Peace & Sustainability

An Evaluation of the United Nations' Peacebuilding Missions
in Afghanistan

Natalie Varady

Abstract

This study is an attempt of exploring and evaluating the conducts of peacebuilding missions carried out by the United Nations. With the policies and goals for a sustainable development as the root of interest, this essay explores how rhetoric and ambitions are translated into concrete strategies and actions. To evaluate the peacebuilding missions of the United Nations, this study has used the methodological structure of a qualitative case study, with the empirical research provided from the United Nations' missions in Afghanistan from 2002 until today. The actions made by The United Nations in the peace process in Afghanistan has been evaluated through the theoretical framework of Peace Ecology. The theory has provided a foundation for creating peaceful and sustainable societies. Peace Ecology stresses the need for new perspectives regarding mankind's interdependence and relation to the environment and advocates for the return of the commons and the development of local and community-based cooperation over resources. This study reveals that the United Nations is not fully maintaining their purposes of policies in their concrete action. The United Nations may very well have acted upon the belief of creating a peaceful society. However, the conducts made will not, according to the theoretical framework presented in this study, result in a future of sustainable development.

Key words: United Nations, Sustainable Development, Peace Ecology, Environment, Afghanistan
Total amount of words: 9760

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1. Introduction

1.1 The Nature at Stake

"It is not only the living who are killed in war." – Isaac Asimov

The existence of climate change is perhaps now a well-known phenomenon, with its implications already visible in various regions all over the globe. Resource scarcity, land degradation and heavy weather are already a part of our reality. It would be plausible to say that the environmental alterations are the consequences of mankind, due to our behavior regarding production and consuming in our highly resource-intensive way of living (United Nations Environment 1, 2019). Scholars and scientists are even referring contemporary date to the Anthropocene era, where mankind is affecting the biosphere's regulation system and influencing the earth's structure (Dalby, 2009:97). But our impact on nature is far from limited to well-known effects like air pollution and global warming. The consequences of violent conducts, such as war and military interventions are affecting more than just human lives.

The different stages of warfare have devastating consequences for the surrounding regions, both on human and natural systems (Machlis et al. 2011:2). Over 120 armed conflicts have under the recent 17 years been recognized and among the worlds' 195 countries, a total of 163 countries are maintaining proper armed forces. Preparations for and maintenance of war is taking its toll on the surrounding environment through practices of material utilization, toxic waste and land degradation, leaving the ecology and biodiversity in a tense state. Harmful chemicals, like the herbicide Agent Orange used in the Vietnam war, destroy forests and crops, affecting ecology and food supplies. The aftermath of war is furthermore proven just as harmful, with weapons deployment, resource draining

and the continuation of contamination from landmines and chemicals (Machlis &
Hanson, 2011:33-36; Amster, 2015:3). The environment is indeed a casualty of
war in a long-term perspective, whether it is an ancillary casualty or an intentional
tactic of war (Amster, 2015:69).

1.2 Nature and Peace: A Beneficial Relationship

The implications of war and military conflict is clearly affecting the surrounding
environment. But that is not the only revelation this field of study has uncovered.
Ecology and biodiversity has a documented positive effect on mankind. The
nature assists and contributes to human well-being both directly and indirectly. By
providing humanity with security, freedom and the basic materials for life, nature
has a positive impact on communities and even though the exploitation of our
resources might have benefited some societies, a greater number of individuals are
suffering due to its consequences. Fragile ecosystems and a loss of biodiversity
have the potential of worsening poverty in certain social groups, as well as
decreasing welfare and security for individuals. (MEA, 2005:5).

Hence, the flourishing of nature affects societies in a positive and beneficial
way and the degradation of the environment poses a great threat to our well-being.
The approaching of environmental changes will indeed have an impact on all of
us, but with higher intensity and danger for states and communities raged by
conflict, because of their inability to defend themselves or adapt to change
(Mobjörk et al. 2016:x). The exposure to environmental alterations, along with the
degradation of the surrounding landscape, ecosystems and biodiversity could very
well aggravate chances for peace, as they can contribute to the recurrence of
violent behavior. Militarism and violent conduct can hence be both a cause to, and
effect of environmental degradation, which could jeopardize the development for
peace (Amster, 2015:37-38). The work for peace should perhaps therefore not
only be viewed as a matter of human protection, but also the protection of nature.
In order to increase chances of peace, scholars suggest that knowledge and
understanding of the relationship between nature and peace is unquestionably

necessary and encourage actors to take this relationship into consideration when engaging in processes for peace (Machlis et al. 2011:1-2).

1.3 United Nations

As one of the world's largest interstate organizations and the biggest peacekeeping actor, the United Nations are currently involved in keeping the peace in 14 countries around the world. With over 100.000 peacekeepers and employees from over 120 countries, the organization is indeed a considerable intervening actor on the global arena (United Nations Peacekeeping 1, 2019). The United Nations describe their work as not only keeping peace where there once has been conflict, but also where conflict is threatening to disrupt. The United Nations define their interventions of peace as a mean to reduce human suffering and assist in constructing durable societies (United Nations Peacekeeping 2, 2019). Legitimacy and authorization for peacekeeping actions are granted from the United Nations Security Council and the organization aims to provide security and assistance to conflict-torn societies and individuals. The United Nations themselves, describe their presence as "a central element of international conflict response" (United Nations Peacekeeping Background Note, 2014).

