

# **From DDR/SSR to social cohesion: how security is embedded in the UN Peacebuilding model in Sierra Leone**

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## **Abstract**

Security and peacebuilding are two intrinsic concepts and none of them is being applied without considering their dimensions in the field. In the scope of this paper, there are at least two dimensions to be analysed: the military and the social one. However, a strategy to achieve peace in post-civil war society requires the application of a broader dimension of the level of security engaged. In this sense, the UN concept of peacebuilding contributed to the emergence of different perspectives on how to provide security. This article aims to analyse the security dimension in the peacebuilding model applied to Sierra Leone by the UN. It follows a conceptual approach on both peacebuilding and security dimensions and their nexus, in order to discuss the UN strategy to implement DDR and SSR programmes and getting an overview how these concepts link to their perspectives on human security.

## **Introduction**

Security and peacebuilding are two intrinsic concepts and none of them exists or is being putting into practice without considering their dimensions in the field. In the scope of this essay, there are at least two dimensions to analyse: military and social. However, a strategy to construct peace in a post-civil war society requires the application of a broader dimension of the level of security engaged. At the same time, it needs to look at the circumstances in which the same concept may be attributed another dimension, other than its minimalist condition of diminishing the military threat or direct violence. In this sense, the emergence of a UN peacebuilding concept contributed to the emergence of a different perspective on how to provide security. The proposal of this essay is to analyse the security dimension of the peacebuilding model applied to Sierra Leone, emphasizing that this concept is the basic approach considered in the moment of designing and evaluating missions on the ground. The article starts with a conceptual approach of both peacebuilding and security and their nexus, in order to discuss, in the one hand, from the perspective that security is related to its military essence and, consequently, to its strategy to implement DDR and SSR strategies in post-armed conflict countries; and, on the other hand, to get a broad overview, linking the concept to its variations of human security or processes of securitization.

## **Security and peacebuilding nexus**

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When the concept of peacebuilding appeared as a role of the peace missions proposed by the UN former Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, in 1992, there was not any mention or relation to the concept of security *per se*. At that time, peacebuilding was defined in the context of the aftermath of a civil war as an *ad continuum* strategy responsible for “rebuilding the institutions and infrastructures of nations torn by civil war and strife; and building bonds of peaceful mutual benefit among nations formerly at war” (UN, 1992: 2). In the same document, peacebuilding was characterised as an “action [capable] to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict” (UN, 1992: 3). Since its emergence in the *Agenda for Peace*, peacebuilding was enlarged by, in one hand, the Brahimi Report (UN, 2000: 3), which defined it as an activity which is “undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war”, and, on the other hand, by the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), through the resolutions 1645 and 60/180 which were published on December 2005.

In both resolutions, the creation of the PBC was an attempt to construct a “coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation with a view to achieving sustainable peace” (UN, 2005a; 2005b). In this sense, the PBC was created to act as an intergovernmental advisory body which aimed to support peace efforts in countries emerging from armed conflict, and as a key addition to the capacity of the International Community in the broad peace agenda (UN, 2005a; 2005b). The PBC is based on three pillars of action: (1) bringing together all of the relevant actors, including international donors, the international financial institutions, national governments, troop contributing countries; (2) marshalling resources and (3) advising on and proposing integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery and where appropriate, highlighting any gaps that threaten to undermine peace (UN, 2005a; 2005b).

These pillars provided by the UN not only changed from time to time, as they also contributed to the enlargement of different dimensions of security. Conceived primarily as a positivist perspective, in which security was about survival (Buzan *et al*, 1998), and also as a holistic framework based on *human security* (UNDP, 1994), the concept of security encompasses at least three levels of analysis in the scope of this essay. First, it can be understood as a “relative freedom from war, coupled with a relatively high expectation that defeat will not be a consequence of any war that should occur” (Bellamy, 1981); second, as a mutual relationship between the nexus *internal and external* “that threaten or have the potential to bring down or weaken state structures, both territorial and institutional, and governing regimes (Ayoob, 1995); and thirdly, a perspective in which it implies in both “coercive means to check an aggressor and all manner of persuasion, bolstered by the prospect of mutually shared benefits, to transform hostility into cooperation” (Kolodziej, 2005). Notwithstanding, all those concepts mentioned previously find support in what Buzan *et al* stated, mentioning that security is a “self-referential practice, because it is in this practice that the issue becomes a security issue – not necessarily because a real existential threat exists but because the issue is presented as such a threat” (Buzan *et al*, 1998: 24). In this regard, the process of establishing a strategy to provide security is based in both material and immaterial conceptions of what constitutes a threat to internal and external levels and, at the same time, how those levels tend to influence the deployment of an intervention to provide security.

