

Networks of Effective Action: Implementing an Integrated Approach to Peacebuilding

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Organizations in the peacebuilding field face the imperative of taking a holistic, integrated approach to peacebuilding that combines traditionally distinct disciplines such as human rights, humanitarian assistance, sustainable development, environment, conflict resolution, security, and the rule of law in order to be effective in today's complex conflicts. The concept of a *Network of Effective Action* is proposed as a set of practices for collaboration that is capable of facilitating integrated approaches to peacebuilding both on the ground and in terms of the theoretical development of the field.

WE ARE CURRENTLY AT A CRITICAL MOMENT in the development of the peacebuilding field.¹ Organizations working to build sustainable peace and development must now think and act in more integrative ways that cut across traditional boundaries – such as between official and unofficial actors – and across such diverse fields as humanitarian relief, conflict resolution, development, human rights, and environmental protection. Recent studies of peacebuilding have consistently emphasized two recommendations for improving the effectiveness of peacebuilding practice: (a) to break down the distinctions between the ‘peace’ and

¹ The term *peacebuilding* is used here as a catch-all term to refer to a wide variety of interventions designed to build or maintain sustainable peace and development. It is meant to encompass post-conflict peacebuilding as well as conflict prevention. However, peacebuilding has commonly been defined in much more specific ways. *An Agenda for Peace* defines post-conflict peacebuilding as ‘action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict’ (United Nations, 1992: para. 21). In the relief and development field, *peacebuilding* has come to refer to a specialized area of practice as distinct from governance, human rights, conservation, agricultural development, health, etc. However, the UN Security Council has expanded this definition to ‘encompass a wide range of political, developmental, humanitarian and human rights programmes and mechanisms’, which ‘focus on fostering sustainable institutions and processes in areas such as sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and inequalities, transparent and accountable governance, the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law and the promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence’ (United Nations Security Council, 2001: 1–2).

the 'relief and development' fields in order to promote greater integration (Ball, 1996; Anderson, 1999; Forman & Patrick, 2000; Goodhand & Atkinson, 2001); and (b) to promote greater coordination between the myriad interveners on the ground in a given conflict situation (Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 1999; Chayes & Chayes, 1999). While empirical and anecdotal evidence supports calls for greater integration across diverse organizations from diverse fields in the area of peacebuilding, this would constitute a fairly radical change in how organizations behave on the ground, how they conceive of their operating strategies, and the broader system within which all of these organizations operate.

In making this change, individual organizations have to see peacebuilding not just through the narrow lens of their own core competencies, but in a holistic way that would consider the peacebuilding needs of a situation at the systemic level and how their individual efforts relate to those of others. This challenge is made more difficult because there is not yet a widely shared integrated theory of peacebuilding that would help organizations see how their distinct competencies fit together. For example, without a shared notion of an elephant, it would be very hard for the proverbial blind men to know how the different pieces they each were feeling could fit together into a coherent whole.

This article attempts to define a way to promote integrated approaches to peacebuilding, in both theory and practice, through the use of a Network of Effective Action (NEA).² The concept of an NEA does not refer to a particular structure, but to a set of practices for how peacebuilding actors can organize themselves for more effective and integrated collaboration and for greater impact on conflict situations at the programmatic and systemic levels. The article is based on analysis of evaluations of peacebuilding efforts, as well as practical field experience in applied conflict resolution.³

The Need: An Integrated Approach to Peacebuilding

While the last ten years have seen successful transitions to peace from situations of violent conflict in such places as Northern Ireland, South Africa, Cambodia, Mozambique, Namibia, and Central America, several trends that give cause for critical reflection on peacebuilding practice can also be identified (Hampson, 2001: 13). In the decade of the 1990s, there was a trend toward conflicts that became more and more protracted (Wallensteen &

² Kevin Clements, currently Secretary General of International Alert, introduced the author to this term and generously allowed the author to take liberties in defining it.

³ The author worked for the Harvard Negotiation Project and the Conflict Management Group of Cambridge, MA, from 1988 to 2001, and participated in numerous interventions in political and ethnic conflicts internationally.

