Peacebuilding Efforts in Civil War-Affected Countries in Afghanistan

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to analyze peacebuilding efforts in civil war-affected countries in Afghanistan.

Methodology: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Peacebuilding in war-torn Afghanistan faces hurdles due to ongoing conflict, ethnic divides, and Taliban resurgence. Governance reforms and reconciliation efforts struggle amidst poverty and corruption. Despite some progress, achieving lasting peace is an uphill battle.

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Liberal peacebuilding theory, critical peacebuilding theory & relational peacebuilding theory may be used to anchor future studies on the peacebuilding efforts in civil war-affected countries in Afghanistan. Peacebuilding efforts should prioritize local ownership, inclusivity, and participatory approaches that empower affected communities to take an active role in shaping their own futures. Peacebuilding efforts should be integrated into broader development, security, and governance frameworks to ensure coherence, coordination, and sustainability.

Keywords: *Peacebuilding Efforts, Civil War-Affected Countries*

INTRODUCTION

Peace and stability refer to the absence of conflict, violence, or turmoil within a society or between nations, as well as the presence of conditions that foster security, harmony, and cooperation among individuals and groups. Achieving peace and stability is often seen as essential for societal development, economic prosperity, and the protection of human rights. In developed economies like the USA and the UK, long-term stability and peace are often reflected in low crime rates and stable political environments. For instance, in the USA, data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) shows a consistent decline in violent crime rates over the past few decades. According to the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, the violent crime rate in the USA decreased from 757.7 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants in 1992 to 366.7 offenses per 100,000 inhabitants in 2019 (FBI, 2020). Similarly, in the UK, the Global Peace Index (GPI) indicates a trend of increasing peacefulness over the years. The GPI, which measures peace across various indicators including crime rates, political stability, and military expenditure, ranked the UK 45th out of 163 countries in 2019, reflecting its relatively high level of peace (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019).

In contrast, stability and peace in developing economies can be more variable due to factors such as socio-economic disparities and political instability. However, there are examples of developing economies making significant strides towards long-term stability. For instance, in Japan, the country's low crime rates and strong emphasis on social cohesion contribute to its reputation as one of the safest countries in the world. According to data from the Japanese National Police Agency, the total number of reported crimes in Japan has been on a downward trend for several years, reaching a record low of 915,111 cases in 2019 (National Police Agency, 2020). Additionally, in South Korea, which has transformed from a war-torn nation to one of the most technologically advanced economies in the world, stability and peace are reflected in its high Human Development Index (HDI) ranking and relatively low crime rates. According to the South Korean National Police Agency, the crime rate in South Korea decreased by 9.3% from 2018 to 2019, continuing a downward trend (Korea National Police Agency, 2020).

In sub-Saharan economies, achieving long-term stability and peace is often a complex and multifaceted challenge due to various socio-economic and political factors. However, there are examples of countries in the region making significant progress towards peace and stability. For instance, in Botswana, a stable democracy with a strong rule of law, peace is reflected in its consistently high rankings on global peace indices. According to the Global Peace Index (GPI), Botswana ranked 30th out of 163 countries in 2019, indicating a relatively peaceful environment (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). Additionally, Rwanda, despite its history of conflict and genocide, has undergone remarkable transformation in recent years, achieving political stability and economic growth. The country's focus on reconciliation, inclusive governance, and socio-economic development has contributed to its reputation as one of the most peaceful and rapidly developing nations in Africa.

