

BOOK REVIEW

Sultan Barakat (Ed.)

After the Conflict: Reconstruction and Development in the Aftermath of War

London: I.B. Tauris, 2010, ISBN: 978 1 84885417 8, £ 27.00, 304 p.

This book, *After the Conflict: Reconstruction and Development in the Aftermath of War*, was first published in 2005. Although it has been eight years since the first publication and paperback edition in 2010 is not updated with the most recent information, this book is still a highly valuable reference. In this book, a group of leading researchers from the University of York's Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU) provides a comprehensive explanation on a wide range of key dimensions of post-war reconstruction practices and core topics in contemporary academic discussions which include capacity building, local context, proactive humanitarianism and public administration. In addition, the authors elaborate some significant lessons learned from their involvements in post-war countries such as Afghanistan, Rwanda, Kosovo, Somalia, Indonesia, Mozambique, and East Timor bringing life to their main arguments in some chapters.

The book consists of 14 chapters, and to understand better I rearranged and categorised them into two groups: thematic discussions on various aspects of peacebuilding (chapter 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10 and 12) and fields of practice in post-war reconstruction (chapter 6, 7, 9, 11 and 13). First, thematic discourses of main arguments of this book are explained: local context and general patterns; humanitarianism; challenges to third-party intervention; aid coordination; capacity building; and long-term commitment. In Chapter 2, Mac Ginty emphasises the importance of the end of Cold War in terms of profoundly changing contexts of post-reconstruction and development in the post-Cold War era. He argues that official peace processes and local population's actual life should be connected by relevant stakeholders of peace initiatives and processes. Özerdem and Rufini, in Chapter 3, remind us of both utility and ambiguity of the word 'humanitarian' introducing twin principles of 'impartiality' and 'neutrality', challenges to 'new humanitarianism', and the discussion of finding a way for the actual implementation of humanitarian principles. In Chapter 4, Barakat, Connolly and Large analyse the case of the Province of Aceh, Indonesia and elaborate the 'challenges to third-party intervention': suitable strategy of intervention, a level playing field, implementing agreements, clean process of intervention, balancing institutional image. This chapter also discusses the use of proactive humanitarianism in creating suitable solutions to various conflicts reassuring that the case of Indonesia gives us a lesson that theory and strategies should be tailored in accordance with the relevant context.

In Chapter 5, Strand focuses on the issue of effective aid coordination with the use of a case study of Afghanistan and provides some details on the clear definition and increasing



importance of aid coordination. In addition, in Chapter 8, Suhrke and Strand show us the Afghan case 'through a comparative lens' and argue that there is no such a panacea in the process of conflictual peacebuilding with the comparing reference of the cases of East Timor and Mozambique. In Chapter 10, Barakat and Chard focus on the issue of capacity building in a war-torn society and highlight the difficulty of prioritising the needs of developing the capability of people and national institutions. The authors argue that 'a strong social and institutional infrastructure is crucial to growth and development' and the United Nations would be the one which should make best efforts with 'the longer perspective of development for peace'. In Chapter 12, Barakat and Deely claim the importance of long-term commitment in the process of post-war rehabilitation with the case study of sustaining local health services in Somalia. According to the authors, short-term relief assistance should go through transition to rehabilitation process and empowering local people is necessary for enhanced participation of local population and well-suited measures of post-war reconstruction.

Second, some fields of practice in post-war reconstruction (chapter 6, 7, 9, 11 and 13) are also discussed in this book: economy; health and health systems; physical reconstruction and the built environment; public administration; reintegration of former combatants. In Chapter 6, Jones looks into the relationship between conflict and economy focusing on Rwanda. Jones particularly examines: 'the role of the pre-war economy'; 'the impact of war on an economy'; the relationship between post-war economy and poverty reduction. In Chapter 7, Deely provides an overview of the influence of conflict on health and health systems examining some major challenges to war-torn countries such as 'increased health needs' of the war-affected people, 'diminished capacity of health services' and 'distortion of the health system'.

In Chapter 9, Zetter examines the nature and importance of post-war 'reconstruction of the built environment'. This chapter argues that 'physical reconstruction is not just a sectoral and programmatic end in itself' and that this type of recovery needs 'long term and systematic developmental frameworks' while suggesting a 'strategic framework for post-conflict reconstruction'. In Chapter 11, Evans starts his arguments for post-war reconstruction from three assumptions: 'effective public administration' is required; 'indigenous civil service' should lead the process of post-war development; 'multi-level collaborative governance' including local and national government, donors, and international organisations. In Chapter 13, Barakat and Özerdem examine the relationship between 'reintegration of former combatants and peacebuilding' with the case of Kosovo. They argue that the international community should pay more attention to some issues which can be essential to set a secure and stable environment for post-war recovery including effective human resource allocation and utilising training programmes strategically.

All in all, the biggest strengths of this publication are that comprehensive analyses are provided to deal with key post-war reconstruction discourses over the time and an insightful philosophy for long-term and sustainable post-war recovery also can be drawn. Although it only consists of fourteen chapters, in terms of timeframe of peace process, this book covers the issues occurring from the peace negotiation period for terminating ongoing violent conflicts to conflict transformation which aims to long-term peace consolidation. As for the issue areas, it explores from material reconstruction (i.e. health care institutions, economic



rehabilitation) to social and psychological issues (i.e. community development, social reintegration of ex-combatants). In this sense, this book looks like a concise handbook of post-war reconstruction. In addition, since its first publication in 2005, it has been consistently providing some food for thought to various readers - not only relevant academics and researchers of post-conflict or development studies but also peacebuilding practitioners including aid workers – through offering keen insights on a wide range of post-war reconstruction issues.

However, it should be mentioned that there is distinct room to update the information relevant to the case studies presented in this publication. Although the main arguments and theoretical discussions are still relevant, it is a little surprising that the editor did not include more up-to-date data when he decided to republish this book five years after its first publication. In addition, although this is not a criticism, I find the discussions in the book may be too deep to be an introductory reference for practitioners or undergraduate students but too brief to be an argumentative material relevant to academic researchers or research students.

Wookbeom Park

Re-Shaping Development Institute (RDI), Seoul, South Korea