



## 4 Building and Sustaining Peace

Sebastian Sönsken, Anne Kruck and Zina El-Nahel

*“The beauty of peace is in trying to find solutions together.”*

Dekha Ibrahim Abdi

What is peace? In debates about peace definitions, the distinction between negative and positive peace put forward by Johan Galtung has gained broad acceptance. Negative peace describes peace as the absence of war or direct physical violence. A positive notion of peace includes the increase in social justice and the creation of a culture of peace among people within and across societies. This is the understanding of peace that informs the Berghof Foundation’s approach.

**PEACE** | a complex, long-term and multi-layered process, in which it is possible to identify steps towards peace and measure the decrease of violence and increase of justice. The multi-layered character of peace means that not only governments but also stakeholders at all levels of societies are responsible for it.

**PEACEBUILDING** | a generic term to cover all activities intended to encourage and promote peaceful relations and overcoming violence. A long-term process that seeks to positively alter structural contradictions, improve relations between the conflict parties and encourage overall constructive changes in attitudes. It may also refer to activities connected with economic development, social justice, reconciliation, empowerment of disadvantaged/strategic groups and humanitarian support.

A frequent criticism of positive peace is that it lacks conceptual clarity. Nonetheless, most scholars agree that peace is a complex, long-term and multi-layered process, in which it is possible to identify steps towards peace and measure the decrease of violence and increase of justice. The multi-layered character of peace means that not only governments but stakeholders at all levels of societies are responsible for it.

### **Steps for peace**

Working toward peace requires at least three fundamental steps: First, a vision of peace must be articulated. Peace on an individual level obviously differs from international peace; researchers, politicians and artists all use the term “peace” in different ways, and interpretations vary according to culture. In some societies the word “peace” may even cause resentment due to experiences of oppression inflicted in the name of peace. Peace definitions are therefore context-specific. Developing common peace visions is an important aspect of peace work.

Second, it is crucial to specify the conditions for peace in or between societies, with a view to establishing these conditions. In his analysis of the historical emergence of peace within western societies, Dieter Senghaas identified six crucial conditions and put them together as a “civilisatory hexagon”: power monopoly, rule of law, interdependence and affect control, democratic participation, social justice and a constructive culture of conflict (see → Educating for Peace).

Third, comparing the current realities in a given society with the peace vision, it is essential to find out what peace-supporting structures, institutions or attitudes need to be created or strengthened. A wide range of strategies and methods are used to make, keep, build or sustain peace on different actor levels (often also referred to as tracks). Peace efforts can be undertaken by actors on all levels and across several levels and tracks (see Figure 1).

### **From peacebuilding to sustaining peace**

In his *Agenda for Peace*, former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali (1992) described peacebuilding as a major instrument for securing peace in post-war situations. This narrowly-defined approach was criticised by the Advisory Group of Experts who reviewed the peacebuilding architecture of the UN in 2015. The group called for the broader concept of “sustaining peace” which puts more emphasis on the prevention of violent conflict to “save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” as stated in the UN Charter. They see “sustaining peace” as an overarching term including prevention, peacemaking and peacekeeping, as well as peacebuilding, post-war recovery and reconstruction. This paradigm shift within the UN has come about in the course of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals. Although only Goal 16 relates directly to peace – “promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” – all 17 Goals are interconnected and

## Pyramid of peacebuilding

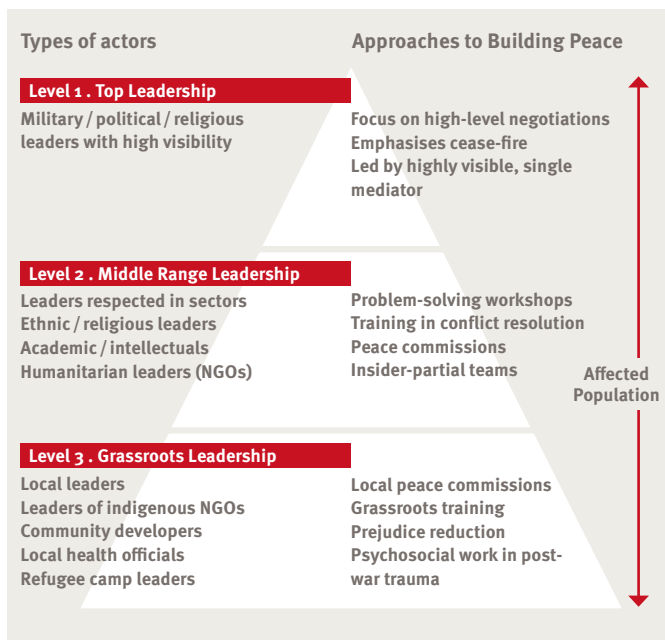


Figure 1, source: John Paul Lederach, 1997

relevant for the achievement of positive peace, such as quality of education, access to food and clean water or health services.

