

Give „P“ a Chance: Peacebuilding, Peace Operations and the HDP Nexus

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Executive Summary

In their **coalition agreement for 2021-2025**, the three parties forming Germany's new federal government declared their intent to actively contribute to the implementation of the goals of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) Nexus.¹ This pledge is based on the insight that in complex situations of humanitarian crisis and conflict, the activities of humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors must be more closely linked. The aim of the nexus approach is to bring more coherence to international crisis engagement – and thus make it more effective.

The HDP nexus approach aims at more coherent and thereby more effective international crisis and conflict management.

At the same time, the United Nations (UN) is seeking to further develop its **Peace and Security Architecture**, including its peace operations. The Security Council has increasingly mandated “multidimensional” peace operations that implement a wide range of peacebuilding tasks. Several UN Secretaries-General have driven reforms to link peace operations more closely with the activities of UN agencies.

Other efforts have sought to strengthen the interface between policy areas in the context of the major **UN development policy initiatives**, such as the current Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Peacebuilding features in SDG 16, while **fragility and violent conflict** are now a priority in the development debate.

Essentials of the HDP Nexus Approach

- The Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus emerged from a **World Humanitarian Summit** initiative to better link humanitarian aid and development cooperation through a New Way of Working. It was then complemented by UN Secretary-General António Guterres to include peacebuilding.
- With respect to **bilateral donors**, it was the International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF) and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the OECD that dealt with the nexus. The largest donor nations committed themselves to reforms aimed at taking the HDP nexus into account in their funding decisions. This also put pressure on implementing organisations they fund, including the UN agencies, to commit to the nexus approach.
- The HDP nexus approach builds on **earlier debates on comprehensive approaches**, all of which aimed to link a variety of actors more closely. In contrast to the previous strict rejection by humanitarian actors, there is currently a broader spectrum of opinions: while some also reject the new HDP nexus approach, others embrace the concept and are adapting their work accordingly.
- There is little agreement when it comes to the **peace pillar**. In the UN system, it includes security actors and peace operations, but the HDP nexus is mainly discussed in development and humanitarian circles.
- For humanitarian and civil society organisations, the peace dimension often consists of what is called “**small p**”: the promotion of societal peace and social cohesion through conflict-sensitive project activities.
- Actors that are primarily concerned with security aspects and the “**Big P**” (high-level political dialogues, diplomatic initiatives or peace operations) hardly feature in the HDP nexus approach. For those that are part of the UN system, the reform of the UN Peace and Security Architecture is their anchoring point.

¹ Mehr Fortschritt wagen. Bündnis für Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Nachhaltigkeit. Koalitionsvertrag 2021 – 2025 zwischen SPD, BÜNDNIS 90 / DIE GRÜNEN und FDP, 147-148.

Essentials of the Peace and Security Architecture

- Over the past three decades, the UN Peace and Security Architecture has steadily strengthened the link between the **UN's three pillars** of peace and security, development, and human rights.
- Long before its emergence in UN policy documents, the interface between H, D and P was acknowledged **in multidimensional peace operations**. The UN Security Council has been mandating missions with tasks that followed a nexus logic for some time.
- At the beginning of the millennium, the UN adopted a **concept for integrated missions and integrated UN presences**. Key players here are the Resident Coordinators, who lead the UN Country Teams, represent the UN system on the ground, and provide strategic leadership for its cohesion.

Recommendations

Especially in light of the **future development of peace operations**, the nexus is gaining relevance. First, in the face of a greater reluctance to mandate multidimensional missions, the supporting peacebuilding role of humanitarian and development actors is becoming increasingly important. Second, considering the HDP nexus in the transition of peace operations, i.e. the transfer of their competencies to other actors on the ground, is equally central.

- The next UN **peacebuilding review** offers an opportunity to further link the discourses on the Peace and Security Architecture and the HDP nexus. In countries where peace operations are deployed, it is important to support the Resident Coordinators in their efforts to establish coherent strategies in line with the UN's integrated approach and the HDP nexus.
- This should also feature more prominently in the debates of **international donors**. In particular, the conceptual work in INCAF should further raise awareness of the link to peace operations and their transitions among its members and associated multilateral institutions.
- **Germany**, together with its closest partners, should constructively promote the UN and OECD processes, call for progress in the multilateral debate and back this up with financial incentives. Peace operations, including support to and regular exchange with them, should be a fixed point of conceptual considerations in Germany's inter-ministerial approach and the Joint Analysis and Agreed Planning (GAAP) of the Federal Foreign Office (AA) and the Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

Here, they can also draw on the institutional knowledge that Germany has gained through the secondment of personnel to such missions.

The HDP Nexus is gaining relevance in the context of peace operations and their transition.

The growing number of protracted humanitarian crises and the financial constraints of international engagement have given **new emphasis to the need for a comprehensive approach** – including peace and security actors where relevant. When humanitarian crises are accompanied by simmering or open violent conflicts, it is often insufficient to pursue peacebuilding activities exclusively in the sense of a “small p”. Rather, it is important to align project level activities with the goals and the actors of the “Big P”.

As personnel in institutions are constantly changing, it is important to keep the debate going, to enable collective learning and develop practical solutions. **Institutional innovations** that promote a cooperative mind-set among all stakeholders and show what is practicable are invaluable.

1. Introduction: Global Initiatives for Peace and Development

The UN is uniquely placed to connect the dots [...]. To succeed, it must further strengthen the nexus between peace and security, sustainable development and human rights policies – a holistic approach to the mutually-reinforcing linkages between its three pillars.

António Guterres, Vision Statement 2016²

It is commonplace to state that international interventions aiming to contribute to peace and development are confronted with **complex challenges**. The steady increase in the number of actors in this field, which are not necessarily pulling in the same direction, does not make effective action any easier.

The **number of initiatives, strategies and planning instruments** that seek to remedy this is also growing. They are driven by the challenges (as the crises and conflicts are not diminishing),³ but also by political cycles, personal ambitions of top political personnel, and competitions for opinion leadership and financial resources.

Complex challenges, it was realised, require complex responses. This led to an intense debate on **comprehensive or integrated approaches**, intended to link the entire spectrum of diplomatic, military, police, developmental and humanitarian instruments more closely in the areas of analysis, planning and implementation.

The United Nations play a key role in global initiatives at the interface of peace and development.

The **Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus** is the latest incarnation of the discourse on comprehensive approaches. However, it is mainly discussed in development and humanitarian aid circles, while actors focussed on peace and security remain in the background.

The Peace and Security Architecture

In this context, the UN has a key role to play and claims to be doing so (see Chart pp. 14 – 15). As the umbrella organisation of the international community, it is predestined to drive forward **processes in the spirit of the UN Charter**. First and foremost this is the obligation to “maintain international peace and security”, followed by the tasks to “achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights” and in doing so to “be a centre for harmonizing the actions of nations in the attainment of these common ends”.⁴

² António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 2016: [Challenges and Opportunities for the United Nations](#).

³ See Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2021: [Conflict Barometer 2020](#), 15; Development Initiatives, 2021: [Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2021](#), 12.

⁴ [UN Charter](#), 1945: Art 1 (1), (3) und (4).

Since the UN's founding in 1945, the development of its **Peace and Security Architecture**, including peace operations of the UN and regional organisations, has been of central importance. In recent decades, the UN Security Council has increasingly issued mandates that go far beyond the original, mostly military, observation mandates of the 'blue helmets'. Current **multidimensional peace operations** are to implement a broad spectrum of civilian peacebuilding tasks.

In parallel, a number of UN Secretaries-General pursued reforms to link the peace operations more closely with activities of the UN agencies on the ground (see Chapter 3 for more detail). One reform result was the creation of **integrated presences** in all countries where a UN mission and a UN Country Team are active. In support of these presences, integrated planning processes were created, in particular through the Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning that provides, among other things, for an Integrated Strategic Framework.⁵

Finally, in spring 2016, the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly adopted so-called **twin resolutions on sustaining peace**.⁶ They underline that sustaining peace is central to the work of the UN and that the three UN pillars (peace and security, development, and human rights) should be mutually reinforcing.

Fragility and the Global Development Goals

Efforts to strengthen the interface of adjoining policy areas have also taken place within the framework of the UN's major **development policy initiatives**. A milestone was the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at a General Assembly summit in 2000. In order to implement the MDGs more effectively, and under the slogan "**Delivering as One**", the Secretary-General sought to better align the activities of the UN agencies for development, humanitarian aid and environment.⁷

The development policy debate has increasingly focussed on fragility and violent conflicts.

Drawing on the MDGs, the development policy debate also increasingly focused on states affected by **fragility and violent conflict**, which would clearly not be able to achieve their development goals. The World Development Report 2011 reiterated this by pointing out that violent conflicts that have not been sustainably resolved tend to flare up again and states affected by them fall far behind comparable countries.⁸

Also in 2011, a pioneer group of states and civil society organisations jointly established an International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding and committed to a **New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States**.⁹ They highlighted that since 1989, two thirds of all fragile states with a total population of 1.5 billion have been subject to violent conflict. The New Deal identified five priority Peace and Statebuilding Goals and promoted **new instruments**: periodic fragility analyses, a national vision and an implementation plan ("One Vision, One Plan"). The lead responsibility for these activities – "country-owned and country-led" – fell to the affected states themselves, but civil society and development partners were to be involved.

5 United Nations, 2013: Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning. On the definition of an integrated UN presence, see paragraph 13.

6 Security Council Resolution [S/RES/2282\(2016\)](#) of 27 April 2016 and General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/70/262](#) of 12 May 2016.

7 General Assembly Resolution [A/61/583](#) of 20 November 2006: Delivering as One. Report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. The area of environment was later subsumed under the UN's development work.

8 World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development. Washington DC: The World Bank. See also Andreas Wittkowsky, 2011: „Sicherheit, Gerechtigkeit, Arbeit“ – und ein langer Atem. Das neue konfliktpolitische Credo der Weltbank. ZfP Policy Briefing.

9 International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding, 2012: [A New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States](#).

