OSCE Security Days Event, 16 September 2013   SEC.DAYS/23/13   1
"Promoting Lasting Solutions - Approaches to Conflict   23 September 2013
Resolution in the OSCE Area"

ENGLISH only

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Making it Last: Sustainable Peacebuilding through I4P

What are the key requirements of sustainable peacebuilding?

In a nutshell, the requirements of sustainable peacebuilding can be summarised in the terms *credibility*, *resilience and reliability*.
As enshrined in the 1992 *Agenda for Peace,* peacebuilding aims at securing peace in post-war situations. This process usually starts from scratch, after a total breakdown of the political and social order due to war or to other forms of protracted violence, and it is accompanied – at least at the outset – by a great deal of disillusionment, moral despair and lethargy amongst large sections of the post-war society.

Credibility is what is needed most to alter the public attitude and to make people engaged for peace. Different from security – which can be established through a negotiated deal or in rare cases even by force – peace rests on the willingness of people to collaborate with each other and to overcome the use of violence. Therefore credibility originates in recognised principles such as mutual respect, tolerance for different interests, and the readiness to compromise, with the renunciation of force at all costs as the most important one – and thus in a credible change in individual behaviour and attitudes. On the state and society level this change has two interrelated dimensions of transformation: the reform of social, economic and educational structures that could lead to the use of violence, and the improvement of damaged relations and communication amongst the society as a whole, including former adversaries.

Resilience means to protect the process from backlashes and spoiling. The best recipe for resilience is ensuring inclusivity and participation. Peacebuilding is a collaborative endeavour. Attracting as many stakeholders as possible to constructively join the effort seems to provide the best guarantee to make it sustained. Inclusivity means addressing and inviting all people to contribute to the social and political change which is both part of and aimed at peacebuilding.

Finally, sustained peacebuilding is about *reliability*. Because peacebuilding is neither a linear

nor a one-dimensional process it needs a vision of peace that is broadly shared. All steps of peacebuilding must comply with that vision and be transparent in order to make them credible.

How can third party actors like the OSCE contribute to this?

Third parties have limited but potentially important influence. They can contribute primarily as norm-setters, guarantors, facilitators, mediators and observers.

Norm-setting is definitely one the greatest powers the OSCE has at its disposal. In retrospect this power has not only contributed to the implosion of autocratic regimes in Europe, its principles have also helped to bridge the gaps between former friends and foes, through placing the focus on societies and the rights of human beings rather than on political systems and states. The OSCE was built on the conviction that sustained peace in Europe was possible and the 1990 Paris Charter embodied the normative framework for that peace. Ever since the strength of the OSCE has been in its power to prevent – it has never become a collective security system nor does it have the capacity to enforce peace. But as explained in the following the OSCE has more leverage than is often assumed.

Third parties can function as *guarantor*s, sometimes by providing the option of using hard power (such as NATO did in Kosovo), but more often by providing political, economic or technical support. Expertise is what is often needed on the ground, starting off with rebuilding a functioning administration, establishing the rule of law and providing professional advice in the realms of education, community-building and reconciliation. In all these areas the OSCE with its norm-setting framework can help to ensure that the participating states comply with the needs for peace and increase the threshold for using force. This can decrease the vulnerability of the peacebuilding process, but it cannot protect against breaking the rules.

Facilitation is another method that the OSCE can use to contribute to peace. It aims to build bridges between conflicting parties by providing space within which they can communicate and start to collaborate with each other. Facilitation is a low key intervention for which the OSCE might be better suited than other Third Parties, because here its weak institutional power is its strength, as the OSCE can hardly be suspected of gambling for high stakes. Facilitation allows ownership to be left to the participants, but it also requires a minimum of readiness to achieve compromise through negotiations. Since the OSCE is a forum of participating states, its role as facilitator in asymmetric conflicts is difficult to establish.

In recent years, *mediation* as a tool for conflict transformation has received more attention. It seems to provide a proper response to the challenge of asymmetry because it targets the attitudes and behaviour of conflicting actors in order to transform their relations into constructive interaction. The UN and EU have boarded this train, and the OSCE could also play a role based on its expertise in fostering human and minority rights. But it may lack the funds and political support to become involved in long-lasting mediation efforts.

Finally, *monitoring* and reporting is a proven capacity for the OSCE, well related to its norm-setting role.

How can infrastructures for peace contribute to conflict resolution? Which institutions that are part of I4P would be most relevant for successful conflict resolution?

Infrastructures for peace - as my colleague Ulrike Hopp has written - "give peace an address".[1] Post-war peacebuilding, particularly in its initial phase, is extremely vulnerable due to weak and volatile structures, to an overwhelming uncertainty and mistrust, and to the lack of communication. Institutionalised focal points, that can be directly addressed, and which mitigate uncertainty through connecting (previous) conflict actors in both vertical (inter-track) and horizontal (intra-track) channels can make a difference. Infrastructures for peace can reconcile the tension that exists between top-down and bottom-up approaches to peacebuilding. They establish a professional architecture of support that builds on trust, ownership and responsibility. Trust comes from a clear and transparent mandate. Ownership means the structure must not be owned by on party to the conflict nor an international actor. Responsibility is related to accountability of those who run the structure.

In order to make the OSCE an attractive partner for peace processes, incentives are needed, such as offers to provide knowledge, resources and hands-on support. In doing so, inclusivity and ensuring local ownership are essential for the sustained credibility of I4P. In short: All elements of I4P that contribute to credibility, reliability and resilience are most important: the structures and processes that foster inclusivity, participation and nonviolent conflict transformation.

If peacebuilding is considered a meta-concept of the transition from war to peace, I4P at their best can provide the technical set-up for making it happen. No more, no less. While external advice may be helpful to establish them and to make them work technically, I4P will only be sustained if they are owned by legitimate

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[1] Ulrike Hopp (2013), Giving Peace an Address, in: Barbara Unger et. al. (eds.) Peace Infrastructures. Assessing Concept and Practice, Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series, no. 10, 2013, pp. 1-20.

domestic actors. Support and ownership must not be mismatched. As said before, a true peace must grow, it cannot be established, especially not from outside. Hence the OSCE should not consider I4P as a sort of revolving door for better external/internal collaboration, but rather as a tool to be used by stakeholders on the ground, who deserve support from external actors and to whom external actors can offer support if requested, without questioning legitimacy and ownership. This may include knowledge-transfer and capacity-building for analysis, scenario-development, policy-planning, collaboration, monitoring and assessment. In this sense I4P create a physical space for both learning and doing.

What role does the government play in terms of establishing I4P and making them work?

Most often I4P are created and funded by governments, both domestic and external. Governments can indeed provide the resources that are needed to make such infrastructures work and be sustainable. However, this may also imply the risk of peace processes being politicized and hijacked, and that the independence of the structures may be sacrificed to the interests of a donor who understands its role as that of a patron. But any effort to turn I4P into a tool of partisan interests will inevitably lead to a legitimacy crisis and result in political deadlock.

Governments should accept I4P as a potential asset as such, but not as a domestic or foreign policy tool. Being ownership-based and often low-profile may not necessarily result in what governments may hope for in the short run. But they may lay a seed for peace to grow, which is based on the daily experience that nonviolent interaction is possible and on learning about how to craft the techniques for this.