



RESEARCH PAPER

A General Framework for Peace-Building: A Study of Five Observations

Biraj Narayan Roy

Ph.D. Research Scholar, Centre for Journalism and Mass Communication, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, West Bengal, India

Corresponding author: birajn93@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Peace-building is increasingly understood as a multidimensional, processual phenomenon rather than a fixed political outcome. In regions marked by protracted conflict, ethnic plurality, and contested governance—such as Northeast India—peace initiatives have often failed due to their narrow focus on security, elite negotiations, or development-driven conflict management. This article develops a general framework for peace-building through a critical synthesis of five scholarly observations drawn from the existing scientific literature on peace studies, development theory, and conflict resolution. The reviewed works include Miller's (2019) socio-cultural framework of the Bodo community, Ron's (2009) analysis of peace negotiations in the public sphere, LohaChoudhury's (2023) formulation of the conflict-to-peace continuum, Singh and Sharma's (2018) critical inquiry into conflict resolution in Assam, and the practice-oriented dialogue study *Conflict Resolution: Learning Lessons from Dialogue Processes in India* (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue & Delhi Policy Group, 2011). Taken together, these studies foreground culture, dialogue, ideology, communication, and inclusive governance as constitutive dimensions of peace. By synthesising these observations, the article proposes an indicative and phenomenological framework that conceptualises peace as a lived, relational, and continuously negotiated condition. The framework contributes to peace-building scholarship by integrating micro-level cultural practices with macro-level political processes, offering a holistic lens for understanding peace beyond accords and ceasefires.

Keywords: Peace-Building, Phenomenology of Peace, Dialogue, Conflict Transformation, Northeast India, Governance

Peace-building has emerged as one of the most complex and urgent challenges of the contemporary world. In many conflict-affected regions marked by ethnic diversity, historical grievances, political marginalisation, and uneven development, peace cannot be understood merely as the absence of armed conflict. Rather, peace is a layered, relational, and processual phenomenon that evolves through social interactions, cultural values, institutional practices, and communicative action. The Northeast region of India, particularly Assam and its surrounding areas, provides a compelling context for examining peacebuilding due to its

prolonged conflicts, multiple insurgencies, and repeated yet fragile peace initiatives.

This research article develops a general framework for peace-building by synthesising five scholarly observations from the existing scientific literature. These observations are not treated as isolated case studies but as interconnected analytical lenses that together illuminate the conditions, processes, and

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limitations of peace. The five studies reviewed include: Miller's (2019) work on Bodo socio-cultural values and governance; Ron's (2009) analysis of peace negotiations in the public sphere; LohaChoudhury's (2023) conceptualization of the conflict-to-peace continuum; Singh and Sharma's (2018) critical inquiry into conflict resolution in Assam; and the report *Conflict Resolution: Learning Lessons from Dialogue Processes in India* published by the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue and Delhi Policy Group (2011). The latter provides an important empirical perspective on dialogue-based peace initiatives in India by systematically examining negotiation processes across insurgency contexts and demonstrating how sustained, inclusive, and culturally sensitive communication frameworks are essential for long-term conflict transformation. Each of these contributions foregrounds a distinct yet complementary dimension of peace-building—culture, dialogue, ideology, governance, and communication.

The central argument of this article is that peace-building requires a general framework capable of integrating micro-level cultural practices with macro-level political processes, while remaining sensitive to ideology, communication, and inclusivity. By synthesising insights from the five observations, this study proposes an indicative and phenomenological framework for peace-building that is flexible, context-sensitive, and relational. The title, *A General Framework for Peace-Building: A Study of Five Observations*, thus reflects both the empirical grounding of the study and its conceptual ambition: to move from reductionist stress on fragmented peace interventions toward a holistic understanding of peace as lived experience and social process where communities at the grassroots and the government have the society as an interfacing reality.

Goal and Objectives

The primary goal of this article is to construct a general peace-building framework derived from the synthesis of five significant scholarly observations. Rather than proposing a rigid or universal model, the framework aims to identify core elements and

relationships that recur across different peace contexts, particularly in plural and conflict-affected societies. The framework seeks to bridge the gap between theory and practice by demonstrating how peace is felt, sustained, and experienced at multiple levels of individual and institutional life.