Under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), a high-profile **summit on aid effectiveness** was held in Busan, South Korea, also in 2011. Its final document – the Busan Partnership – reaffirmed that recipient countries must take the lead for implementing ever more complex development policies. The document explicitly welcomed the New Deal and its approaches.¹⁰

As, by 2015, the Millennium Development Goals had not entirely succeeded in combating underdevelopment and hunger, the UN member states adopted a successor document, the **Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development** with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While the Agenda is primarily focussed on development, it also makes a more far-reaching, universal claim. The beginning of the preamble makes this clear:

“This Agenda is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. It also seeks to strengthen universal peace in larger freedom.”¹¹

Although derived from the UN Charter, the attempt to explicitly integrate peacebuilding objectives into the agenda was controversial among UN member states.¹² In the end, they were integrated into SDG 16 under the heading “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”, albeit more modestly than peacebuilding actors had hoped.¹³ Nevertheless, through this reference SDG 16 today forms an important conceptual bridge between the Peace and Security Architecture and the UN development system.

Including explicit peacebuilding goals in the Agenda 2030 was controversial among UN member states.

When taking office in December 2016, the current UN Secretary-General António Guterres made conflict prevention a priority of his tenure.¹⁴ This led to the World Bank and the United Nations for the first time in the history of both institutions conducting a joint study on the prevention of violent conflict, published in 2018 under the title “Pathways for Peace”.¹⁵ Two years later, the World Bank Group developed a “Strategy on Fragility, Conflict and Violence”.¹⁶

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus

Against this backdrop, the debate on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace (HDP) nexus emerged. Here, too, the declared aim is to strengthen effective approaches to international cooperation by considering the nexus between its three constituents.

The HDP nexus debate crystallised at the first World Humanitarian Summit. Since the increase in protracted humanitarian crises (often in connection with violent conflicts) was increasingly overburdening the humanitarian system, not least because it was chronically underfunded, the summit called for a stronger link between humanitarian aid and development cooperation. This Double Nexus was intended to increase the effectiveness of both areas.

Upon taking office, António Guterres picked up the concerns of the World Humanitarian Summit, but emphasised that peacebuilding should be included in the equation alongside humanitarian aid and sustainable development as equally important sides of a “triangle”,¹⁷ turning the Double into a Triple Nexus.

¹⁰ [Busan Partnership](#) for Effective Development Co-operation, 2011.

¹¹ UN General Assembly Resolution [A/RES/70/1](#) of 21 October 2015: Transforming our world: the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development, Preamble.

¹² See e.g. [Points of the Russian delegation on proposed goal 16](#), Open working group on Sustainable development goals, 19 June 2014. UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

¹³ See Gert Rosenthal, 2021: Sustaining Peace. Changing architecture and priorities for UN peacebuilding, in: Stephen Browne and Thomas G. Weiss, 2021: [Routledge Handbook on the UN and Development](#), Routledge Handbooks, 117.

¹⁴ António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, 2016: [Vision Statement: Challenges and Opportunities for the United Nations](#).

¹⁵ World Bank Group, United Nations, 2018: [Pathways for Peace](#). Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict.

¹⁶ World Bank Group, 2020: [Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence](#), 2020-2025.

¹⁷ UN Secretary-General, 2016: [Secretary-General-designate António Guterres' remarks to the General Assembly on taking the oath of office](#), 12 December 2016.

Mind the Gap: In Search of the “P”

Whether in peacebuilding, development cooperation or the humanitarian field – there is a repeated complaint that political discourses take place in ‘silos’, i.e. that the respective disciplines conduct largely closed debates, in their respective vocabulary and without sufficient consideration of other relevant actors and interfaces. In this sense, silos are a vivid image of those “self-referential discourses” that sociologist Niklas Luhmann once described as characterising a reality that is divided into functional systems.

Although the discourses converge, they are conducted with varying intensity and emphasis in different professional communities. Despite the fact that the HDP nexus claims comprehensiveness, the debate almost exclusively continues in development and humanitarian circles. Here, the nexus functions as the dominant guiding principle, alongside the Agenda 2030, and has contributed to strengthening cooperation. Its link to peace and security, however, remains weak.

The HDP nexus approach claims comprehensiveness, but the debate predominantly takes place in separate ‘silos’ of development policy and humanitarian aid.

This study aims to deepen the understanding and context of these discourses and to locate them within the wider debate on comprehensive approaches. It will first explore the extent to which UN Secretary-General Guterres’ concern to establish peace – i.e. the “P” – as an equal third pillar of the HDP nexus has been met (Chapter 2). In a second step, the debate on peace operations and the UN Peace and Security Architecture will be examined to see how it relates to the HDP nexus and which open questions remain (Chapter 3). Finally, the study will consider how to bridge the gap between the two discourses.

2. The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: Genesis and Classification

The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus is a somewhat awkward term as it combines a state (peace), a process (development) and an adjective (humanitarian).

Peacebuilding Support Office 2016¹⁸

In the last six years the number of countries affected by **protracted crises** has doubled to 34.¹⁹ Currently, almost 90 per cent of humanitarian funding goes to areas of protracted crises, according to the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC).²⁰

The year 2019 alone recorded 33.4 million new internally displaced persons (IDPs), of which 8.5 million were due to **conflict and violence**. This brought the total number of people displaced by conflict and violence worldwide to 45.7 million – an all-time high.²¹ 750 million people were facing high levels of food insecurity and 690 million or 8.9 per cent of the world's population were suffering from hunger – this figure has increased by 60 million in the last 5 years.²²

Faced with ever-increasing humanitarian needs, then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon tasked the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to host a **World Humanitarian Summit** in Istanbul in 2016, the first of its kind. The Summit was intended to provide an inclusive forum for debate and initiatives in the humanitarian community to adapt humanitarian action to a changing world.

At the summit, the UN Secretary-General presented an **Agenda for Humanity** to end the world's worst humanitarian emergencies.²³ The Agenda called for bridging the gap between humanitarian aid and development, thereby improving the effectiveness of both through aligned ways of working. This link has since been referred to as the **Double Nexus**:

“We must return our focus to the people at the centre of these crises, moving beyond short-term, supply-driven response efforts towards demand-driven outcomes that reduce need and vulnerability. To achieve that, international providers will need to set aside such artificial institutional labels as „development” or „humanitarian”, working together over multi-year time frames with the Sustainable Development Goals as the common overall results and accountability framework.”²⁴

Almost 90 per cent of humanitarian aid is spent in countries affected by protracted crises.

18 Peacebuilding Support Office, 2016: [Background paper on Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#). Inter-Agency Standing Committee and UN Working Group on Transitions Workshop, 20-21 October 2016.

19 Development Initiatives, 2021: [Global Humanitarian Assistance Report 2021](#), 12.

20 OECD 2021, [DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#), OECD/LEGAL/5019, 3.

21 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, 2020: [Global Report on Internal Displacement](#), 9ff.

22 FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO, 2020: [The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020](#). Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets, 3

23 General Assembly Resolution [A/70/709](#) of 2 February 2016: One humanity: Shared responsibility. Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit.

24 General Assembly [A/70/709](#) of 2 February 2016: One humanity: Shared responsibility. Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit, 29.

2016

24 & 25 May

 World Humanitarian Summit
in Istanbul

Double Nexus

New Way of Working

Grand Bargain

2015

25 September

 UN Summit for the adoption
of the Agenda 2030 and the
Sustainable Development
Goals (SDGs)

2015

16 June

 Report of the High-Level
Independent Panel on Peace
Operations (HIPPO)

2015

29 June

 Report of the Advisory Group
of Experts for the 2015
Review of the UN Peace-
building Architecture

2016

27 April & 12 May

 “Twin Resolutions“ on
Sustaining Peace adopted
by UN Security Council
and General Assembly

Global Milestones for Peace and Development, 2015–2019

Two initiatives for implementing the Double Nexus are particularly noteworthy:

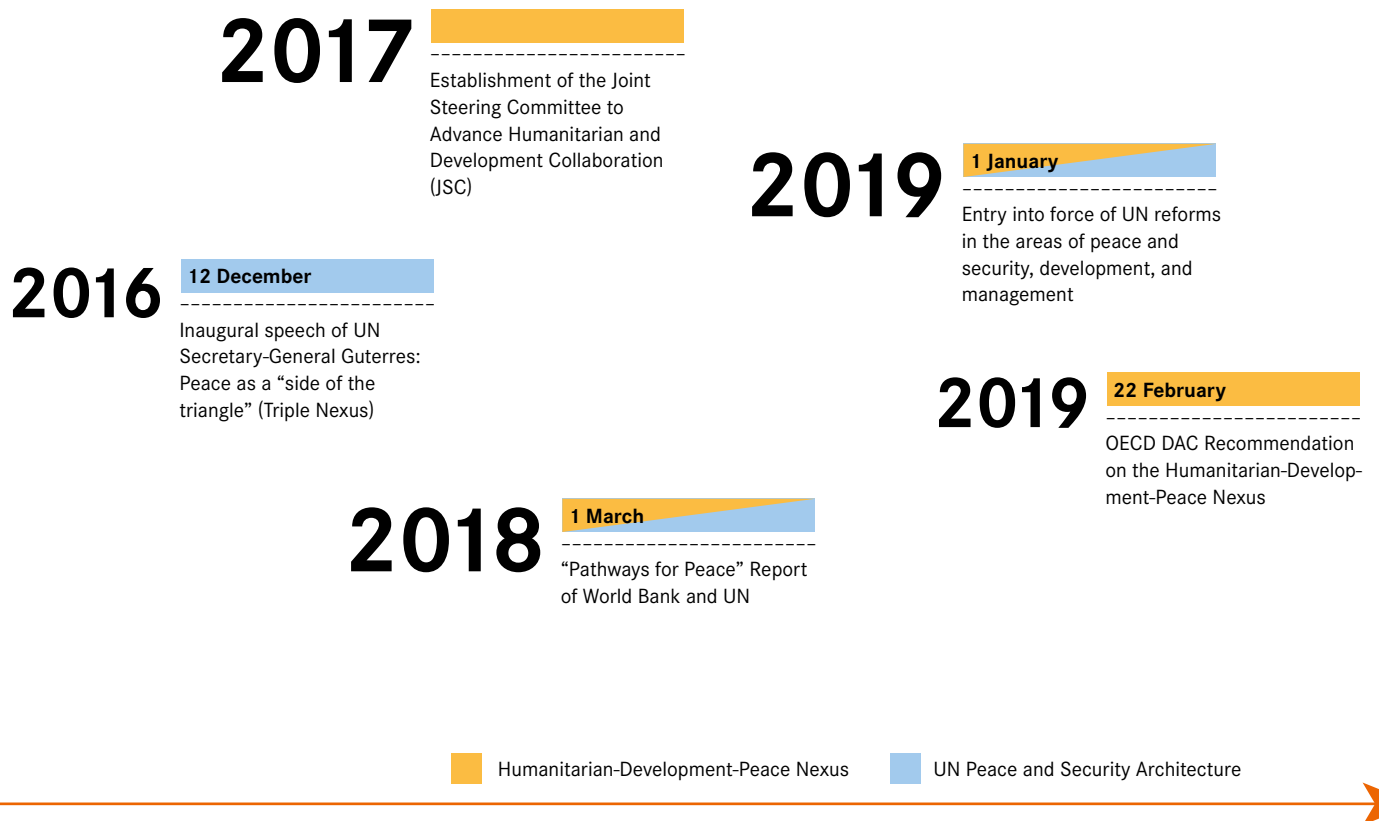
1. The **Grand Bargain** is an agreement between some of the largest humanitarian donors and NGOs. They commit to bringing more aid to the people through increased effectiveness and efficiency.
2. The **New Way of Working** targets internal reforms to implement the nexus approach in the UN system. At the summit, the UN Secretary-General and the directors of eight UN agencies, with the support of the World Bank and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), signed a joint Commitment to Action “Transcending humanitarian-development divides” in which they agreed on the New Way of Working.²⁵ The UN and World Bank closing ranks promised new funding opportunities for aid in fragile states.

