The Implications of Human Rights Violations for Peacebuilding and the Sustainability of Security in Post-Conflict Areas: The Conflict in Sri Lanka as a Case Study

Houria Gassaa [1,*] , Rafika Zebda [2]
[1] University of 08 May 1945, Guelma (Algeria)
2 University of Ziane Achour, Djelfa (Algeria)
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Abstract:

This study examines the intricate relationship between human rights and humanitarian security in post-conflict areas within the framework of international missions. It emphasizes the importance of establishing a human rights-based framework as a foundation for achieving sustainable security and peace. The central problem addressed is how to balance humanitarian security requirements with the protection of fundamental rights in contexts characterized by weak state institutions and pressures from internal and external actors, including the influence of multinational corporations and international security assistance.

Findings indicate that the interaction between human rights and humanitarian security is highly complex and mutually reinforcing. Violations of economic and social rights function both as a cause and consequence of ongoing conflict. Moreover, external interventions, even when humanitarian or developmental in nature, may inadvertently destabilize these regions through the "weaponization of peace." The study concludes that sustainable security in post-conflict contexts requires an integrated approach combining human rights promotion, development, and good governance, while critically reassessing the role of international actors to ensure justice and human dignity.

Keywords: Human Rights Violations; Peacebuilding; Security Sustainability; Post-Conflict Areas; Conflict in Sri Lanka.

1- Introduction

The discourse surrounding human rights constitutes a core theme in international politics, owing to its intrinsic connection with global security and peace. This interdependence was clearly articulated in the United Nations Charter, signed on June 26, 1945, in San Francisco, which emphasized three mutually reinforcing pillars: peace and security, development, and human rights.

Former UN Secretary-General **Kofi Annan** underscored this interrelation by asserting that respect for human rights is an essential prerequisite for achieving peace, security, and sustainable development. As he succinctly stated:

* Corresponding author: e-mail: gassaa.houria@univ-guelma.dz .

"We will not enjoy security without development; we will not enjoy development without security; and we will not enjoy either without respect for human rights."

This statement highlights the central role of human rights and justice in preventing conflicts, promoting mediation, and sustaining peacebuilding efforts.

In the same vein, scholars and human rights advocates such as **Margaret E. Brysk**, **Daniel Mullerson**, **Chase Chirot**, and **Sean McCauley** have argued that discrimination based on religion, ethnicity, or gender—along with violations of economic, social, political, and security rights—serves as a direct catalyst for conflict emergence and transformation. Such violations may manifest through uprisings or mass migrations toward neighboring countries in search of safety and protection.

Mullerson further contends that there exists a clear correlation between stability and security—both domestically and internationally—and the prevalence of human rights violations, as local abuses can indirectly destabilize the broader international system.

– Research Problem

Given the pivotal role of human rights in achieving security, stability, and sustainable development, **what are the key challenges and strategic stakes faced by post-conflict regions as a result of ongoing human rights violations?**

– Hypothesis

The more decision-makers in post-conflict regions recognize the significance of human rights and actively work to strengthen them, the greater the positive impact on achieving security, stability, and advancing development trajectories.

– Objectives

This study seeks to:

- Explore the reciprocal relationship between the respect for human rights and the achievement of security and stability in post-conflict contexts;
- Identify and analyze the principal challenges and constraints confronting human rights in post-conflict settings.

– Study Structure

The study is structured as follows:

2– Human Rights as a Fundamental Pillar for Achieving Security in Post-Conflict Areas

Although the concepts of human rights and security emerged and evolved within distinct historical and political contexts, their practical application today reveals a profound interconnection—particularly in post-conflict settings. A closer analysis of both domains indicates that policies aimed at promoting human rights within peacebuilding processes cannot be separated from efforts to strengthen security. Each reinforces the

other, and neglecting one dimension at the expense of the other may lead to ineffective or even counterproductive outcomes, such as heightened social tensions or weakened state institutions—developments that could ultimately jeopardize the sustainability of peace and development.