Sollenberg, 2001: 640). Analysts writing from several different perspectives have documented the negative, though unintended, consequences of peacebuilding interventions (Alden, 2001: 119; Anderson, 1999). There have also been numerous breakdowns in peace processes due to inability to control spoilers (e.g. Angola 1992, Rwanda 1994) or inability to conclude subsequent negotiations called for by, and critical to, an initial accord (e.g. Israel–Palestine 1994, Democratic Republic of Congo [DRC] 1999) (see Stedman, 1997, 2001; Licklider, 2001).⁴

An integrated approach to peacebuilding has the potential to address these trends. In order to develop such a concept, it is necessary to develop a typology that captures some basic, yet significant, distinctions in the types of peacebuilding interventions.⁵ The typology used here categorizes peacebuilding interventions into three types: political, social, and structural.

Political peacebuilding (e.g. peacemaking, formal peace processes, unofficial efforts to support formal peace processes) focuses on reaching agreements between leaders or organizations (e.g. governments, rebel movements), and is concerned mainly with the transaction (e.g. resolving a dispute, declaring a ceasefire, reaching an agreement). Social peacebuilding focuses on affecting widely held perceptions and attitudes (e.g. radio soap operas that break down inter-ethnic stereotypes, truth and reconciliation commissions that attempt to create widespread acknowledgement and healing of inter-ethnic wounds), and social peacebuilding initiatives are ultimately concerned with transformations in the underlying relationships between groups in conflict. Structural peacebuilding focuses on repairing or rebuilding the underlying systems that would support and sustain a peacefully functioning society (e.g. good governance and the rule of law to handle inter-group disputes and tensions, development assistance to redistribute economic assets and alleviate economic deprivations that lead to conflict, reform of the security sector, etc.).⁶ The goal of structural peacebuilding is to build assets on which a peaceful society can be built and that satisfy the underlying needs of people within the society.

Many of the examples cited above demonstrate that activity in any of the political, social, or structural areas has an impact on activity in the other areas (see Boyce, 2000: 381).⁷ Moreover, case studies make the point that

⁴ The death of Jonas Savimbi has cleared the way for peacebuilding progress in Angola and, at the time of writing, the DRC is finally on the verge of concluding the Inter-Congolese Dialogue, which was supposed to have been finished in December 1999. Despite the agreements in the DRC, however, many observers and even some of those active in the process are skeptical that the agreements will be implemented.

⁵ The author was first introduced to this typology by Dr. Louise Diamond of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy and the Peace Company.

⁶ *Structural peacebuilding* is meant to include the wide variety of forms of traditional humanitarian and development assistance.

⁷ Boyce (2000: 381) notes that 'the central issue is not *whether* aid will have political impacts, but *what* these impacts will be'.

successful peacebuilding *demands* that sufficient progress be made in all three areas. Many authors point to the danger of any one process getting too far out in front of progress in the other areas. Crocker, Hampson & Aall (1999: 12) point to the failure of the political peacebuilding process due to insufficient progress in the social arena. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, efforts to push ahead with structural peacebuilding, when donors rushed in with large amounts of aid, actually undermined progress in the political and social areas. Demichelis (1996: 5) writes that 'the rush to spend too much relief and reconstruction money "efficiently" – for example by relying on mayor's beneficiary lists to determine aid recipients – has blocked community participation in the reconstruction and reconciliation process and bred defeatism and resentment among Bosnians'.

On the positive side, in Guatemala, the structural process (building democratic institutions) and the political process (negotiating a formal cessation of hostilities) had a synergistic effect on each other. As Azpuru (1999: 97) notes, 'the process of democratization paved the way for the start of the peace negotiations, and the five years of negotiations themselves advanced the process of democratization' in Guatemala. Smith (2001: 32) argues that structural peacebuilding (building democratic institutions) is essential to 'countering the myths, stereotypes, and propaganda that fuel ethnic conflicts' (social peacebuilding) (see also Boyce, 2000: 367–377). Others cite examples of the reverse, where progress in the social area had a positive impact on the structural sector. Studies have shown that a rise in social capital (a social peacebuilding goal) has a large effect on raising household incomes (a structural peacebuilding goal) (see Feldman & Assaf, 1999: 26).⁸