With the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016, the UN became the driver of the nexus debate. Internally, it has promoted a New Way of Working.

When UN Secretary-General António Guterres added peace as the **third dimension** to the Double Nexus in December 2016,²⁶ this created the HDP or Triple Nexus. In essence, the HDP nexus emerged from within the UN system. With the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and the proclamation of the New Way of Working, the UN became and continues to be the **driver of the HDP nexus debate**.

²⁵ World Humanitarian Summit, 2016: Transcending humanitarian-development divides. Changing People’s Lives: From Delivering Aid to Ending Need, [Commitment to Action](#).

²⁶ UN Secretary-General, 2016: [Secretary-General-designate António Guterres’ remarks to the General Assembly on taking the oath of office](#), 12 December 2016.



Earlier Nexus Debates

The realisation that the management of complex crises and conflicts requires the combined action of several policy fields and instruments is, however, much older. The HDP nexus approach follows **thirty years of debates** on managing complexity in crisis areas (see Table p. 18), all of which aimed at increasing the coherence of a diverse set of actors, rendering their activities more effective. Then too, there was often a gap between debates on peace and security on the one hand and humanitarian aid and development actors on the other.

Thinking on how **emergency aid and long-term development measures** could be better linked began in the 1980s. Initially, humanitarian aid was focused on natural disaster relief. The discussion was triggered by the realisation that natural disasters not only interrupt an otherwise linear development, but that there is a causal link between poverty and vulnerability to the impact of disasters. As a result, approaches sought to not only meet immediate needs through emergency aid, but also strengthen the resilience of the affected population against new crises and their consequences.²⁷

The HDP nexus approach draws on earlier debates aiming at managing complexity in crisis areas.

²⁷ See Joanna McRae, 2019: 'Linking Thinking', Why is it so hard and what can we do about it?, 16.

Some approaches aimed at embedding humanitarian aid and development cooperation more strongly in the overarching goals of peace and security.

In the 1990s, attention shifted to how armed conflicts cause humanitarian crises. In 1996, the European Commission published the policy document **Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development (LRRD)**²⁸ that shaped the subsequent debate, in that activities should now take aspects of conflict prevention into account. While LRRD initially followed an approach of providing emergency aid and then moving on to long-term development measures, the second generation of LRRD recognised the need for instruments in conflict areas and fragile states to work concurrently according to the respective needs on the ground rather than sequentially (*continuum vs. contiguum*).

At the beginning of the 2000s, approaches came to the fore that called for humanitarian aid and development cooperation to be more firmly embedded in the **overarching goals of peace and security**. In the context of major peace operations aimed at liberal statebuilding, above all in Afghanistan, a number of nexus debates emerged, based on similar basic assumptions.

The notion of a **Security-Development Nexus** emphasised that security and development in complex conflicts are inextricably linked and mutually dependent. As a rule, both were to be seen as equally important or of equal priority.

In Germany, *vernetzte Sicherheit* (usually translated as “**networked security**”) became a guiding security policy paradigm with the Federal Government’s White Paper (*Weißbuch*) 2016 on German Security Policy and the Future of the Bundeswehr. The aim was to deal with conflicts more effectively at the local, national and international level by aligning or pooling the resources of diplomacy, security, development cooperation and humanitarian aid.²⁹ The debate took place against the background of the ongoing Afghanistan intervention, which also served as a testing ground. Even today, some of the experiences still echo in the dialogue between various actors, for example in the controversy over humanitarian-development activities carried out by armed forces within the framework of Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC).

The German term *vernetzte Sicherheit* was not entirely compatible with other international concepts, where the same questions were being discussed under the heading of a **comprehensive approach**. Leading nations in international crisis intervention made particular efforts to ensure an interdepartmental or **whole-of-government approach**.

Especially in large multilateral organisations, which have the entire spectrum of military and civilian instruments at their disposal, but also in some individual states, these objectives were further refined into an **integrated approach** which was to ensure, at least within their own institutions, a coherent, coordinated interaction of all instruments. The UN, the EU and the United Kingdom all claim to pursue an integrated approach in their crisis engagement.

²⁸ Commission of the European Communities, 1996: [Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development \(LRRD\)](#).

²⁹ See Wittkowsky and Meierjohann, 2011: Das Konzept der Vernetzten Sicherheit: Dimensionen, Herausforderungen, Grenzen, [ZIF Policy Briefing](#); Wittkowsky and Wittkamp, 2013: Wegbereiter des Comprehensive Approach: Wie Deutschlands Partner den umfassenden Ansatz weiterentwickeln, [ZIF Policy Briefing](#).

From the beginning of the 2000s, **stabilisation approaches** gained political and operational relevance. In the short- to medium-term, stabilisation aims at establishing political arrangements that transform violent conflicts into non-violent forms of conflict resolution. The approach also emphasised that diplomatic, development or security measures require a minimum level of security to be effective.³⁰

These discourses were all conducted with a **focus on security** and were dominated by security policy actors. Although the concepts sought to include humanitarian and development cooperation, many civilian actors remained sceptical, fearing the dominance of military means or blurred boundaries between civilian and military means. Humanitarian and civil society actors in particular saw great risks for their own security and acceptance in their areas of operation due to close cooperation with security actors.

Human security puts human rights and the responsibility to protect in the foreground. This was a door opener for more inclusive security debates.

It was the emerging paradigm of **human security** that opened the door to more inclusive security debates. It denoted that a state-centred concept of security was insufficient to deal with current conflicts and instead placed human rights and the international Responsibility to Protect (R2P)³¹ at the centre of security efforts. Through this lens, the concept of security also gained acceptance among actors and organisations from a broader peacebuilding spectrum.

The current debate on the HDP nexus follows the **tradition of discourses on the comprehensive approach**. Its objective is to make further progress from the insight for better cooperation on a theoretical level to effective structural change. In the process, certain controversies and findings on the feasibility of comprehensive approaches that were already the subject of previous debates resurface.

³⁰ See Wittkowsky and Breuer, 2020: 25 Years of Stabilisation Discourse: Between Realpolitik and Normativity, [ZIF Study](#).

³¹ The principle of the responsibility to protect means the political responsibility of each state to protect their citizens from mass atrocities. The international community bears the responsibility to 1) support weak states in the protection of their citizens and 2) intervene, in line with the UN Charter, when a state is not willing or able to protect its own population. See Federal Government of Germany, 2017: [Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace](#).

The HDP Nexus as an Incarnation of the Comprehensive Approach

Type of approach	Activities/Actors involved	Humanitarian	Development	Diplomacy / Mediation	Security
Defined Goal					
Nexus Security-Development	Human Security	✓	✓	?	✓
LRRD (Linking Relief, Rehabilitation and Development)	“ Structural stability ” by combining humanitarian aid, development assistance that strengthens resilience, and better risk management (European Commission)	✓	✓	--	--
Vernetzte Sicherheit ('networked security')	“ Security [requires a] comprehensive approach that can only be ensured in ‘networked’ security structures and in a comprehensive understanding of security at the state and the global level.” (Weißbuch 2006)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Comprehensive / integrated Whole-of-Government	Strategic goal not determined (instrumental approach), usually aimed at security, international conflict management, peacebuilding.	✓	✓	✓	✓
Stabilisation	Various definitions. Guidelines of the Federal German Government: “With its stabilisation measures, the Federal Government supports political processes of conflict resolution, while providing an incentive for parties to cease engagement in armed conflict. [...] Stabilisation measures specifically serve to create a secure environment, to improve living conditions in the short term, and to offer alternatives to economies of war and violence. This requires a comprehensive approach [...]”	✓	✓	✓	✓
HDP Nexus	“Nexus refers to the interlinkages between humanitarian, development and peace actions. Nexus approach refers to the aim of strengthening collaboration, coherence and complementarity.” “This requires the engagement of a diverse range of actors, based on their respective comparative advantage, a shared understanding of risk and vulnerability and an approach that prioritises ‘prevention always, development wherever possible, humanitarian action when necessary’“ (OECD DAC Recommendation)	✓	✓	Peace	
		but not fully consensual			not further specified, <i>small p</i> vs. <i>Big P</i>

Core Elements of the HDP Nexus Approach

Contrary to the way many stakeholders use the term, a ‘nexus’ is initially neither a concept nor a theory of change, but simply an interface. The HDP nexus therefore is the **link between humanitarian aid, development and peace**, without containing a prioritised formulation of overall objectives.

In order to better link its three pillars and their activities, the HDP nexus approach, according to an **OECD DAC definition**, aims to:

“capitalize on the comparative advantages of each pillar – to the extent of their relevance in the specific context – in order to reduce overall vulnerability and the number of unmet needs, strengthen risk management capacities and address root causes of conflict.”³²

Proponents hope that the nexus approach will improve the **chances of successfully managing complex and protracted crises**. They hope that it will provide more effective emergency aid to the affected populations and, at the same time, contribute more effectively to the transformation of crises towards positive peace and sustainable development. Better linking the individual elements unlocks synergies and increases the effectiveness and efficiency of the measures.

