

Research article

# A review of approaches and methods in peacebuilding

## Revisión de enfoques y métodos en la construcción de paz

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### Abstract

**Introduction:** The objective of this work was to critically review the central elements of the theoretical discussion on peacebuilding, including the methodologies proposed for its evaluation and analysis. **Methodology:** This review was carried out using the method of scoping review or exploratory systematic review, whose purpose is to obtain a panoramic view of the research on a topic, which allows identifying the evolution of knowledge about it, the emerging themes and the main methodological developments used in research in the field. **Results:** Much of the literature on peacebuilding has dealt with two main themes: first, the critique of the liberal approach in peace studies; second, the perspective that proposes a shift towards the local and its implications. The latter approach attaches great importance to the participation of local communities and advocates bottom-up peacebuilding processes that consider the particularities of each territory. **Conclusions:** Although there is no consensus on the meaning of peacebuilding and the type of interventions that are considered peacebuilding, it is clear that these are related to other areas of action such as development and the institutional framework. In addition, the multiplicity of interventions, actors and levels involved in peacebuilding makes its measurement difficult.

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**Keywords:** peacebuilding; conflicts; liberal peace; local; development; international organizations; UN; impact evaluation.

## Resumen

**Introducción:** El objetivo de este trabajo fue revisar críticamente los elementos centrales de la discusión teórica en torno a la construcción de paz, incluyendo las metodologías propuestas para su evaluación y análisis. **Metodología:** Esta revisión se efectuó utilizando el método de scoping review, cuyo fin es obtener una visión panorámica de la investigación en torno a un tema, que permita identificar la evolución del conocimiento sobre el mismo, los temas emergentes y las principales metodologías utilizadas. **Resultados:** Gran parte de la literatura se ha ocupado de dos temas principales: En primer lugar, la crítica al enfoque liberal en los estudios de paz; en segundo lugar, la perspectiva que propone un giro hacia lo local y sus implicaciones. Este último enfoque otorga gran importancia a la participación de las comunidades locales y aboga por procesos de construcción de paz de abajo hacia arriba. **Conclusiones:** Aunque no hay consenso sobre el concepto de construcción de paz y el tipo de intervenciones que se consideran construcción de paz, está claro que éstas se relacionan con otras áreas de acción como el desarrollo y el marco institucional. Adicionalmente, la multiplicidad de intervenciones, actores y niveles que involucra hace que su medición sea difícil.

**Palabras clave:** construcción de paz; conflictos; paz liberal; local; desarrollo; organizaciones internacionales; ONU; evaluación de impacto.

## 1. Introduction

Peacebuilding refers to efforts to build a sustainable peace by addressing the root causes of conflict and building endogenous capacities for peaceful conflict management and resolution (International Association for Humanitarian Policy and Conflict Research, 2013). Notwithstanding this general definition, the concept and practice of peacebuilding are not unique; they have evolved over time, mainly influenced by political changes and the experience of the international community in conflict resolution in various countries. Likewise, there is still no consensus on the best way to evaluate peacebuilding and measure the effectiveness of the actions considered within this category.

The interest generated by peacebuilding is not only due to academic motivations, but also to practical ones, given the existence of numerous armed conflicts around the world, which continue to be a challenge of great proportions for humanity. Armed conflicts generate enormous costs for society, even after the cessation of violence. In addition to the immediate and direct effects such as loss of life and disability, armed conflicts increase people's vulnerability, negatively affect access to the provision of public goods, destroy infrastructure, hinder human capital accumulation and generate a development gap (Gattes et al., 2015). In this regard, the Institute for Economics & Peace (2023, p. 34) estimated the economic impact of violence and armed conflict on the global economy in 2022 at \$17.5 trillion (PPP), corresponding to 12.9% of global GDP.