Considering these definitions, there are two important contributions that give a perspective on how security and peacebuilding are intrinsically linked and how the security dimension is perceived within the peacebuilding concept and, consequently, how it intends to establish a sense of social cohesion when applied. The first one is provided by Richmond (2015), who clarifies that peacebuilding “recreates the state centric order, territorial integrity, and basic human rights, while also attempting to institutionalise, political, social, and economic reform according to the precepts of the democratic peace, which have been widely accepted in the post-Cold War environment” (Richmond, 2015: 7). The second one is provided by Diehl (2008), who concluded his analysis emphasizing the existence of five dimensions which peacebuilding are based on: its goals and, consequently, its strategies to achieve such goals; the timing of such activities; the context in which peacebuilding should be carried out and, mainly, who are the actors capable of carrying out the peacebuilding actions. Based on these two contributions, the sense of social cohesion lays on that it promotes “the capacity of a society to ensure the welfare of all its members, minimising disparities and avoiding polarisation” (CDCS, 2004), being also understood as “the belief – held by citizens in a given nation state – that they share a moral community, which enables them to trust each other” (Larsen, 2013, 2014).

In this regard, how was the security dimension incorporated and applied within peacebuilding in Sierra Leone? In order to answer this question, the next part of this essay analyses the applicability of the concept of security in a process of reconstructing a post-armed conflict country, and, at the same time, how the United Nations enlarged this applicability into two different ways: one, by the model established by the PBC and, second, by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which incorporated the peacebuilding framework into its policies of constructing human potentialities.

### **The UN peacebuilding in Sierra Leone**

The role of the UN peacebuilding in Sierra Leone<sup>2</sup> can be analysed within three different initiatives: first, the creation of the United Nations Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) in January 2006 through the Resolution 1620/2005 (UN, 2005c); second, the inclusion of the peacebuilding mission into the Peacebuilding Commission's Agenda in July 2006; and thirdly, the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) on Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding initiated in 2008. The first and the second initiatives mentioned above did not change the purposes of the mission in its essence.

While the UNIOSIL was responsible for assisting the Government of Sierra Leone in different levels of action, such as i) building the capacity of state institutions to address further the root causes of the conflict; ii) developing a national action plan for human rights; iii) building the capacity of the National Electoral Commission; iv) enhancing good governance; v) strengthening the rule of law; vi) strengthening the Sierra Leonean security sector; vii) promoting a culture of peace; and viii) developing initiatives for the protection and well-being of youth, women and children (UN, 2005c: 2); the Peacebuilding Commission's Agenda emerged in order to work with the government and international and local partners to address the country's peacebuilding priorities in the areas of youth

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<sup>2</sup>The deployment of a UN Peacebuilding mission in Sierra Leone was the third phase of a sequence of interventions provided by the international community in that country. The first two interventions happened during the armed conflict in Sierra Leone and were designated as the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone, UNOMSIL (1998-1999) and the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone, UNAMSIL (1999-2005).

employment and empowerment, justice and security reform, good governance, energy sector development, and capacity building (UN, 2016).

In parallel, the work by the UNDP's on Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone aimed to promote social cohesion and empowering nations and communities to become inclusive and resilient to external and internal shocks through three levels of intervention: capacities for conflict prevention and management; facilitation, dialogue and consensus building; and conflict analysis and assessment. Since Sierra Leone remains on the list of the poorest countries in the world, and the legacy of the armed conflict still prevails as the main challenge to build peace, the work provided by all those UN interventionists models have not proved to be efficient in a process of constructing peace, because since the end of the armed conflict in 2002 and the constant presence of the UN in the country, “[Sierra Leone] remains heavily dependent on [international] aid” (UNDP, 2016).

Based in this scenario, the UN peacebuilding model applied to Sierra Leone has two integrated directions of action or, in the scope of this essay, areas of dimension: in the one hand, it can be classified as military dimension, which focuses on the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) programmes; and on the other hand, the social dimension, focusing on the establishment of constructing post-civil war society through social empowering.

The first security dimension in the UN peacebuilding model is the promotion of peace through DDR and SSR programmes. Even if those two issues are not easily intertwined (Yasutomi, 2008), they encompass a gradual intervention through the passage of an unstable military condition to a construction of a social cohesion by the inclusion of ex-combatants (Muggah and Karuse, 2009: 137) into a social daily life. At a first glance, DDR seeks to create security and stability in post-conflict environments, and to start recovery and development, by getting the former combatants to comprehensively disarm and providing them with opportunities for sustainable social and economic reintegration into civilian life (UN, 2014: 24; Yasutomi, 2008: 36). In consequence, SSR emerges as step forward of this process in order to maintain security. The purpose of SSR can be achieved by rebuilding security sector institutions more efficiently and effectively; improving the state's ability to control those security sector institutions under democratic civilian oversight, and to ensure that the norms and order prevail throughout the state (Yasutomi, 2008: 37-38).