With the **New Way of Working**, adopted at the World Humanitarian Summit, stakeholders strive to better achieve this goal. At its core, the approach requires actors in the three sectors to work together over a multi-annual period on the basis of their comparative advantages, and to focus the planning of their interventions on collectively agreed outcomes.

Collective outcomes do not aim at final but at intermediate goals. They are to be realised through intensified cooperation.

Collective outcomes are “concrete and measurable result[s] that humanitarian, development and other relevant actors want to achieve jointly over a period of 3–5 years to reduce people’s needs, risks and vulnerabilities and increase their resilience”.³³ They do not refer to an end-stage of a conflict or crisis, but intend to represent concrete intermediate goals for all actors working together in the nexus approach, but with very different time horizons, funding modes and reporting strands for their work. This five-year horizon corresponds to the time horizon of more recent stabilisation approaches.³⁴

In order to formulate common goals, actors of the three sectors must **intensify their exchange**, foster mutual understanding of each other’s work, principles and mandates, and enable mutual learning.

In contrast to earlier approaches, such as the early LRRD, the HDP nexus approach **does not envisage a sequencing of instruments**. Development and peacebuilding interventions should start after the emergency response, simultaneously, and as early as possible in accordance with the needs on the ground.

Additional elements are characteristic of the HDP nexus approach: Since every crisis is different and the needs of the local population differ, planning and implementation should be **context-specific**. Conceptually, actors in the three sectors should develop a common understanding of key concepts such as sustainability, vulnerability and resilience.

³² OECD, 2021: [DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#), OECD/LEGAL/5019, 6.

³³ OCHA, 2018: [Collective Outcomes. Operationalizing the New Way of Working](#), 2.

³⁴ See Wittkowsky and Breuer, 2020: [25 Years of Stabilisation Discourse: Between Realpolitik and Normativity, ZIF Study](#).

Whenever possible, **local governmental and non-governmental structures** should be used and empowered instead of building parallel structures. This includes disbursing funds directly to local and national authorities, institutions and NGOs whenever possible, combined with reliable multi-annual commitments.

The inclusion of humanitarian aid in this kind of cooperation is subject to the caveat that **humanitarian principles** are upheld, i.e. that humanitarian actors can continue to operate in accordance with the principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality.

Operationally, better conditions for effective and efficient cooperation are to be created, particularly by establishing **regular exchange, shared data, joint analyses and coordinated planning processes**. In addition, funding instruments that promote rather than oppose the work in a nexus approach are needed. Sufficient flexibility to respond to changing crisis contexts is another important element.

The involvement of humanitarian actors remains subject to the caveat that they can continue to operate in accordance with their principles of neutrality, independence and impartiality.

Many organisations hope for fundamental **changes in the funding** of interventions in crisis areas and fragile states, calling on donors to make multi-annual commitments and enable better cooperation through pooled funds for humanitarian aid, development and peace-building. More funds allocated without specific earmarking would enable implementing organisations to respond flexibly to changes in the environment and the needs of the affected population.

Activities to Implement the HDP Nexus Approach

Since the World Humanitarian Summit, the UN, bilateral donors and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have taken important steps to implement the HDP nexus approach. Within the UN, the **reform of its development system** under Secretary-General Guterres provided a good opportunity to anchor the New Way of Working in the UN system.

The UN, bilateral donors and NGOs have started to implement the nexus approach. The reforms of the UN development system promoted the New Way of Working.

In the course of these reforms, the role of UN **Resident Coordinators** was strengthened. As heads of UN Country Teams, they no longer represent a single UN agency and now report directly to the UN Deputy Secretary-General (DSG). In 2017, a **Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration (JSC)** was also established under the DSG.³⁵ It develops recommendations for greater coherence between humanitarian and development activities in crises and in transition to long-term sustainable development. To this end, it advises Resident Coordinators and Country Teams on the HDP Nexus (see also Chapter 3).

The **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)**, as the highest-ranking humanitarian coordination body in the UN system, also issued a paper on the peace pillar in the nexus and guidelines for formulating collective outcomes.³⁶

³⁵ [United Nations Joint Steering Committee to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration, 2021.](#)

³⁶ [Inter-Agency Standing Committee, 2020: Light Guidance on Collective Outcomes.](#)

Implementing the HDP Nexus Approach in Germany

As a major humanitarian aid and development cooperation donor, Germany has recognised the HDP nexus approach as a means for dealing with protracted crises. Since 2016, the Federal Foreign Office (AA) and the Ministry for Economic Development Cooperation (BMZ) have introduced various innovations to better connect their instruments:

1. The 2019 Operations Manual on the “Interministerial Approach to Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace”, which emerged from 2017 guidelines bearing the same name, contains many elements that strengthen cooperation in the spirit of the nexus. These include joint analyses, joint planning of programmes, mutual participation in departmental planning and coordination on the support for international financing instruments.
2. With the mutually agreed Joint Analysis and Agreed Planning (GAAP), AA and BMZ intend to regularly share information on country contexts and project outlines.
3. Non-governmental organisations can apply for two complementary projects under a newly created “Nexus Chapeau” for humanitarian aid at AA and for transitional development assistance at the BMZ. To do so, projects must link up and formulate common goals in a chapeau paper.
4. In the course of its “BMZ 2030” reform, the ministry has also introduced a “Nexus and Peace Partner” category for ten of its partner countries.

Following the dialogue with the OECD DAC, and with the support of several bilateral partners, the UN recently established a **Nexus Academy**. Based at UNDP, it intends to jointly train staff of the UN, bilateral organisations, donors and NGOs in order to sensitise them to the nexus and to build capacity for associated advisory services.

Since 2016, the **World Bank** has expanded its cooperation with the UN in countries affected by conflict or fragile statehood. The joint UN-World Bank study “Pathways for Peace” published in early 2018 furthered this cooperation. Importantly, it was realised that development must take place in parallel rather than begin only after the greatest humanitarian need has been addressed. Through its subsidiary IDA (International Development Association), the World Bank therefore has begun financing development projects at an earlier stage of crisis engagement.

Through its **State and Peacebuilding Fund**, the World Bank focuses on financing projects that implement the HDP nexus approach. The prospect of accessing World Bank funding provides a significant incentive for organisations to align their work with it. In early 2020, the Bank issued a “Strategy on Fragility, Conflict and Violence”.³⁷

Bilateral donors are also driving the HDP nexus debate. The most visible sign of this is the OECD DAC “Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus”, drafted in 2019 and updated in 2021.³⁸ The Recommendation is the result of intensive debate in INCAF, which has since been driving implementation forward conceptually. Its implementation has just been reviewed.

The OECD DAC recommendation is the most visible sign that the nexus approach has also been taken up by bilateral donors.

³⁷ The World Bank, 2020: [Strategy for Fragility, Conflict and Violence 2020-2025](#).

³⁸ OECD, 2021: [DAC Recommendation on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#).

Major donor countries have thus committed to reforming their planning, approval and financing structures in order to take the HDP nexus into account in future **funding decisions**. In doing so, they are also increasing the pressure on implementing agencies in the field, including the UN agencies they fund, to commit to the nexus approach.

Several **UN agencies** have also subscribed to the OECD DAC Recommendation.³⁹ Among other things, there is a high-level dialogue between DAC and UN agencies on how to improve implementation. This Partnership for Peace strengthens coherence along the bilateral-multilateral axis.⁴⁰

Humanitarian organisations remain sceptical and want to keep state institutions and political objectives at arm's length.

Meanwhile, many **international NGOs** have drafted position papers and studies to discuss opportunities and risks of the nexus approach.⁴¹ Many organisations have set up initial projects that more clearly align with it in programming and implementation.⁴² Some have initiated reforms and adapted procedures within their organisations. However, criticism and open questions about implementation remain.

Controversies: The Autonomy of the Humanitarians and the Practical Effort Involved

In the humanitarian sphere, the HDP nexus approach remains particularly controversial. Especially those organisations that have always wanted to keep state institutions and political objectives at arm's length are voicing criticism. They see **similar risks** as in previous nexus or comprehensive approaches.

First, they fear the **politicisation of humanitarian aid**. In the HDP nexus approach, humanitarian aid is subordinated to a common strategic vision and therefore to political goals. Development aid and peacebuilding often cooperate closely with the host country government and aim to build its capacities. Humanitarian aid, in contrast, operates precisely where the state can no longer meet the basic needs of its own population.

Humanitarian actors are also weary of donors introducing political objectives such as **counter-terrorism and migration control** into the programming of large funding instruments. The EU Emergency Trust Fund for Africa is cited as an example.⁴³ Many humanitarian organisations fear compromising their fundamental principles of independence, neutrality and impartiality by linking up with state institutions. This might hamper access to people in need and put aid workers at risk.

Coupled with this, the nexus approach risks **diverting attention from the most urgent humanitarian needs**. Different programming logics and more coordination efforts with other actors could complicate getting aid to affected people quickly and prioritising the most pressing needs.

Humanitarian actors worry that the current dynamics might turn the approach into an end in itself. Therefore, it would be important to question what added value it can generate in practice. Precisely on this there has been too **little evidence-based evaluation** and research so far. A positive effect might be anticipated, but has not been comprehensively confirmed.⁴⁴

39 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), World Food Programme (WFP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), International Organisation for Migration (IOM) und United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) officially adhered to the recommendation; the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has initiated the process of adhering. The UN Secretariat has expressed its support for the DAC recommendations through an exchange of letters between the UN Secretary-General and the DAC Chair.

40 See OECD, 2020: [Partnership for Peace: High-Level OECD DAC & UN Roundtable on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus](#), 6 October 2020.

41 See e.g. Jens Pedersen, 2016: The Nexus of Peacebuilding, Development and Humanitarianism in Conflict Affected Contexts: A Respect for Boundaries, [MSF Analysis](#); VOICE, 2019: NGO Perspectives on the EU's Humanitarian-Development-Peace-Nexus, [VOICE Report](#); Emma Fanning und Jessica Fullwood-Thomas, 2019: The Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus. What does it mean for multi-mandated organizations? [Oxfam Discussion Paper](#).

