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Post-growth peacebuilding

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Abstract

Economic development is considered one of the pillars of international peacebuilding. The mandates of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations often contain the promotion of economic growth as a prerequisite for post-conflict recovery and sustainable peace. However, the relationship between peace and economic growth needs re-examination in light of urgent calls for global sustainability and climate action. To do this, I first review the claims and critiques that economic growth is a precondition for peace. I then revisit past peacebuilding cases where the promotion of economic growth has either corresponded with or led to environmental degradation and unequal distribution of resources, contributing to new or renewed forms of violence. Finally, I explore the prospects of post-growth peacebuilding based on recent efforts to make UN peacekeeping operations more attuned to environmental considerations and the changing climate. Post-growth peacebuilding is not just about reducing the environmental footprint of peacekeeping; it is, more importantly, about breaking away from the linear and growth-driven path of peace and development towards intergenerational and ecological justice.

Keywords: economic growth; peacebuilding; peacekeeping; post-growth

Introduction

My conceptualisation of post-growth peacebuilding draws on three discourses on peace: the liberal, the environmental, and the planetary. The first focuses on the liberal peace assumption that market-oriented economic development can build peace in post-conflict or conflict-affected societies. This assumption has been criticised for many reasons, and one of those is the destabilising effects of economic development through rapid marketisation.[1] Despite these critiques, economic growth/development is still largely seen as a key component of peacebuilding. The second is the increasing call to make peacebuilding efforts more aligned with environmental or climate considerations. This is especially relevant as many of the peacekeeping operations deployed by the United Nations (UN) are in countries vulnerable to climate change.[2] Climate-insensitive peacekeeping or peacebuilding mandates will not only prove detrimental to peace promotion or conflict prevention but may even add to environmental destruction or exacerbate climate vulnerabilities.[3] And finally, I draw on the concept of the Anthropocene, the proposed geological epoch of humanity changing

[1]Roland Paris, 'International peacebuilding and the "mission civilisatrice"', *Review of International Studies*, 28:4 (2002), pp. 637–56; Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh (ed.), *Rethinking the Liberal Peace: External Models and Local Alternatives* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

[2]Florian Krampe, 'Why United Nations peace operations cannot ignore climate change', SIPRI (22 February 2021).

[3]Krampe, 'Why United Nations'.

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the planet. The Anthropocene is the manifestation of capitalism's virtue of unlimited growth and commodification of nature,[4] incentivising structural forms of violence.

Using these liberal, environmental, and planetary peace discourses, I explore in this article what post-growth peacebuilding entails. To do so, I discuss in the next section the relationship between liberal peace and economic growth. I then revisit past peacebuilding cases where the promotion of economic growth has either corresponded with or led to environmental degradation and unequal distribution of resources, contributing to new or renewed forms of violence. These adverse outcomes prompted peace operations to integrate environmental and climate considerations, but I argue that these efforts omit the problem of growth-driven economic development. Finally, I explore the prospects of post-growth peacebuilding and call for a peacebuilding agenda that breaks away from the linear path of peace and development towards intergenerational and ecological justice.

Perpetual peace and economic growth

Liberal peacebuilding intervenes in moments of crisis – state collapse, armed conflict, and widespread human rights violations. Since the rise of UN deployments in the 1990s, the theory of liberal peace has been at the heart of peacebuilding debates. Echoing Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, proponents of liberal peace argue that the polities and economies of liberal states act as institutional restraints and trade disincentives for going to war.[5] These assumptions underpin international peacebuilding efforts where democratic participation, the rule of law, the protection and promotion of human rights, open and globalised markets, and neoliberal development have become integral to the mandates of UN peacekeeping operations.[6] Peace accords incorporated these characteristics,[7] and the generally successful conduct of elections in cases such as Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador, and Mozambique fed the UN's exuberance for liberal peacebuilding strategies, particularly democratisation and marketisation, in post-conflict or conflict-affected societies.

The integration of liberalisation strategies into peacebuilding processes aligns with the UN's development agenda. The UN emphasises development as the most secure basis for peace, with the 2030 Agenda describing peace and development as two sides of the same coin.[8] While the notion of development is now broader, covering human security and sustainability, many of the development narratives in peacebuilding (e.g. the development mandates in peacekeeping operations) are still implicitly tied to its economic dimension, in particular, the value of economic growth, which has a long tradition in peace and security discourses. As published in the 2001 *Responsibility to Protect* report, 'economic growth not only has law and order implication but is vital for the overall recovery of the country concerned'.[9] In other words, economic growth leads to a higher state capacity to provide public goods and income opportunities that contribute to poverty alleviation and better well-being. For a society coming out of widespread armed conflict, it is imperative to build its capacity to generate income and manage resources to effectively deliver goods and services to its conflict-affected populations. This view is still pervasive in the practice of

[4]Jason W. Moore, *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History, and the Crisis of Capitalism* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2016).