Considering the relevance of peacebuilding as a category of analysis, the objective of this work is to carry out a critical review of the main theoretical perspectives that have emerged around peacebuilding and the methodologies proposed for its analysis, considering the elements that have influenced this theoretical and methodological discussion. Accordingly, the paper first examines the origin of the concept of peacebuilding, followed by the analysis of liberal peacebuilding and the critiques of this approach that gave way to the perspective of peacebuilding from the local level. Subsequently, the role of local governments in this last

approach is discussed. Finally, some methodologies proposed to evaluate the effectiveness of peacebuilding, and its strengths and weaknesses are studied.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This analysis was elaborated using the method of scoping review or exploratory systematic review, which purpose is to obtain a panoramic view of the research on a topic, identifying the evolution of knowledge on the topic, the emerging themes and the main methodological developments used in research in the field, among others. In this case, the aim was to identify, critically analyze and synthesize the key theories, concepts and methods used to explain peacebuilding in last decades. The search for information included digital libraries, databases, citation databases and scientific search engines such as ScienceDirect, Jstor, SciELO, Redalyc, Scopus and Google Scholar. This strategy was complemented with citation tracking.

The criteria considered for the selection of the works to be analyzed were the number of times each document has been cited, the year of publication, favoring the most recent ones, the pertinence in relation to the selected thematic axes and the relevance of the authors in the field. It was mainly considered the publications that are the product of research work but some documents from non-academic sources such as international organizations were also included. For the analysis of the information, structured summaries were used, following a chronological sequence within each topic. Finally, the results are presented in the form of a narrative synthesis by theme.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. *Origin of the peacebuilding concept*

The origin of peacebuilding as a category of analysis is located by several authors in the 1970s (Hueso, 2000; Woodhouse, 2010; Zapata, 2009) when the Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung first used this term in his work "Three Approaches to Peace: Peacekeeping, Peacemaking and Peacebuilding" (Galtung, 1976). Previously, in 1964, Galtung had questioned the pacifist approach predominant in peace studies, according to which peace has a unique and clear rational meaning (París, 2005). Galtung makes a fundamental distinction in peace studies which would serve as the basis for his later theoretical approaches: that of negative peace versus positive peace (Galtung, 1964). He defines negative peace as the absence of violence, while positive peace as human integration, which he later defines as the absence of structural violence.

In his 1976 work, Galtung critically reviews the peacekeeping and peacemaking approaches and proposes a peacebuilding perspective. The peacekeeping approach is described by Galtung as dissociative, militaristic and based on the balance of power. He considers it dangerous and inadequate to resolve the great variety of conflicts that exists in the world. On the other hand, Galtung states that the peacemaking or conflict resolution approach is unrealistic, because it supposes that peace is achieved almost automatically with the signing of a peace agreement between the opposing parties. In contrast, he argues that peacebuilding, which he calls the associative approach, is more appropriate since it implies the creation of adequate structures that remove the causes of war and offer peaceful alternatives in situations where violent conflict could occur (Galtung, 1976).

Galtung also claims that violent culture and violent structures cannot be overcome using violence, because it would increase confrontation and fuels the culture of war. By contrast, On the contrary, a culture and structure of peace is required, with tools and mechanisms that allow

conflicts to be settled by peaceful means. Accordingly, peacebuilding consists of creating the conditions that make it possible to overcome the multiple causes of violence in its various forms and avoid relapsing into it, for which a particular structure is required. In Galtung's words, "Peace has a structure different from, perhaps over and above, peacekeeping and ad hoc peacemaking.... The mechanisms that peace is based on should be built into the structure and be present there as a reservoir for the system itself to draw upon.... More specifically, structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offers alternatives to war in situations where war might occur" (Galtung, 1976, p. 298).

For this author, conflict is inherent to society, but not violence, which arises when conflict fails to be transformed. Thus, Galtung distinguishes three types of violence: direct, structural and cultural, which represent a set of conditions that, combined in certain cultural or historical moments, generate the conditions for violence or war (Galtung, 1990). Direct violence refers to hostilities and the use of force, which causes harm to others. Structural violence corresponds to conditions such as poverty, inequality, exclusion and other systematic forms that limit the access of some groups to opportunities or the satisfaction of their basic needs. Cultural violence is related to the prevailing social norms in society that normalize or justify direct or structural violence.