It is hereby utterly transparent how the United Nations view their institutions and missions, as an international actor with responsibility towards mankind beyond borders. This cosmopolitan way of viewing mankind and its responsibilities legitimize the purposes of the United Nations. But human security, equality and protection is not the organization's sole concern, regarding global issues. The preservation and maintenance of our shared environment is indeed a critical subject, if one were to examine United Nations policies throughout the years. As one of the eight fundamental topics for the Millennium Development Goals, which were established in September 2000, the protection of nature is expressed through the verbalization "ensuring environmental sustainability". The Millennium Goals were policies constructed with the aim of securing a sustainable development (United Nations Goal 7 Fact Sheet, 2013). Here, aspects of biodiversity loss, resource exploitation and a responsibility to implement

sustainable conducts in relation to the environment, were being addressed. The deadline of the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals was in 2015, but were quickly replaced by the Sustainable Development Goals, due 2030 (United Nations Sustainable Development, 2019). The United Nations made it even clearer, through these new goals, about their stance regarding the importance of environmental protection, by expanding from one goal surrounding environmental ambitions to seven goals. With these ambitions, the United Nations' policy covers climate action, maintenance of life on both land and in water and discloses environmental preservation as an important part of sustainable development (Ibid). The United Nations have further stated and recognized, as recently as in May 17, 2019 the crucial role of functioning ecosystems when it comes to preventing environmental disasters and that ecosystem-based approaches should be used when dealing with recovery and reconstruction (United Nations Environment 2, 2019)

It is safe to say that the United Nations, according to their policies and statements, should have an interest in the relationship between nature and peace, since the organization claims to value and work for peace and a sustainable environment. As the Secretary-General António Guterres stated at the 2019 ECOSOC Financing for Development Forum: "The Sustainable Development Goals are our blueprint for a fair and sustainable pathway to development that leaves no one behind" (United Nations Secretary-General, 2019), the mission of the United Nations is to create a sustainable development for societies, which is now generally considered being closely linked with the preservation of the environment.

2   Purpose of Thesis

The environment is proven to be a significant casualty of war, especially regarding its qualities of protection for mankind and its capacity of sustaining life. In the introduction, we learned about the close relationship existing between nature and peace. This does not necessary mean that a flourishing environment will undeniably result in a lasting peace. It does, however, insinuate that a prosperous nature will have positive effects on a peace process, and that a tense ecosystem and fragile biodiversity could leave a society vulnerable to violent conduct. It would be plausible to conclude that peacekeeping actors, such as the United Nations, would want to have this perspective in mind, when working with peace and sustainability. The United Nations furthermore articulate their interest in both human and environmental security and protection. By waving the flag of "sustainable development" in their march for peace, one could very well interpret this to signify a closer work between peace and nature.

2.1   Essay Question

With the reasoning above in consideration and the United Nations' ambitious policies in mind, one could question the actual practices and procedures regarding the missions for peace from an environmental point of view. This essay explores if rhetoric and ambitions are translated into concrete strategies and actions and hence aims to pursue the following question:

How have the United Nations related their work in peacebuilding to sustainable development?

3   Key Concepts

3.1   Sustainable Development

The description of sustainable development for this study will follow the definition made by the United Nations. This, with the aim of ensuring that the study measures the proper matter when analyzing information provided by the United Nations. Sustainable development refers to a state where the needs of the present are met, without compromising the needs of future generations on this planet. The way we utilize resources and treats our nature, must be in a way that will secure the comfort and essential needs for coming generations, so that the conducts of today, will not affect the ability of future generations to meet their needs. The United Nations urges the global society to view the world in an alternative way, where the improvement of human lives, markets and technology should not compromise the environment. The needs of humanity are referred to the environmental as well as the human well-being, since sustainable development includes the aim for prosperity for both mankind and nature (United Nations, 2015).

3.2   Peacebuilding

The concept of peacebuilding will be adopted from the theory of Peace Ecology created by Randall Amster, later used as the theoretical framework and grounding for this study. Peacebuilding, by this interpretation refers to a process for peace that can occur before, during and after violent conduct. It is, hence, not bound to a certain time, in relation to a conflict, but can extend through phases of pre, during

and post violent behavior. The process for peace is emphasizing the creation of structural conditions that can establish a peaceful society (Amster, 2015:7). Since the United Nations have not specified their peace mission in a proper term, the theoretical framework will decide on this, based on the levels of application of the peace mission. Due to the mission's aim of building and creating structure, this study will treat the United Nations' missions as a peacebuilding process.

3.3 Peace

The definition of peace will also follow the concept presented by the theoretical framework of this study. To define this perception of peace, both negative and positive peace will be included. In other words, the absence of violence and war, as well as conditions for peaceful communities will define the concept. This does not necessarily mean that violence should be eliminated altogether. It rather implies that a community require well-developed measures for handling violent conduct. To establish peace in this sense, structural conditions that would assist and promote a non-violent society, is viewed necessary (Amster, 2015:7). By supporting the creation of durable societies and aiming to reduce human suffering, the United Nations are sharing a similar view on how a peaceful society should look like (United Nations Peacebuilding 2, 2019), thus making it a reasonable definition when evaluating the conducts of the United Nations.

4 Methodology

4.1 Case Study: Afghanistan

In order to examine and evaluate the work carried out by the United Nations, empirical findings need to be analyzed. "Different types of research provide different contributions to knowledge", meaning that the methods and strategies of a research can highlight different conclusions, thereby contributing with different perspectives and answers (Halperin & Heath, 2017:112). Since the essay aspires to analyze variables that could possibly be relative to various matters, this study will take the appearance of a qualitative case study with the intention of ensuring the validity of the variables. While a quantitative approach can analyze a broader spectrum of information, the uncertainty of the validity of the subjects remains since the statistical findings cannot take situational aspects in consideration (Bennet, 2005:19). Hence, solely one case of the United Nations' peace missions will be evaluated. By conducting a qualitative research, a more in-depth analysis can be made. However, by gaining the ability to analyze and recognize details and variables, one might have to surrender the capacity of external validity. Due to the nature of a qualitative case study method, the eventual findings of this study cannot be fully generalized, but rather serve as a case where the United Nations' conducts of peacemaking can be evaluated and perhaps, depending on the outcome, become a call for further analysis.

The empirical case for this study will be the peacemaking missions in Afghanistan. The decision of choosing the case of Afghanistan is reliant upon several factors. The United Nations have been involved with peacemaking operations since 2002, with the approval of the UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan). By selecting a case, where the mission has been ongoing for a longer period of time, the chances of broader information

would reasonably increase. Since the conflict, the United Nations have released an assessment of the environmental challenges that Afghanistan is facing, due to conflict-related activities (UN Environment Programme, 2003). There is therefore, an understanding within the United Nations, that the country of Afghanistan could get affected by environmental alterations and the dangers following, which in turn could give the peacebuilding missions in Afghanistan relevance for this study because of the potential need for a more environmental approach to the matter.