[5]John R. Oneal and Bruce Russett, 'The Kantian peace: The pacific benefits of democracy, interdependence, and international organizations, 1885–1992', *World Politics*, 52:1 (1999), pp. 1–37; Michael W. Doyle, 'Three pillars of the liberal peace', *The American Political Science Review*, 99:3 (2005), pp. 463–66.

[6]Oliver P. Richmond, 'The problem of peace: Understanding the liberal peace', *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6:3 (2006), pp. 291–314.

[7]Madhav Joshi, Sung Yong Lee, and Roger Mac Ginty, 'Just how liberal is the liberal peace?', *International Peacekeeping*, 21:3 (2014), pp. 364–89.

[8]UN, 'Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development' (21 October 2015).

[9]International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 2001), p. 42.

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international peacebuilding. In the 2022 UN 'Peacebuilding and sustaining peace' report, economic growth remains the objective of attracting investments in conflict-affected societies.[10] It states: 'by investing in conflict-affected areas and contributing to economic growth, reconstruction and creating decent jobs, private sector actors can directly address the drivers of conflict through enhanced social cohesion'.[11]

The assumption that economic growth is essential to peace is a questionable one because growth is not necessarily a precondition of development or peace. Although economically prosperous societies also tend to be peaceful,[12] it does not mean that economic growth undoubtedly leads to peace, particularly in conflict contexts. In an inferential study of 11 peacekeeping operations, it is unclear how host countries benefited from UN-led economic rehabilitation, with four countries even experiencing its negative consequences.[13] Relatedly and citing Collier and Hoeffler's study,[14] Suhrke and Buckmaster pointed out that economic growth is inconsequential to the prevention of civil war.[15] For example, in Liberia's peacebuilding process, the UN recognised that the benefits of its pro-growth strategy of economic governance will not always be available or accessible to the poor and vulnerable populations. According to Souza and Mendes, 'the UN official discourse presents this strategy of market liberalisation as a sine qua non condition for development, even though acknowledging that it would not tackle the problem of horizontal inequality' between local elites and marginalised groups in Liberia.[16] Another example is in a post-conflict rentier state such as Kosovo, where domestic productivity is paid little attention because of an over-reliance on external transfers for achieving rapid economic growth.[17] Notwithstanding the economic aspirations of emerging economies to reduce poverty and improve social welfare through economic growth,[18] these examples show how the preferential promotion of economic growth in a state that draws on exogenous factors volatile to international trends has a high risk of economically motivated conflicts.

Ignoring the socio-economic problems of conflict-affected societies when deploying market-oriented policies could perpetuate power asymmetries, preserve wealth imbalances, and exacerbate economic vulnerabilities.[19] In some cases, and as recognised in a 2000 World Bank report, economic growth is pursued at the cost of inequity, unemployment, weakened democracy, and loss of cultural identity.[20] In Sierra Leone, government policies rely on the assumption that global market integration will bring economic growth, which in turn will alleviate food insecurity.[21] However, as Castañeda argues, the outcome of this security-oriented and growth-driven approach to peace and food security brings nothing but short-term benefits favourable only to international

[10]UN, 'Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: Report of the Secretary-General', A/73/668–S/2022/66 (24 March 2022).

[11]UN, 'Peacebuilding and sustaining peace', para. 49.

[12]Institute for Economics & Peace, 'Business & peace 2019: Analysing peace as a precondition for a sound business environment' (September 2019).

[13]Vincenzo Bove and Leandro Elia, 'Economic development in peacekeeping host countries', *CESifo Economic Studies*, 64:4 (2018), pp. 712–28.

[14]Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, 'Aid, policy and growth in post-conflict societies', *European Economic Review*, 48:5 (2004), pp. 1125–45.

[15]Astri Suhrke and Julia Buckmaster, 'Aid, growth and peace', *Conflict, Security & Development*, 6:3 (2006), pp. 337–63.

[16]Matheus de Abreu Costa Souza and Cristiano Garcia Mendes, 'Building peace through the nexus between security, democracy and development: A critical assessment of the United Nations Mission in Liberia', *Revista de Paz y Conflictos*, 13:1 (2020), pp. 73–98 (p. 85).