Galtung's theses were criticized by authors who considered the distinction between positive and negative peace as reductionist and detrimental to the discipline of peace studies (K. Boulding, 1977). For others, their arguments were unrealistic (Lawler, 1993) or inappropriate in the scenario of the end of the Cold War. Notwithstanding these criticisms, Galtung's ideas were fundamental in the construction of the concept and theory of peacebuilding. Insofar as he considered violence as a phenomenon with deep roots, which goes beyond the aggressions that can be generated between opposing actors, Galtung recognized the multidimensionality of this phenomenon and the need to approach peace from a holistic perspective. This is also reflected in the importance he attached to culture as a fundamental variable in the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

By distinguishing between violence that is directly manifest and that which is indirect or structural in nature, Galtung departed from the actor-centered approach and made a critical analysis of the underlying configurations and the essential measures to change them for less violent ones (París, 2005). In addition, his concept of structural violence established a link between peace and the living conditions in a society, connecting peace studies with development studies (Grewal, 2003); a connection that is still valid today.

### ***3.2. Criticisms to liberal peace and the United Nations perspective on peacebuilding***

In the post-World War II period, much of the peacebuilding efforts were guided by a liberal approach known as liberal peace or liberal peacebuilding. From this perspective, countries with democratic institutions, market economies and economic development tend to have fewer conflicts. The theoretical foundations of liberal peacebuilding can be found in John Locke's individualism, Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism, Adam Smith's economic freedom and, above all, Immanuel Kant's perpetual peace (Hegre, 2004; Richmond, 2008). Based on their thesis, the liberal perspective assumes that war is not desired by individuals and that political pluralism, democracy, economic freedom, free trade and a broad distribution of rights and responsibilities are fundamental for peace. Therefore, democratic and transparent institutions that guarantee these principles are required (Richmond, 2008). Consequently, the interventions stemming from this approach, mainly managed by international organizations, are aimed at promoting a democratic political system, economic reforms that favor private activity and insertion into the global markets. The defense of individual rights, the protection

of property rights and access to basic social guarantees such as health, education and housing, are also important measures recommended under this approach (Bonilla, 2018).

These liberal ideas began to be strongly questioned in the 1990s. One of the main criticisms was that liberal peacebuilding is often perceived as an external imposition of Western values and governance structures in post-conflict contexts. This can lead to local resistance and lack of ownership by affected communities. Likewise, it is considered that liberal approaches tend to assume that the principles and models of liberal democracy and market economy are universal and applicable in all contexts. This assumption ignores the cultural, historical and social specificities of each society. In addition, liberal peace interventions are often implemented by international actors and not by local communities, which can create a democratic deficit. Crucial decisions are made outside the control and participation of local citizens. Critics also question the effectiveness of liberal peace. In many cases, imposed structures can be fragile and susceptible to collapse once the international community withdraws (Bindi & Tufekci, 2018; Campbell et al., 2011).

In addition to these challenges to the liberal approach, various circumstances in the international context influenced a change of focus in peacebuilding theory. Among them, the end of the Cold War, which poses a new scenario in which confrontations are no longer conceived as a mere extension of the global conflict (Rettberg, 2013). Added to this, the emergence of numerous intra-state conflicts and the failures of the international community in managing the conflicts in Rwanda, Bosnia and Somalia. This leads various researchers to question the "top-down" approach that liberal peace assumes and advocate for a "peace from below", with greater incidence of local actors (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015), so that the local dynamics acquire great importance in peace research.

Debiel & Rinck (2016) also explain the shift towards the local in peacebuilding debates as an alternative to the liberal perspective. The latter approach is characterized by a top-down view where decisions and liberal democratic political structures and processes and neoliberal economic practices are prioritized in addressing conflicts. In contrast, the local peacebuilding approach focuses on the local and societal level and advocates locally designed peace processes, according to the particularities of the territory. However, these authors warn that this idealized vision may end up ignoring the importance of national institutions, domestic politics, formal institutions and the State.

On the other hand, peace strategies began to consider periods of time beyond the ceasefire and to include a wider variety of actors and processes (Rettberg, 2013). All these activities and aspects are considered from then on, elements of peacebuilding. Among the diverse participants now included, civil society emerges as the most significant actor, as its role is considered fundamental to confer legitimacy to the actions undertaken, validating their social relevance and ensuring accountability.