From this perspective, defining human rights and security in post-conflict contexts must reflect the realities of implementation, emphasizing their interdependence rather than treating them as isolated notions. Moreover, classical definitions of these concepts—often centered on the state or the mere absence of conflict—become increasingly complex and sensitive in post-conflict environments. In such contexts, institutional and social fragility intertwines with human rights and security challenges, necessitating an integrated and innovative policy approach to reconstruction and governance.

2.1-The Evolution of Human Rights Concepts in the Context of Peace

Former UN Secretary-General **Boutros Boutros-Ghali** underscored the critical importance of human rights in sustaining peace. In his address at the World Conference on Human Rights, he outlined three interrelated dimensions of peace: peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding. He described peacebuilding as a context-specific endeavor aimed at identifying and supporting mechanisms that foster public confidence and societal well-being. These mechanisms work to restore order through support to security forces, reform and guidance of governmental institutions, and the promotion of both direct and indirect citizen participation in political life—while emphasizing social and political justice and addressing the root causes of conflict, such as oppression.

Similarly, former UN Secretary-General **Kofi Annan** affirmed that "the direct relationship between respect for human rights, lasting peace, and sustainable development is universally recognized." He argued that human rights must therefore occupy a central place in the UN policy agenda and across all programs of decision-making. At the same time, Annan redefined the concept of security in the modern world as extending beyond the mere absence of war. More than two decades ago, the traditional understanding of security was predominantly tied to inter-state conflict and the protection of sovereignty and international peace. During the **Cold War**, the global conception of security became heavily militarized, emphasizing the maintenance of balance of power as a means of preventing war. Yet, despite this logic, conflicts during that era brought immense destruction and severely hindered development across many parts of the world (Krasniqi, 2017, p. 70).

The perspective advanced by Kofi Annan reflects an epistemological shift in understanding the relationship between human rights, security, and international peace. Security is no longer reduced to a formula of military deterrence or balance of power;

rather, it has become a multidimensional concept centered on human security as the primary referent object. This transformation signifies a move from a "state security" paradigm to a "human-centered security" approach, in which the protection of human dignity constitutes a structural precondition for sustainable peace rather than a secondary outcome of it.

From the perspective of international relations theory, this shift can be interpreted as a departure from classical realism, which confined security to the protection of sovereignty and the prevention of external aggression, toward liberal and constructivist approaches that emphasize the role of norms and values in shaping state behavior. The historical experience of the Cold War demonstrated that maintaining a balance of power did not prevent proxy wars or devastating internal conflicts, nor did it avert widespread human rights violations within states. Consequently, an exclusive focus on military deterrence produced a form of negative peace—the absence of direct war among major powers—without achieving positive peace grounded in justice and development.

Annan's emphasis on the interdependence of human rights, peace, and development reflects a logic of structural interconnectedness: the absence of rights generates marginalization and exclusion, both of which create fertile conditions for political violence; similarly, the lack of development deepens institutional fragility and undermines state legitimacy. Therefore, any peacebuilding strategy that neglects transitional justice, accountability, and institutional reform risks reproducing the very conditions that led to conflict. Sustainable security cannot be achieved through coercive control alone, but through the construction of a renewed social contract capable of restoring trust between the state and society.

Moreover, the expansion of the concept of security acknowledges the evolving nature of contemporary threats, which are no longer exclusively military but also encompass structural poverty, discrimination, and the erosion of the rule of law. This understanding aligns with the notion of human security, which places freedom from fear and freedom from want at the center of international policy agendas. Accordingly, integrating human rights into the United Nations' agenda is not merely a moral imperative, but a strategic necessity for long-term stability.

In sum, Annan's reconceptualization of security represents a shift from a narrow defensive framework to a comprehensive vision that regards respect for human rights as the foundation of enduring peace. Historical experience demonstrates that neglecting the human dimension in security calculations produces fragile stability, whereas strengthening rights and the rule of law establishes a more resilient foundation for political systems capable of managing and preventing the recurrence of conflict.

2.2– Security as a Fundamental Driver of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

The new approaches that emerged during the 1990s offered a paradigm shift from the classical conception of security, which had long positioned states as the primary actors competing within the international system. In more recent decades, security has increasingly been viewed as a human entitlement. This shift toward a people-centered conception of security provides valuable insight into the multiple forms of insecurity that individuals commonly experience in their daily lives.