In the case of Sierra Leone, the DDR process implemented and co-ordinated by the UN and the National Commission for DDR (NCDDR) started in February 1998 with the goal of dismantling some 32.000 of the various fighting forces between July 1998 and January 2000. It is important to mention that the DDR process was implemented while the armed conflict was taking place and it was divided into three distinct phases, as Solomon and Ginifer's (2008) emphasise. Phase I, lasted from September to December 1998; phase II was launched in October 1999; and phase III ran from May 2001 to January 2002. “Over the three phases, in four years, 72,500 combatants were disarmed and demobilised, including 4,751 women (6.5 per cent) and 6,787 children (9.4 per cent), of whom 506 were girls; 42,330 weapons and 1.2 million pieces of ammunition were collected and destroyed” (Solomon and Ginifer, 2008: 8-9). In this regard, the main challenge to provide a DDR programme was not related only to the disarmament itself, but the rehabilitation process of more than 72.000 individuals, the majority of whom were youth (Lawrence, 2013) and have acted as a child soldier at that time. Even if DDR has provided a military policy in its essence, the process of conducting those ex-combatants to social life was considered the main challenge.

As mentioned by Solomon and Ginifer (2008), reintegration from 2001 was part of an overall integrated recovery strategy in Sierra Leone that included judicial reform, SSR, economic development, and the return, resettlement, and support of refugees and IDPs. However, in practice, these elements and other forms of programme were not fully co-ordinated or integrated in Sierra Leone. The lack of linkages or ineffective between DDR and related processes such as Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control, SSR and access to justice, meant that opportunities to address human security issues in Sierra Leone such as risks, vulnerabilities and community protection in a holistic and co-ordinated manner have not been fully grasped. As Lawrence (2013) mentioned, “many former-combatants (especially youth) were unable to return to their home communities due to their actions during the war and opted instead to stay in the cities, where they found scant economic opportunities or social protections”.

This discrepancy in providing rehabilitation to ex-combatants is related to the existence of two implications in this process (Muggah and Karuse, 2009). In these authors’ analysis, peacebuilding interventions have proved only partly successful in redressing conflict-related violence, and development donors and public authorities have been relatively blind to the security needs of their target populations and to the need to incorporate violence prevention and reduction strategies into their programmes (Muggah and Karuse, 2009: 143-144). In this regard, the logic behind DDR and SSR programmes is the basis for a more holistic approach in the peacebuilding process, which can be understood as a first interrelated task which aims to provide a holistic approach to peace based in a human concept of security.

The second dimension refers to the improvement of the human potentialities combined with the participation of the government. The main focus is the incorporation of the security concept into a more holistic perspective based on the concept of human security, which was conceived in a human-centred approach (UNDP, 1994: 23). Even UNDP has been involved in the scope of the DDR and SSR, and this institution is responsible for conducting social programmes in Sierra Leone since 1965. Afterwards it became a central partner to act as a parallel intervenor with the PBC. Until that time, UNDP has developed seven programmes which encompass democratic governance; inclusive and sustainable growth; responsive institutions; development impact and effectiveness; climate change and disaster resilience; and crisis prevention and recovery. In total, there were 39 projects being conducted to post-conflict reconstruction since 2008, while in 2016 this number decreased to only 24 projects.

As Zeeuw (2005) has argued, the central aim of all these 'democracy programmes' is to foster political stability, create transparency in public affairs, enhance accountability between the state and its population and improve popular participation in (political) decision making. In his analysis – which was conducted taking into account the role of the international assistance to elections, human rights and media to eight post-armed conflict countries, including Sierra Leone – the main institutions which worked directly with these issues still remain politically biased, are largely unaccountable to their members or society in general, are not transparent in their operations, have no substantial influence on decision making and are in most cases financially unsustainable. “This lack of institutionalization is the main reason why (...) in most post-conflict countries electoral processes are far from free and fair, human-rights violations continue and the media remains unfree (Zeeuw, 2005: 501). Far from a debate on success or failure, Neethling (2007) emphasizes that the post-conflict peacebuilding process in Sierra Leone clearly involved a human security approach, because this approach included a logic of interrelated actions, such as those based on a liberty/rights and rule of law dimension; a freedom from fear/safety of people's dimension; and a freedom

from want/equity and social justice dimension. “Moreover, it involved a willingness to make a difference on the ground in preventing conflicts or establishing the basic conditions for making sustainable security and development possible” (Neethling, 2007: 88).

## Conclusion

While the process of building peace is focused on the role of the UN and its programmes to enhance and diminish social cleavages in post-armed civil society, such as peacekeeping and peacebuilding, those same programmes have incorporated and applied two different dimensions of security in their scope. As presented in this essay, both military and social dimensions are an interrelated issue of concern, which means that the first dimension cannot be achieved without a subsequent and complementary second one. In this sense, the peacebuilding framework is a constant endeavour, which deals with peace through a permanent conceptual security basis.

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