Another important development during the last decade of the 20th century was that the United Nations Organization (UNO) incorporated the concept of peacebuilding into its discourse, with significant implications for the theoretical discussion and practice of peacebuilding. As explained by Gravingholt et al. (2009), the concept of peacebuilding evolved throughout the 1990s hand in hand with the policy documents of various international organizations, particularly the United Nations. In 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, UN Secretary-General, published *An Agenda for Peace* (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015) in which he explains the Organization's strategy for peace, consisting of four elements: preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-conflict peacebuilding.

In the Agenda for Peace, peacebuilding is defined as actions to identify and support structures that tend to strengthen and solidify peace and foster a sense of trust and well-being among the population, in order to avoid a relapse into conflict. Under this concept of peacebuilding, the UN includes efforts of various kinds such as disarmament of the parties involved in the confrontation, repatriation of refugees, supervision of electoral processes, protection of human rights, strengthening of government institutions and support for political participation processes (Boutros-Ghali, 1992). Although the definition proposed by the UN is quite limited in that it places peacebuilding in the post-conflict period, An Agenda for Peace became the reference for many organizations working in the field of peace at the international level, widely disseminating the notion of peacebuilding.

For Paffenholz & Spurk (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006), the conception adopted by the UN in this document is quite restricted, as it is based on the notion of negative peace. Peacebuilding is defined as the prevention of large-scale violence or its immediate recurrence after armed conflicts or wars, within a specific time horizon. From this conception, all actions aimed directly at achieving this objective are part of peacebuilding. Paffenholz & Spurk (2006) argue that this definition is taken and slightly expanded by the international community, for whom peacebuilding is considered complete when it is evident that a post-conflict country can provide a minimum level of security to its citizens that allows the withdrawal of international peacekeeping forces. In addition, it implies establishing functioning democratic structures, generally represented by a national government legitimized through internationally supervised and recognized elections.

### ***3.3. Bottom-up peacebuilding***

Several works place Adam Curle as one of the authors who provide the basis for the bottom-up peacebuilding approach (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015; Martinelli, 2000; Woodhouse, 2010; Zapata, 2009). Curle states that achieving peace involves changing the way in which stakeholders relate to each other, from violent to peaceful relationships and highlights the importance of people's attitudes and values within systems for peace and violence. In his early work, Curle argues that mediation is the best form of conflict resolution, which should give way to negotiation. However, he later recognizes the difficulty of materializing these ideas on mediation and stresses the need to build on indigenous socio-cultural structures and practices, build local capacities and empower local communities, who have the best potential to achieve peace (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015; Woodhouse, 2010).

Curle's ideas are taken up by Jean Paul Lederach, considered a pioneer among researchers who defend the need to turn towards the local. Lederach rejects the idea that peacebuilding refers only to post-conflict efforts, as it is derived from the concept coined by the United Nations (Lederach, 1998). On the contrary, for him, peacebuilding transcends the mere restoration that occurs after a peace agreement and implies a comprehensive approach that includes the procedures, approaches and phases necessary to transform conflicts into nonviolent and lasting relationships. Thus, the term encompasses a wide range of activities and roles that precede and follow formal peace agreements. In addition, Lederach considers that peace is not just a temporary stage or condition; rather, it is a constantly evolving social process and, as such, requires a process of building that involves investment, materials and ongoing maintenance (Lederach, 1998).

Lederach is considered the main representative of what Paffenholz & Spurk (2006) Paffenholz and Spurk (2006) call the conflict transformation school. This approach emphasizes the transformation of deep-rooted violent confrontations into peaceful conflicts, based on a new understanding of the concept of peacebuilding. It recognizes the existence of conflicts that,

although they cannot be resolved, can be transformed through the construction of long-term relationships and the resolution of the underlying causes of the conflict. For this, Lederach proposes the construction of a long-term peacebuilding infrastructure that supports reconciliation within society and the potential for peacebuilding. This requires sensitivity to local culture and a long-term time frame. In this context, the work of external actors should focus on supporting internal actors and coordinating external peace efforts.

