically. People become the “means” to political stability as opposed to being the “end” of peacebuilding (Conteh-Morgan 2005). Human security has been relegated to a secondary role.

The Report of the United Nations Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict recognises that, in too many cases, the international community has failed to catalyse a response that offers immediate, tangible results. Capacities and resources have been insufficient to meet demands on the ground in several recurring areas where international assistance is frequently requested as a priority in the immediate aftermath of conflict like “the support to the provision of basic services, such as water and sanitation, health and primary education, and support to the safe and sustainable return and reintegration of internally displaced persons and refugees” (UNGA Security Council 2009).

Protracted displacement is often the result of “political indifference on the part of national authorities, development actors and donors” (UNGA 2010, para. 78). In many cases, the internally displaced, after having received generous humanitarian assistance during the worst moments of the crisis, are forgotten once the armed violence ends. With no help to rebuild their lives, IDPs enter into a vicious circle of aid dependency and protracted displacement. They are also often encouraged or forced to return to their places of origin before it is safe or sustainable for them to do so. Although both options, return or reintegration, are equally valid, most agencies focus on return, often against the will of those concerned, because it is the option for which they have had the most operational experience and the one generally preferred by governments (IDMC 2011, p. 47).

As part of the humanitarian response, the role of the Early Recovery Cluster/Network is widely recognised as setting the foundations for future efforts “by protecting and investing in people’s livelihoods and developing the capacity of community leaders, civil society organisations and local government in pockets of peace” (United Nations General Assembly Security Council 2009, para. 47). It is during transition when outside aid is most crucial for creating the conditions required for ensuring political stability, security, justice and social equality, in other words, the foundations of peacebuilding. Early recuperation activities, for their part, aim to build on humanitarian assistance, support spontaneous community recovery initiatives and lay the foundations for longer-term recovery (Bailey et al. 2009). The lack of assistance for transition situations and recuperation activities is therefore particularly worrying.

3.6 Final Observations

This chapter has sought to stress the potential of humanitarian action for peacebuilding, starting from the common goal of achieving human security and fulfilling the protection agenda. Incorporating protection as one of the pillars of humanitarian action means that humanitarian work should focus on those most at risk, for example, IDPs. Protection ultimately involves fully realising human rights and, therefore, people's rights to a just and sustainable peace. However, despite international recognition of the problem of protecting the civilian population in conflict and post-conflict situations and that the normative changes that have taken place in the system of sovereignty and non-intervention have created new opportunities for international action, the protection of people is still not a priority for peacebuilding. As well as showing that in practice humanitarian responses are still not linked with a recuperation process that allows the foundations of sustainable peace to be set, the case of IDPs is a clear example that people, or human security, are not a priority for peacebuilding processes.

The tendency over the past 10 years to instrumentalise humanitarian action in places such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia and Haiti has linked humanitarian action to peacebuilding not in the interest of human security but of stabilisation and the containment of what are deemed to be threats to international security from weak or fragile states. As pointed out in many reports, since 9/11 certain trends have emerged resulting in civilians being even more vulnerable than they were before: direct attacks on civilians are continuing in most conflicts and the military operations to stabilise Iraq and Afghanistan⁷ have had an enormous negative impact on civilians. This has resulted in a shrinking of humanitarian space: humanitarian actors are less able to reach the populations affected and vulnerable groups have less access to assistance and protection. Military personnel are increasingly involved in humanitarian action, thereby compromising its principles and aims.

At the same time, recognition that comprehensive, integrated approaches need to be developed to find stable and lasting solutions to crises and conflicts and concern that humanitarian action may be hijacked for political and security objectives raises tensions and dilemmas that are difficult to resolve. One of the crucial components of humanitarian action is its apolitical nature, in the sense that it is supposed to be outside of politics and its aims. Humanitarian action therefore needs a *humanitarian space* to ensure access to vulnerable populations, based on respect for the principles of the neutrality, impartiality, humanity and independence of humanitarian action. Respect for independence refers, in particular, to the need for humanitarian objectives to be separate from political and other objectives, and serves to ensure that the purpose of humanitarian aid is only ever to alleviate and prevent the suffering of the victims of humanitarian catastrophes. However, although humanitarian action is based on these principles, the humanitarian agenda is not apolitical. Humanitarian

⁷ See the joint briefing sent by 29 NGOs working in Afghanistan to the Heads of State and Government gathered at the NATO summit in Lisbon in November 2010.

actors do not do their work in a political vacuum but in politically complex settings. Incorporating a rights approach into humanitarian action means that it inevitably becomes politicised to some degree (Hughes et al. 2005). Humanitarian actors have to assume that they form part of, and are participating in, the power relations dynamic and recognise that the objective shared with the peacebuilding agenda is human security if they genuinely want people to be protected. As long as humanitarian agencies at both the organisational and individual level fail to come to terms with this “politicisation”, their ability to respond to attempts at instrumentalisation and their contribution to peacebuilding will continue to be very limited.

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