42 See e.g. case studies on NGO projects in VOICE, 2019: NGO Perspectives on the EU's Humanitarian-Development-Peace-Nexus, [VOICE Report](#).

43 See Ralf Südhoff et al., 2020: The Triple Nexus in Practice, [Centre for Humanitarian Action](#), 13.

44 See Joanna McRae, 2019: 'Linking Thinking', Why is it so hard and what can we do about it? [KUNO Platform](#), 24.

The **conceptual fuzziness** of the approach is a particular challenge for its operationalisation. A non-representative survey conducted by the Centre for Humanitarian Action (CHA) among field staff of international organisations found that 69 per cent of respondents perceive a lack of clarity about what the Triple Nexus means in practice. The peace pillar has also not been sufficiently defined so far. 35 per cent of interviewees fear that the nexus approach creates too much complexity on the ground.⁴⁵

Unresolved Aspects of the Peace Dimension

There is little agreement on the definition and operationalisation of the peace pillar, which was only added to the Double Nexus later by UN Secretary-General Guterres. Above all, there are **issues between humanitarians and the UN peace pillar**. The UN system includes security actors in general and peace operations in particular, while humanitarian actors equate UN peace operations with a military operation under blue helmets. Some consider the peace component as being added to the nexus by the Secretary-General top-down and after the fact.⁴⁶

However, it is now generally acknowledged that humanitarian aid can contribute directly or indirectly to peace by **strengthening the societal resilience** and can even provide concrete entry points for peacebuilding. For example, maintaining or restoring critical infrastructure, such as hospitals or schools, can help a society to overcome internal conflicts and crises more quickly. Humanitarian organisations can also reduce people's vulnerabilities by providing food or shelter. Indirectly, humanitarian ceasefires can give diplomats time to mediate.⁴⁷

For many humanitarian and civil society organisations the peace dimension consists of what is often referred to as **“small p”**: supporting political processes through activities that are conflict-sensitive, providing basic services, and promoting social peace and cohesion. In this way, the peace dimension is integrated as a cross-cutting task in a humanitarian or development project logic. Autonomous peace and security actors remain outside this sphere. However, where violent conflicts simmer, this is often insufficient and puts the interaction with security actors back on the agenda.

Therefore, the peace dimension must also include the **“Big P”**: peacebuilding through high-level political dialogue, diplomatic initiatives or instruments such as peace operations and stabilisation operations, including conflict transformation measures by actors not located in the humanitarian or development spheres.⁴⁸

The hitherto **inadequate definition** leaves ample space for interpretation. Especially state actors such as Germany or large intergovernmental organisations such as the OECD include stabilisation under the peace dimension.⁴⁹ The unclear definition also seems to be the reason why many humanitarian actors remain at the ‘nexus table’ in the first place. At the same time, actors who classify themselves as part of the peace pillar do not feel sufficiently represented, rendering the global debate less inclusive.

The peace dimension is often addressed through mainstreaming in conflict-sensitive development or humanitarian activities (“small p”).

45 Ralf Südhoff et al., 2020: The Triple Nexus in Practice, [Centre for Humanitarian Action](#), 21.

46 VOICE, 2019: NGO Perspectives on the EU's Humanitarian-Development-Peace-Nexus, [VOICE Report](#), 32.

47 Alice Debarre, 2018: Humanitarian Action and Sustaining Peace, [IPI Issue Brief](#), 2.

48 See Max Middeke, 2021: Die Friedenssäule im HDP-Nexus. Stand der (internationalen) Debatte. Presentation, GIZ sector program Peace and Security, Disaster Risk Management.

49 See Ralf Schröder und Mirko Schilbach, Closing the Gap – The German Perspective on the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus, in: [Rural 21 01/19](#), S. 20; Erik Forsberg, 2020: Security Actors in Fragile Contexts, [OECD Development Co-Operation Working Paper 75](#).

Interim Conclusion: HDP Nexus without P-Actors

Building on previous debates on development policy coherence, the HDP nexus approach aims to bring **more coherence and effectiveness to international interventions** in complex conflicts and humanitarian crises. In doing this, it leaves the formulation of overall strategic objectives to the respective actors. The central instrument of the approach is the joint definition of collective outcomes, the formulation of which remains a challenge in practice.

The implementation of the HDP nexus approach faces similar difficulties as earlier variants of the comprehensive approach.

While previous comprehensive approaches were often met with strict rejection by **humanitarian actors**, there is a broader spectrum in the debate today: some reject the nexus approach, others engage, criticise individual elements of the concept, but also make adjustments in their own organisations. As a result, many actors seeking better coordination in the sense of the approach do not implement it in an ideal-typical fashion in practice.

Once more, many humanitarians fear a loss of autonomy if they become too involved in broader goals of international interventions.

This is especially true when it comes to **robust peace operations** mandated to use military force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

But for several reasons, the more open-minded actors on the humanitarian spectrum consider the HDP nexus approach to be **more acceptable** than earlier variants of the comprehensive approach:

- It **focuses less on security**.
- It concentrates on the **needs of individuals or local communities** rather than on working with state actors and building state resilience.⁵⁰ It thus follows the logic of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its central transformative goal of leaving no one behind.
- As a result of the large number of protracted humanitarian crises, many humanitarian actors are also striving to make the impact of emergency aid more sustainable and see the HDP nexus approach as an opportunity for humanitarian aid to become a first step towards **greater social peace**.⁵¹
- Finally, some organisations expect **new access to resources**.

Collaboration is often hampered by competition for mandates and resources, but first structural changes are visible.

However, the actors of the three pillars H, D and P continue to operate under **different legal conditions, programmes, time horizons, funding structures and cultures**. Cooperation is often hampered by competition for mandates and resources. Some actors show little inclination towards new coordination processes that divert resources from actual mandate fulfilment. For this very reason, previous concepts were insufficiently operationalised, structural changes remained limited and silo thinking in the field has not been overcome. The UN-led process is also criticised for offering little space for dialogue with civil society groups so far.⁵²

50 VOICE, 2019: NGO Perspectives on the EU's Humanitarian-Development-Peace-Nexus, [VOICE Report](#), 14.

51 See Alice Debarre, 2018: Humanitarian Action and Sustaining Peace, [IPI Issue Brief](#), 1; ICRC, 2016: Protracted Conflict and Humanitarian Action: Some recent ICRC experiences, [Report](#), 24.

52 Sonja Hövelmann, 2020: [Triple Nexus to go](#), 3.

Initially, the HDP nexus approach was carried by a **core group of UN agencies**, but major **donor countries** have increasingly embraced the debate's quest for effectiveness and efficiency. The discussions in INCAF, as well as the Recommendation and working groups of the OECD DAC provided the impetus for more dialogue on coherence between the bilateral and multilateral levels.

In the meantime, various **other organisations and actors** are grappling with the HDP nexus and have engaged with the New Way of Working. In particular, organisations with a dual mandate for humanitarian aid and development have adjusted their structures, not least encouraged by new funding opportunities for interventions that consider the nexus in their programming.

Although the aim of the HDP nexus approach is to connect its three pillars more closely, it **has only been able to partially break the silos** between them. For humanitarian and development actors, the nexus is omnipresent. The support of major donors and the UN system generates a certain pressure to take it into account.

For humanitarian and development actors the nexus is omnipresent, actors from the peace and security spectrum are mostly missing.

Actors from the peace and security spectrum participate less in the discussion, despite the fact that they already addressed the issues of complexity and effectiveness in earlier debates, albeit in different terms (see Chapter 3).

Whether **peace operations** should be part of HDP nexus activities is a contentious issue in the humanitarian and development spectrum. Given their strong presence in crisis contexts, however, it is all but inevitable to address the interface with them.

3. Peace and Security Architecture, Peace Operations and the HDP Nexus

Without a successful formula through which to unite the efforts of the three pillars, UN peacebuilding will continue to fail.

Advisory Group of Experts, Peacebuilding Review 2015⁵³

Multidimensional peace operations face the challenge of creating synergies with other UN system institutions.

UN peace operations are present in many areas affected by violent conflicts, fragile statehood and humanitarian crises. They are a particularly visible form of international engagement in conflict transformation. They can be either (smaller) special political missions or (larger) peacekeeping operations.

In contrast to traditional peacekeeping, which focuses on monitoring ceasefires and the separation conflict parties, many missions today are **multidimensional peace operations**. They include military, police and civilian components that carry out a variety of different mandated tasks in the host country. As mandates have become more comprehensive, there has also been a growing debate on cooperation, coordination and the creation of synergies between different actors within the UN system.

In the development of the **overarching UN Peace and Security Architecture**, coherence, effectiveness and the management of complexity have also become issues. Within this architecture, peace operations mandated by the Security Council have a prominent place. Increasing consideration is also directed at neighbouring peacebuilding policy areas – including development and humanitarian tasks.

The guiding theme was the cooperation of **three pillars of the UN system** (peace and security, development, and human rights) and how they should interlock. Only recently UN peace and security policy documents have begun to include references to the HDP nexus.

UN Security Council Mandates

Some mandates of current UN peace operations contain clear references and tasks that resemble the HDP nexus approach, but predate the current concept. References are sometimes found in the preamble of Security Council resolutions, which point to the connection between peace and security on the one hand, and between sustainable economic and social development on the other.

⁵³ United Nations, 2015: [The Challenge of Sustaining Peace](#). Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, 29 June 2015, 8.