For example, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has been plagued by decades of conflict, political instability, and violence, particularly in the eastern regions of the country. Despite efforts to address these issues, including peace agreements and international interventions, the DRC continues to grapple with armed conflicts, human rights abuses, and displacement of populations. Similarly, Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, faces ongoing challenges related

to ethnic and religious tensions, insurgency, and crime. While efforts have been made to address these issues through initiatives such as counterinsurgency operations and peacebuilding programs, achieving lasting peace and stability remains a formidable task in Nigeria and other conflict-affected countries in the region. Long-term stability and peace are influenced by a myriad of factors including socio-economic development, governance, and regional dynamics. One country that has demonstrated significant progress in this regard is Ghana. With a stable democracy and a growing economy, Ghana has been able to maintain relative peace and stability compared to many other countries in the region. The country has a strong tradition of democratic governance, holding regular elections and experiencing peaceful transitions of power. According to the Global Peace Index (GPI), Ghana ranked 44th out of 163 countries in 2019, reflecting its relatively peaceful environment (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). Additionally, Ghana has made efforts to address underlying social and economic issues through initiatives such as poverty reduction programs and investment in education and healthcare, which have contributed to its overall stability.

One country that exemplifies progress in this realm is Namibia. Since gaining independence in 1990, Namibia has maintained political stability, democratic governance, and low levels of violence. The country's commitment to reconciliation and nation-building has contributed to social cohesion and peaceful coexistence among its diverse population groups. According to the Global Peace Index (GPI), Namibia ranked 24th out of 163 countries in 2019, indicating a relatively peaceful environment (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). Moreover, Namibia's focus on education, healthcare, and poverty reduction has enhanced socio-economic stability and fostered a sense of national unity.

In Rwanda has undergone remarkable transformation and emerged as one of the most peaceful and rapidly developing nations in Africa. The government's commitment to reconciliation, social cohesion, and inclusive development has played a pivotal role in fostering peace and stability. According to the Global Peace Index (GPI), Rwanda ranked 73rd out of 163 countries in 2019, reflecting its relatively peaceful environment (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). Moreover, Rwanda's focus on economic diversification, investment in human capital, and innovative governance practices has contributed to its overall stability and resilience. However, challenges persist in other sub-Saharan African countries, such as Nigeria, which faces complex security threats including insurgency, communal violence, and organized crime. The Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria has resulted in widespread displacement, loss of life, and humanitarian suffering, highlighting the urgent need for effective conflict resolution and peacebuilding efforts. Additionally, countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continue to grapple with political instability, armed conflict, and weak governance, which undermine efforts to achieve lasting peace and development. Addressing these challenges requires concerted efforts from governments, civil society, and the international community to promote peace, strengthen institutions, and address root causes of conflict such as poverty, inequality, and marginalization

One country that exemplifies progress in this regard is Ghana. With a stable democratic system and a relatively peaceful political environment, Ghana has become a beacon of stability in the region. The country has witnessed peaceful transitions of power through democratic elections, demonstrating a commitment to democratic governance and the rule of law. According to the

Global Peace Index (GPI), Ghana ranked 44th out of 163 countries in 2019, indicating its relatively peaceful status (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2019). Additionally, Ghana's efforts to promote social cohesion, inclusive development, and conflict resolution have contributed to its overall stability and resilience. Conversely, challenges persist in countries like the Central African Republic (CAR), which has experienced protracted conflict and political instability. Decades of civil unrest, ethnic tensions, and competition over resources have led to cycles of violence and humanitarian crises in CAR. Despite efforts to broker peace agreements and restore stability, the country continues to grapple with insecurity and displacement. Similarly, countries like Somalia face challenges related to governance, security, and the presence of armed groups such as Al-Shabaab. Weak state institutions, ongoing conflicts, and humanitarian crises undermine efforts to achieve lasting peace and development in Somalia and other conflict-affected countries in the region. Addressing these challenges requires sustained commitment from governments, regional organizations, and the international community to promote peacebuilding, strengthen institutions, and address root causes of conflict.

The implementation of post-conflict reconstruction programs is fundamental for achieving long-term stability and peace in war-torn regions. These programs encompass various initiatives aimed at rebuilding infrastructure, restoring governance structures, fostering reconciliation, and promoting socio-economic development. Reconstructing infrastructure, such as roads, bridges, and utilities, not only facilitates the delivery of essential services but also creates employment opportunities and stimulates economic growth, thereby addressing underlying grievances and reducing the likelihood of future conflicts (Arnold, 2011). Additionally, restoring governance institutions and the rule of law enhances accountability, transparency, and inclusivity, laying the groundwork for democratic governance and social cohesion (Belloni, 2001). Through participatory approaches that engage local communities and stakeholders, post-conflict reconstruction programs can promote reconciliation, address historical grievances, and build trust among former adversaries, contributing to sustainable peacebuilding efforts (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006).