It is now widely acknowledged that security constitutes the foundation upon which long-term sustainable development can be built. The interdependence between security and development in post-conflict regions has been repeatedly emphasized in numerous global forums.

According to **Rebecca Spence**, activities and operations in the initial stages of post-conflict recovery should concentrate on addressing the root causes of conflict rather than merely its visible consequences. This includes supporting the restoration, reconstruction, and reintegration of the social fabric torn apart by war and violence, with the goal of reinstating lost dignity and rebuilding public trust.

Spence stresses the need to recognize the specific characteristics of each post-conflict society in order to design and implement sustainable, context-sensitive strategies that ensure the protection of human rights. Establishing a solid human rights foundation in post-conflict settings, therefore, guarantees a form of peace and security that transcends the simple absence of war—encompassing also the elimination of underlying security threats and the creation of conditions for lasting stability.

2.3– The Traditional Divide Between Human Rights and National Security

Since the rise of the human rights movement in the mid-twentieth century, the promotion of human rights has often been perceived as competing with—or even threatening—the core imperatives of national security. Historically, governments have tended to treat human rights as a moral commitment to be pursued only when sufficient diplomatic capacity exists and when national security is not at risk. As a former member of the U.S. Congress once remarked, there is a persistent belief within the American government that:

"There will always be tension between our foreign policy, as traditionally defined in terms of the United States' economic, political, and strategic interests, and the pursuit of human rights. The result of this perceived competition has often been the marginalization of human rights in U.S. foreign policy" (Burke-White, 2004, p. 251).

This observation exposes a central tension in contemporary international relations: human rights are frequently regarded as being in conflict with national interests. Such an

attitude reflects the logic of political realism, under which states tend to prioritize strategic, political, and economic objectives over moral or humanitarian principles when the two come into conflict.

This tension is not unique to the United States; it represents a broader pattern in how many states navigate humanitarian concerns within their security agendas. Analytically, integrating human rights into governmental policy requires a delicate balance between ethical commitments and the practical need to preserve state security. Ignoring or postponing human rights considerations can, however, result in diminished international legitimacy and may even heighten the risk of domestic or international instability.

Although the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948, human rights concerns did not meaningfully enter U.S. foreign policy deliberations until the end of the Vietnam War. Legislative reforms at that time compelled the executive branch to begin addressing human rights issues, including the requirement for the President to submit annual human rights reports to Congress concerning countries receiving U.S. foreign aid. Nevertheless, human rights remained largely peripheral in foreign policy decision-making.

"This was evident in Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's view, which resisted the new congressional reporting requirements, claiming that "the international call for human rights runs counter to national security" (Burke-White, 2004, p. 252)

From this perspective, international legitimacy alone is insufficient to ensure the protection of human rights within foreign policy. Effective implementation requires binding mechanisms and robust domestic political pressure. The American experience following the adoption of the Universal Declaration—and the continued marginalization of human rights prior to Vietnam—illustrates that states may perceive human rights as a potential source of tension with national interests. Analytically, this underscores a causal relationship between domestic legislative pressures and the effectiveness of human rights norms in shaping foreign policy. It also highlights that domestic legal and political considerations often determine the degree of adherence to international standards.

Over the past three decades, the subordination of human rights to national security imperatives has remained a recurring feature of U.S. foreign policy. This does not mean that human rights have never motivated U.S. external actions. In some instances—such as the 1999 intervention in Kosovo or the pressure on South Africa in the late 1980s—human rights served as a significant driving force. However, as **David Forsythe** observes, "A variety of domestic factors in the United States after the Cold War ensured some attention to human rights in foreign policy, but also ensured that the government would not pay an excessive price for advancing those principles internationally" (Forsythe, 2000)

Under **President Jimmy Carter**, many observers believed that human rights would finally move to the center of American foreign policy. Yet this goal was never fully realized. Although Congress created the post of Coordinator for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs in 1976, and Carter elevated it to the rank of Assistant Secretary of State, the position had little real influence in most administrations, whether Democratic or Republican.