Mandates with HDP Nexus Components

Mission / Resolution

Wording

- UNMIK**
1244 (1999)
- Responsibilities of the international civil presence will include (h) supporting, in coordination with international humanitarian organizations, humanitarian and disaster relief aid
 - Welcomes the work in hand in the European Union and other international organizations to develop a comprehensive approach to the economic development and stabilization of the region

- UNOTIL**
1599 (2005)
- Underlines that United Nations assistance to Timor-Leste should be coordinated with the efforts of bilateral and multilateral donors, regional mechanisms, non-governmental organizations, private sector organizations and other actors from within the international community, and encourages the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to establish and chair a consultative group, made up of these stakeholders in Timor-Leste
 - Encourages, in particular, the Government of Timor-Leste, UNOTIL, the United Nations Secretariat, United Nations development and humanitarian agencies, and multilateral financial institutions to start immediately planning for a smooth and rapid transition, in Timor Leste, from a special political mission to a sustainable development assistance framework

- UNMIT**
1704 (2006)
- To facilitate the provision of relief and recovery assistance and access to the Timorese people in need
 - To cooperate and coordinate with United Nations agencies, funds and programmes as well as all relevant partners, including the international financial institutions and donors, in carrying out tasks mentioned above as relevant, with a view to making maximum use of existing and forthcoming bilateral and multilateral assistance to Timor-Leste in post-conflict peacebuilding and capacity-building, and to support the Government and relevant institutions, in cooperation and coordination with other partners, in designing poverty reduction and economic growth policies and strategies to achieve the development plan of Timor-Leste

- MINUSTAH**
1892 (2009)
- Reiterating the need for security to be accompanied by social and economic development as a way for Haiti to achieve lasting stability
 - Underlining the need for the quick implementation of highly effective and visible labor intensive projects that help create jobs and deliver basic social services that contribute to increased support of MINUSTAH by the Haitian population
 - Requests the UN country team, and calls upon all actors, to complement security and development operations [...] with activities aimed at effectively improving the living conditions of the concerned populations

- Calls upon MINUSTAH and the UN Country Team (UNCT) to further enhance their coordination and, in concert with [...] international partners, help ensure greater efficiency in the implementation of the DSNCRP (*Document de stratégie nationale pour la croissance et la réduction de la pauvreté*) in order to achieve progress in the area of socio-economic development [...] and address urgent development problems

- MONUSCO**
1925 (2010)
- Stressing the need for sustained international support to ensure early recovery activities and lay the foundations for sustainable development

- MONUSCO**
2053 (2012)
- Recognizing the importance of supporting peace-building efforts in order to achieve further progress in the stabilization of the country, underlining the importance of economic development to ensure long-term stabilization and peace consolidation, and stressing the need for sustained international support to ensure early recovery activities and lay the foundations for sustainable development
 - Requests MONUSCO to support effective coordination, transparency and harmonization of efforts, as well as a clear division tasks and responsibilities of all international partners involved

- MONUSCO**
2098 (2013)
- Request the SG, to produce a detailed report and accompanying matrix reflecting the current division of labor between MONUSCO and the UNCT on tasks shared by the Mission, the UNCT and the Government of the UNCT to the fullest extent possible tasks where the UNCT has a comparative advantage or which take place in non-conflict areas

- MONUSCO**
2556 (2020)
- Stresses the need for coordination and cooperation between [...] UN entities, civil society organizations and development actors to build and sustain peace, stabilize, improve the security situation and assist in restoration of State authority
 - Work with [...] humanitarian workers to identify threats to civilians and implement joint prevention and response plans and strengthen civil-military cooperation

- MINUSMA**
2100 (2013)
- Encouraging the international community to provide broad support to resolve the crisis in Mali through coordinated actions for immediate and long-term needs, encompassing security, governance, development and humanitarian issues

- MINUSCA**
2149 (2014)
- Welcoming the pledges made at the High-Level Meeting on Humanitarian Action in the CAR in Brussel, on 20 January 2014 and encouraging the international community to swiftly follow through on pledges to continue providing support in response to the humanitarian situation in CAR, and to prepare for reconstruction with an approach linking relief, rehabilitation and development (LRRD)
 - Creation of a secure environment for the immediate, full, safe and unhindered, civilian-led delivery of humanitarian assistance

UN Peace and Security Architecture and Peacebuilding Architecture

The term UN **Peace and Security Architecture** refers to the UN's instruments and institutions in the field of peace, security and peacebuilding. They are also referred to as the UN Peace and Security Pillar.

Peacebuilding Architecture is an established term in the UN system and describes a sub-area of the Peace and Security Architecture. It includes the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). All three were established by a decision of UN member states at the 2005 World Summit.

Activities to generate synergies between H, D and P can be found in peace operations' mandates much earlier than in UN policy documents.

An early example of a mission mandate and structure that integrated the entire spectrum of the HDP nexus is the **United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo** (UNMIK). In order to bring the UN's main international partners on board, the mission was divided into four pillars. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) assumed responsibility for emergency relief as Pillar I, and the United Nations itself assumed responsibility for civil administration as Pillar II. As a non-UN organisation, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) devoted itself to building democratic institutions (Pillar III), the European Union to economic reconstruction (Pillar IV). Thus, as early as 2001, organisations from the three functional areas later addressed in the HDP nexus were working together in an integrated manner in a UN mission led by a Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG).⁵⁴

Sometimes missions were mandated with specific **tasks in the spirit of the HDP nexus**, including, for example, coordinating various actors in a crisis area, implementing Quick Impact Projects (QIPs), cooperating with humanitarian organisations, and providing a safe environment for the provision of humanitarian aid.

A look at various mandates (see Table p. 27) shows that interfaces between the areas were sought in the practice of peace operations long before they were spelled out in UN policy documents. While the UN Security Council first discussed the nexus between security and development in 2011,⁵⁵ it had long since mandated missions with tasks that followed a nexus logic.

Brahimi Report (2000)

The report of the UN Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (**Brahimi Report**), named after its chair, had already emphasised the need to integrate the capacities of the UN system for conflict prevention and peacebuilding and thus increase their effectiveness.⁵⁶ The report was published in the midst of the ongoing debate on the Security-Development nexus and the emerging debate on the comprehensive approach. The panel recommended that

- All actors involved in the UN, its Secretariat and in the field develop a **common understanding of the situation on the ground** and joint plans on what to do when the situation changes.

⁵⁴ See Andreas Wittkowsky, 2021: Gründerzeit im Kosovo: Übergangsverwaltung, Wirtschaftswunder und andere Überraschungen.

⁵⁵ United Nations Security Council, 2011: [Letter](#) dated 2 February 2011 from the Permanent Representative of Brazil to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, 2 February 2011.

⁵⁶ Report of the Panel on Peace Operations, [A/55/305 / S/2000/809](#) of 21 August 2000, 1; 6.

- Development agencies in the UN system should view humanitarian and development work through a **prevention lens** and make long-term prevention a central focus of their work.
- Peace operations should implement **Quick Impact Projects** with a view to increase their acceptance among the local population. Resident Coordinators/Humanitarian Coordinators should ensure coherence with UN Country Team activities.
- The UN should be the **focal point for international donors of peacebuilding activities**.
- More use should be made of the possibility of appointing **Resident Coordinators** (who may also have a mandate as Humanitarian Coordinator, see below) in a country as Deputy SRSGs.
- **Integrated Mission Task Forces** should be created involving staff from all relevant areas of the UN system (political analysis, military operations, police, elections, human rights, development, humanitarian aid, refugees and IDPs, public relations, logistics, finance and recruitment) in the planning of new missions and for their subsequent support from the Secretariat.

Integrated UN Presences, Missions and Planning

At the beginning of the 2000s at the latest, the realisation that a lack of coherence and coordination contributed to a lack of effectiveness and sustainability also prevailed with regard to UN peace operations.⁵⁷ This eventually led to the **concept of integrated missions and integrated UN presences**, which aimed to link the different peacebuilding activities of the UN system (political engagement, development work, humanitarian assistance, human rights work, rule of law promotion, social and security aspects) into a coherent and effective UN crisis response.

The UN refers to **integrated presences** as a set-up in which both a UN Country Team and a UN mission operate on the ground – regardless of whether the mission is purely military, multidimensional or political.

The mission and the UN Country Team are often, but not always, **structurally interlocked**. To that end, heads of the UN Country Teams (the Resident Coordinators) are simultaneously appointed Deputy Heads of Mission, i.e. Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG). In the UN framework, this is referred to as **double-hatting**. When Resident Coordinators are also the UN Humanitarian Coordinators in a country, they are referred to as **triple-hatted**.

Apart from the integration of the coordinator into the mission through his double or triple function, the UN Country Teams remain structurally independent. Often, however, there is close and trusting cooperation between the SRSG and the Resident Coordinator even without this structural interlocking.

To ensure the strategic and operational coherence of activities, the UN has adopted a **Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning**. Among other things, it provides for an Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF) for integrated UN presences.⁵⁸ An ISF is based on a shared conflict analysis and a common understanding of the operational environment, and forms the foundation of the common strategic vision for the mission and the UN Country Team. It also serves as a strategic planning tool in the areas of politics, security, development and human rights, taking into account humanitarian needs and current challenges in the field.⁵⁹

Through integrated presences, the UN country teams and peace operations are to create a common impact.

⁵⁷ Cedric de Coning, 2008: The United Nations and the Comprehensive Approach, *DIIS Report*, 7.

⁵⁸ United Nations, 2013: *Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning*. See also Wendy MacClinchy Day, 2010: Integrated Strategic Frameworks for Peace Consolidation: A Briefing Note, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, Vol. 5 No. 2, 75.

⁵⁹ United Nations Somalia, 2014: *Integrated Strategic Framework 2014-2016*, 4.

Capstone Doctrine (2008)

In 2008, the so-called Capstone Doctrine recognised that multidimensional UN peacekeeping missions play an important role in ensuring that the activities of the UN system and other international actors are guided by a **common strategic vision**. The doctrine stipulated that the UN has a unique capacity to organise truly comprehensive responses to complex crises and therefore developed the concept of integrated missions to maximise the effectiveness of its work in conflict countries.⁶⁰

Peace operations can provide political support to development organisations and create a secure environment for humanitarian actors.

The Capstone Doctrine then elaborated on the role of UN peacekeeping operations when **interacting with other actors** in the mission area:

- Peacekeeping operations are mostly not mandated to support **socio-economic development** in host countries, but they can support development organisations in promoting reforms through their influence on the host government. Similarly, they can be helpful in mobilising funding from the international community.
- In terms of humanitarian aid delivery, the primary role of peacekeeping operations is to establish a **secure and stable environment for humanitarian actors**. In particular crisis situations, UN peace operations may be asked to assist in the delivery of humanitarian assistance.
- Missions should coordinate with and consult humanitarian agencies when implementing **Quick Impact Projects**. This is to address concerns about mixing military and humanitarian activities.
- Missions are also encouraged to **proactively share information with development and humanitarian actors**, even if these do not seek close cooperation and coordination with the UN for various reasons.
- When it comes to the question of integrating development and humanitarian partners into a mission's work, **possible complications** for their work due to the proximity to the mission should be taken into account. Integrated planning should include worst-case scenarios and provisions for changes in the mission environment, in close communication with the actors involved.
- **Mission planning** should take into account analyses and planning by other actors already available on the ground and actively create interfaces, for example with Post-Conflict Needs Assessments (PCNAs) or the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

Report on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict (2009)

In 2009, then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon still described peacebuilding as a **post-conflict activity**. The immediate post-conflict period was seen as a window of opportunity for providing basic security, achieving peace dividends, strengthening and generating support for the political process, as well as strengthening national capacity to lead peacebuilding efforts. In this way, the foundation for sustainable development would be laid.⁶¹

The report stressed that the UN has profound capabilities in the areas of peace and security, human rights, development and humanitarian assistance. Successful peacebuilding would require joint efforts across all these pillars. However, it also described **systemic challenges** in terms of effectiveness, coherence and coordination, stemming from different mandates, principles, governance mechanisms and funding instruments within the UN system.⁶²

⁶⁰ United Nations, 2008: [United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Principles and Guidelines](#), 25.