Specifically, the objectives of the study are fourfold. First, it aims to critically engage with five relevant existing scientific literatures, explicitly acknowledging and discussing each study's title, argument, and conceptual contribution. Secondly, it seeks to identify common themes and tensions across these studies, such as top-down versus bottom-up peace-building, individualism versus collectivism, and negotiation versus dialogue. Thirdly, the article aims to synthesise these themes into a coherent set of framework elements that can guide peace-building analysis and practice. Finally, the study aspires to articulate a phenomenology of peace—that is, an understanding of peace not only as policy or outcome, but as a lived, communicative, and ethical condition shaped by everyday social interactions.

In doing so, the article contributes to peace and conflict studies by offering a middle-level framework that avoids both abstract universalism and narrow contextualism. It is designed to be adaptable across settings while remaining grounded in empirical observation and cultural specificity.

Delimitations

Despite its integrative ambition, this study is subject to certain delimitations. First, the framework is derived entirely from existing scientific literature rather than primary fieldwork. While the selected studies are rich and contextually grounded, the absence of original empirical data limits the ability to test or validate the framework in real-time conflict settings. The framework should therefore be understood as heuristic and indicative rather than prescriptive.

Secondly, although the existing scientific literature reviewed is thematically coherent, it is geographically concentrated, with a strong emphasis on Northeast India, particularly Assam. While this focus allows for

depth and contextual sensitivity, it also constrains the framework's immediate applicability to other regions without careful adaptation. Peace dynamics in other geopolitical contexts may involve different institutional, cultural, or historical variables.

Thirdly, the five studies consulted, though complementary, emerge from different disciplinary orientations—Communication studies, development studies, peace studies, political theory, and sociology. Synthesising perspectives from such diverse social studies risks stretching or oversimplifying concepts. Certain nuances specific to each author's methodological or theoretical commitments may be diluted during integration.

Finally, the framework does not claim to resolve all dimensions of conflict, particularly structural and global forms such as economic exploitation, geopolitical intervention, or environmental degradation. These factors are acknowledged but not exhaustively theorised within the scope of this article.

Reasons for Study Delimitations

The delimitations of the present study identified above arise from both methodological and conceptual constraints inherent in peace research. Peace-building is an expansive field that traverses communicative action, embracing politics, culture, psychology, economics, and ethics. Any attempt to construct a general framework must therefore negotiate trade-offs between breadth and depth.

The reliance on existing scientific literature reviews is partly a strategic choice. The five selected studies already represent condensed reflections on long-term conflicts and peace processes. Engaging deeply with these works allows for analytical synthesis without reproducing fragmented case descriptions. However, this choice necessarily limits the immediacy of lived voices and grassroots perspectives beyond what is already captured in the reviewed texts.

Geographical delimitation is also intentional. Northeast India functions as a microcosm of broader peace challenges—ethnic plurality, contested identities, state violence, and development-induced

conflict. By focusing on this region, the study prioritises contextual richness over superficial generalisation. The framework is thus general in structure but contextual in flavour.

Finally, the diversity of disciplinary approaches reflects the reality that peace cannot be explained through a single lens. The resulting conceptual tension is not a flaw but a productive constraint that encourages dialogue across fields. Nonetheless, this interdisciplinarity requires careful synthesis, which inevitably limits exhaustive engagement with each theoretical tradition.

Indicative Framework Elements

Drawing from the five studies mentioned above, several indicative elements of peace-building emerge. These elements do not function independently; rather, they interact dynamically to shape peace processes.

Dialogue Practice and Process Legitimacy: The report *Conflict Resolution: Learning Lessons from Dialogue Processes in India* (Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue & Delhi Policy Group, 2011) contributes a practice-oriented understanding of peace-building by emphasising dialogue as a sustained social and political process rather than a singular negotiation event. The study demonstrates that successful peace initiatives in India rely heavily on informal dialogue channels, trusted intermediaries, confidence-building measures, and continuous communication between the state, insurgent groups, and civil society. It highlights the limitations of elite-centric negotiations and stresses the importance of inclusivity and multi-stakeholder participation. The report further illustrates how peace accords function as communicative instruments signalling recognition and legitimacy. However, it warns that inadequate post-agreement communication often weakens peace consolidation. This perspective reinforces the framework's emphasis on communication continuity and process legitimacy as essential components of sustainable peace.