[17]Nicolas Lemay-Hebert and Syed Mansoob Murshed, 'Rentier statebuilding in a post-conflict economy: The case of Kosovo', *Development and Change*, 47:3 (2016), pp. 517–41.

[18]Chukwumerije Okereke, 'Degrowth, green growth, and climate justice in Africa', in this Forum.

[19]Michael Pugh, 'The political economy of peacebuilding: A critical theory perspective', *International Journal of Peace Studies*, 10:2 (2005), pp. 23–42.

[20]Tatyana P. Soubbotina and Katherine Sheram, *Beyond Economic Growth: Meeting the Challenges of Global Development* (Washington, DC: World Bank Publications, 2000).

[21]Carla Castañeda, 'How liberal peacebuilding may be failing Sierra Leone', *Review of African Political Economy*, 36:120 (2009), pp. 235–51.

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actors/donors and local elites. Market liberalisation also opens opportunities for exploitative practices by international and local entrepreneurs, especially in conflict contexts where labour rights are suppressed and the social resistance that fights for them is silenced.[22] These conditions could create new sources of conflict, thereby challenging the liberal peace assumption, especially in societies transitioning from conflict to peace.

Is liberal peacebuilding suitable to address new moments of crisis, particularly those prompted by ecological destruction? Indeed, the relationship between peace and economic growth needs re-examination in light of global environmental change. Even those who question the economic emphasis on development view economic growth as essential to peace and overall development. For example, the World Bank report expands the concept of development but still considers accelerated economic growth as an important dimension of a holistic version of development.[23] Even the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development declares economic growth as part of its plan of action for people, the planet, and prosperity. In fact, one of the 17 goals is to 'promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all'.[24]

Growth remains front and centre on the international agenda of peace and development despite urgent calls for global sustainability and climate action.[25] For instance, while the 2022 UN Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace report acknowledges the impact of climate change on conflict and peacebuilding, there is no mention of the environmental or climate considerations in pursuing economic growth.[26] Although economic development is now attached to agreeable qualifiers, such as sustainable and equitable, it still rests on the growth principle. Economic growth continues to be a function of the development mandates implemented in conflict-affected societies, which essentially contradicts the environmental/climate agenda for peacebuilding. From economic development to sustainable development, economic growth is still the name of the development game.

Greening or greenwashing peace?

The economic dimension of liberal peacebuilding falls apart in light of ecological destruction. The pursuit of perpetual growth could sanction, if not incentivise, unsustainable consumption and resource exploitation, leading to environmental degradation. I argue elsewhere that peacebuilding efforts, to be responsive to the challenges of our time, must be sensitive to spatial considerations, including their environmental footprint.[27] The deployment and day-to-day management of peacekeeping operations require massive amounts of resource materials to support their staff and infrastructure.[28] Furthermore, the accompanying environmental impact of these deployments adds a burden on the already-unprotected ecosystems and weak institutions in their host countries, especially in urban settings.[29] Some of these environmental impacts are greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, toxic substances from solid waste, air pollution, depletion of water resources, health risks from wastewater, and threatened biodiversity. For instance, genomic sequencing confirmed

[22] Michael Pugh, 'Employment, labour rights and social resistance', in Michael Pugh, Neil Cooper, and Mandy Turner (eds), *Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 139–56.

[23] Soubbotina and Sheram, *Beyond Economic Growth*.

[24] UN, 'Transforming our world'.

[25] As Michael Albert elucidates in this Forum, the political-economic, ideological, and military-strategic drivers of the current international order produce and reproduce 'growth hegemony' at global and national scales. Michael Albert, 'Growth hegemony and post-growth futures: A complex hegemony approach', in this Forum.

[26] UN, 'Peacebuilding and sustaining peace'.

[27] Dahlia Simangan, 'Reflexive peacebuilding: Lessons from the Anthropocene discourse', *Global Society*, 35:4 (2021), pp. 479–500.

[28] Lucile Maertens and Malkit Shoshan, 'Greening peacekeeping: The environmental impact of UN peace operations, International Peace Institute' (17 April 2018).

[29] Maertens and Shoshan, 'Greening peacekeeping'.

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that the cholera outbreak in Haiti in 2010 was caused by human transmission from UN peacekeepers and improper waste disposal practised at one of the camps of MINUSTAH (the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti).[30] In Darfur, approximately 52,000 trees were lost annually between 2004 and 2008 when the construction of UNAMID (African Union–United Nations Hybrid operation in Darfur) compounds increased the demand for wood, contributing to deforestation and tensions within local communities.[31] Because of their scale, it is not surprising that peace operations have the highest share of total emissions within the UN in 2019 and 2020 (despite recent reductions due to the Covid-19 pandemic).[32] These scenarios call for better integration of environmental considerations into these operations.