It is, however, crucial to note that this study will not strive for any further understanding of the conflict in Afghanistan, nor any other aspect of the country. The aim is to evaluate the actions of the United Nations, in relation to sustainable development, and the case of Afghanistan will therefore operate as an instrument for accessing information, rather than being the evaluated subject.

4.2   Delimitations

The United Nations' peace missions in Afghanistan were granted in 2002 and are still operative. Furthermore, the climate related agenda within the United Nations have become certainly apparent since the establishment of the Millennium Goals in 2000 and its development post 2015 as the Sustainable Development Goals. This transition of policies is indeed of interest, since the environmental guidelines were drastically improved. The time frame of this study will hence commence in 2002 and conclude with the latest reports of 2019, since the United Nations have had a pronounced interest in sustainable development throughout the years of their entire mission in Afghanistan, with an extension of their climate policies during these years.

The missions evaluated will primarily be the ones executed by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), since the mission is the principal peace operation in the region carried out by the United Nations. Furthermore, climate-oriented departments of the organization, such as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the, by UNEP appointed, group for National Environment Protection Agency (NEPA) of Afghanistan will be

included. These branches of the United Nations are perhaps not necessarily appointed to work as peacemaking entities, but due to their significant presence in Afghanistan, along with their work for environmental stability, it would seem rather unreasonable to not address these actors. The UNEP and NEPA are thus not the United Nations' primary peacemaking organs, but the aim of their work in Afghanistan have indeed been to assist the process and construction of peace and therefore they will be included in this study.

4.3   Material

Due to the nature of a qualitative case study, no form of larger data collection will be applied or processed. In pursuance of reaching an in-depth analysis of the peacemaking conducts of the United Nations, sources directly from the organization will be used. This decision is based on the pursuit of minimizing processed information, with the aim of getting as close as possible to the actual conducts made in the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan. Therefore, sources in the form of documents, resolutions and assessments from the affected branches of the United Nations will be analyzed. The material will then be examined through the theoretical framework, to further be evaluated in the light of their own ambitions and policies.

The aim of this study is to evaluate the peacemaking missions of the United Nations. Policy documents and general ambitions will hence not serve as the main material for how the peacekeeping process has been carried out. They will, as previously mentioned, serve as tools for why this study is of interest and, depending on the outcome, be an interesting point of analysis. General policies for the ambitions and goals of the United Nations' purpose, are serving as reasons for relevance and reasons for a need to evaluate the actual actions of the United Nations. In order to measure what has been conducted in the missions of the United Nations in Afghanistan, more concrete documents like resolutions and decisions will be processed. There is, however, a very limited access to material that tells the actual conducts, due to the lack of interviews or other bottom-up

information from personnel out in the field. This study will thus rely on the assumption that the resolutions and decisions documented, are true to events.

Furthermore, some of the conducts made by the branches of the United Nations *are in the form* of recommendations and assessments. This study will remark a difference between documents of assessments with the aim of creating general policies, and the ones with the direct objective towards the peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan and thus also make that delimitation in the selection of material.

5   Theoretical Framework

5.1   Previous Research

The connection between nature and violent conduct has been documented and theorized in previous articles and literature. Dating back to 1974, environmentalist Edward Goldsmith explored the relation between resource shortages and violent conflict, predicting that resource scarcity would increase the risk of conflict (Amster, 2015:30). The belief of resource scarcity to be a threat multiplier is indeed a common assumption. The United Nations has produced a framework for preventing eventual conflicts due to resource scarcity and the Pentagon addressed the climate change as a threat multiplier in their 2014 review and concluded that environmental alterations will damage landscape and infrastructure, which will in turn increase the danger of poverty and political instability (UN Environment Program, 2012; Pentagon, 2014).

The impact of violent conduct on the environment has however, a narrow and more current literature as well as understanding. In 2009, the NATO Advanced Research Workshop was held with the purpose and objective of defining a subcategory of ecology that would tackle the effects of war and violent conduct. The outcome provided grounding for the theory of *Warfare Ecology* (Machlis et al, 2011). The idea of Warfare Ecology introduces a new perspective on the impacts of conflict, both pre, during and post violent actions. It could very well be viewed as steps towards an interdisciplinary theory, since ecology meet war and military activities and it shows the impact of conflict related activities on surrounding regions and ecology systems (Ibid). Warfare Ecology includes environmental factors for a sustainable development, an approach that traditional peacekeeping tends to overlook when focusing primarily on economic and social factors. The inclusion of ecology in peace work has been shown to increase the

chances of long-term solutions and planning (Kyrou, 2007; Swain & Krampe, 2011:201).

Admitting that the theory of Warfare Ecology acknowledges and discusses environmental problems in relation to war, the theory shows difficulties in giving policy recommendations for long-term planning regarding the work for peace. The environmental aspect opens a broader spectrum of factors to evaluate when speaking of conflict. But due to not being theoretically completed, which the authors behind the NATO approved theory of Warfare Ecology addresses as they suggest their work to be an early step towards a broader term, and the heavy focus on biological factors and less on social aspects, the theory cannot shed any light on how to carry out any actual practice for peace related work (Machlis et al, 2011:vi; Swain & Krampe, 2011:201).

An attempt to associating environmental elements with the making of peace, has been made by researcher Christos Kyrou. With his theory, or perhaps worldview, of *Peace Ecology*, Kyrou is striving for a concept of long-term peace work regarding the relationship between nature and non-violence. Kyrou argues that previous attempts of peacebuilding through an environmental lens are centered around the understanding of different environmental problems (Kyrou, 2007:78). Through Peace Ecology, Christos Kyrou demonstrates a reasoning that does not focus on environmental problems, but rather on environmental solutions. By using environmental qualities to build bridges and collaboration in conflict-torn societies and by demonstrating a thought of interconnectedness, the logic of Peace Ecology aims to provide peace and sustainability (Kyrou, 2007:88). Kyrou's forming of a new framework for peacebuilding is indeed a new approach on the subject. Nevertheless, his suggestions are considerably abstract when constructing this viewpoint on our society and way of living. Fortunately, Kyrou is not alone in his new field of study.