In his inaugural address, **Carter** declared:

"Our moral sense dictates a clear preference for those societies which share our enduring respect for individual human rights".

Nevertheless, in testimony before Congress in 1977, Carter's Secretary of State acknowledged the limits of this vision, stating that:

"We must balance our political concern for human rights with our economic and security objectives".

During the first eleven months of the **Reagan administration**, the position of Assistant Secretary for Human Rights remained vacant, while human rights policy became entangled in the ideological struggle against communism. In 1982, three leading non-governmental organizations observed that the Reagan administration had devalued human rights by invoking its principles selectively—to criticize governments deemed hostile to the United States while excusing or justifying violations committed by friendly regimes.

For instance, in **El Salvador**, where the government was notoriously brutal and repressive, the Reagan administration continued to endorse its human rights record in order to justify ongoing military assistance in the fight against left-leaning insurgent forces.

2.4–The Overlap Between Security Levels and Human Rights

This interconnection becomes more evident when we consider that human rights constitute the very foundation of human security. Individual, national, and international development all require the protection of human rights; thus, genuine security cannot exist without safeguarding these rights. Development depends on respect for human rights, while such respect helps to prevent the outbreak of conflicts. Likewise, peacebuilding efforts must be grounded in human rights principles, and peacekeeping and post-conflict reconstruction place human rights considerations at the core of their strategies, incorporating them as integral components of their operational frameworks.

Furthermore, societies must adopt what can be referred to as "human rights strategies as a framework of governance." This means that every government should explicitly recognize human rights as both a principal objective of governance and a

defining feature of its political nature. It entails striving to realize the civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights of all individuals. A clear illustration of this notion can be found in the Conflict Prevention Mechanism of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), which emphasizes the principle of what may be termed "democratic legitimacy." This principle underscores the necessity of insisting on democratic governance—also referred to as democratic transparency. The concept of democratic legitimacy has also become increasingly embedded in the practices of the United Nations Security Council, reflecting the idea that human rights define human security. Both the OAU's conflict prevention mechanism and the Security Council's activities exemplify the interplay between human rights, human security, and democratic legitimacy.

At the same time, the Security Council faces significant political challenges, particularly concerning intervention and preventive action, as it must carefully balance the two. Recognizing the importance of security sector reform, along with evolving notions of security, human rights, human security, democratic legitimacy, confidence-building, and capacity development, is therefore essential. In the field of human rights, many states experience prolonged states of emergency or siege, revealing a constant condition of exceptional security measures. Consequently, addressing conflict prevention and security sector reform becomes a critical priority to ensure stability while upholding fundamental human rights and freedoms.

3- Motivations for Strengthening Human Rights–Based Peace

There are compelling theoretical arguments supporting the evident link between domestic human rights policies and international aggression—arguments that extend beyond the empirical evidence provided by case studies. Two key pathways toward a human rights–based peace are grounded in the literature on **democratic peace theory**:

- **The structural argument** highlights the constraints imposed by the institutionalization of human rights protection.
- **The political and social belief argument** assumes that shared values and convictions regarding the primacy of human rights act as restraints on states that uphold these rights, while such constraints are absent in states that violate them (Moravcsik, Autumn 1997, pp. 513, 515).

3.1– Human Rights and Institutional Constraints

One of the causal pathways rooted in liberal international relations theory that may explain the observed correlation between systematic human rights violations and inter-state aggression is the institutional constraint that accompanies the protection of human

rights. The institutionalization of human rights norms exerts a significant—if not decisive—influence on state behaviour:

First, the protection of human rights determines the extent to which segments of society are able to have at least some voice in the political decision-making processes of the state. Even if a state is not a pluralistic democracy, by providing basic human rights protections to all—or most—of its citizens, it allows a relatively broad spectrum of social and political actors to participate in political life. Freedoms such as freedom of thought and protection from extrajudicial physical harm, for instance, enable citizens to form their own opinions on political issues and, in many cases, to express those opinions through public channels. This, in turn, increases the level of political competition—one of the principal structural explanations of the democratic peace—even in the absence of formal democratic institutions. While individual interests may not directly shape state policy, it can still be argued that these freedoms facilitate public debate and the exchange of ideas, thereby indirectly fostering a higher degree of political competition within the system.