Consequently, and along the same lines as Galtung, Lederach points out the need to create an infrastructure for conflict transformation and peacebuilding. Thus, building the infrastructure for peace requires two types of resources, socio-economic and socio-cultural. While the first type of resources relates to monetary aspects and the sociological dimension associated with the distribution of funds, socio-cultural resources refer to people and their diverse cultural traditions, which are fundamental to peacebuilding. Therefore, peacebuilding needs broad social participation and the empowerment of people, organizations and cultural practices in the context of conflict.

Three elements stand out in the conceptual framework proposed by Lederach. First, it emphasizes the relational dimension; transforming conflicts implies changing the underlying relationships and dynamics and carrying out a process of reconciliation. Second, he argues for a notion of peace that is not simply the absence of violence, but a state in which relationships, institutions and structures are transformed to address the injustices and inequalities that often lie at the root of conflict. By emphasizing conflict transformation, rather than its elimination, Lederach visualizes conflict as an opportunity to generate processes of constructive change that reduce violence and increase justice, among other objectives (Zapata, 2009). Lederach takes from Curle the idea of conflict as progression, to reinforce his argument that peacebuilding goes beyond the cessation of hostilities or the holding of negotiations and is rather a complex system of interrelated activities, roles and functions (Lederach, 1998). The third element that stands out is the importance he attaches to the active participation and empowerment of local actors, as he believes that sustainable solutions come from understanding and collaboration among the people directly affected by the conflict.

Other authors who also argued for peacebuilding from the local were Rupesinghe, Fetherston, Nordstrom and Boulding (Cited by Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015). Rupesinghe and Fetherston analyze the role of local actors as peacebuilders and argue that they are the main architects, owners and long-term stakeholders of peace. Thus, peace must be produced and reproduced by the people living in a specific post-conflict context. Therefore, interventions by external actors must be articulated with local peacebuilding frameworks (Fetherston, 2000; Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015).

Nordstrom, on the other hand, explains how local people and communities affected by violent conflicts use indigenous practices to manage post-conflict situations (Cited by Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015). From a similar perspective, Boulding highlights that each social group has developed over time its own practices for conflict resolution, based on local culture and knowledge of their immediate environment (Boulding, 2000). The common denominator of these contributions is the emphasis that peace is built on cultural practices and internal and local traditions, so that external agents act only as a support in the process, since it is the local actors who decide on the kind of peace to be built.

The theoretical discussion on the need to adopt strategies that consider local conditions and actors in peacebuilding processes, together with the failure of UN interventions in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, permeated the discourse of this organization at the beginning of the new century. Without completely abandoning the vision of post-conflict peacebuilding,

the UN now attaches greater importance to the prevention of violent confrontations and the consequent need to attack not only the manifestations of conflicts, but also their causes, which are closely related to the living conditions and development of each country (Secretario General de las Naciones Unidas, 2000).

From this perspective, the UN recognizes that peacebuilding requires harnessing the capacities of local communities and achieving sustainable development, which can only be accomplished by the local population itself, while the organization plays the role of facilitator: "The role of the United Nations is simply to facilitate the process of dismantling the structures of violence and creating conditions conducive to lasting peace and sustainable development" (Consejo de Seguridad Naciones Unidas, 2001, p. 3). Consequently, the interventions of the UN and other organizations expand to accommodate a state-building agenda, where issues such as governance and local capacity building are of great relevance, going beyond the traditional measures of pacification and ceasefire verification.

### *3.4. Role of local governments*

Within the perspective of local peacebuilding, there is a line of analysis that has focused on the consolidation of state institutions at the subregional level and the role of subnational governments in achieving peace objectives. According to Leonardsson & Rudd (2015), in this approach the consolidation of legitimate and efficient institutions in the local sphere is crucial, since the state apparatus in post-conflict contexts generally suffers from weakened institutional capacity, resulting in exclusionary and inefficient public institutions. It is considered that local governments can count on greater legitimacy and capacity to act to solve the needs of the population and therefore, have an important potential for conflict resolution. However, for this potential to materialize, it is essential that subnational governments have sufficient resources and autonomy.