This report provides an empirically grounded examination of multiple dialogue initiatives across India and offers important lessons on the role of

sustained, inclusive, and process-oriented dialogue in conflict resolution. Its inclusion strengthens the framework by linking theoretical reflections on dialogue with practical experiences from Indian peace processes.

Cultural Embeddedness: Miller's (2019) article, *Northeast Cultural Values and Principles, Good Governance and Conflict Reduction: A Bodo Socio-Cultural Framework*, underscores the foundational role of indigenous cultural values in peace-building. Concepts such as Baada (taboo), Saori (community flourishing), and Loathi (ethical conduct) function as informal institutions that regulate behaviour and prevent conflict. Peace, in this sense, is culturally embedded and sustained through shared moral frameworks rather than solely through external enforcement.

Dialogical Processes: Ron's (2009) *Peace Negotiation and Peace Talks: The Peace Process in the Public Sphere* highlights dialogue as the transformative core of peace negotiations. Negotiation is not merely strategic bargaining but a communicative process that redefines enemies as legitimate interlocutors. This dialogical element extends beyond negotiation tables into the public sphere, where legitimacy and consent are continuously negotiated.

Ideological Continuum: LohaChoudhury's (2023) editorial, *"Between Individualism and Collectivism: Charting Way to 'Conflict to Peace Continuum'"*, introduces ideology as the precursor to both conflict and peace. Peace emerges through gradual ideological shifts toward equity, balance, and holistic thinking. This continuum challenges static notions of peace and emphasises transformation over time.

Inclusive Governance: Singh and Sharma's *Conflict Resolution in Assam: A Critical Inquiry* demonstrates that peace processes fail when they prioritise conflict management over transformation. Exclusionary negotiations, militarised governance, and fragmented accords undermine trust. Inclusive governance, involving civil society and multiple stakeholders, is therefore a core element of the framework.

Process-Oriented Dialogue and Communication

Continuity: The HD Centre and Delhi Policy Group (2011) study introduces the idea that peace-building requires continuous dialogue structures extending beyond formal negotiations. The study shows that ceasefires, peace talks, and accords are effective only when supported by long-term communication networks, community engagement, and feedback mechanisms. This element emphasises that peace is sustained through communicative continuity rather than episodic negotiation outcomes.

Communication as Practice: Across all five observations, communication emerges as a cross-cutting element. Whether through customary councils, public debates, or negotiation forums, peace is enacted through communicative practices that enable recognition, trust-building, and shared meaning.

Synthesizing Elements

The above discussion reveals an interesting convergence among studies from different social science domains. The convergence is epistemological in that it makes conclusions about the reality of peace. That's why studies often reach the same conclusions about five key elements.

Synthesizing these indicative elements reveals several higher-order patterns. First, peace-building operates simultaneously at micro, meso, and macro levels. Cultural norms shape everyday interactions; dialogue structures political engagement; ideology informs long-term aspirations; and governance provides institutional scaffolding. A general framework must therefore be multi-scalar.

Secondly, peace is relational rather than transactional. The existing scientific literature reviewed for the present work consistently rejects the idea that peace can be delivered through accords, development packages, or security operations alone. Instead, peace emerges through relationships—between individuals, communities, and institutions—sustained by communication and mutual recognition.

Thirdly, balance is a recurring theme. Choudhury's middle path between individualism and collectivism

resonates with Miller's integration of indigenous values and modern governance, as well as Ron's balance between elite negotiation and public dialogue. Peace frameworks must avoid extremes, whether of coercion or romanticised tradition.

Finally, temporality is central. Peace is not an endpoint but a continuum. Negotiations initiate peace; culture sustains it; ideology deepens it; and communication renews it. This temporal dimension is essential for understanding why peace agreements often fail when treated as final settlements.

Emergence of the Phenomenology of Peace

The concluding task of this study is to clarify what is meant by a general framework for peace-building by articulating it phenomenologically—that is, by examining peace as it is experienced, enacted, and sustained in lived social reality. A phenomenology of peace shifts the focus away from peace as a static outcome or institutional artefact and understands it as a condition of relational being, continuously shaped by culture, communication, ideology, and governance. The framework proposed here does not prescribe a single pathway to peace; rather, it describes the essential structures through which peace comes into presence in societies emerging from conflict.