5.2 Peace Ecology

For this study, a more solid and materialized approach to Peace Ecology will be adopted. This approach has been constructed by Randall Amster, director of the

Program on Justice and Peace at Georgetown University and author of *Peace Ecology*, released in 2015. Amster holds on to the very same essence of Peace Ecology as Christos Kyrou, when addressing interconnectedness and the idea of conflict-driven environmental factors being the very same factors that might become opportunities for peace. He stresses that the contemporary view of problem-focused attitudes only exacerbates the issues and leaves us no closer to the solution (Amster, 2015:2). By using a problem-focused approach and military language of securitization on climate change, Amster argues that there is an unintentional risk of framing the environmental challenges in favor of nationalism or similar mindsets that will divide the world in terms of "us" and "them". Which, with regards to the perspective of interconnectedness, would not be beneficial for tackling the environment at all. Regardless of nationality or geographical location, we are all dependent upon the very same environment and global environment. It is therefore rather pointless to stay in a mindset of exclusion, since the environmental issues will stretch throughout the system (Amster, 2015:6, 165).

Peace Ecology takes the assumption of war to be a social, economical but also an ecological disaster. The most apparent casualty of war are the people since they are the most immediate casualty. But with a long-term perspective in mind, the environment will be suffering for generations (Amster, 2015:3). Amster illustrates the concept of Peace Ecology to be just as concerned about the human-environment as the human-human interface, which characterizes the theory and distinguishes it from contemporary peace theory (Amster, 2015:8-9). Randall Amster further defines Peace Ecology by giving solid cases for how environmental tools could be wielded as opportunities for cooperation and peacebuilding. The sense of interconnectedness as well as interdependence runs through every chapter and outline the central vision of society according to the worldview of Peace Ecology. By redirecting the mindset of both environmental issues and how we approach sustainability, Amster provides the subject matter with a solution-oriented theory that stretches from communities to a global scale. Peace Ecology is giving the field of study, as well as contemporary peacemaking operations, a new perspective on peace through sustainable development, that is redirecting solutions to a more long-term planning.

The theory of Peace Ecology claims to be able to apply to both peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding practices. Since the different concepts, according

to Amster, can overlap significantly and sometimes be used interchangeably, the theory will aim to apply on either approach. Also, Amster argues for the three concepts to all possess environmental components, hence why they can all be interpreted from Peace Ecology (Amster, 2015:7). This study will, as formerly declared, concentrate on the peacebuilding aspects, since the aim is to evaluate the conducts of the United Nations' work for constructing peace and sustainable development. Peace Ecology recognizes that it's theory is both a global and local phenomenon, which makes both grassroots organizations as well as states and interstate organizations potential actors and drivers for collaborative efforts (Amster, 2015:174). The United Nations would therefore be of relevance for the theory of Peace Ecology and following thoughts on how to construct a peaceful society.

5.2.1 Changing Our Mindset

A repetitive and recurring theme, found in the theory of Peace Ecology, is the urging of a new mindset, a new way of understanding the relation between peace and the environment. Peace Ecology suggests, as previously discussed, viewing environmental resources, shortages and threats not as a subject of securitization, but as a matter of cooperation and a key to building partnerships in communities. The contemporary beliefs are, according to Peace Ecology, making a distinction between mankind and the environment, making it acceptable to use resources to the point of scarcity, which then leaves mankind in the mindset of a competition over resources (Amster, 2015:26-27). Scarcity, is viewed to be supply-induced, demand-induced or structural. A resource could get depleted or degraded, it could be demanded by an increase of people due to population growth and finally, a resource could be distributed unfairly and unjustly. The fear of resource scarcity thus creates concern and doubt, which makes resource scarcity a problem of equal parts of practice and perception. The feedback loop continues and will not create opportunities for solutions, but only worsen existing problems (Amster, 2015:30-31). By changing our perception and mindset, new solutions and conclusions can be made and by removing natural resources from competition and control, a structurally peaceful society can be born (Amster, 2015:44).

The way we view resource scarcity and competition, is far from the only ideas we need to rethink, according to Randall Amster's take on Peace Ecology. As noticed in the Introduction of this study, the conducts of militarism and violent conflict can indeed have grave consequences on the surrounding environment, causing a more difficult path to peace. Peace Ecology acknowledges this phenomenon and thus declares that a militaristic approach cannot create a peaceful society (Amster, 2015:37-38). The presence and usage of military would not be beneficial for the building and creation of peace and should therefore not be practiced by actors who wishes for peace.

5.2.2 Rise of the Commons

Another fundamental step towards a peaceful and sustainable society, is what Randall Amster and his definition of Peace Ecology explain as the "triumph of the commons" (Amster, 2015:46). Lands, forests, water and other natural resources has for long, in western history, been enclosed and privatized. By installing fences, building walls and prohibiting access by commoners, Peace Ecology narrates an exclusionary regime that does not take cooperation or interdependence into account. By privatizing and excluding lands and resources, ecosystems are cut off and patterns of wildlife migration are interrupted. Furthermore, the cooperation between farmers' trough food growing and animal grazing were broken. By recognizing the opportunities of open access and common lands, there is room for building peace (Ibid).

Peace Ecology points out several ideas that could have built the structure of in which way we are thinking regarding privatization of common resources. Notable thinkers within the scope of human nature and the environment, such as Thomas Hobbes and Garrett Hardin, grounded certain understandings about mankind in relation to resources. While Hardin came to the conclusion that the expansion of humanity and the entitlement to utilize natural resources would make it highly dangerous for the common to thus have open access, Hobbes had already set the foundations of humanity being self-centered and therefore not able to cooperate over natural resources in a sustainable way. Hence, powerholders and corporations have been privatizing and utilizing resources, in the name of a more

effective exploitation (Amster, 2015:47-48). This narrative would plausibly legitimate the privatization and control over certain resources in societies. However, examples from around the world of cooperation over rivers and other natural resources, illustrates that our previous understanding of mankind, might not be entirely correct.