In this sense, well-planned and properly managed decentralization can contribute to stability and peace by increasing legitimacy, accountability and inclusion, while fostering participation. Additionally, the relationship between local and central leaders, as well as the presence of leadership that supports and stimulates peace initiatives, play a critical role in this process (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015).

These arguments have been contrasted empirically and the results are inconclusive. The research conducted by Birkenhoff & Johnson (2009) in Iraq using the participant observation technique finds a positive effect of local governance and decentralization on public service delivery, reduction of ethnic and regional inequalities, conflict mitigation, legitimacy building and democratic capacity building in communities.

In contrast, other research concludes that the expected benefits are not always achieved. For example, Brancati (2006) analyzes 30 countries over a 15-year period and concludes that decentralization can reduce ethnic conflict and secessionism by bringing government closer to the people and increasing opportunities for community participation. But they also found that it can increase ethnic conflict and demands for regional independence by fostering the growth of regional parties. Similarly, Schou & Haug (2005) conclude that decentralization can cause both positive and negative effects in conflict territories. Among the positive aspects are greater participation, legitimacy, greater bargaining power vis-à-vis the central government and the strengthening of trust within the community. As for the negative effects, the most important are tensions between regions due to the redistribution of resources and between local and central government. In relation to these negative effects and the lack of success of decentralization in improving conflict situations, it is argued that they may occur partly due



to the capture of local power by certain groups and the limited capacity of local governments to generate their own resources to effectively meet the needs of the population (Leonardsson & Rudd, 2015).

### *3.5. Methods for the evaluation of peacebuilding*

One of the most important challenges in peace studies is the evaluation of peacebuilding initiatives. The reason is that it is a complex process that develops in various stages, involves different actors (the State, civil society, international organizations and armed actors, among others), levels (international, national, local) and themes (for example: development, democratization, state-building, cessation of hostilities and reincorporation into civilian life). On the other hand, the concept of peacebuilding is not univocal. Although there is a broad conceptual development on the subject, peacebuilding has tended to be defined differently by each organization that develops activities in this field, depending on its particular agenda and objectives.

In this context, in the last 20 years various researchers and organizations have proposed methodologies to measure the effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts, especially oriented to the actions carried out by international agencies active in this field. As mentioned before, the reactivation of violent conflicts in the 1990s, among other reasons, generated an intense discussion on the limitations of the peacebuilding concept until then, which was mainly oriented to actions after the ceasefire. This led to a broadening of the notion of peacebuilding, giving space within its definition to actions to prevent the emergence of violence and relapse into conflict once it has ceased. This implied recognizing that the consolidation of a stable and sustainable peace requires social, political and cultural changes (Rettberg, 2013). As a consequence, peacebuilding began to be considered part of the functions of development agencies. Thus, the methodologies designed to measure or evaluate peacebuilding largely respond to the dynamics of these organizations and assume a link between conflict and development (Paffenholz & Spurk, 2006).

One of the frameworks that have been proposed to evaluate peacebuilding interventions is the "Aid for Peace" approach, developed by Paffenholz and Reyhler (cited by Reyhler, 2008). It is intended as an analytical tool for the planning and evaluation of peacebuilding, development and humanitarian aid interventions. It includes a series of components or steps to be considered when planning and evaluating interventions. The first step is the analysis of peacebuilding needs in the area to be intervened. The second element is an evaluation of the relevance of the planned or existing intervention. For this, the objectives and activities are contrasted with the identified needs, in order to establish their relevance, avoiding duplication of activities and incorporating lessons learned from past experiences. Next, the risks of the conflict on the planned activities are identified and finally, the effects of the interventions on the conflict dynamics and the peacebuilding process are evaluated.

Although no specific methodology is defined for this evaluation, Paffenholz and Reyhler (cited by Reyhler, 2008) indicate two conditions for it to be carried out. First, it is necessary to establish a baseline prior to the intervention, which will allow later comparisons. In addition, during intervention planning it is necessary to establish a theory of change and operationalize it, agreeing on the results chains and indicators to be used for evaluation. Developing a theory of change for each action to be evaluated is a common element in the methodologies that have been formulated to evaluate the effectiveness of peacebuilding actions.