At its core, the framework understands peace as relational equilibrium. Drawing on Miller's (2019) Bodo socio-cultural framework, peace first emerges at the micro level as harmony in everyday life—manifested through ethical conduct (Loathi), collective flourishing (Saori), inner balance (Saithi), and respect for moral boundaries (Baada). Phenomenologically, peace is felt as social trust, predictability of behaviour, and moral legitimacy. When individuals internalise shared cultural norms, peace becomes habitual rather than imposed. Thus, the first dimension of the framework locates peace in lived cultural experience, where conflict prevention precedes conflict resolution.

The second dimension of the framework is dialogical recognition, informed by Ron's (2009) analysis of peace negotiations in the public sphere. Peace, in this sense, emerges when former enemies are no

longer encountered as existential threats but as legitimate interlocutors. Phenomenologically, this marks a transformation in perception: the "other" is reconstituted from an enemy to a participant in shared meaning-making. Dialogue is not merely a tool but a condition of peace itself. Where dialogue collapses, peace becomes brittle; where dialogue is sustained, peace remains open, adaptive, and self-correcting. This dimension highlights that peace is experienced through communicative engagement and public legitimacy, not solely through signed agreements.

The third dimension is ideological transformation along a continuum, as articulated by Loha-Choudhury's (2023) concept of the conflict-to-peace continuum. From a phenomenological perspective, peace is not an abrupt transition but a gradual reorientation of collective consciousness. Societies move from ideologies rooted in exclusion, competition, and fear toward those emphasising equity, balance, and shared responsibility. Peace is experienced here as a widening of moral imagination—from narrow self-interest to inclusive collective well-being. The framework, therefore, treats peace as temporally extended, requiring sustained educational, ethical, and ideological work rather than short-term interventions.

The fourth dimension is institutional and governance legitimacy, which Singh and Sharma critically examine in *Conflict Resolution in Assam: A Critical Inquiry*. Phenomenologically, peace is undermined when institutions are experienced as coercive, exclusionary, or indifferent. Militarised governance, selective negotiations, and fragmented accords generate a lived sense of injustice, even in the absence of open violence. Conversely, peace emerges when governance structures are perceived as inclusive, responsive, and dialogic. This dimension underscores that peace is not only felt in interpersonal relations but also in citizens' everyday encounters with the state. Legitimacy, rather than force, becomes the experiential marker of peace.

A complementary phenomenological insight emerges from the HD Centre and Delhi Policy

Group (2011) report, which demonstrates that peace is experienced socially through sustained communicative engagement rather than institutional declarations alone. The report shows that communities perceive peace as stable only when dialogue remains open, inclusive, and culturally responsive. From a phenomenological standpoint, peace becomes meaningful when communication channels enable recognition, reassurance, and participation. The absence of post-agreement dialogue often results in experiential insecurity despite formal settlements. Thus, the study reinforces the framework's understanding of peace as an ongoing communicative practice.

Binding these dimensions together is communication as a constitutive practice of peace. Across all five observations, communication is not peripheral but foundational. Customary councils, public debates, negotiations, and civil society mediation are the spaces where peace is enacted and renewed. Phenomenologically, peace exists insofar as communication remains open, participatory, and meaning-oriented. Breakdown in communication—whether through silence, coercion, or exclusion—signals the erosion of peace even before violence re-emerges.

Taken together, the general framework for peace-building proposed in this article can be visualised as a dynamic alignment of five interdependent dimensions: cultural embeddedness, dialogical recognition, ideological continuity, inclusive governance, and communicative practice. Peace is sustained when these dimensions reinforce one another; it deteriorates when one or more are systematically weakened. Importantly, the framework rejects the notion of peace as finality. Peace is always provisional, requiring continuous ethical conduct, dialogue, learning, and institutional adaptation.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenology of peace advanced here redefines peace-building as an ongoing social achievement rather than a policy deliverable. By synthesising five observations grounded in cultural practice, political dialogue, ideological critique, governance analysis, and empirical dialogue, this study offers a general yet context-sensitive framework for understanding peace as a lived reality. Peace, ultimately, is not what is declared at the end of conflict, but what is practised daily in how societies relate, communicate, govern, and imagine their collective future.

GENERATIVE AI DECLARATION

The author(s) confirm that there was no use of artificial intelligence (AI)-assisted technology for assisting in the writing or editing of the manuscript, and no images were manipulated using AI. The authors developed and verified all scientific content, data analysis, interpretation of results, and conclusions. The authors take full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and originality of the work presented, and no AI tool was listed as an author.

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