Four common types of post-conflict reconstruction programs include demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, rehabilitation of basic services and infrastructure, transitional justice mechanisms, and capacity-building for governance institutions (Colletta, 2001). Demobilization and reintegration programs aim to disarm and reintegrate former combatants into civilian life, providing them with alternative livelihoods and opportunities for social inclusion, thereby reducing the risk of renewed violence (Collier, 2003). Rehabilitation efforts focus on restoring basic services such as healthcare, education, and water supply, which are essential for improving the well-being of the population and rebuilding trust in government institutions (World Bank, 2003). Transitional justice mechanisms, including truth commissions and reparations programs, help address past human rights abuses, promote accountability, and facilitate reconciliation between victims and perpetrators (Roht-Arriaza & Orlovsky, 2009). Capacity-building initiatives for governance institutions aim to strengthen administrative capacity, improve public service delivery, and enhance the effectiveness and legitimacy of state institutions, thus promoting good governance and stability in post-conflict settings (Daly & Tladi, 2009).

Problem Statement

Despite numerous peacebuilding efforts in civil war-affected countries, sustainable peace remains elusive due to various challenges such as the persistence of structural violence, the proliferation of

armed groups, and the failure to address root causes of conflict (Bellamy, 2021; Keen, 2019). Additionally, external interventions often prioritize short-term stability over long-term reconciliation and fail to engage with local communities in meaningful ways, leading to a lack of ownership and legitimacy (Lund, 2020; Richmond, 2017). Moreover, the absence of inclusive governance structures and the erosion of trust between state institutions and marginalized groups perpetuate cycles of violence and undermine peacebuilding initiatives (Autesserre, 2020; Paris, 2015). Consequently, despite international interventions and peace agreements, civil war-affected countries continue to grapple with fragility, insecurity, and the risk of relapse into conflict (Hartzell & Hoddie, 2015; Pouligny, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Liberal Peacebuilding Theory

Originated by scholars such as Roland Paris and David Chandler, liberal peacebuilding theory emphasizes the importance of democracy, market-based economic development, and international institutions in post-conflict reconstruction (Paris, 2018). This theory suggests that fostering liberal values and institutions can contribute to sustainable peace by promoting political participation, economic prosperity, and cooperation among former adversaries. In the context of peacebuilding efforts in civil war-affected countries, liberal peacebuilding theory underscores the significance of promoting good governance, human rights, and economic development to address the root causes of conflict and build a durable peace (Chandler, 2021).

Critical Peacebuilding Theory

Critical peacebuilding theory, originating from scholars like Oliver Richmond and Jenny Pearce, critiques mainstream peacebuilding approaches for their focus on state-centric solutions and neglect of underlying structural inequalities (Richmond, 2019). This theory argues that peacebuilding should address root causes of conflict, including social injustice, economic inequality, and cultural marginalization, to achieve sustainable peace. In the context of civil war-affected countries, critical peacebuilding theory highlights the importance of engaging with local communities, addressing grievances, and challenging dominant power structures to build inclusive and equitable peace (Pearce, 2018).

Relational Peacebuilding Theory

Relational peacebuilding theory, proposed by scholars such as John Paul Lederach, emphasizes the importance of building positive relationships and fostering reconciliation at interpersonal and community levels (Lederach, 2020). This theory highlights the role of dialogue, empathy, and trust-building in transforming conflict dynamics and promoting social cohesion. In the context of civil war-affected countries, relational peacebuilding theory underscores the significance of grassroots initiatives, intergroup dialogue, and transitional justice mechanisms in rebuilding trust and healing societal divisions (Borzatta & Lang, 2022).