In fact, many advocate using work in one sector – be it social, structural or political – to advance work in another. Ball (1996: 8) writes that donors (engaged in structural peacebuilding) should seek to 'minimize disparities among groups' (social peacebuilding) and 'maximize opportunities for resolving disputes peacefully' (political peacebuilding). In advancing the concept of 'peace conditionality', Boyce (2000: 378) argues for structural peacebuilders (donors) to integrate with political peacebuilders by translating the 'grand bargain between the international community and the warring parties into a series of mini-bargains, which link disbursements to specific peacebuilding measures'. Further, Mancino, Malley & Cornejo (2001: 6), in their paper on 'developmental relief', argue that 'emergency response should be holistic, analyzing and addressing the root causes of conflict'.

While the effectiveness of the integrated approach is supported by evidence from the field, the approach itself is far from being a coherent theory of peacebuilding. The specific interrelationships and relative sequencing of activity between the political, social, and structural fields, as well as the

⁸ *Social capital* has been defined as the set of norms, values, and relationships shared among individuals and groups that permits and facilitates cooperation among them.

criteria for what constitutes 'sufficient progress' in any one field, are neither known nor knowable. Thus, the imperative for academics and practitioners in the field of peacebuilding is to develop a mechanism to push the field in the direction of better understanding and using integrated approaches. However, given the many negative experiences with coordination – even simply within one peacebuilding field or one large organization – the goal of promoting integrated approaches to peacebuilding may seem far-fetched. In making the case for the viability of an NEA as a set of practices designed to achieve greater integration, this article will elaborate on the theory and structure of an NEA, with a focus on overcoming the many obstacles to the creation and implementation of an NEA.

Obstacle: Limited Theories of Action

Each organization develops a 'theory of action' or knowledge and a set of causal connections about how to be effective in the world (see Argyris & Schon, 1976; Argyris, Putnam & Smith, 1985). Without a theory of action, organizations cannot function or be effective. Case studies of peacebuilding interventions by various organizations have found clear evidence of organizational 'theories of action' and their impact. According to Anderson (2001: 7), 'studies showed that characteristics of the agencies themselves (including their experience and their skills/special abilities), on the one hand, and their agency "theory" of how peace comes about, on the other, were the two factors that most often shaped the activities that agency undertook'. To generalize, social peacebuilders will tend to develop theories of action for how to build peace at the social level based on their organizational abilities and experiences. Mediators (political peacebuilders) will develop theories for how to do mediation well. Relief agencies (structural peacebuilders) will develop theories for how to deliver humanitarian aid and provide development assistance.

Theories of action, while essential, can actually inhibit an organization from taking a systemic view and achieving real integration with other actors who have different theories of action. In explaining why international donors have trouble adjusting to the integration of their expertise in emergency relief and macroeconomic policy with the larger peacebuilding process, Boyce (2000: 369) notes that 'the toolkit international donors bring to post-conflict transitions was not designed for peacebuilding'. Anderson (2001: 8), while de-linking this phenomenon from the issue of effectiveness, notes that 'no agency appeared to analyze a context to decide what, of all possible strategies, would be the most effective in making peace. Rather, an agency, believing that dialogue is necessary to peace making, would analyze a

situation to decide who to bring into dialogue, when, under what conditions, and over what time period.'

The result of these limited theories of action is that collaboration is relegated to a secondary consideration. An organization first defines its goals and strategy based on its theory of action, and if collaboration can help it achieve those goals and strategies, the organization will pursue one or more collaborations with other interveners. However, for there to be an integrated approach, the perceived need for collaboration with diverse actors – from within and across the social, structural and political sectors – must be integral to, not ancillary to, an organization's theory of action. Put another way, collaborations need to be partnerships of necessity, not marriages of convenience. Many collaborations are driven by logistical considerations, such as sharing an office because this is more cost-effective, or by the requirements of a Request for Proposals (RFP) issued by a donor. In a marriage of convenience, participants work as subcontractors, each in charge of fulfilling specific contract requirements (e.g. delivering training or administering a grant program), but not working together to carry out a joint situation assessment, design a project or combine their separate methodologies into a new approach.