The understanding of privatization and control of our natural resources to be the most effective outcome, has perhaps become our downfall. The protection of resources against the commons, might instead have caused a bigger issue since it is indeed the wealthy part of our world that has utilized and consumed the world's resources to the point of environmental degradation and the countermeasure could very well be the introducing of common ownership (Amster, 2015:48). Scholars and scientists have observed several disadvantages following a loss of commons. Primarily, it excludes people from resource access and creates groups of people around the world that are denied essential needs. However, it also associates privatization with progress and privilege, which could further lead to environmental degradation (Amster, 2015:49). The theory of Peace Ecology argues that privatization of natural resources will pin sustenance against sustainability, wealth against well-being and success against society (Amster, 2015:71). Amster further states, that because of the false illustration of mankind not being able to unify around a natural resource, societies have been presented with an inaccurate choice of either injustice, where privatization leads to the exclusion of natural resources, or total ruin. When in fact, it is proven to be the exploitation and inequality that devastates the environment, not sharing of the commons. In order to break free from these beliefs of mankind and society, Peace Ecology advocates for the rise of the commons and an inclusive approach to the handling of natural resources (Ibid). The central idea, that Peace Ecology brings up by emphasizing the importance of the commons, is that when interdependence and cooperation is accepted in a community, the treating of natural resources will more likely to be of partnership than of competition (Amster, 2015:61).

The theory of Peace Ecology thus presents an antidote to the problem of exclusivity and competition. Throughout history, the commons have been characterized by rights and responsibilities, sometimes referred to common pool resources, or CPR (Amster, 2015:54). An example of this is the system of acequia, which is a way of sharing water. The acequia is based on channels and

ditches, where the water flows through and is free for all, to take. When looking at a system like this trough the contemporary perspective of privatization and desired effectiveness, it is perhaps hard to believe the functioning behind a CPR system like acequia. However, due to the shared water resource, the people felt an increased connection with their neighbors, hence only taking what they needed from the water source and sharing their prosperity whit others (Amster, 2015:65). Cooperative systems like the acequia is presented as both a solution to a believed resource issue and an opportunity for people to commence partnerships with the hopes of increasing a sense of interdependence. They are, clearly, not just systems of effective resource sharing, but also social structures to tie people together (Ibid).

5.2.3 Localism

The system of acequia is not only an example of a non-privatized system over a natural resource, but also an example of localism. A basic principle of the theory of Peace Ecology (when concretizing this philosophy) is the need for localism. By keeping a local market and local initiatives, the hypothesis suggests that people will be more likely to cooperate and find their own prosperity through others. Randall Amster cites James Gustave Speth, when arguing that our fixation on growth is "the world's secular religion" (Amster, 2015:86). He states that even though people can interact with others on a global scale, the acts of people cannot go any further than within their local community. Therefore, perhaps markets and corporations should not go any further either, since they could then expand into privatized corporations or militarized nations. The essential idea behind the need for localism is that growth might not always be beneficial. (Ibid).

Acts of localism could include shared resources, but Peace Ecology also gives examples of other local initiatives, such as food and local food economies. This would bring consumer and producer closer to each other, as well as keeping a sustainable environment and creating a sense of connection with other people in within a community (Amster, 2015:86-87). Localism in this way, could also be seen as a political act, since it creates a way for social justice through sustainable food consumption as well as production. Community based food markets, water

sharing and other initiatives on a local basis, could furthermore bring security and stability. According to certain observations, communities that live on locally produced food, water and energy are more equipped to find solutions to resource problems and to future uncertainties (Ibid).

6 Empirical Research

6.1 UNAMA: A Political Mission

On the 28th of March 2002, a Security Council resolution was established, with the ability to commence the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (henceforth referred to as UNAMA) (S/RES/1401). The United Nations had indeed been involved in the conflict of Afghanistan long before, but because of the Bonn Conference in 2001 with the agreement on establishing provisional governmental institutions in Afghanistan, the United Nations called upon all Afghan groups and announced their eagerness to further aid the situation (S/2002/278). The structure as well as mandate for the mission was established in a previous report from the General Assembly and the Security Council. The overall objective for the mission was to assist and support the implementation of the Bonn Agreement through helping the different arising institutions in Afghanistan. While doing so, another aim emerged. The UNAMA should do their very best, in all aspects, to rely on the Afghan capacity, the Afghan people and to leave as light of a footprint as possible behind. This, in order to let the inhabitants of Afghanistan manage their own country, both in governmental and non-governmental situations (Ibid). The structure proposed by the report would be a two-pillar structure, with one leading political affairs and the other leading recovery and development related issues. The proposal also advised to not give the mission any uniformed personnel, as long as they were not advisers for military matters (Ibid).

The first pillar, regarding political affairs would concern tasks of reporting and monitoring the general situations concerning political and human rights, as well supporting the provisional government and maintaining communication with the Afghan community, from political leaders to civil society groups. This division

would furthermore serve as an informer and guide the other parts of UNAMA regarding political matters (S/2002/278). The second pillar of this type of structure, were to focus on reconstructing and reintegrating Afghanistan. This part of UNAMA would work with both the internally displaced persons and ensuring a framework for national development. The report of the General Assembly and the Security Council suggested tasks like articulating strategic plans for ensuring the needs of vulnerable groups and that the national reconstruction should be gender-sensitive (Ibid). This structure and mandate was established by the resolution 1401 within a month of the report and the UNAMA was fully authorized for an initial 12-month period (S/RES/1401).

The implementation of the UNAMA mission was indeed political-oriented with the mandate of supporting governance and reconstruction of Afghanistan, with at first not more than a year of authority. Since, the mandate has been renewed annually and the goal for the mission has remained within the frames of political aid. On 28th of March 2003, the mission was further authorized for a year, with orders of continuing the support for the provisional government and other Afghan political parties (S/RES/1471). A plan for a national development budget was successfully made, as well as currency reform. The economic development was thus in progress and according to the United Nations, a favorable outcome with regards to previous international agreements (S/2003/33). On the 26th of March 2004, the mission was granted an additional 12 months' mandate and stressed the importance of the UNAMA providing support and observe the upcoming election in Afghanistan. The mission in Afghanistan was recognized to establish a government authority and a transparent judicial system (S/RES/1536). Two years after this assignment, UNAMA had created a framework consisting of five matters: law reform, building institutions, access to justice programs, traditional justice and coordination (S/2006/145). The Afghan Government was called upon, in 2008, to organize a Civil Voter Registry, as well as other tools for future elections, with the aid of UNAMA. It was also stressed, that the work on the security sector and police force should be strengthened and reformed (S/RES/1776).