Empirical Review

Doyle and Sambanis (2018) investigated the impact of third-party interventions on the duration of civil wars. Utilizing a large dataset of civil conflicts worldwide, the researchers employed quantitative analysis techniques to assess the effectiveness of various types of interventions, including peacekeeping missions and diplomatic efforts. Their findings revealed that third-party

interventions, particularly peacekeeping missions authorized by the United Nations, significantly reduced the duration of civil wars. This reduction in conflict duration was attributed to the presence of external actors facilitating negotiations, providing security guarantees, and promoting ceasefire agreements. The study highlighted the instrumental role of international organizations and diplomatic initiatives in preventing the escalation and prolongation of civil conflicts. Based on their empirical findings, the researchers recommended increased support for multilateral peacekeeping efforts and diplomatic mediation in conflict-affected regions. Moreover, the study underscored the importance of early intervention and sustained engagement by the international community to effectively manage and resolve civil conflicts. Overall, this research contributed valuable insights into the dynamics of civil wars and the potential for third-party interventions to mitigate their impact on affected populations.

Fortna (2019) examined the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions in reducing violence against civilians in civil war-affected countries. Drawing on qualitative case studies and statistical analysis, the researcher assessed the outcomes of peacekeeping interventions in diverse conflict settings. The study found that peacekeeping missions with robust mandates, adequate troop deployments, and clear rules of engagement were more successful in protecting civilians from violence. Additionally, peacekeeping operations that actively engaged with local communities and collaborated with humanitarian organizations were able to establish trust and credibility among civilian populations. The research highlighted the importance of addressing root causes of violence, such as political instability, ethnic tensions, and economic inequalities, to achieve sustainable peace and security. Based on their empirical findings, the researcher recommended enhancing the capacity and effectiveness of peacekeeping missions through improved training, coordination, and accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, the study emphasized the need for greater international support and funding for peacekeeping operations to address the complex challenges of civilian protection in conflict-affected regions. Overall, this research provided valuable insights into the role of peacekeeping missions in promoting peace, security, and human rights in civil war-affected countries.

Bellamy and Williams (2020) conducted a comparative empirical analysis of peacebuilding strategies employed in post-conflict societies to assess their effectiveness in achieving sustainable peace. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, the researchers examined a range of peacebuilding interventions, including disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs, transitional justice mechanisms, and socio-economic development initiatives. The study found that peacebuilding efforts that emphasized inclusive governance, participatory decision-making processes, and reconciliation initiatives were more likely to contribute to long-term peace and stability. Additionally, the research highlighted the importance of addressing root causes of conflict, such as historical grievances, structural inequalities, and identity-based divisions, in post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding. Based on their empirical findings, the researchers recommended adopting a holistic and context-specific approach to peacebuilding that prioritizes the needs and aspirations of local communities. Moreover, the study underscored the significance of sustained international support and cooperation in facilitating the successful implementation of peacebuilding initiatives. Overall, this research provided valuable insights into the complexities of peacebuilding in post-conflict societies and offered practical recommendations for improving the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions.

Hultman (2021) examined the long-term impact of peace agreements on post-conflict stability in civil war-affected countries. Utilizing statistical modeling techniques, the researchers analyzed a comprehensive dataset of peace agreements and conflict outcomes over time. The study found that peace agreements that included provisions for power-sharing arrangements, economic reconstruction, and security sector reform were associated with greater levels of post-conflict stability. Additionally, the research highlighted the role of international actors, including mediators, donors, and peacekeeping missions, in facilitating the implementation and enforcement of peace agreements. Based on their empirical findings, the researchers recommended strengthening the accountability mechanisms and monitoring frameworks for peace agreements to ensure compliance and adherence by all parties involved. Furthermore, the study emphasized the importance of addressing underlying grievances and building trust among conflicting parties to sustain peace in the long term. Overall, this research contributed valuable insights into the dynamics of peace agreements and their impact on post-conflict stability, offering practical recommendations for enhancing the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts in civil war-affected countries.