A partnership of necessity sees collaboration not as just a contractual relationship, but as integral to achieving the goals of the project. For example, Mercy Corps (a structural peacebuilder) and the Conflict Management Group (CMG) (a political peacebuilder) undertook a joint 'stabilization' project in Kosovo to carry out local market development in a way that improved relations between Serb and Albanian Kosovars. Mercy Corps and CMG approached the project from the outset as an endeavor to combine their separate competencies into a new approach, and they began with the assumption that 'humanitarian and conflict management activities of co-existence programs should not be ancillary to each other' (Mercy Corps & CMG, 2001: 10). As a result of their successful experience in Kosovo, the two organizations began to change their underlying theories of action: each began to see the success of the other's work as integral to the success of its own. This, in turn, has led the two organizations to change how they design and implement their programs and to develop new capacities in line with the new approach.⁹

⁹ CMG has rewritten its mission and programmatic focus to reflect this change, and Mercy Corps has rewritten its civil society policy as well. There are also hybrid organizations being developed that combine the work and philosophy of previously distinct fields. For example, Earth Rights International combines human rights and environmental approaches to peacebuilding.

Response: NEAs Need To Enable Learning

The kind of learning that would cause an organization to change its theory of action, in the direction of seeing integration as integral to success, tends to be driven by practical field experience. CMG and Mercy Corps had three years of experience together. Prior to that, both organizations had related experiences that influenced their thinking. CMG had a five-year collaboration with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) to work with the government of Georgia and the breakaway region of South Ossetia from 1995 to 2000 (see Olson, 2000; Nan, 2000). Several key conclusions emerged for CMG about the value of integrated approaches. CMG learned that its ability to foster constructive dialogue between representatives for the two sides (e.g. helping them formulate an agreement on return of refugees) was augmented by the NRC's ability to help achieve concrete changes on the ground in the conflict zone (e.g. assistance in rehabilitating villages and helping refugees return home). As Olson (2000: 24) notes, the 'NRC's concrete assistance work in the conflict zone enhanced the credibility of the project, which was seen as offering resources for "doing" as well as opportunities for "talking".'

CMG went into the dialogue project in Georgia with the assumption that success would mean helping the sides come to a settlement over the political status of South Ossetia (e.g. that it would remain part of Georgia, become an independent state, etc.), and that this would lead to peace. However, over the course of the project it became evident that a settlement of the political status question proved too difficult. The parties opted instead to address specific problems that were critical to the conflict, such as the return of refugees, rebuilding infrastructure, working with the media, and affecting public perceptions of the conflict (see Olson, 2000: 12–14). The experience helped create a fundamental shift in CMG's thinking away from a linear approach to peacebuilding – one that envisioned a peace agreement leading to social and structural change that, in turn, would lead to peace. Instead, the Georgian experience seemed to follow an iterative approach. For example, political activity (such as facilitating an informal agreement on refugee return) led to joint structural activity (the resettlement of refugees), then to concrete improvements on the ground (rehabilitated villages) and positive changes in social attitudes (people in the region saw tangible evidence that the two sides could cooperate to their mutual benefit). In turn, this improved climate encouraged negotiators from the two sides to continue their political negotiations.

The learning that came out of the experience in Georgia was critical to changing CMG's theory of action in a way that necessitated integration with others from diverse fields. To promote learning that affects an organization's theory of action, NEAs need to adopt two key operating principles:

1. Promote information exchange between political, social, and structural actors working on a specific conflict, between official and unofficial actors, and between international actors and local partners. This information exchange will promote improved and integrated situation assessments and program design.
2. Promote organizations taking an iterative approach to peacebuilding, combining political, social, and structural activity that addresses specific issues in the conflict, as opposed to promoting a 'global' settlement.