There are new initiatives under way to minimise the environmental impact of peacekeeping operations. The UN has recognised and started integrating environmental concerns into the standards, guidelines, and mandates of peacekeeping operations.[33] For instance, the Greening the Blue initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has been reporting on the UN system's GHG emissions since 2009, evaluating the UN's environmental footprint and assisting the agencies in transitioning towards greater environmental sustainability. For peacekeeping operations more specifically, UNEP published the Greening the Blue Helmets report in 2012, assessing the environmental management practices and the role of peacekeeping operations in safeguarding natural resources and stabilising resource conflicts. The report states that good governance, particularly effective and transparent resource management by post-conflict governments in countries with high-value natural resources, is important for conflict prevention and sustainable and equitable economic growth. Several missions are adopting green initiatives by reducing their energy consumption, plastic usage, and waste generation, among other projects. In 2013, the UN Security Council directed MINUSMA (UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali) to manage its environmental impacts while fulfilling its mandate – the first time a peacekeeping operation's mandate had a task on environmental management.[34] An analysis of cross-sectional data from African states shows that these environmental mandates, as well as cooperative activities among other UN agencies, and shared principles and commitments, make peace operations a positive contributor to improved environmental quality, specifically water sources and sanitation.[35] These initiatives signal the capacity and willingness of international actors to participate in power reconfigurations and political transformations.[36]

Greening peacekeeping operations is, of course, a positive and welcome change. I argue, however, that peacebuilding must go beyond reducing the environmental footprint of peacekeeping operations and reducing the GHG emissions of the UN system. It is one thing to ensure that the housing structure built by peacekeeping operations is not destructive to the local environment, for example, but it is another thing to resolve the paradox that the pursuit of unlimited growth could contribute not only to environmental degradation but also to an unequal distribution of resources, thereby inciting conflict and violence. This means that peacebuilding approaches that continue to promote economic growth consequentially add to both environmental degradation and peace deterioration. As Diehl observed, green peacekeeping is more about minimising the environmental

[30]Fabini D. Orata, Paul S. Keim, and Yan Boucher, 'The 2010 cholera outbreak in Haiti: How science solved a controversy', *PLOS Pathogens*, 10:4 (2014), e1003967.

[31]United Nations Environment Programme (hereafter UNEP), *Destitution, Distortion, and Deforestation: The Impacts of Conflict on the Timber and Wood Fuel Trade in Darfur* (Geneva: UNEP, 2008).

[32]UNEP, *Greening the Blue Report 2021: The UN System's Environmental Footprint and Efforts to Reduce It* (UNEP: Geneva, 2021); UNEP, *Greening the Blue Report 2020: The UN System's Environmental Footprint and Efforts to Reduce It* (UNEP: Geneva, 2020).

[33]Lucile Maertens, 'From blue to green? Environmentalization and securitization in UN peacekeeping practices', *International Peacekeeping*, 26:3 (2019), pp. 302–26.

[34]UN, S/RES/2100, adopted by the Security Council at its 6952nd meeting (25 April 2013).

[35]Zorzeta Bakaki and Tobias Böhmelt, 'Can UN peacekeeping promote environmental quality?', *International Studies Quarterly*, 65:4 (2021), pp. 881–90.

[36]Bentley Allan, 'After growth: Industrial policy and the green state', in this Forum.

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footprint of the operation itself rather than changing the strategies of peacebuilding.[37] For instance, addressing resource conflicts will prove to be short-lived if economic growth remains a virtue of international peacebuilding. The first step to stabilising conflicts in resource-rich but conflict-ridden countries is to accept that economic growth is not the panacea for peace (or for sustainable development). Peacebuilding cannot be environmentally sustainable if it is anchored on economic growth. When economic growth, which is one of the causes of environmental degradation in many conflict-affected societies, remains a peacebuilding pillar, then greening peacekeeping operations is nothing short of greenwashing peace.

For the above reasons, my critique here centres on growth-driven and market-oriented economic development as a pillar of liberal peace(building) and its impact on peace and development. In Cambodia, for example, the development task of UNTAC (UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia) emphasised self-sustaining economic growth.[38] UNTAC's assistance to Cambodia in opening up to foreign trade, aid, and investment, plus the improved overall security and political stability, prompted economic growth. However, these improvements did little to address or may have even exacerbated existing economic inequalities and poor working conditions in the country. A Technical Advisory Committee on Management and Sustainable Exploitation of Natural Resources was created amid concerns about resource exploitation during the conflict and the impact of deforestation on people's livelihoods.[39] But measures put forward by the committee were not effectively implemented in the long run, as regional demand and low state budget made logging a lucrative business.[40] Deforestation in Cambodia remains an issue to this day, with forests being methodically and voraciously cleared for rubber plantations. Moreover, the economic benefits of the rubber industry only go to multinational corporations and national elites, marginalising and displacing local communities and Indigenous groups.[41] One of the reasons for this is the misplaced emphasis on economic growth as a precursor of peace and development during the peacebuilding process.