On the 20th of March 2008, the United Nations Security Council decided upon additional mandate and leadership. The UNAMA was authorized to lead international civilian efforts, by promoting more coherent support to the Afghan

Government through coordination of donors and strengthening cooperation with other organizations, both international and non-governmental actors. The continuation of support for electoral processes in Afghanistan was recognized and the Security Council further urged an expansion and strengthening of the UNAMA in the region (S/RES/1806). It is not fully expressed why the Security Council would make such a decision, especially when the initial aim and structure of UNAMA was to try to minimize the footprint left from the United Nations in the country. However, the following resolution in 2008 described a concern for the security situation in Afghanistan, due to violent and terrorist acts made by illegal armed groups across the country (S/RES/1817). It is not apparent if this security threat affected the peace operation in other ways than by expanding its magnitude.

In 2012, the United Nations expressed their accountability in making the transition process of the Afghan government. With previous agreements like the Bonn Conference in mind, the institutions built where to be transitioned to Afghanistan as a sovereign country. UNAMA received full mandate and account for this process and would support the Afghan authorities and, once again, the electoral processes at request (S/RES/2041). The following year, UNAMA was extended with the aim of aiding the Afghan government's capacity of leadership, ownership and advancing justice and economic development. The UNAMA was furthermore assigned to continue their work in coordinating the delivery of humanitarian donations and assistance. Lastly, the mission was stressed to support an Afghan-led process for peace (S/RES/2096). UNAMA thus maintained their aim as a political mission, with the ambition of assisting the emerging government while simultaneously trying to keep their presence low in the sense of making the Afghan people the primary actors for peace and societal development.

In 2014, the transition of the Afghan government concluded, and the initiation of a new process, the Transformation Decade, took its place. Still, the United Nations, through UNAMA, were to be fully accountable for the completion of the transition. The subjects in focus were still the progress of security, governance and human rights in the form of laws (S/RES/2210). The importance of an Afghan-led government and political process has been stressed through the years and is still an active objective. Even though the United Nations, through UNAMA, still are highly present in the governmental institutions as well as the

humanitarian aid, the aim of only being an assistance and not a ruling actor, is very visible throughout the resolutions to today (S/RES/2344; S/RES/2460).

The UNAMA is indeed a political mission, with mandate to support the institutions of Afghanistan, whether it is provisional or transitioning to a fully capable Afghan government. The UNAMA was authorized to support the process for recovery and peace and to monitor the electoral and judicial processes (UNAMA, 2019). According to the latest UNAMA mission statement, published in 2017, the mission has been and still is a political aid to support the rule of law, an accountable government and the respect for human rights. It also states the mission's support for achieving peace in Afghanistan. This, by preparing electoral processes, building security, protection and economic integration and by working for reintegration and cooperation. Lastly, as have been shown, the UNAMA has worked for strengthening the governance regarding economic growth (UNAMA, 2017).

6.2   Legislating the Environment

In 2003, the United Nations Environment Programme (henceforth referred to as UNEP) together with the Afghan government and other experts on environmental issues, developed an assessment of the environmental consequences that the future Afghanistan were facing. Due to the history of conflict, as well as droughts and earthquakes in the region, the people and ecosystem of Afghanistan were in a fragile state. Overexploitation of natural resources and habitat loss, was also concerning the country. The lack of proper water resources and the environmental degradation has driven many people away from their homes in Afghanistan, in hopes of finding better living conditions. For the people of Afghanistan, the biological resources have been more valuable than any metal or mineral. Afghanistan has historically been a country of hunting, local farming and livestock grazing. The land surface of Afghanistan has been used for centuries, but due to the raging of violent conduct and a failing government, the land surface of Afghanistan has turned into a region of drought, degradation and has caused food shortages (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003:6).

UNEP therefore, with the collaboration of the Afghan government and other afghan experts, created an assessment of the situation, along with a total of 163 recommendations for future improvement of the surrounding environment (Ibid).

As previously discussed, the 2001 Bonn Conference concluded with the constitution of a provisional government, that would later transition into an Afghan leadership and ownership of the state. Priorities of the government was indeed to establish the rule of law, security and the respect for human rights. Several new institutions and ministries was introduced in Afghanistan, such as the Ministry for Irrigation, Water Resources and Environment. The United Nations admitted the environmental alterations and dangers surrounding it, to be a cross-cutting issue. UNEP therefore created the post-conflict environmental assessment with the aim of providing recommendations that could be implemented in the various institutions (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003:7-8).

The material needed for making an assessment was taken in the form of samples, collected from urban sites and rural locations. UNEP furthermore obtained access to satellite images of the regions of Afghanistan, with information over a 25-year period (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003:8). This is far from the first post-conflict environmental assessment that the UNEP had executed. But in contrast to previous assessments, focusing solely on the effects of warfare and military related damage such as chemical releases and bombings, the assessment of Afghanistan included, what UNEP found more stressing, the impacts and consequences of a failed government (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003:10-11). The water situation of Afghanistan is an example of this conclusion, where the droughts damaged the Afghan agricultural productivity and due to a defect way of governance, wells were drilled and groundwater was drained, without the consideration of long-term impacts. The water scarcity hence became more severe and in need of a more strategic approach. Wetlands were drought, sediments had filled irrigation reservoirs and canals and destroyed fields and villages (Ibid).