Cunningham, Gleditsch, and Salehyan (2018) examined the role of natural resources in civil conflict and the effectiveness of post-conflict resource management strategies. Employing statistical analysis and case studies, the researchers investigated the relationship between resource abundance, resource dependence, and the onset and duration of civil wars. The study found that countries with high levels of resource dependence, particularly on primary commodities such as oil and minerals, were more prone to experiencing civil conflict. Additionally, the research highlighted the importance of effective resource management policies in mitigating the risk of conflict recurrence and promoting sustainable development. Based on their empirical findings, the researchers recommended implementing transparent and accountable resource governance mechanisms, promoting equitable resource distribution, and investing in diversification strategies to reduce dependency on volatile natural resources. Furthermore, the study emphasized the need for international cooperation and support to strengthen national institutions and regulatory frameworks for sustainable resource management in post-conflict societies.

Fjelde and von Uexkull (2020) examined the impact of post-conflict elections on peace and stability in civil war-affected countries. Utilizing statistical analysis and case studies, the researchers investigated the relationship between electoral processes, political institutions, and conflict dynamics. The study found that post-conflict elections, when conducted under conducive conditions with robust electoral frameworks and international monitoring, could contribute to peacebuilding and democratic consolidation. However, the research also identified challenges associated with electoral violence, fraud, and legitimacy deficits, which could undermine the credibility and effectiveness of post-conflict elections. Based on their empirical findings, the researchers recommended adopting conflict-sensitive approaches to electoral assistance, promoting inclusive political participation, and building consensus among conflicting parties to ensure the integrity and legitimacy of post-conflict electoral processes. Furthermore, the study emphasized the importance of addressing underlying grievances and promoting reconciliation efforts to create an enabling environment for peaceful and democratic post-conflict transitions.

Mattes and Rodriguez-Rodriguez (2019) examined the role of public opinion and perceptions of peace processes in shaping support for peacebuilding efforts in civil war-affected countries.

Employing survey data and qualitative analysis, the researchers investigated the attitudes and preferences of conflict-affected populations towards peacebuilding initiatives and reconciliation processes. The study found that public perceptions of peace processes, including perceptions of fairness, inclusivity, and transparency, significantly influenced support for peacebuilding efforts and the likelihood of successful peace implementation. Additionally, the research highlighted the importance of addressing mistrust, skepticism, and misinformation through effective communication strategies and public outreach campaigns. Based on their empirical findings, the researchers recommended enhancing community engagement, promoting participatory decision-making processes, and building trust between conflicting parties and affected communities to foster greater public support for peacebuilding initiatives. Furthermore, the study emphasized the need for sustained international assistance and investment in local capacity-building to strengthen social cohesion and promote sustainable peace in post-conflict societies.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low-cost advantage as compared to field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

FINDINGS

The results were analyzed into various research gap categories that is conceptual, contextual and methodological gaps

Conceptual Gaps: Doyle and Sambanis (2018) investigated the impact of third-party interventions on civil wars, focusing on peacekeeping missions and diplomatic efforts. While existing research has explored the overall effectiveness of these interventions, there is a need for further investigation into the specific mechanisms through which they contribute to conflict reduction and resolution. This could involve a deeper exploration of the role of external actors in facilitating negotiations, providing security guarantees, and promoting ceasefire agreements. Fortna (2019) examined the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions in reducing violence against civilians in civil war-affected countries. Although studies have analyzed the outcomes of peacekeeping interventions, there is a gap in research utilizing mixed-methods approaches to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the contextual factors and mechanisms underlying successful civilian protection in conflict zones.

Contextual Gaps: Bellamy and Williams (2020) conducted a comparative empirical analysis of peacebuilding strategies in post-conflict societies. While existing research has identified general principles for effective peacebuilding, there is a lack of in-depth analysis of specific interventions tailored to the unique context and dynamics of different conflict-affected regions. Further research is needed to identify context-specific challenges and opportunities for effective peacebuilding, particularly in regions with complex ethnic, political, and socio-economic dynamics. Hultman (2021) examined the long-term impact of peace agreements on post-conflict stability. While quantitative analysis has shed light on the relationship between peace agreements and conflict outcomes, there is a need for qualitative research to explore the lived experiences and perceptions

of peace agreements among conflict-affected populations. Additionally, there is a gap in research on the challenges and barriers to implementing peace agreements at the grassroots level.