Information Exchange

Diverse organizations, with diverse networks of relationships inside and outside a conflict zone, will have different information at their disposal. NGOs tend to build relationships with different types of people and organizations than governments do. Even when talking to the same individuals, people will often tell different things to official government representatives than to their NGO contacts, especially if long personal relationships are involved. Furthermore, organizations from different fields, each with their own theories of action, will pick up on different information and analyze even shared information from different perspectives. Even if it does not lead to a common conflict assessment, this information-sharing and the learning it promotes will provide organizations with more data than they could gather on their own to assess the situation on the ground, the causes of the conflict, the perceptions of local actors, and the impact of their actions on their own intervention and those of others. This, in turn, provides the opportunity for an organization to build up a different conflict assessment and will affect its theory of what needs to be done in the conflict to build peace. And, as a result, the information exchange can lead organizations to spot new opportunities for intervention, as well as to avoid reinventing the wheel or duplicating effort (see Crocker, Hampson & Aall, 1999: 10).¹⁰

Furthermore, various organizations have different local partners and networks of contacts within local communities. The information-sharing process has to include ways to bring these local voices to the assessment and program-design process. As in the Georgia example, local partners have a critical role to play in correcting the assumptions of international actors, whose diagnoses from afar never comport fully with the needs, perceptions, and desires of the local community. Despite the tendency on the part of interveners to consider only intervention strategies suited to their particular abilities and to follow preconceived notions of what interventions would be

¹⁰ Crocker, Hampson & Aall (1999: 10) note that 'nonofficial groups may be the only third-parties active in the attempt to bring groups together or to alert the international community to the need for preventive diplomacy or some other kind of action'.

most appropriate, information-sharing through an NEA would encourage them to take a broader view.

Iterative Approach

An iterative approach would require a group of diverse actors to use their individual expertise in political, social, and/or structural peacebuilding in a mutually reinforcing way. Ball (1996: 8) supports this approach, recommending that the best way for donors to assist efforts at national reconciliation is to 'create . . . conditions in which the parties to the conflict focus on solving specific problems'. This recommendation supports both the integration of activity at the political level (negotiations between parties over specific problems), the social level (promotion of reconciliation), and the structural level (development assistance from donors), and the idea of working on discrete problems over time. Boyce's notion of 'peace conditionality' also supports the idea of an iterative approach.

By promoting information-sharing and fostering more iterative approaches, an NEA can help create success on the ground through more integrated interventions. In turn, this success on the ground can drive the deeper learning required by organizations in order to change their theories of action in the direction of a more effective, integrated approach to peacebuilding.

Obstacle: Entrenched Practices

There exists a range of established practices that form major obstacles to organizations acting in a more integrated way. Here, two important practices that need to be addressed are: (1) an unhelpful division of labor between actors in the peacebuilding field, and (2) an overemphasis on the role of formal negotiations among political leaders.

An Unhelpful Division of Labor

Whether by default or design, many actors in the peacebuilding field have drawn boxes around their work that limit their ability to take an integrated approach. For example, in El Salvador, the issue of making financial aid to the government conditional on the government's funding of programs critical to the implementation of the peace agreement was put to the World Bank. In response, Boyce (2000: 378) notes, 'the international financial institutions chose not to confront the issue, defining it as a political question outside their limited economic purview'. Historically, Ball (1996: 50) notes that this limited role definition also affects donors and relief organizations, as 'many

donors cannot employ relief funds for activities that do not save lives [and] development practitioners tend to view certain aspects of peacebuilding . . . as a distraction'. There has also been a tendency for official actors who are managing a peace process to bring donors and development organizations into the peace process too late as they wait for the conclusion of political negotiations over a settlement. Some progress has been made in these areas, such as the development of mechanisms that promote integration by expediting funding for war-to-peace transitions (e.g. the Office of Transition Initiatives at USAID) and the involvement of donors at earlier stages in peace processes.

However, problems remain as donors struggle with how to integrate tools for dealing with conflict into a wide range of development programs, as there is a tendency to only use these tools in certain areas. According to a recent report from USAID (2002: 108), 'A conflict lens should be applied to every active area in high risk countries, rather than assuming that some areas are more relevant to conflict than others.' USAID (2002: 109) also notes that there has been criticism of using developmental relief in conflict settings as 'anti-humanitarian', because 'its multifaceted programming approach undermines principles of neutrality and impartiality'. Funders who provide disaster assistance in conflict settings are still unwilling to fund work that links such assistance with programs to deal directly with parties to the conflict.