Although the term “sustaining peace” might be new, comprehensive understandings of peacebuilding are not. Scholars and civil society organisations have long promoted peacebuilding approaches which include preventive measures. These can be applied in all stages of conflict and are also needed in relatively peaceful societies. Peacebuilding covers all activities aimed at promoting peace and overcoming violence in a society.

Although most activities on track 2 and 3 are carried out by civil society actors, the establishment of links to track 1 is considered essential for sustainable transformation of societies. While external agents can facilitate and support peacebuilding, ultimately it must be driven by local actors, often called agents of peaceful change. It cannot be imposed from the outside. Some peacebuilding work done by international organisations is criticised for being too bureaucratic, orientated towards short-term timeframes, and financially dependent on governmental donors and therefore accountable to them but not to the people on the ground. It thus seems to reinforce the status quo instead of calling for a deep transformation of structural injustices. Transformative peacebuilding needs to address social justice issues and should respect the principles of partnership, multipartiality and inclusivity (→ Transforming Conflict).

Peacebuilding, which seeks to sustain positive peace, is not a rapid response tool but a long-term process of ongoing work for all societies in the following three dimensions:

1. *Altering structural injustices* is widely regarded as essential for lasting peace. Important elements are state-building and democratisation measures, the reform of structures that reproduce the conflict (e.g. the education system), economic and sustainable development, social justice and human rights, empowerment of civil society and constructive media (→ Establishing Infrastructures for Peace; → Addressing Social Grievances; → Empowerment and Ownership).

2. *Improving relations between the conflict parties* is an integral part of peacebuilding to reduce the effects of war-related hostility and disrupted communication between the conflict parties. Programmes of reconciliation, trust building and dealing with the past aim to transform damaged relationships (→ Dealing with the Past and Transitional Justice). They deal with the non-material effects of violent conflict.

| Sustaining peace as an overarching term   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| Prevention  | Peacemaking  |  |
| Fulfilment of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals: no poverty, good health, quality education, gender equality, etc. | Diplomatic efforts to end violence and to achieve a peace agreement, e. g. negotiation, mediation, arbitration and judicial settlement |  |

Table 1, source: Berghof Foundation

3. *Changing individual attitudes and behaviour* is the third dimension of peacebuilding. It means strengthening individual peace capacities, breaking stereotypes, empowering formerly disadvantaged groups, and healing trauma and psychological wounds of war. One frequently used measure for strengthening individual peace capacities is training people in non-violent action and conflict resolution (→ Educating for Peace).

Many peacebuilding measures seek to have a greater impact by combining strategies, which encompass all three dimensions (e. g. bringing former conflict parties together to work on improving their economic situation and thus changing individual attitudes). Yet peacebuilding actors and organisations are still struggling to make their work more effective and to generate “collective impact” (see Woodrow 2017). Given the wide variety of peacebuilding approaches, it is therefore important to identify, cluster and publish best-practice examples to create learning opportunities for all present and future peacebuilders.

| Peacekeeping   | Peacebuilding  |
|--|--|
| For example, deployment of armed forces to enforce a ceasefire agreement and monitor peace processes in post-war societies | Includes post-war recovery and reconstruction. For example, demobilising and reintegrating combatants; assisting the return of refugees; supporting justice and security sector reform; fostering reconciliation |

### References and Further Reading

**Johan Galtung (1996).** *Peace by Peaceful Means – Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. Oslo: PRIO.

**John Paul Lederach (2010).** *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Dieter Senghaas (2007).** *On Perpetual Peace: A Timely Assessment*. New York/Oxford: Berghahn Books.

### Online Resources

**Berghof Foundation (2014).** *What is peace? A movie for children*. Berlin: Berghof Foundation. [www.berghof-foundation.org/programmes/peace-education-global-learning/frieden-fragende/](http://www.berghof-foundation.org/programmes/peace-education-global-learning/frieden-fragende/).

**International Peace Institute (2017).** *Sustaining Peace: What does it mean in practice?* New York: IPI. [www.ipinst.org/2017/04/sustaining-peace-in-practice](http://www.ipinst.org/2017/04/sustaining-peace-in-practice).

**Oxford Research Group [Emily Morgan and Oliver Ramsbotham] (2017):** *ORG's Collective Strategic Thinking Model*. London: Oxford Research Group. [www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/orgs-collective-strategic-thinking-model](http://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/orgs-collective-strategic-thinking-model).

**Peter Woodrow (2017).** *Framework for Collective Impact in Peacebuilding. Version for field application & testing*. Cambridge, MA: CDA. [cdacollaborative.org/publication/framework-collective-impact-peacebuilding/](http://cdacollaborative.org/publication/framework-collective-impact-peacebuilding/).