Similarly, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD adopted in 1992 five criteria for the evaluation of development assistance interventions, without elaborating on

their operationalization. These criteria were defined in detail in 2002 and became a benchmark for the evaluation of international development activities, humanitarian and peacebuilding actions, not only for the member countries of this organization, but also for many international agencies (Noltze & Harten, 2021). In 2019, these criteria were updated to include the principles and objectives of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2020), so that there are now six criteria: relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability.

In addition to these general principles for evaluation, some researchers and development organizations have designed methodologies to more specifically measure peacebuilding interventions and their potential impacts. Within these efforts, impact evaluation methodologies with an experimental approach have been widely endorsed as more rigorous because they are based on counterfactual analysis. Although these methodologies are necessary when seeking to attribute causality, there are a variety of approaches that can be used to measure the effects of peacebuilding interventions, as shown by Chigas et al. (2014) and (Scherrer, 2012).

As explained by Chigas et al. (2014), there are important obstacles associated with impact evaluation, among them, the difficulty in establishing adequate measures of the success of peacebuilding, considering the multiple definitions that have been given; the variety of interventions and the lack of precision in the definition of objectives. Another difficulty arises at the moment of establishing causal relationships between variables, given that most peacebuilding actions do not act directly on the conflict, but indirectly on other intermediate variables. In addition, identifying the key factors of the conflict that were affected and establishing how the intervention has contributed to changes at the community, local or national level poses difficulties.

The authors also state that when assessing the impact of peacebuilding actions, it is not possible to attribute changes to a single intervention, since changes in conflict triggers and vulnerability are the product of a combination of many factors, such as other interventions and circumstances of the local or international context, which act jointly on peacebuilding variables. Therefore, they recommend evaluating the contribution, rather than the impact in the strict sense, of a given action (Chigas et al., 2014).

They distinguish three approaches normally used to evaluate the impact of peacebuilding interventions. The first is the traditional impact evaluation or variable-based approach, in which experimental and quasi-experimental methods are used to establish causal relationships between variables. The second is the process-based approach or evaluation based on theory and case studies. This approach, which can be qualitative or quantitative, identifies and tests the assumptions made in the design of an intervention and the channels through which activities will lead to results, which in turn may contribute to peacebuilding. Methodologies included in this approach are Realist Evaluation, Contribution Analysis, Process Tracing and Case Studies, among others. Finally, the participatory approach, in which participants play an active role in the evaluation, getting involved in most phases of the study. To this group belong the Most Significant Change, Outcome Harvesting and Participatory Impact Evaluation studies (Chigas et al., 2014).

The authors conclude that there is no one method that is suitable for all cases; this will depend on the objectives of the evaluation and the characteristics of the intervention, among other aspects. However, the traditional impact evaluation approach could have very limited usefulness for evaluating peacebuilding interventions, given that it does not adequately answer all the questions associated with the effects of the intervention, as well as

methodological challenges and its low conflict sensitivity. A combination of several methods (quantitative and qualitative) and, if necessary, approaches, is recommended to make the evaluation more robust. The use of participatory methods is recommended, since it allows the inclusion of diverse perspectives, and a more detailed understanding of the changes generated by a given action.

The review by Chigas et al. (2014) is very similar to that presented by Scherrer (2012), who identifies impact measurement methodologies that can be applied in highly complex post-conflict interventions involving multiple levels and actors. Her analysis includes methodologies used by 19 international agencies. Scherrer concludes that there is no consensus among international organizations on the most appropriate methodology and recommends using different methods to triangulate results and counteract the weaknesses of each approach. In this regard, she proposes four criteria to be considered when choosing the approach and methodology to be used: the purpose of the evaluation, the questions to be answered, the cost-effectiveness ratio and the particular characteristics of the context. Scherrer also highlights the usefulness of theory-based and participatory approaches, which are regarded as more appropriate alternatives to traditional impact evaluation approaches, depending on the objectives of the evaluation and the resources available.

