

BUILDING PEACE

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SUSTAINABLE RECONCILIATION IN DIVIDED SOCIETIES

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UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE PRESS
Washington, D.C.

The views expressed in this book are those of the authors alone. They do not necessarily reflect views of the United States Institute of Peace.

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First published 1997. Third printing 1999.

Printed in the United States of America

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Lederach, John Paul.

Building peace : sustainable reconciliation in divided societies / John Paul Lederach.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN 1-878379-74-7 (hardback). — ISBN 1-878379-73-9 (paperback)

1. Peace. 2. Pacific settlement of international disputes. 3. International relations and culture. I. Title.

KZ5538.L43 1997

341.7'3—dc21

97-35584

CIP

For Wendy

*With deep appreciation for your support and encouragement
down the many paths and across the long miles
that the search for peace has taken us*

The delight of building peace?
Like fishing, it is the pursuit of what is elusive,
but attainable,
a perpetual series of occasions for hope.

—Adapted from John Buchan

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FOREWORD



“I have a rather modest thesis,” remarks John Paul Lederach in the introduction to this remarkable book. “I believe that the nature and characteristics of contemporary conflict suggest the need for a set of concepts and approaches that go beyond traditional statist diplomacy.” Perhaps this thesis is, as the author claims, rather modest, but its implications are certainly not.

The framework that Lederach lays out in this volume with such clarity and sophistication is as ambitious in its breadth and depth as it is in its goal. That goal is the creation in societies currently riven by division and violence of “sustainable peace,” by which the author means a good deal more than the already difficult tasks of brokering a cease-fire, negotiating a peace agreement, or implementing a multifaceted peace accord. Sustainable peace requires that long-time antagonists not merely lay down their arms but that they achieve profound reconciliation that will endure because it is sustained by a society-wide network of relationships and mechanisms that promote justice and address the root causes of enmity before they can regenerate destabilizing tensions. As Lederach notes, this amounts to a “paradigmatic shift” away from the traditional framework and activities that make up statist diplomacy—“away from a concern with the resolution of issues and toward a frame of reference that provides a focus on the restoration and rebuilding of relationships.”

The scale and the nature of the changes needed to effect such reconciliation are reflected in the framework with which Lederach conceptualizes contemporary intrastate conflict and the means for its



transformation. With a refreshing boldness and breadth of vision, the author argues that all sectors of a society must participate in the building of peace (with “middle-range” rather than “top-level” leaders having a particularly important role to play); that we must address not only the immediate issues in a conflict but also the broader systemic and subsystemic concerns; that conflict is a progression through stages and that peacebuilding is an ongoing process of interdependent roles, functions, and activities; that resources for peace are sociocultural as well as socioeconomic in nature; and that the redefinition and restoration of relationships depends on creating a dynamic, conflict-responsive peacebuilding infrastructure. Lederach also urges that the preparation of people for peacebuilding endeavors be recast, with emphasis given to a process-oriented and context-responsive approach.

This is an ambitious program, to say the least. It goes far beyond the kinds of peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding activities we see most frequently: high-profile envoys shuttling between capitals; soldiers in blue berets patrolling streets; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) delivering food or advice; or even efforts to build civil society or establish rule of law. Each of these activities has a place within Lederach’s overall scheme, but each would have to be cast in a new light and be conducted with a different sense of purpose. In Lederach’s lexicon, “peacebuilding” does not start and stop with, say, the launch and the termination of a UN operation, or with the establishment of political parties or the holding of elections. Rather, “peacebuilding is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates, and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships.”

This holistic vision is evident throughout *Building Peace*, whether the author is describing the character of contemporary conflict, analyzing the structure of deeply divided societies, or prescribing the means for their peaceful transformation. But how should we, Lederach’s readers, respond to so large, so all-encompassing a view?

As Lederach himself anticipates, some critics might be tempted to dismiss his work as well-intentioned but unrealistic. Yet, such a judgment would be superficial. *Building Peace* is a highly sophisticated,

intellectually challenging argument from the pen of one of America's leading scholars of conflict resolution. Yet for all his academic credentials, Lederach is most at home putting his ideas into practice. He has spent much of the past fifteen years working with peace-building initiatives in such places as Somalia, Colombia, Nicaragua, Northern Ireland, the Philippines, and the Basque region of Spain. Indeed, at the outset of this book he declares that his "thinking and approach emerge from the standpoint of a practitioner rather than a theorist." At the least, given the recent difficulties that the international community has encountered in imposing settlements from the outside, Lederach's argument surely deserves careful consideration: It may well be that external intervention is most effective when it empowers indigenous actors to create a self-sustaining infrastructure of processes that promote reconciliation.