Second, the institutional protection of human rights establishes a minimum standard of treatment for all citizens within the domestic political order—even in non-democratic states—by guaranteeing a baseline of protection. In states that respect human rights, for example, individuals who are not politically represented cannot be coerced under threat of violence into servitude or forced labor to generate low-cost economic resources for war. This constraint thus limits the state's capacity to engage in aggressive behavior. Conversely, in a state where power is narrowly concentrated in the hands of a political elite that systematically represses its population, the government is better positioned to absorb the domestic costs of war by violating the rights of its citizens—forcing individuals to sustain or support the military apparatus in its war efforts. Similarly, by denying fundamental human rights, such a state may reduce its political costs for pursuing war. Even if it conducts ostensibly fair elections, the suppression of freedoms of thought and expression isolates the government from electoral repercussions associated with an aggressive foreign policy.

3.2. Shared Human Rights Beliefs and Values

The belief-based explanation begins with the assumption that individuals within states that protect human rights share a collective preference for at least a minimum standard of human rights protection. This assumption is justified for two main reasons (Burke-White, 2004, p. 266):

First, according to liberal political science theory, state policy reflects the preferences of a subset of actors within the domestic political system. Therefore, if a state's observed

policy is oriented toward the protection of human rights, it must be the case that at least a portion of its domestic political community shares this normative preference.

Second, even if individuals within a given political system pursue a diverse range of personal and collective goals, a basic respect for human rights allows them—at least to some extent—to pursue those goals as they define them. Liberal theory posits that individuals in states that uphold human rights are more likely to support the core provisions of human rights themselves.

Given a shared set of universal human rights values within states that respect these rights, government policies are likely to reflect a similar orientation: promoting human rights domestically while advocating for their protection internationally. A state's commitment to universal human rights may lead its leadership to frame national security policies within the structure of this belief system, refraining from acts of aggression that would violate the human rights of individuals both within and beyond its borders. Acts of international aggression typically undermine the human rights of individuals in the targeted state, restricting their freedoms—at least temporarily—in ways fundamentally inconsistent with the respect for basic human rights.

Moreover, such violations impose indirect costs on the citizens of the aggressor state ("State A"), as they are compelled to reconcile their commitment to human rights with actions that contradict those very principles, both domestically and internationally. Consequently, this shared normative commitment to human rights may serve as a restraint on State A's willingness to engage in international aggression.

By contrast, a state that systematically violates the human rights of its own population is unlikely to experience such normative or political constraints. These violations often occur when political power is monopolized by a narrow elite that deliberately disregards human rights standards. In such cases, citizens who do not value or defend human rights domestically are equally unlikely to support the defense of human rights abroad.

3.3. The Imperative of Advancing Women's Rights in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations

Access to justice, women's equal participation in peacebuilding, and women's economic opportunities in post-conflict and post-violence contexts are among the principal challenges faced by women during and after conflict. As Pramila Patten, Chair of the CEDAW Working Group on "Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations: The Rights of Women and Girls during Armed Conflicts and in Post-Conflict Contexts", emphasized, "securing women's rights is a critical step in addressing violations."

Speaking at the regional consultations held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in April 2012, Patten noted:

"Although issues relating to women in conflict and post-conflict situations have received attention at the highest levels, much remains to be done to translate that attention into concrete action on the ground."

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)—the body of independent experts that monitors the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women—has been working to formulate a new General Recommendation on the human rights of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.The purpose of this recommendation is to provide states parties with authoritative and practical guidance on the measures required to ensure full compliance with their obligations to protect, respect, and fulfill women's human rights during conflict and throughout all stages of peacebuilding. As of April 2012, the Committee formally adopted this General Recommendation.

Moussa Gassama, the UN Regional Representative for Human Rights, stressed that discrimination against women—both in law and in practice—remains alarmingly widespread. He added:

"We know that the exclusion of women from decision-making processes heightens their vulnerability to sexual and other forms of violence. This is particularly true in post-conflict settings, where economic, social, and civil-political rights are profoundly affected by militarization and impunity, leading to persistent instability."