A similar situation also occurred in Timor-Leste, but there was a language shift from economic growth to sustainable development in the resolution establishing UNTAET (UN Transitional Administration in East Timor).[42] While the international presence and the UN's facilitation of foreign trade and investment revived economic activities, GDP per capita growth remained modest and volatile. This neoliberal approach to economic development in a country new to a capitalist system of open markets and privatisation sidelined welfare programmes and failed to support informal economies.[43] Local agricultural productivity was neglected as demand grew for tourism and services catering to internationals. The reconstruction period also emphasised the significance of natural resources in the Timor Sea, with oil and gas revenues taking the bulk of Timor-Leste's GDP. This emphasis on oil-based economic growth, however, created opportunities for corruption, engendered clientelist rule, incited land disputes, and disenfranchised communities from the potential benefits of oil-based development plans.[44] The current conditions and mechanisms in

[37] Paul F. Diehl, 'Mainstreaming climate change adaptation into peace missions', in Shirley V. Scott and Charlotte Ku (eds), *Climate Change and the UN Security Council* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2018), pp. 131–46.

[38] UN, S/RES/792, adopted by the Security Council at its 3143rd meeting (30 November 1992); Trevor Findlay, *Cambodia: The Legacy and Lessons of UNTAC* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

[39] UN, 'The situation in Cambodia', A/46/608 S/23177 (30 October 1991).

[40] Ruth Bottomley, 'Structural analysis of deforestation in Cambodia (with a focus on Ratanakiri province, northeast Cambodia', Mekong Watch and Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Japan (2000).

[41] Kenneth Grogan, Dirk Pflugmacher, Patrick Hostert, Ole Mertz, and Rasmus Fensholt, 'Unravelling the link between global rubber price and tropical deforestation in Cambodia', *Nature Plants*, 5:1 (2019), pp. 47–53.

[42] UN, S/RES/1272, adopted by the Security Council at its 4057th meeting (25 October 1999).

[43] Oliver P. Richmond and Jason Franks, 'Liberal peacebuilding in Timor Leste: The emperor's new clothes?', *International Peacekeeping*, 15:2 (2008), pp. 185–200.

[44] Dahlia Simangan and Srinjoy Bose, 'Oiling the rigs of state-building: A political settlements analysis of petroleum revenue management in Timor-Leste', *Asian Journal of Peacebuilding*, 9:1 (2021), pp. 67–89.

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Timor-Leste point to a potential resource curse,[45] which further disputes the value of economic growth in peacebuilding. The environmentally destructive deforestation in Cambodia and hydrocarbon production in Timor-Leste led neither to sustained economic development nor to holistic peace – demonstrating how the tension between economic growth and sustainable development is magnified in the context of peacebuilding.

In sum, growth-oriented economic development in peacebuilding undermines peace and the environment for three reasons. First, it creates inequalities (specifically, unequal patterns of accumulation and distribution) and oppression, especially in conflict-affected societies with extractive economies.[46] Secondly, it opens channels for elite capture because of political instability and power asymmetries inherited from the history of conflict. And finally, it contributes to environmental degradation because most institutions in countries transitioning from conflict are weak or ineffective to implement environmental measures. Therefore, economic growth is not suitable in complex environments of peacebuilding.

Prospects of a post-growth peacebuilding in a capitalist world

Few will disagree that the rise of capitalism went hand in hand with European colonialism and industrialism. Since then, capitalist growth has had a long history of exploiting moments of crisis and transitions – from the fall of empires to the globalisation of trade and technology – turning them into opportunities for accumulation, further enabling inequality in wealth, status, and power.[47] In Dowd's words, 'as if that were not bad enough, capitalism's pressures for unremitting economic growth hold as permanent hostage the flora and fauna, the air, the soil, and the water of the planet – never to be freed, fated to succumb to capital's voraciousness and the "free market's" heedlessness'.[48] What then is the likelihood of a post-growth peacebuilding agenda falling into the same dangers, such as exploiting our collective eco-anxiety for eco-fascist 'solutions' to environmental crises? Acts of violence, justified by concerns over the environmental impact of overpopulation, migration of peoples (particularly from conflict-affected societies), and over-industrialisation (especially of emerging economies) also perpetuate social, economic, and political inequities. Participatory approaches to designing solutions and bottom-up (rather than state-led) cross-border collaboration are some of the proposals within post-growth theories that could address these issues.[49] However, given that growth-driven development has long informed the international peacebuilding agenda, is there a place for a post-growth peacebuilding in our current systems and practices?