Lederach himself sees this work as an attempt to respond to the nature of contemporary conflict with both innovation and realism. While he urges "the development of ideas and practices that go beyond the negotiation of substantive interests and issues," he asserts the indispensability of "grounded political savvy" and calls for a frank recognition of the "hard-core" quality of intrastate conflicts. The framework presented in *Building Peace* is conceptual in nature, but it has a distinctly practical orientation. In the final chapter of this book, John Prendergast, an executive fellow at the United States Institute of Peace who has worked with governments, intergovernmental organizations, and NGOs, demonstrates how Lederach's theoretical apparatus may be used in real-life situations with a look at four cases of intrastate conflict in Africa.

This book is a substantively reworked and significantly expanded version of a manuscript published by the United Nations University in 1994—a manuscript which was used by the Institute's own Education and Training Program in its work of training professional peacebuilders. The strong response from participants in those programs prompted the Institute to support an expanded and updated version of the original manuscript.

Building Peace complements other published work from the Institute by offering a conceptual counterpart to in-depth studies of specific intrastate conflicts and peace processes (for instance, Richard



Synge's examination of *Mozambique*, John Hirsch and Robert Oakley's assessment of *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, and Mohamed Sahnoun's reflections, *Somalia: The Missed Opportunities*) and to more geographically wide-ranging studies (for instance, *Nurturing Peace* by Fen Hampson, *Minorities at Risk* by Ted Gurr, and *African Conflict Resolution*, edited by David Smock and Chester Crocker). This book also adds another perspective to the range of conceptual approaches advanced in Institute publications such as *Peacemaking in International Conflict*, edited by William Zartman and Lewis Rasmussen, *Preventing Violent Conflicts* by Michael Lund, *Autonomy* by Ruth Lapidot, and *Arts of Power* by Chas Freeman.

These and other publications testify to our wish to bring to the academic and policymaking communities a diversity of potentially useful approaches. This full range of work demonstrates the Institute's commitment to developing theory but even more so to promoting practice. Lederach succeeds in advancing both goals, expanding our understanding of the depth and breadth of effort and involvement needed to bring lasting peace.

Richard H. Solomon, President
United States Institute of Peace

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



This book is the result of many experiences, conversations, and collaborative work over the years. It is not possible in a few lines to adequately acknowledge and thank all those who have influenced and contributed to this project. There are, of course, a number of colleagues who deserve special mention.

I appreciate the early encouragement to write this book from Kumar Ruppesinghe, who coordinated the United Nations University's monograph series on Conflict and Governance in which some elements of this book were originally published. My thinking and the content of this book have benefited from my cooperation and work with a number of colleagues over the years, including Cynthia Sampson, Dr. Hizkias Assefa, Dr. Ron Kraybill, Dr. Christopher Mitchell, Juan Gutierrez, and Bill Potapchuk. On the practice side, I have gained enormously from the collaborative work with the Life and Peace Institute and colleagues Sture Normark and Suzanne Lunden and from the Somali members of the Ergada. In recent years the intensive efforts at training with colleagues from the Nairobi Peace Initiative and Justapaz in Bogota, Colombia, have helped formulate the ideas and concepts presented in this book. For their patient prodding and for expanding my horizons, I will always be grateful to my Latin American friends, particularly Dr. Gustavo Parajon, the Rev. Andy Shogreen, Ricardo Esquivia, Zoilamerica Ortega, and Alejandro Benda—a, and to my Irish colleagues, Brendan McAllister, Joe Campbell, and Mari Fitzduff. I have greatly appreciated being able to work with the Education and Training Department of



the United States Institute of Peace and for the support for the rewriting of this text from Dan Snodderly, Nigel Quinney, and Lewis Rasmussen. Finally, this text owes a great debt and a second note of thanks to the early, consistent, and brilliant editing by Cynthia Sampson, and to the wonderfully patient staff at the Eastern Mennonite University's Institute for Peacebuilding, including Ruth Zimmerman, Vernon Jantzi, Lynn Quay, Terry Phibbs Witmer, and Cheryl Helmuth.

I am deeply grateful to the United Nations University, particularly the Academic Division and Professor Takashi Inoguchi, Senior Vice Rector, for giving permission to use and reprint here portions of the original monograph *Building Peace*, which was published in 1994 in the United Nations University's series on Conflict and Governance.