In many cases, women are still unable to participate on an equal footing with men in peace negotiations, peace agreements, and post-conflict reconstruction. Gassama affirmed that:

"Where women play an active role in peace negotiations, peace agreements tend to pay greater attention to social issues—from addressing poverty and ensuring the provision of basic services to establishing transitional mechanisms."

In this context, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) plays a pivotal role in supporting the CEDAW Committee's engagement with civil society and grassroots organizations. One example is the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), which assists women and mobilizes women's groups to promote social justice and sustainable peacebuilding across the region.

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Access to justice, equal participation of women in peacebuilding, and economic opportunities for women in post-conflict and violence-affected contexts are among the

principal challenges women face during and after conflicts. "Securing women's rights is a crucial step in addressing violations," stated **Pramila Patten**, Chair of the CEDAW Working Group on "Women in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations, Rights of Women and Girls During Armed Conflicts and Post-Conflict Periods," of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. During the regional consultations held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in April 2012, Patten noted: "Although women's issues in conflict and post-conflict settings receive attention at the highest levels, much remains to be done to translate this into tangible action on the ground."

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Women frequently cannot participate on an equal footing with men in peace negotiations, peace agreements, or in the reconstruction of post-conflict societies. As Gasama emphasized, "Where women actively participate in peace negotiations, peace agreements tendto address social issues more comprehensively - from poverty alleviation to the provision of essential services and the establishment of transitional mechanisms".

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4– Stakes and Challenges of Human Rights in Post-Conflict Areas

Human rights in post-conflict or post-crisis zones face a multitude of stakes and challenges, which can be summarized as follows:

4.1–Multinational Corporations as a Threat to Security and Human Rights: The Exacerbation or Escalation of Conflict

Considerable debate surrounds the potential impact of multinational corporations operating in conflict-affected regions. While such corporations may contribute to economic development – a factor that can, in principle, serve as a foundation for improvements in human rights – their activities may also exacerbate or reignite existing conflicts. Moreover, they are frequently linked to patterns of human rights violations.

As noted by the former United Nations Special Representative on human rights and transnational corporations, "The most egregious human rights abuses involving business occur amid conflict-affected areas and other situations characterized by widespread violence. Human rights violations may ignite or aggravate conflict, and conflict, in turn, may generate further human rights abuses".

In conflict-affected contexts, corporations have been implicated in human rights violations in various ways – either as primary actors or as accomplices, by aiding and abetting government forces or non-state armed groups such as rebel movements.

Among the most prominent examples are the alleged complicity of Shell in severe human rights violations in Nigeria during the period of military dictatorship; the involvement of private military companies in extrajudicial killings and acts of torture in Afghanistan and Iraq; the complicity of construction firms in war crimes committed in Palestine; and the oil companies' collusion in human rights abuses perpetrated by the Sudanese government.

According to the Collaborative for Development Action (CDA) initiatives, not every well-intentioned intervention contributes to peace. Assumptions regarding the relationship between economic development efforts and peacebuilding are often untested or even misguided. A recent report by **Chatham House** concluded that "promoting extractive-led development as a pathway to peace in conflict-affected contexts entails inherent risks. Even with substantial financial and technical assistance, and despite concerted efforts by multiple stakeholders, there is no guarantee that resource-based development will contribute to peace. … Indeed, even a 'do no harm' approach, consistent with conflict-sensitive guidelines, may inadvertently exacerbate tensions or fuel conflict (Schuit & Dorp, December 2015, p. 02).

4.2–The Role of External Security Assistance in Peacebuilding and Its Impact on Human Rights in Post-Conflict Areas

At this level of analysis, the central question can be framed as follows: What are the effects of external security assistance on the quality of peace in post-conflict states?

Despite the inherent risks and the substantial inflow of weapons and other forms of foreign military aid to governments emerging from conflict, the academic literature offers limited guidance regarding the expected impacts of such assistance. On the one hand, military aid provided to a government recovering from the turmoil of civil war may enable the state to reestablish a monopoly over the legitimate use of force, thereby contributing to more durable peace and enhanced human security.