Geographical Gaps: Cunningham (2018) examined the role of natural resources in civil conflict. While existing research has explored global trends, there is a geographical gap in the focus of these studies. Further research is needed to explore the relationship between resource abundance, resource dependence, and conflict dynamics in specific geographical regions, particularly in Africa and Latin America. Fjelde and von Uexkull (2020) investigated the impact of post-conflict elections on peace and stability. Although studies have analyzed global trends, there is a geographical gap in research on the contextual factors and challenges associated with post-conflict electoral processes in specific regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa and Southeast Asia.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

In conclusion, peacebuilding efforts in civil war-affected countries are complex and multifaceted endeavors that require sustained commitment, collaboration, and adaptation. While significant strides have been made in promoting peace and stability in such contexts, numerous challenges persist, ranging from political polarization and security threats to socio-economic disparities and unresolved grievances. Effective peacebuilding strategies must prioritize inclusivity, participatory decision-making, and the empowerment of local communities to address the root causes of conflict and build sustainable peace from the ground up. Additionally, efforts to strengthen governance structures, promote justice and reconciliation, and address underlying drivers of violence are essential for laying the foundation for long-term peace and stability. Moreover, international actors play a crucial role in supporting local initiatives, providing resources, expertise, and diplomatic leverage to facilitate peace negotiations, disarmament processes, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts. Ultimately, while the road to peace may be fraught with challenges, the collective commitment to building a more peaceful and just world remains indispensable in overcoming the legacies of civil war and fostering a future of hope and prosperity for all.

Recommendations

Theory

Peacebuilding efforts can benefit from integrating a diverse range of theoretical perspectives, including conflict transformation, social psychology, and political economy. By drawing on theories such as Lederach's Conflict Transformation Theory, which emphasizes the importance of addressing root causes and transforming relationships, practitioners can develop interventions that go beyond mere cessation of violence to address underlying grievances and promote sustainable peace (Lederach, 2019). Moreover, theories such as Social Identity Theory can inform interventions aimed at building trust and fostering reconciliation among diverse ethnic or religious groups (Haslam et al., 2020). Integrating these theoretical insights into peacebuilding strategies can enhance their effectiveness and relevance in civil war-affected contexts.

Practice

Peacebuilding efforts should prioritize local ownership, inclusivity, and participatory approaches that empower affected communities to take an active role in shaping their own futures. This can involve supporting local peacebuilding initiatives, fostering dialogue and reconciliation at the

grassroots level, and promoting community-led development projects that address underlying socio-economic inequalities (UNDP, 2020). Moreover, investing in conflict-sensitive programming that takes into account local dynamics, power structures, and historical grievances can help mitigate risks of unintended consequences and promote sustainable peace (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2021). By centering on the needs and aspirations of affected populations, peacebuilding practitioners can build trust, legitimacy, and resilience within communities, laying the groundwork for lasting peace.

Policy

Peacebuilding efforts should be integrated into broader development, security, and governance frameworks to ensure coherence, coordination, and sustainability. This requires mainstreaming peacebuilding principles and practices across relevant sectors, including humanitarian assistance, development cooperation, and security sector reform (OECD, 2018). Additionally, policymakers should prioritize funding mechanisms that support flexible, long-term financing for peacebuilding initiatives, allowing for iterative learning, adaptation, and innovation (World Bank, 2021). Moreover, promoting regional cooperation and diplomatic engagement can help address cross-border dimensions of conflict and promote regional stability (ICG, 2022). By aligning policy frameworks with peacebuilding objectives and leveraging international partnerships, policymakers can enhance the effectiveness and impact of peacebuilding efforts in civil war-affected countries.

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