A first step towards environmental governance was taken, when the Afghan government established the new posts of the Ministry of Irrigation, Water Resources and Environment, as well as Ministry of Reconstruction, Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Planning after the Bonn Agreement (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003:92-93). Every one of these ministries

have, according to UNEP, environmental responsibilities. Laws of environmental character have been established, but UNEP called for new and improved legislation, due to the development and growth of the Afghan institutions and government. UNEP is estimating that the country of Afghanistan will face three kinds of environmental scarcity: the supply of environmental goods due to the exploitation and degradation, demand for environmental goods because of population growth and returning refugees and lastly the access to environmental goods due to previous power imbalances (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003:104). Based on other empirical findings, where environmental scarcity has increased the tensions and instability in regions, UNEP stressed the importance of sustainable development planning and governmental actions that went beyond sectoral borders (Ibid). UNEP emphasized the responsibility for implementing their recommendations lied within the government and people of Afghanistan (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003:105), however, previously mentioned resolutions regarding the United Nations and UNAMA's involvement in Afghanistan, proclaim slightly otherwise when giving UNAMA the mission of assisting the institutions of the Afghan government, at the request of the Afghan government (UNAMA, 2019). Also, at the request of the National Environmental Protection Agency and with the funding of the European Commission, UNEP was ordered to assist Afghan authorities in implementing environmental plans until 2010 (United Nations Environment Programme, 2009:30).

The first recommendation made by the UNEP 2003 assessment, involves enforcement and legalization of the environment. This, in order to create an institutional framework to protect the environment and encourage the implementation on local basis. The environmental rights need to, according to UNEP, be recognized in the national constitution. Judicial systems are encouraged to strengthen their capacity and capability of dealing with environmental litigation and the legislation should contain environmental permits (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003:106). UNEP furthermore addressed the need for local decisions regarding environmental laws, when recommending the processes to be discussed in local traditions and decision-making (Ibid).

Furthermore, UNEP recommended the Afghan government to focus on capacity building, by providing infrastructure and adopting community-based and

decentralized management approaches. This, based on the Afghan history of decision-making and traditional constraints that used to prevent over-exploitation of resources. UNEP states, however, that because of degradation and migration stress, the country cannot fully go back to the way it used to function, instead the regulations will be centralized, with the partnership of local communities (United Nations Environment Programme, 2003:108-109). Regional and local rehabilitation projects for the environment could become opportunities for labor, as well as restoring environmental resources such as water, forest and wildlife (Ibid).

Moreover, UNEP stressed the importance of sectoral environmental management. Since previous droughts and Afghanistan's unorganized exploitation of freshwater and groundwater, UNEP constructed several recommendations for a more sustainable relation to water. Except from advising the different ministries of the Afghan government to protect the water quality and eliminate cross-contamination, UNEP proposed a National Water Authority that would develop strategies for the usage of basins.

In 2009, UNEP published a second report, with the aim of sustainable development in Afghanistan. Yet again, UNEP recognized the steps towards recovery in the construction of a solid structure, the implementation of laws and lastly the need for capacity of the state. With the assessment made, UNEP could declare their views on what needed to be done, in a more factual way. By assisting the Afghan government with recommendations of implementing environmental protection, UNEP then commenced their work for developing the technical and scientific capacity they considered Afghanistan needed (United Nations Environment Programme, 2009:13).

UNEP acted as a recruiting agency by recruiting and creating bodies for the recovery of the environment. One of the most apparent and forceful actors created by UNEP is the National Environmental Protection Agency (henceforth referred to as NEPA) of Afghanistan. NEPA has set up a body of a legal framework for environmental work within several institutions, assisted the country when formulating environmental laws and organized various information events with the aim of educating the population about environmental protection (United Nations Environment Programme, 2009:16).

7 Analysis: Evaluating the United Nations

The peacebuilding missions in Afghanistan, commenced with the authorization of UNAMA in 2002 and is still very present in the country today. The notion of a long-term planning could be questioned, due to the mission's annual renewal, with only 12 months of mandate each time. However, UNAMA has been present in the country for a long period of time, to assist a transition of government, which in all fairness is a long-term project. The concern is due to the decision of only extending the mission for one year at the time and therefore of its potential drawbacks of not being able to plan for longer periods. The mission has indeed been political and is still described as a mission for assistance of the recovery and reconstruction of the Afghan government as well as police and law enforcements. The mission has hence, not been of any direct environmental causes. Throughout the mission in Afghanistan, the United Nations have expanded and improved their goals for sustainable development, as well as constituting new development goals for the world to follow. Nevertheless, the aim of UNAMA did not alter in political vision, but only in size and mandate. The efforts made by UNEP and NEPA in the country of Afghanistan have also seemed to stay away from the development of the United Nations' environmental policies. Both UNEP and NEPA have worked with assessing the issues and needs for the environment and people of Afghanistan, with the aim of assisting the rising government's structure for legislation and planning for a sustainable future.

When looking at the new mindset provided by Peace Ecology, one might view aspects of the peacebuilding missions a bit differently. The essence of Peace Ecology is the need of integrating mankind with nature and transforming our previous ways of identifying problems, into searching for solutions. The assessment made by UNEP carried 163 recommendations. However, all of these

were in line with the understanding of resource scarcity, perhaps leaving the recommendations based on a perspective of competitiveness and a fear for the commons. Recommendations for preparing Afghanistan for these scarcity issues were focused on law and national control in the sense that UNEP perceived natural resources to be better handled by legislation and planning, for effective and sustainable use. As the theory of Peace Ecology urges, fully controlled resources could very well become a self-fulfilling prophecy, since degradation is proven to be a consequence of privatization and a disconnection to the environment. By looking at resource scarcity as an opportunity for solutions, the full control and legislation over environmental matters would only cause more insecurity and equality, according to Randall Amster's take on Peace Ecology. Nonetheless, the recommendations suggested by UNEP could still partially be turned into opportunities for cooperation and connection between people, by creating job opportunities in environmental projects. The mission of UNAMA was also to assist the rising of legislation, structure and a functioning government. UNAMA's secondary goal, however, was to always evaluate and minimize their footprints in Afghanistan. This, with the aim of letting the people of Afghanistan be their own saviors, perhaps creating a more cooperative and neighboring society. The personnel of UNAMA were not allowed, according to the agreements of UNAMA's structure settled in the General Assembly and Security Council's report, to wear military uniform. This could be seen as a step towards a perspective on peacebuilding where military means might not be the primary solution to societal obedience. Yet, it is unclear of how much assistance the UNAMA has given to the construction of state force in the form of police and military personnel. With the perspective of Peace Ecology in mind, one could very well argue for the potential drawbacks that would come with such priorities. The dependence on state control and privatization could, according to the findings of Peace Ecology, worsen already existing inequalities in the country.