⁶¹ UN Secretary-General, 2009: [Report of the Secretary-General on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict](#), 3.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 9.

Peacebuilding Review (2015)

In 2015, the UN published **three major thematic reports** on the Peace and Security Architecture: the Peacebuilding Review,⁶³ the Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (HIPPO Report),⁶⁴ and the Global Study on the 15-year implementation of Resolution 1325 and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.⁶⁵

Sustaining Peace and Prevention

The term **Sustaining Peace** was introduced by the Peacebuilding Review and the HIPPO Report in 2015. UN Secretary-General Guterres subsequently made it a paradigm for the work of the entire UN system. Peacekeeping, he said, belongs to a triangle with humanitarian aid and sustainable development.

Accordingly, peacekeeping should be understood as a broad concept in the sense of a continuum with a focus on prevention, not just as an effort to prevent a relapse into conflict.

Prevention of crises and violent conflicts is the basic idea and rationale behind Guterres' reform efforts. They are intended to create more coherence and system-wide coordination and thereby, in essence, increase the capacity of the UN system to prevent crises and violent conflict.

The 2015 Peacebuilding Review, together with the HIPPO report, defined **sustaining peace** as the guiding principle for the work of the entire UN system and stressed that this required a multidimensional approach, which poses major challenges in terms of coherence.

In a significant shift from the 2009 report, the review also emphasised that peacebuilding should not only be understood as a post-conflict activity, but as a challenge that spanned the **entire duration of UN engagement** in a country.

The review noted that **fragmentation of the system**, originally due to the distribution of responsibilities between the UN bodies under the UN Charter, persisted despite many previous initiatives. Overcoming fragmentation in favour of better cooperation between the three UN pillars has proven to be a particular challenge. The review stressed again that peacekeeping required an **integrated approach** at the strategic, political and operational levels.

It further noted that the UN system internally and in cooperation with its external partners still lacked sufficient **capacity for effective peacebuilding**. Limited resources were not always structured or prioritised in the best possible way. That is why the review also prepared the ground for the New Way of Working:

“As it transforms itself to work more effectively by taking a comprehensive approach to sustaining peace and involving all organisations in the system, the UN system should also set norms and standards to enable other partners to adhere to the same principles.”⁶⁶

Peacebuilding should not only be understood as a post-conflict activity, but as a task that spans the entire duration of the UN engagement in a country.

63 United Nations, 2015: [The Challenge of Sustaining Peace](#). Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture.

64 Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, [Uniting Our Strengths for Peace – Politics, Partnership and People](#), 16 June 2015.

65 UN Women, 2015: Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace. A Global Study on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325.

66 United Nations, 2015: [The Challenge of Sustaining Peace](#). Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, 29 June 2015, 56.

The HIPPO Report (2015)

The 2015 HIPPO Report highlighted the need for the UN system to find “new and creative ways to harness the comparative advantages of the entire system and achieve better results in an integrated way”⁶⁷ in conflict prevention and management.

The panel called on all actors in the system to develop a **common understanding of the situation and a common policy goal**. At the same time, the panel supported the view of humanitarian partners that peace operations with a robust mandate and humanitarian organisations must be clearly distinguishable.

In order to build sustainable peace and avoid relapse into conflict, new approaches would be needed. The UN and its partners should sustain their political **engagement in crisis areas over the longer term**, promote inclusive social and economic development, bridge systemic gaps and expand engagement with local populations.⁶⁸

The actors in the UN system should develop joint situational awareness and common political goals.

The HIPPO report also pointed to **funding challenges** of UN and other international conflict transformation efforts and warned that peace operations face serious financial constraints, especially with regard to peacebuilding activities, not least as donors tend to be overtly risk-averse. Moreover, funding frameworks and modalities differ. Consequently, support to conflict-affected countries remains short-term, uncoordinated and fragmented. To be more effective, the report argued, there was a need for better funding opportunities, such as pooled funds at country level.⁶⁹

Thus, the HIPPO report and the later HDP nexus debate **share ideas, as well as language**. Especially the quest for effective coordination between different actors within and outside the UN system and the use of comparative advantages run through both.

Twin Resolutions on Sustaining Peace (2016)

In response to the 2015 Peacebuilding Review and the HIPPO Report, the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly adopted so-called twin resolutions that institution-
alised **sustaining peace** as the underlying paradigm for the work of the UN:

“Sustaining peace [...] should be broadly understood as a goal and a process to build a common vision of a society, ensuring that the needs of all segments of the population are taken into account, which encompasses activities aimed at preventing the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict [...].”⁷⁰

Further, the resolutions demand that sustaining peace be considered at every stage of conflict and across all three pillars of the UN, underlining that **development, peace and human rights are linked** and mutually reinforcing.⁷¹

In 2018 and 2020, the UN General Assembly and the UN Security Council each adopted coordinated **follow-up resolutions**. These essentially reaffirmed the 2016 resolutions and the process of further implementation.⁷²

67 Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, Uniting Our Strengths for Peace – Politics, Partnership and People, 16 June 2015, 14.

68 Ibid., 10.

69 Ibid., 37.

70 Security Council Resolution S/RES/2282 of 27 April 2016 und General Assembly Resolution A/RES/70/262 of 12 May 2016.

71 Ibid.

72 Security Council Resolution S/RES/2413 (2018) of 26 April 2018; General Assembly Resolution A/RES/72/276 of 30 April 2018; Security Council Resolution S/RES/2558 (2020) of 21 December 2020; General Assembly Resolution A/RES/75/201 of 28 December 2020.

Reforms under Guterres: Prevention and Sustaining Peace

After António Guterres took office as UN Secretary-General on 1 January 2017, he declared **prevention as his top priority**. Already during his candidacy, he had called for a “culture of prevention” in a vision statement.⁷³ Anchoring this more firmly in the UN institutions became the central goal of the reforms he initiated.

At the beginning of 2019, the peace and security structures in the **UN Secretariat** were reconfigured: The renamed Department of Peace Operations (DPO) was assigned responsibility for supporting all peacekeeping operations and the larger special political missions, while the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) merged the responsibilities for the remaining political missions and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO).⁷⁴

From 2018 onwards, Guterres presented annual progress reports on **peacebuilding and sustaining peace**. Importantly, they confirmed that the UN has expanded its **toolbox for integrated support** in the field,⁷⁵ linking peace operations more closely to other UN actors through a growing number of cross-pillar tools.

In early 2019, the peace and security structure in the UN Secretariat was reorganised by reconfiguring DPO and DPPA.

But the 2018 report once again lamented the **fragmentation of the UN system** which continued to undermine its ability to support member states in their efforts to build peaceful societies and respond effectively to conflicts and crises. Therefore, necessary measures were outlined in four areas: (1) coherence at the operational and policy levels, (2) leadership and accountability, (3) funding and (4) partnerships. Recommendations with a nexus logic include the following:

- Peace operations conduct regular strategic assessments with other UN development, human rights and humanitarian actors to develop a **common understanding of the situation**. These should be linked even more closely with the Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF) and the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) so that all work towards the same goals and national priorities.
- The principle of integration is reaffirmed as a way to maximise impact of UN action in mission contexts. The **Integrated Assessment and Planning Policy** is to be revised to further strengthen coherence.
- The **Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO)** is to play a stronger bridging role across the pillars and into the humanitarian community, strengthening the orientation of the three pillars towards peace operations.
- Better positioned **UN Country Teams**, led by strengthened Resident Coordinators, are to serve as platforms for joint analysis and planning.

⁷³ António Guterres, 2016: [Challenges and Opportunities for the United Nations](#), 3.

⁷⁴ Until then, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was competent for all peacekeeping operations, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) for the Special Political Missions. See Tanja Bernstein, 2018: [Reforming the United Nations' Peace and Security Pillar, ZIF Policy Briefing](#).

⁷⁵ General Assembly A/74/976 / Security Council S/2020/773, 2020: [Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace. Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 July 2020, 14.

The report also **links the Agenda 2030 to the sustaining peace concept**:

“In the [twin] resolutions, the important contributions of the United Nations development system to peacebuilding were recognized and the need to continue strengthening cooperation and coordination for that purpose [...] Sustainable development is the primary goal and an end in itself. It also has the advantage of being the best guarantee of peace that endures.”⁷⁶

A year later, the **2019 interim report** noted that the reform of the Peace and Security Pillar had created a more unified institutional structure and opened up new opportunities for integrated support in the field.⁷⁷

Integrated Strategic Frameworks and integrated transition planning are to overcome the fragmentation of the UN system.

Integrated transition planning has improved the handover of peace operation tasks to UN Country Teams, for example in Sudan. There, the Country Team gained access to USD 15 million in programmatic funding from the mission budget. Also, with additional funding from the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), the Country Team was able to expand its work to areas from which UNAMID had already withdrawn during its transition.