Let us first consider sustainable development. I underscore here that peacebuilding that is cognisant of socio-ecological considerations must incorporate sustainability initiatives and, more importantly, recognise the narrow operationalisation of sustainability. In 2020, UN Secretary-General António Guterres renewed the UN's commitment to sustainable development as reflected in the Declaration on the Commemoration of its 75th anniversary. A review of relevant UN resolutions and Secretary-General reports shows increasing integration of development-related activities into peace missions.[50] When we examine each of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), SDG7 on decent work and economic growth is the most referenced in the reviewed documents,

[45] Samuel John, Elissaios Papyrakis, and Luca Tasciotti, 'Is there a resource curse in Timor-Leste? A critical review of recent evidence', *Development Studies Research*, 7:1 (2020), pp. 141–52.

[46] The same can be said for the Global South. See Miriam Lang, 'Degrowth, global asymmetries and ecosocial justice: Decolonial perspectives from Latin America', in this Forum.

[47] Douglas F. Dowd, *Capitalism and Its Economics: A Critical History* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

[48] Dowd, *Capitalism and Its Economics*, p. 2.

[49] Lorenzo Fioramonti, 'Post-growth theories in a global world: A comparative analysis', in this Forum.

[50] John Gledhill, Richard Caplan, and Maline Meiske, 'Developing peace: The evolution of development goals and activities in United Nations peacekeeping', *Oxford Development Studies*, 49:3 (2021), pp. 201–29.

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more than the SDG16 on peace, justice, and strong institutions.[51] We can infer here that economic growth remains at the heart of the international agenda on peace and development.

The operationalisation of sustainability, or more specifically sustainable development, has emphasised the economic aspects of development, despite finite resources that cannot realistically sustain economic growth. To borrow Saito's arresting description, the SDGs have become the 'opium of the masses'.[52] This opium is peddled by greenwashing industries and companies that are either oblivious or neglectful of their culpability for environmental degradation. Industrialised countries preach sustainable development, and industrialising ones are conditioned by it. In fact, there is little evidence that the SDGs have substantially improved environmental policies, as most countries prioritise socio-economic SDGs and put environmental targets on the back burner.[53] Countries will continue cherry-picking economic over environmental goals until they revise their policies away from growth-driven economic development.

Let us now turn our attention to the concept of human development. Human development, or 'the process of enlarging people's choices',[54] converges with the holistic notion of positive peace.[55] It challenges the state-centric and economic focus of development. In 2020, for the first time since its inaugural publication in 1990, the Human Development Report outlined the challenges to human development in the Anthropocene. It was admitted in the report that 'too often, development choices pit people against trees because the environment has been systematically undervalued while economic growth has had top billing'.[56] By recognising the pluralistic approaches to development, the report also challenges the prescriptive approach of dominant development paths, reminding us that 'economic growth is more means than end'.[57] This discourse shows the importance of an Anthropocene framing. Instead of simply pursuing economic growth, tackling development in the Anthropocene also questions the impact of such a pursuit.

Human development's paradigmatic shift away from economic growth is supported by the burgeoning studies on pathways towards a post-growth society, a society that maintains human well-being within ecological limits. In contrast to the GDP-based economic model, 'the post-GDP production system is likely to operate like a "horizontal economy" based on customization (as opposed to mass production and economies of scale), and on producing what we need (as opposed to generating waste) and on local production cycles (as opposed to comparative advantages and globalized transportation)'.[58] A post-growth economy will have implications for political organisations. As suggested by the proponents of degrowth and well-being economy,[59] GDP growth will no longer be a state and economic imperative, and economies will be organised along 'community-determined development priorities'.[60] These characteristics resonate with the normative goals of critical peacebuilding scholarship, specifically with the critique of state-centrism in liberal peacebuilding and with recommendations for local and other emancipatory approaches to peacebuilding. Specifically, a post-liberal peace is a departure from the Westphalian system,

[51] Gledhill, Caplan, and Meiske, 'Developing peace'.

[52] Justin McCurry, '"A new way of life": The Marxist, post-capitalist, green manifesto captivating Japan', *The Guardian* (9 September 2022); Kohei Saito, *Hitoshinsei No Shihonron* [Capital in the Anthropocene] (Tokyo: Shueisha, 2020).