Furthermore, many donors think in terms of 'projects', 'deliverables', and short timelines, which often forces a different kind of unhelpful division of labor. Success is defined by meeting the preset timelines and goals of individual projects, rather than on the basis of whether those individual projects were integrated with other initiatives and contributed to peace at a systemic level. As the World Bank (2002) notes, individual sectoral programs are realizing that their ability to reach overarching development goals is determined by their ability to make linkages across sectors and programs. However, the World Bank (2002: 43) concludes that 'a more effective institutional mechanism is needed to foster the design and implementation of cross-sectoral strategies to deliver on specific development goals'.

Overemphasis on Political Negotiations

In many circumstances, ceasefires and formal peace agreements between combatants are necessary early steps in the peace process, and can pave the way for social and structural peacebuilding activity.¹¹ However, this is not necessarily the only order in which political, social, and structural activity

¹¹ This phenomenon is also relevant to conflict prevention. In cases where there is incipient violent conflict, political dialogue between the government and opposition groups and civil society is certainly appropriate. However, if political dialogue is the only form of peacebuilding, it will weaken the chances of successful conflict prevention. In these cases, social or structural peacebuilding that is directed at addressing underlying causes of the conflict is also needed and should not be sacrificed for the sake of the political dialogue.

can relate to each other. There are instances where insistence on the primacy of political negotiations and agreements, at the expense of social and structural activity, can be harmful. In an analysis of the role of 'spoilers' in peace processes, Stedman (1997: 38) found that there was a tendency on the part of official actors, such as the UN, to elevate political negotiations and their implementation to the status of a 'holy grail' that is pursued with a single-mindedness that can be counterproductive. Stedman (1997: 39) concludes that, in Rwanda and Angola, 'spoilers were willing to kill hundreds of thousands of people to demonstrate that they did not want peace, yet the response of the United Nations was to plead with them to return to negotiations'.¹²

Inflexible implementation of political agreements can also hurt the peace process. Often, the timelines set out in peace agreements are far too short. On the basis of her study of peace processes in Latin America, Arnson (1999: 449) concludes that 'the process of change and institution building extends beyond a period of formal compliance with a peace agreement and may never be complete'. Adherence to these timelines can also cause elections to be held prematurely (Paris, 2001).

Lastly, political agreements are not necessarily the only drivers of social and structural change, but may also be driven by it. Feldman & Assaf (1999: 23) report that, in his analysis of 45 communities in six Latin American countries, Hirschman (1984) found that community members believed 'too much importance is attributed to large scale political changes' as a means for building peace at the social level; instead, members of these communities felt that, for real change in the political sphere, 'social, cultural, and personal relationships must first be transformed'. Marks (2000) reports on the creation of local peace committees in South Africa, established pursuant to the National Peace Accord, that succeeded in significantly reducing violence by transforming relationships between local groups in conflict, well before the political transfer of power was complete. In addition, Guatemala stands out as an example of where structural change (creation of a legitimate government) preceded the formal declaration of an end to hostilities (Azpuru, 1999: 99).¹³

Response: NEAs Need To Operate Chaordically

The alternative to these entrenched, though sometimes counterproductive, practices is not to replace them with another preset division of labor or to

¹² While Sierra Leone was not part of Stedman's research, a similar situation occurred there in relation to pressure for the government to negotiate with the Revolutionary United Front (RUF).

¹³ Azpuru (1999: 99) writes, 'Thus the process in Guatemala is unique in that legitimate governments had begun to exist before peace had been attained formally.'

make the practice of peacebuilding even more chaotic. Rather, work in the field of organizational development (Hock, 1999) points to organizational structures that combine the principles of chaos and order, competition and cooperation. Within a 'chaordic' network, there is no division of labor as such. Using the concept of a chaordic network, an NEA would be based on the following operating principles:

1. *Shared purpose and principles of conduct.* Members of an NEA would subscribe to a common purpose (building sustainable peace in a specific conflict) and a common set of operating principles (rules of the road) for how the participants will conduct themselves in pursuit of the NEA's shared purpose. These principles would be a commitment to a diversity of actors, sharing of diagnostic information, participative planning, non-duplication of effort, and the fostering of an iterative and multipronged approach to intervention.
2. *Decentralized and self-organizing.* Rather than stressing command and control, members of the NEA are free to make decisions and work collaboratively as long as this is consistent with the NEA's purpose and principles. NEA members would collaborate with each other on specific projects, but only if it was in their interests to do so and not because of some preset mandate to cooperate for cooperation's sake. An NEA would foster opportunistic and entrepreneurial interventions that both take into account the interests of intervening organizations and are responsive to and driven by the needs of people on the ground.
3. *Malleable in form, empowering of its members.* The NEA would exist to increase the effectiveness of its members and would create whatever central bureaucracy and support systems that best serve the needs of its members.
4. *Inclusiveness.* An NEA has three dimensions along which it would promote integration. First, an NEA would include a representative sampling of actors from across the political, social, and structural sectors. Second, an NEA would include both official and unofficial actors. Third, an NEA must also be capable of bringing actors from the international, national, and especially the subnational, or local, levels to the table (Anderson & Olson, 2002; Ayindo, Doe & Jenner, 2001).

These operating principles give the NEA an orderly quality. However, the sequence of interventions, the number and diversity of those interventions, and the particular actors involved in any one intervention would be determined on a more ad hoc, chaotic basis. There are examples of structures for coordination, such as the joint planning teams described by Chayes & Chayes (1999: 147–189) within the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the US government. However, an NEA would be a

fundamentally different structure from what currently exists. The Resident Coordinators of the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance (OCHA) do provide a coordination function, but this is for a different purpose (more effective humanitarian assistance) than an NEA (more effective peacebuilding). Furthermore, the purpose of an NEA is *not* coordination via central planning or formal hierarchies.¹⁴ More simply, an NEA is essentially a communication network with a common goal (e.g. building peace in a particular conflict zone) and some shared rules of the road. Members of an NEA may choose to coordinate with each other, but are not required to do so.

By bringing together these diverse actors for purposes of information-sharing, exchanging advice, and planning, an NEA would allow actors to think in a more collective and holistic way, thereby fostering entrepreneurial, opportunistic, and integrated approaches arranged on a self-organizing basis. For example, a government (a political peacebuilder) may feel the time is not right for peace talks, but an NGO from the development field (a structural peacebuilder) might see an urgent need to build rural health clinics that would address the needs of each party to the conflict. They might bring the parties together to launch a health initiative that, in turn, sets the stage for limited negotiations between the parties on other important political issues.

Responding to the 'Realist Critique'

The obvious critique of the idea of multiple actors, both official and non-official, from diverse fields working together is a simple dose of *realpolitik*. Governments are ruled by political imperatives and national interests, and do not want other governments – let alone NGOs – getting in their way. Internal bureaucratic turf battles within the UN, the European Union, or large governments like that of the USA frustrate attempts at coordination and information-sharing. NGOs exist in an environment of competitive funding processes and shrinking resources that militates against collaboration and trust-building.

The chaordic nature of an NEA provides several ways of dealing with the competitive pressures, bureaucratic politics, and organizational self-interests that make integrated approaches difficult to realize. First, because forming an NEA does not mean that organizations have to agree in advance to work together, it lessens the political risks involved and thus the potential reluctance to join an NEA. Organizations would only agree to share information (how much would be up to them) regarding their activities in a specific area.

¹⁴ The Resident Coordinators used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have had some success in playing a coordinating function in various countries; see United Nations (2000: 16–17).

The theory of an NEA is that by bringing relevant actors together from across various disciplines, the creative interplay between them will help them devise new, holistic, and context-specific approaches. NEAs do not compel collaboration, but merely increase the chances that actors will see opportunities for better serving their self-interest through collaboration. Structurally, an NEA could take on various forms, from an informal communication network to a more formal consortium of groups with a logistical coordinator, regular meetings, and even a common office or meeting place.

Second, NEAs do not require the end of competition, but instead thrive on competition. The premise of an NEA is that, through being a part of one, an organization will have a competitive advantage – the NEA will help it succeed over others that are not part of an NEA. This is already happening in response to RFPs issued by many donors who are asking for humanitarian and development projects to actively incorporate conflict resolution and human rights activity. As a result, many alliances are forming. Some of these alliances are of limited duration or for a specific project. There are also more strategic alliances that are being formed to foster collaboration and increase the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts. The European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation is a network of diverse organizations that carry out conflict resolution, humanitarian, and human rights work. The Platform also maintains a Liaison Office that engages in lobbying and advocacy work for a subgroup of Platform members.