One of the most recent methodological advances for the assessment of peacebuilding actions comes from the Institute for Economics and Peace - IEP (2018), which has proposed a global model for conducting cost-benefit evaluations at the national level, taking as an example the case of Rwanda. This country is chosen due to the availability of information and because it is considered a successful peacebuilding case. Considering that there is no consensus among researchers and international agencies on the kind of activities that should be considered peacebuilding, nor is there a record of the resources allocated to peacebuilding for each country, IEP proposes a categorization that considers the resources allocated by donor countries within the framework of Official Development Assistance of the OECD. Thus, the activities considered under the umbrella of peacebuilding are those related to basic security, inclusive political processes, basic government functions, provision of basic services and economic reactivation.

In particular, the methodology consists of five stages: i) Estimation of the costs of the conflict in the country based on four variables (costs associated with combat deaths, impact of terrorism, displaced population and slower economic growth). ii) Construction of two possible scenarios for the country, using an Arima model. In the first scenario the conflict continues, based on past behavior, while the second is a peace scenario. Subsequently, the costs of the conflict in each scenario are calculated based on the trend of the last 20 years. iii) Estimation of the benefits of peacebuilding, which result from the difference in the cost of the conflict in the two scenarios. iv) Calculation of the shortfall of resources allocated to peacebuilding for each country, taking as a reference the resources invested in Rwanda. v) Estimation of the cost-benefit ratio by country, understood as the ratio between the necessary increase in peacebuilding expenditure per capita required to reach the same level as Rwanda, divided by the estimated peace dividends for each country. After implementing these steps globally, the cost-benefit ratio of peacebuilding obtained is 1:16, indicating that for every dollar invested, the cost of conflict is reduced by \$16.

Cost-benefit analyses may be more appropriate than other methods for evaluating concrete peacebuilding interventions because they do not face the limitations of other techniques that evaluate outcomes or impacts, which are difficult or impossible to establish. This kind of analysis is also considered more suitable than those that use binary measures that indicate whether a country has relapsed into conflict, or statistics on the number of combat deaths to

determine the success of peacebuilding processes. These indicators do not allow us to differentiate between the importance of different types of peacebuilding, as they do not provide a measure of a country's level of peace, nor do they provide information on whether conflict has turned into other types of violence.

## 4. Conclusions

By introducing the notion of peacebuilding, Galtung marked a milestone in peace studies, since it shows that peace is not the automatic result of the signing of an agreement between the parties in conflict or the use of coercive means, but rather a long-term and wide-ranging process that involves working on various fronts (economic, political, cultural, relational, etc.). Likewise, the definition of the various types of violence that can occur is a fundamental tool for understanding the underlying causes of conflicts, which must be addressed together for peace to be sustainable.

For several decades, the liberal approach to peacebuilding predominated, until it was widely criticized for claiming to universalize Western liberal values and institutions and for the preponderant role given to external actors, leaving aside local actors and ignoring the particular conditions of the territory affected by the conflict. Faced with this panorama, the theory and practice of peacebuilding has shifted to give greater importance to the conditions of the context, society and local government, so that peace is built "from the bottom up" and not "from the top down" as the liberal approach does. Although it is hoped that this perspective will prove more effective, it is necessary to analyze in depth the extent to which this has been the case or whether the change has been merely rhetorical. This is a research topic for future work.

Although Galtung's theses provide the basis for the development of the peacebuilding approach, there is no single concept and the discussion on what actions are considered peacebuilding and their temporality continues. This makes it difficult to measure peacebuilding and evaluate its effectiveness. An additional obstacle is the large number of actors and levels that peacebuilding can involve, as well as the numerous elements that can influence a specific outcome, given that changes cannot be attributed to a single intervention, as shifts in conflict triggers and vulnerability stem from a combination of multiple factors. In this context, assessments that combine various methods and approaches, especially participatory ones, are more advisable.

This paper does not analyze possible more recent theoretical developments or alternative approaches such as adaptive peacebuilding, hybrid peace and complexity-sensitive peacebuilding, which could provide valuable contributions to broaden the theoretical and methodological debate on peacebuilding and therefore constitute topics to be taken into account in future studies.

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