[53] Frank Biermann, Thomas Hickmann, Carole-Anne Sénit, et al., 'Scientific evidence on the political impact of the sustainable development goals', *Nature Sustainability*, 7 (2022), pp. 795–800.

[54] UN Development Programme (UNDP), 'Human development report' (1990).

[55] Johan Galtung, 'Violence, peace, and peace research', *Journal of Peace Research*, 6:3 (1969), pp. 167–91.

[56] UNDP, 'Human development report 2020. The next frontier: Human development in the Anthropocene' (2020), p. 5.

[57] UNDP, 'Human development report 2020', p. 6.

[58] Lorenzo Fioramonti, *The World after GDP: Politics, Business and Society in the Post Growth Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), p. 9.

[59] For an overview of the various post-growth theories, see Fioramonti, 'Post-growth theories'.

[60] Michael J. Albert, 'The climate crisis, renewable energy, and the changing landscape of global energy politics', *Alternatives*, 46:3 (2021), pp. 89–98 (p. 94).

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grounded on the everyday, and open to feedback and adaptation.[61] Peace scholars have long challenged state stability as a peace imperative and demanded emancipatory forms of local involvement in peacebuilding. These critiques are present in the Anthropocene discourse too,[62] calling out the state-centric and capital-driven roots of the causes and proposed solutions to the challenges in this new geological age.[63] By interrogating how power operates and dominates international norms and practices and highlighting legacies of colonialism and imperialism, post-liberal peacebuilding draws heavily on critical Internation Relations (IR), which in turn infuses post-growth peacebuilding (and post-growth literature in general) with ethical considerations surrounding equity, justice, and emancipation. While these considerations are already integral to post-growth theories, critical IR discourse on the Anthropocene justifies post-growth's shift from a growth-driven global economy and opens the debate on ecologically aligned economic systems. Additionally, post-liberal peacebuilding provides pathways for localising post-growth principles. Therefore, a post-liberal peace and a post-growth economy converge in the re-imagining of peacebuilding in the Anthropocene.

Following the growing recognition that the impacts of climate change complicate peacebuilding activities, the UN's DPPA (Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs), together with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UNEP, established the CSM (Climate Security Mechanism) in 2018. The CSM supports UN operations, including field missions, in conducting climate-security risk assessments and developing risk-management strategies.[64] It aims to integrate efforts on peacebuilding, sustainable development, and the environment based on the understanding that climate has serious security implications, especially in conflict-affected societies. These are improvements in enhancing partnerships, sharing knowledge and practices, and streamlining capacity-building and management surrounding the climate–conflict nexus. However, I argue that a truly climate-sensitive peacebuilding cannot ignore the problematic foundation and consequences of economic growth. For example, one of the questions in the UN CSM's Toolbox Checklist is about the impact of climate-change mitigation/adaptation policies on political economy, warning that a transition to renewable energy sources may contribute to either instability or slow economic growth.[65] This growth-driven policy prioritisation is telling of how the UN has taken up the problems related to growth neither extensively nor urgently in its attempts to make peacebuilding more climate-sensitive or aligned with environmental concerns.

Peacebuilding must draw on a growth-independent political economy. Green growth is about decoupling economic growth from resource use and carbon emissions through state-led and bottom-up sustainability initiatives that aim to reduce the environmental impact without disrupting the economic status quo.[66] Meanwhile, post-growth includes state- or citizen-led political and economic restructuring of the current growth-centric institutions.[67] Peacebuilding in a human-driven changing climate will be informed by the latter.

The pathways towards post-growth are in parallel with the critical peacebuilding scholarship, which challenges technocratic blueprints, highlights local agency, and welcomes hybrid peace (re)configurations. Drawing on these parallelisms, I characterise post-growth peacebuilding as more than being climate-sensitive; it is about restructuring the political economies of growth (implicit within the international peacebuilding agenda). Hence, a systemic change is needed.

[61] Oliver P. Richmond, 'A post-liberal peace: Eirenism and the everyday', *Review of International Studies*, 35:3 (2009), pp. 557–80.

[62] Guest editors, 'Dealing with dangerous abundance: Towards post-growth International Relations', in this Forum.

[63] Simangan, 'Reflexive peacebuilding'.

[64] UN, 'Climate security mechanism: Progress report' (2021).

[65] UN, 'Climate security mechanism: Toolbox: Climate risk checklist for political analysis' (2020).