On the other hand, large-scale inflows of military assistance and weaponry from foreign governments may incentivize regimes to adopt more repressive modes of governance. This occurs by increasing state capacity while reducing the cost of coercion, and by strengthening the security sector at the expense of other state institutions. Such dynamics complicate empirical analysis due to significant data limitations and concerns regarding internal validity and endogeneity (Sullivan, Blankenb , & C, December 2018).

Conversely, when examining the impact of security assistance on human rights conditions following 171 internal armed conflicts that ended between 1956 and 2012, using a novel measure of military aid and an instrumental variable for arms transfers, strong empirical evidence indicates that both military assistance and arms transfers to post-conflict governments tend to increase state repression.

For instance, after the signing of the Chapultepec Peace Accords, the United States continued to provide substantial military aid to El Salvador, averaging USD 4 million annually over the four decades following the conflict. However, the post-war human security situation in El Salvador was catastrophic. The armed forces and the oligarchic elites undertook several reforms in the security sector, yet the disbanded units responsible for severe human rights abuses were never replaced with properly accountable institutions. As a result, crime rates surged dramatically, with homicide rates doubling in the aftermath of the Chapultepec Agreements, reaching one of the highest levels globally by 1997 (Jones & others, 2006, p. 37).

One of the structural paradoxes in external security assistance policies in post-conflict contexts becomes clearly evident. Rather than contributing to stability and sustainable peacebuilding, empirical evidence suggests that flows of military aid and arms transfers can practically weaken the quality of peace and increase levels of state repression.

Analytically, the study covering 171 cases of internal armed conflict reveals a complex causal relationship between security assistance and state behavior. Such assistance enables governments to enhance their coercive capacities without necessarily implementing institutional reforms or ensuring civilian oversight of the security sector. This dynamic leads to the reproduction of authoritarian structures that were originally part of the dynamics causing the conflict.

The case of El Salvador following the Chapultepec Peace Accords provides a clear example of this paradox. Despite the formal end of the conflict, substantial U.S. military support persisted, empowering the ruling elites and the armed forces to reshape the security apparatus in ways that served their entrenched interests. In the absence of genuine reforms ensuring accountability and transparency, the "peacebuilding" process effectively became a reinstitutionalization of old repressive forces under a new institutional guise.

This trajectory highlights a deeper dilemma regarding the instrumental nature of security assistance, which is often guided by geopolitical considerations rather than by standards of good governance or respect for human rights. Consequently, human security does not materialize; instead, regime security is prioritized over the safety of individuals – a pattern evident in the sharp rise of crime and organized violence in El Salvador despite the "official peace."

In short, it becomes evident that unregulated security assistance can produce fragile peace based on coercion rather than justice, and that the absence of accountability mechanisms and comprehensive security sector reform renders such assistance a driver of further human rights violations rather than a remedy.

5– Sri Lanka: Human Rights Violations and Their Effects on Post-Conflict Peace and Security

In its 2011 statement, Amnesty International emphasized the necessity of making the United Nations report on accountability in the Sri Lankan armed conflict publicly available, considering it a fundamental document for understanding a critical phase in the country's recent history and for restoring confidence in national justice and reconciliation processes.

In the same context, **Sam Zarifi**, Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific at Amnesty International, stated that withholding the Expert Panel's findings from the Sri Lankan public constitutes a violation of citizens' right to information, particularly as the report addresses the final phase of the civil war (2008–2009), during which, according to UN reports, serious violations of international humanitarian law were committed by both parties to the conflict—the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) (Amnesty International Media Release, 2011).

The United Nations Expert Panel was established in June 2010 to advise UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on accountability issues related to grave human rights violations during the final stages of the Sri Lankan armed conflict. This initiative was part of a joint commitment between the Secretary-General and then-President Mahinda Rajapaksa, following Ban Ki-moon's visit to Colombo in May 2009. The Panel's primary objective was to formulate practical recommendations ensuring justice and accountability,

based on international human rights standards. However, the Sri Lankan government refused full cooperation with the Panel, describing its appointment as unjustified and a violation of national sovereignty.