The **2020 annual report** identified further milestones since the adoption of the twin resolutions:⁷⁸

- The **Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)** has taken on an integrating role between peace operations and UN Country Teams, particularly during transitions. In 2019, 30 per cent of funds were invested in countries in transition.
- The **Joint Steering Committee** to Advance Humanitarian and Development Collaboration, in its third year of work, supported Resident Coordinators, Country Teams, and (where available) peace operations in their joint analyses to promote coherent programming.
- **Resident Coordinators’ offices** around the world were strengthened with more substantive and technical expertise, including for coordination, planning, economic analysis, and communication. This helped to implant a systemic focus on prevention and improve multidimensional approaches between pillars in the field.
- In many locations, **Peace and Development Advisors (PDAs)**⁷⁹ seconded through a joint programme of UNDP and DPPA are now reinforcing the Resident Coordinators’ office. Their main purpose is to support UN actors in the field in designing conflict-sensitive programmes and identifying entry points for preventive action. They are a practical example of cross-cutting work between peace and development, but still mostly deployed in countries without a UN mission.
- Between 2020 and 2025, the main goal is to improve **monitoring and evaluation systems**, thereby enhancing the design of peacebuilding approaches and system-wide learning.
- **Regional strategies** are intended to promote more coherent UN system responses, such as the United Nations Regional Prevention Strategy for the Horn of Africa.

All three reports confirm that strengthening **the UN system’s capacity** to work at the intersection of humanitarian assistance, development and peacebuilding is central to the ongoing reforms.

⁷⁶ General Assembly A/72/707 / Security Council S/2018/43, 2018: Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace. [Report of the Secretary-General](#), 18 January 2018.

⁷⁷ General Assembly A/73/890 / Security Council S/2019/448, 2019: Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace. [Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 May 2019.

⁷⁸ General Assembly A/74/976 / Security Council S/2020/773, 2020: Peacebuilding and Sustaining Peace. [Report of the Secretary-General](#), 30 July 2020.

⁷⁹ The programme has been in existence since 2004 and has been expanded as part of the current UN reforms. See Tanja Bernstein, 2017: Operationalizing Conflict Prevention: Peace and Development Advisers in Non-mission Settings, [ZIF Policy Briefing](#).

Interim Conclusion: P-Actors without Nexus Discourse

The **interface of UN peace operations with humanitarian aid and development** was already clearly visible in some mandates more than two decades ago. It existed earlier in the practice of peace operations than in UN policy documents. Today, UN peace operations fulfil a variety of mandated tasks that correspond to the HDP nexus. Coordination with other actors is also regularly emphasised.

At the same time, the UN Peace and Security Architecture has been continuously developed to better connect the **three pillars of the UN**. A variety of policies, guidelines, instruments and institutional reforms in the UN Secretariat and in the field aimed at increasing synergies within the Peace and Security Architecture. Peace operations are at the heart of this architecture and have interfaces to many other actors.

Within the framework of integrated presences, UN actors in the field are fundamentally obliged to coordinate through defined and standardised processes. **Resident Coordinators** play a central role in integrated UN presences, which has been further strengthened as part of the recent reforms. They are not only supposed to represent the UN development system in the host country, but also to ensure a better integration of the three pillars through strategic leadership.

And yet, reality is slow to change. The guidelines on integrated presences are not always implemented to the letter. This is partly due to a pragmatic approach that aligns with existing strategies in different areas of operation, but also partly to **institutional slack**.

The Resident Coordinators play a key role in integrated UN presences. Their strategic leadership is intended to achieve a better connection of the three UN pillars.

Although the quest for coherence and coordination within the UN system does not completely exclude the humanitarian sector, the relative **autonomy of humanitarians** has been emphasised in doctrinal documents over decades. Where coordination is called for, it is always subject to compatibility with humanitarian principles and the protection of humanitarian space. The UN has recognised that caution is needed in relations with humanitarian actors, especially where peace operations have robust military mandates under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ See also the Guidelines of the UN Humanitarian Civil-Military Coordination ([UN-CMCoord](#)).

4. Conclusion and Recommendations: Building Bridges

We are committed to the goals of the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus and the Grand Bargain and will actively participate in their implementation and ongoing development.

German Coalition Agreement 2021 – 2025⁸¹

Over the past decades, there has been a growing realisation that complex problems require complex approaches. This led to an intensive debate on **comprehensive or integrated approaches**. In the process, the different professional communities proceeded at different speeds, used different terms and set different priorities.

The **Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus** is intended not only to link actors from the three pillars H, D and P more closely, but also to incorporate **multi- and bilateral actors** and civil society. The peace dimension remains underrepresented and insufficiently spelled out in this discourse.

The nexus approach has so far been discussed mainly in **development policy and humanitarian aid** circles. This is where the majority of initiatives are located to align cooperation and working methods more coherently. At the same time, this new version of a comprehensive approach had only partial success in integrating humanitarian actors.

Those who want to tap into new funding sources are more open, while others who want to keep state institutions and political objectives at arm's length remain sceptical.

The nexus approach is meant to link the actors of the H, D and P pillars. But old 'silos' persist.

Actors who are primarily concerned with **security aspects and the "Big P"** of peacebuilding (i.e. high-level political dialogues, diplomatic initiatives or peace operations) remain in the background. Their anchor point, as far as they belong to the UN system, is the reform of the UN Peace and Security Architecture. Its further development – also with the aim of linking peace and security with development and humanitarian issues – hardly features in the HDP debate. Clearly, familiar **silos persist** and further efforts are needed to bridge the gaps.

In terms of content, both debates strongly resemble each other. With the Agenda 2030 and the sustaining peace paradigm, which complement and reinforce each other, the UN has also created an **overarching political narrative and guiding principle** for its work.

In particular, the **UN's integrated presences** (i.e. peace operations plus UN Country Teams) are underexposed in the nexus debate. For these, the guidelines for an Integrated Strategic Framework (ISF) apply, which fulfil many of the requirements of the New Way of Working: cooperation based on comparative advantages, information sharing and joint analysis and planning. Here, bilateral donors that are committed to the HDP nexus can push for further progress on the ground.

⁸¹ Mehr Fortschritt wagen. Bündnis für Freiheit, Gerechtigkeit und Nachhaltigkeit. Koalitionsvertrag 2021 – 2025 zwischen SPD, BÜNDNIS 90 / DIE GRÜNEN und FDP, 147-148.

The nexus approach revisits many aspects of earlier debates on comprehensive approaches. It **deserves credit** in that many humanitarian and development actors, who were sceptical about the previous ones because of their reference to security, are now holding intensive discussions on a comprehensive approach for the first time.

Quite a bit has also changed in **practice**. Within the framework of the nexus approach, a wide variety of actors are increasingly working towards common goals, and international donors are providing incentives to further strengthen cross-cutting thinking and working methods in times of scarcer funds.

Even with its limitations, the approach provides a **hinge between actors** engaged in humanitarian or development activities in fragile settings. As staff in institutions is constantly changing, it is important to keep the debate going, to enable collective learning and to further develop practical solutions. At the same time, it is important to recognise the interfaces with other discourses and the limits of the approach.

When it comes to **implementation in a conflict context**, both the nexus approach and the UN's integrated approach continue to encounter practical obstacles. Starting points, key challenges and programme cycles of the organisations involved are often too different. In addition, most actors already have established approaches and strategies that take time to align and adapt. It is also important not to overburden the fragile system of actors on the ground.

Another problem lies in the **political economy of international engagement**: despite all the evidence to the contrary, cooperation continues to be hampered by competition for mandates and resources.

This is precisely why **institutional innovations** that promote a collaborative mind-set among all participants and show practical pathways are worthwhile: from joint training programmes such as the Nexus Academy to funding instruments that facilitate a coordinated approach on the ground.

There can be no grand design – i.e. a single, **all-encompassing approach** – for dealing with complexity in crisis regions. It is therefore all the more important that at least the key actors on the ground coordinate their efforts in a way that is appropriate to the context. Depending on this very context, peace and security actors are part of it.

In countries where humanitarian crises are accompanied by protracted or open violent conflicts, it is often not sufficient to define peacebuilding exclusively in terms of a “small p”. Here it is important to **align activities at the project level with the goals and actors of the “Big P”**. The integrated presences of the UN and their guidelines offer a platform or – where unavailable – a model for orientation.

Humanitarian and development actors, who viewed earlier comprehensive approaches with scepticism, are now increasingly open to creating synergies.

As staff is constantly changing, the debate enables continuous collective learning. Innovations that promote a collaborative mind-set are worthwhile.

Recommendations

In light of the **future development of peace operations**, the nexus is gaining relevance. Virtually in all places where peace operations are mandated, there is an HDP nexus. The UN Security Council, but also the EU and important member states, have become increasingly reluctant to mandate large multidimensional peace operations. This makes the supporting peacebuilding role of humanitarian and development actors all the more important in the future.

It is equally important to consider the HDP nexus in so-called **transitions**, i.e. the withdrawal of a mission and the transfer of its mandated tasks to other actors on the ground. Since peace operations regularly adapt their mission implementation plans, transition has become a near continuous task. At least that is how Jean-Pierre Lacroix, the Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations, recently put it: “all UN missions are in transition”.⁸²

In support of peace operations and their transition the HDP nexus is gaining relevance.

The UN is ideally placed to further align the discourses on the Peace and Security Architecture and the HDP nexus. In upcoming strategic processes, it would be important to further break down the silos that hampered previous debates. Initial steps towards conceptual convergence are evident in the reports. The next UN **peacebuilding review** would be an opportunity to clarify the terminology. Where peace operations are deployed, it would be important to promote and support UN Resident Coordinators in their efforts to establish coherent strategies in the spirit of the HDP nexus and the UN integrated approach.

International donors should also pay greater attention to these issues. In particular, the conceptual work in the OECD’s **International Network on Conflict and Fragility (INCAF)** can raise awareness of the interface with peace and security actors among its members and associated multilateral institutions.

Together with its closest partner countries, **Germany** should constructively promote these processes in the UN and the OECD, demand progress in the multilateral debate and back this up with financial incentives. The interministerial approach spelled out in the Operations Manual for the implementation of the Guidelines “Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace”,⁸³ and the Joint Analysis and Agreed Planning (GAAP) between AA and BMZ, should routinely incorporate support to and exchange with peace operations into conceptual considerations. In this they can draw on the institutional knowledge that Germany has accumulated through the secondment of personnel to such missions over the years.

⁸² Quoted in Daniel Forti, 2021: The Road to Seoul: Pre-viewing the 2021 UN Peacekeeping Ministerial. [IPI Issue Brief](#).

⁸³ Federal Government of Germany, 2017: [Guidelines on Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace](#); Federal Government of Germany, 2019: [Operations Manual](#). Inter-ministerial Approach to Preventing Crises, Resolving Conflicts, Building Peace.

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