[66] Ekaterina Chertkovskaya, Jacob Hasselbalch, and Matthias Kranke, 'Organization beyond growth: Post-growth in the global political economy' (SASE Mini-conference on the Political Economy of Climate Change, University of Amsterdam, 2022).

[67] Chertkovskaya, Hasselbalch, and Kranke, 'Organization beyond growth'.

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Echoing Nicoson, peace must be understood as the negation of structural violence, which is possible through 'degrowth processes of redistribution, reprioritized care, and global equity'.[68] The framework she presented draws on the fact that power structures have enabled over-consumption and over-industrialisation, but these structures can be disrupted through decentralised and localised economies and by valuing the salience of care economies for well-being and social cohesion. In this regard, post-growth peacebuilding draws on the degrowth principle of a just, participatory, and ecologically sustainable society and well-being economy's emphasis on human *and* ecological well-being.[69]

While inequality is inherent to and a by-product of capitalist growth, which remains a virtue even in purportedly ecologically aligned and sustainable systems, post-growth peacebuilding disentangles from growth as a prerequisite of peace and development, rejects inequality at the outset of any peace intervention, and draws on localised albeit not necessarily isolated economies. To adopt a post-growth agenda, international peacebuilding must focus on human and ecological well-being rather than mere growth in production and consumption.[70] By creating systems for wealth (and power) redistribution towards groups vulnerable to conflict and ecological harm, the welcome by-product of post-growth peacebuilding is socio-economic equality, the lack of which often feeds different forms of social and ecological violence. UN peacekeeping operations have shown in the past that it can push for profound structural changes in societies transitioning from conflict. Therefore, it can also wield its legitimacy and capacity for a realignment of its peace and security mandates with human and ecological well-being.

Conclusion

The post-growth paradigm challenges the liberal economic frameworks of international relations and, by extension, how the UN conducts peacebuilding. Although the UN DPPA has recently recognised that economic growth does not inexorably lead to peace,[71] there has been little investigation on how environmental issues or climate change factor in the growth–peace equation. On the other hand, the growing salience of climate for conflict and peacebuilding does not have an explicit discussion on how economic growth influences such a relationship. In some cases, it was even implied that slow economic growth is not desirable for peace or political stability. In general, the assumption that economic growth could contribute to peace dividends has not been problematised vis-à-vis ecological degradation or climate change.

In the absence of such discussions, I conclude this paper with potential pathways for concretising post-growth international peacebuilding in post-conflict or conflict-affected societies. All these pathways require a combination of radical rethinking of the global economy, decoupling development and throughput growth, and realistic revisions of the current economic systems.[72] This combination responds to concerns about global policies for climate justice potentially sidelining national efforts towards poverty reduction and social-welfare improvement.[73] First, peacebuilding in a post-growth society will support local and environmentally sustainable economies in lieu of coercing participation in the global economy and measuring development based on economic growth. Secondly, post-growth peacebuilding assesses and minimises not just its immediate environmental impact and GHG emissions, but also how its activities and infrastructure influence biodiversity, water systems, land surface, and public health, among other areas of global

[68]Christie Nicoson, 'Towards climate resilient peace: An intersectional and degrowth approach', *Sustainability Science*, 16 (2021), pp. 1147–58 (p. 1155).

[69]Fioramonti, 'Post-growth theories'.

[70]On the role of well-being economy in advancing a post-growth agenda, see Lorenzo Fioramonti, 'Post-growth theories'.

[71]UN DPPA, 'Strategic Plan United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs: 2020–2022', available at: {https://dppa.un.org/en/strategic-plan-2020-2022}.

[72]Fioramonti, 'Post-growth theories'.

[73]Okereke, 'Degrowth, green growth'.

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transformation. Thirdly, post-growth peacebuilding is adaptive to uncertainty (i.e. holistic, non-linear, and internalised)[74] and reflexive to change (i.e. welcomes disruption of path-dependent practices and institutions).[75] Finally, and considering the historical injustice brought by industrialisation, post-growth peacebuilding is in line not only with environmental sustainability and climate action, but also with intergenerational and ecological justice. The UN's peacebuilding architecture has already started exploring these pathways (for example, in confirming the centrality of local actors and contexts and recognising the environmental impact of peacekeeping operations, as discussed in this paper). Future articulations of post-growth peacebuilding need to pay attention to political agencies and political economies of peace and security in an era of unprecedented global environmental change.

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[74]Cedric de Coning, 'Adaptive peacebuilding', *International Affairs*, 94:2 (2018), pp. 301–7; Simangan, 'Reflexive peacebuilding'.

[75]Simangan, 'Reflexive peacebuilding'.

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