Amnesty International and UN bodies documented a series of crimes and violations, including (Amnesty International Media Release, 2011):

- ✓ The killing of more than 10,000 civilians during the final months of the war;
- ✓ The LTTE's use of civilians as human shields and forced recruitment of children;
- ✓ The Sri Lankan military's shelling of densely populated areas, despite their designation as "safe zones";
- ✓ The imposition of a crippling humanitarian blockade depriving civilians of food, water, and medical care.

The humanitarian crisis was further exacerbated in 2008 when the government prevented aid workers, journalists, and independent monitors from entering northern areas under rebel control, hindering accurate field documentation of violations. The UN estimated that approximately 300,000 civilians were trapped between the warring parties, whereas the government downplayed the scale of the crisis, claiming the number did not exceed 70,000, resulting in a severe gap in humanitarian response (Amnesty International Media Release, 2011).

Following the end of military operations in May 2009, hundreds of thousands of civilians were detained in military-run displacement camps under the pretext of security verification of links to the LTTE. Thousands more were arbitrarily held without trial in so-called "rehabilitation camps." The absence of investigations and accountability fostered a climate of impunity and lack of the rule of law, which later manifested in reports of abductions, enforced disappearances, and targeted killings, primarily affecting those returning from conflict-affected areas in the north (Amnesty International Media Release, 2011).

Amnesty International noted that impunity has been a prevailing feature throughout the nearly three-decade civil war, and that the absence of justice constitutes a structural obstacle to achieving sustainable peace and genuine national reconciliation. From a transitional justice perspective, the publication of the UN Expert Panel report is a crucial step toward establishing truth and ensuring non-repetition, thereby reinforcing institutional trust and restoring victims' dignity.

Amnesty International called on the UN to adopt an independent international investigation mechanism to ensure accountability, emphasizing that such a measure sends a clear message to the international community: respect for international humanitarian law is not a political choice but a legal and moral obligation. The organization also stressed

that the publication of the report's findings should mark the beginning, not the end, of the justice process, and that reconciliation cannot be based on forgetting or compromise, but on recognition and redress.

The Sri Lankan case highlights a complex dilemma between justice and national sovereignty, as the state's refusal to cooperate with international investigative mechanisms weakened domestic trust in the peacebuilding process. The experience demonstrates that justice is not an obstacle to peace but a prerequisite for it; the absence of accountability only perpetuates violence in new forms.

6-Conclusion

Based on the points discussed throughout the study, it has become clear that there are numerous practical areas in which the levels of security and human rights are closely interconnected. This underscores the need to shed light on these issues and highlight the central importance of respecting human rights in achieving security, considering that respect for human rights serves as a key measure of human security.

Human rights—as a core component of human security—are often neglected in areas beyond government control and in contested territories during the post-conflict phase. This neglect can exacerbate conflicts, placing policymakers in a position where developing strategies and national institutions dedicated to promoting human rights becomes imperative. Such efforts should include collaboration with civil society actors, international and regional stakeholders, and human rights actors on the "other side" of conflict lines.

Peace enforcement within the framework of foreign security assistance in post-conflict areas represents one of the main challenges and risks to security in these regions. These challenges arise from increased recorded human rights violations, the role of multinational corporations in threatening both security and human rights, and the exacerbation or escalation of conflict.

One of the key pillars of achieving security in post-conflict areas lies in promoting transparent oversight of security forces, the rule of law, and respect for human rights. Holding security institutions accountable for human rights violations is fundamental for effective democracy, conflict prevention, and sustainable peacebuilding.

Recommendations

- There is a need to understand security from a human rights perspective, which entails focusing on four distinct concepts of security: international security; individual security against the state; security as a justification for limiting human rights; and the state's positive obligation to provide security to individuals against other individuals.

- Foreign assistance to security forces should be monitored and evaluated to ensure that recipients are not committing gross human rights violations.
- Attention must be drawn to inequality and inefficiency within some governments in post-conflict areas. Such shortcomings often emerge through security enhancement efforts that lead to various human rights violations, fostering social and economic instability. Once political stability is exhausted, the likelihood of these problems spilling over to neighboring states increases.

7-References

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