The recommendations made by UNEP, also included a structure for more community based partnership and decision making. This might not entirely line up with the teaching of Peace Ecology, regarding the importance of localism and community based markets and economy. On one hand, it could very well be viewed as an attempt to strengthen the sense of connection between people, as well as keeping traditions and therefore perhaps also leaving the people and

communities to be a part of their surroundings (and thereby the environment). On the other hand, however, the United Nations, along with the decisions of the Bonn Agreement, still paced highest authority within the government, giving directions for the community based partnerships so that these partnerships shall not go further than what the government has planned for.

Because of a lack of environmental work within the mandate of UNAMA, as well as the fact that the mission was not affected by the progress of environmental policies within the United Nations over time, suggest that the United Nations do not carry out the work for environmental sustainability, when striving for peace. The mission for peacebuilding has not carried out any direct orders for securing the human-environment relation, but it becomes perhaps a secondary matter. The structure of the mission, reported in March 2002, was set up as two pillars, one handling political affairs and the other managing humanitarian issues. This structure has remained intact, through the years of progression in environmental policy and ambitions for ho to obtain sustainable development. Indirectly, one could point out the mission's assistance for constructing a reliable government who, in turn, would be able to protect the nature. However, the perspective of Peace Ecology calls on an equal importance, when it comes to dealing with the human-human and human-environment interfaces and therefore the sustenance of our nature should not be excluded from peacebuilding processes, nor be treated as a later matter.

7.1   What About Sustainable Development?

As the United Nations defined the matter, sustainable development refers to a state where the needs of today's generation, will not affect the generation of tomorrow. The way we utilize resources and treats our nature, must be in a way that will secure the comfort and essential needs for coming generations. The theoretical framework of the rather new approach to peace and nature, Peace Ecology, suggests a reintegration with the environment, where people can live in interdependence of each other and of nature. For this to happen, a few concrete recommendations are brought up. The access to essentials, such as water, food,

energy and other resources are implied to become inclusive and open for all, rather than being privatized or fully controlled by corporations or states. The United Nations have, through their different branches of their organization such as UNEP, NEPA and UNAMA, supported the building of a government with a legislative and military body, thus putting the people of Afghanistan in the danger of getting excluded from essential resources.

There is however to some extent, a belief of the power of cooperating communities, since the United Nations have given recommendations to the Afghan government that favors local collaborations, but these are not based of the peoples own initiative. By recommending the government to commence different local projects in order to restore the environment at the same time as creating jobs, the United Nations are hoping for it to become a tool for resilience. Nonetheless, this method closes the doors for local initiatives such as food markets or the opportunity for common pool resources like the example of the water sharing system acequia. The utilization and exploitation of resources are perhaps associated with the power of the commons due to certain assumptions on mankind, but reality has shown us that the untenable usage or natural resources happens when corporations, states and privatization takes over. As the theory of Peace Ecology concludes, there is more to gain in cooperation than by competition. To obtain sustainable development, perhaps the resources need to be given to the people in an inclusive way, where they can take care of it together, as nature are taking care of the people.

Frameworks for national development, plans for job creation and policies of economic growth have all been up on a top priority within the different tasks of the United Nations. UNAMA has been working with the development of frameworks, as well as the implementation, whereas UNEP and NEPA have been creating action plans and recommendations for management and structure. The belief of growth to be equivalent to development could, after taking the worldview of Peace Ecology into consideration, eventually turn out to be the exact opposite of what we associate the phenomenon with. It is perhaps no longer a question of how the United Nations have been working towards peace and sustainable development, but rather what they *believe* to be the solutions for a sustainable and peaceful society.

8 Conclusion

This study has attempted to evaluate the United Nations peacebuilding missions in Afghanistan. Due to the rhetoric and ambitions regarding sustainable development, stated by the United Nations throughout their missions in Afghanistan, this study has had an interest in the actual conducts made by the United Nations. With a theoretical framework based on the recent development of a theory and perhaps a field of study, the theory of Peace Ecology has been used to identify the United Nations' peacebuilding work and put it into context.

After evaluating the conducts of the peacebuilding missions in Afghanistan through the elements of Peace Ecology, and in the light of stated ambitions for a world with sustainable development, the study concludes the United Nations to not maintaining their purposes through policies to concrete actions. The United Nations are found to not be following their own rhetoric when acting in Afghanistan, at least not when analyzed through this study's elements. Means for sustainable development have perhaps not been directly incorporated in the work for a peaceful society, but rather been kept separate from the peacebuilding operation. The United Nations almost seems to view peace and sustainability through a dichotomous perspective. Not only is there no room for sustainable thinking in the structure of the United Nations primary peacekeeping mission, UNAMA. But neither does it seem to be of priority in the projects of UNEP or NEPA. Instead, it is expressed in policies and assessments, creating a problem for later instead of making it a solution for peace.

This does not necessary mean that the United Nations do not have any intentions of creating peaceful, yet developed societies. By assisting the creation of institutions, an accountable government and strategies for economic growth, the United Nations clearly show their commitment of helping conflict-torn societies to develop and become peaceful. The United Nations might very well

follow a strategy built upon certain assumptions and beliefs for getting a certain outcome. However, this study concludes, with the theoretical framework as guidance, that the ways of today will not result in sustainable development, not a peaceful society.

What is further important to remark, is the theory's period of existence. Peace Ecology is indeed a new territory and available for further research, which makes it relevant for further analysis, both within the theory itself, but perhaps also in relation to peacebuilding actors such as the United Nations. By broadening our perceptions and rethinking what we believe to already know, additional solutions to peace and sustainability can be found. Because the environment knows no borders and the decisions we make will most reasonably, have definitive implications for us all.

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