In the USA, there is a newly formed organization called the Alliance for International Conflict Prevention and Resolution (AICPR), a consortium of over 26 leading conflict resolution organizations that seek to promote greater collaboration, including the collaborative pursuit of funding, among its members and with organizations outside the conflict resolution field (AICPR, 2001). In Africa, the Western Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), formed in 1998 by representatives from seven West African nations, is dedicated to developing a conflict prevention network, increasing effectiveness in peacebuilding, and promoting coordination.¹⁵ While organizational politics and competition for funds are still barriers, the European Platform, AICPR, and WANEP are signs that the trend is toward competitors working together in the belief that this will give them a professional and competitive advantage. This trend should not be surprising, as the practice of alliances between competitors has become well established in the private sector (Berton, 1998).

Finally, there is also a growing trend toward greater integration between Track One and Track Two actors. Cooperation between governments and NGOs is not new. Perhaps the most well known is the cooperation between the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Institute for Applied Social Science to form the 'Norwegian Channel' that led to the Oslo Accord

¹⁵ See WANEP's website at <http://www.wanep.org>.

of 1994 (Egeland, 1999). Generally, NGOs can do things that governments cannot, such as facilitate the development of new and creative ideas, provide a trusted but informal channel of communication, and expand networks of contacts, especially to groups or individuals that governments may be precluded from meeting with because of political or legal concerns (Smock, 1998). Cooperation between Track One and Track Two actors is growing because such collaboration advances the self-interests of each actor. US Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Ambassador Marc Grossman, a career diplomat of 26 years, gives the following assessment of the importance of governmental collaboration with NGOs: 'one of the biggest changes . . . in the time I have been in the Foreign Service is the work we now do with NGOs' (Grossman, 2002). And, as with the growing trend toward alliance-building between 'competitors' in the field, the collaboration between official and unofficial actors is a sign that the 'realist critique' is no longer a necessary bar to the creation of an NEA.

Conclusion

Integrated approaches to peacebuilding are essential for the future effectiveness of the field. An NEA is essential to making truly integrated approaches a reality. The principles of an NEA provide a set of practices for improving how organizations should work together to increase their individual and collective effectiveness, and for producing an integrated approach to peacebuilding in theory and practice. In structuring their individual interventions, organizations need to adopt an approach to collaboration that includes the principles that define NEAs:

- Individual organizational effectiveness demands building a network that is inclusive of:
 - ◆ governmental and nongovernmental organizations;
 - ◆ organizations that span the political, social, and structural fields; and
 - ◆ the views of actors at the international, national, and especially the subnational level.
- Within that network, organizations must share information (e.g. about the conflict, their assessments, local voices, and opportunities for intervention).
- Organizations should work in an iterative fashion with one another.
- The network should operate in a chaordic fashion (decentralized decisionmaking, self-organizing, and flexible in form).

The use of these operating principles is what makes an NEA different from other forms of collaboration.

It is the contention of this article that NEAs will be formed because successful peacebuilding efforts in today's environment compel organizations to take integrated approaches. Further, an NEA provides some useful guidance to those in the field, like the UN Resident Coordinators, on how to go about promoting better coordination among various actors. The principles of an NEA suggest areas where integration makes sense and is likely to lead to better collaboration (e.g. information-sharing), yet also take account of realities (such as the need for flexibility and the inability to achieve coordination through command and control). Lastly, the case for an integrated approach should send a message to all organizations in the peacebuilding field that, in order to be responsible and effective actors, it is incumbent upon them to look beyond the boundaries of their own interventions. Organizations need to be in contact with other interveners working in the same conflict zone who come from diverse fields (e.g. official, unofficial, political, social, and structural) and who offer the potential for collaborative activity that is more holistic and effective. An NEA provides a structure that peacebuilding organizations can use to make this potential collaboration a reality.

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