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# A STUDY ON THE ROLE OF UNITED NATION IN PEACE-BUILDING

# A Study on the Role of United Nation in Peace-Building

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*Abstract – Scholars and practitioners of international relations have devoted increasing attention to how ceasefires, once achieved, may be translated into sustained peace. In recent years, the United Nations, the World Bank, and the United States and other governments have revamped their institutional architecture for addressing post-conflict reconstruction and peace building. The creation in 2006 of a UN Peace-building Commission exemplifies these changes. The relationship between weak states and the durability of peace has acquired new emphasis in IR research. This article analyzes recent conceptual developments in post-conflict peace building, relating them to new thinking about fragile states. It then analyzes the international architecture for addressing post-conflict peace building, identifying gaps, and analyzing likely policy challenges in the near future. We argue that despite important analytic insights and institutional changes, serious challenges persist in efforts to prevent wars from recurring.*

*Keywords: Peace Building, Peace-Keeping, Post-Conflict Reconstruction, State Building, Civil War, Nation Building.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Ending armed conflict has long been a concern of practitioners and scholars of international relations. Recent years have seen new attention to questions of "building peace" beyond the immediate termination of war, primarily driven by the experience of civil wars in the 1990s and the very mixed record of international involvement from relative successes like Namibia, Mozambique and El Salvador through partial successes like Cambodia, Bosnia and East Timor to abysmal failures like Angola and Rwanda. The costs of failing to build peace are stark and manifold. By most accounts, a significant number of armed conflicts relapse to war, and many "new" wars occur in countries that have failed to consolidate peace. When peace building fails, parties to conflict often unleash greater violence than in the prior war - grimly attested by the nearly two million dead after peace unraveled in Angola in 1991 and Rwanda in 1993–1994.

Peacekeeping by the United Nations is a role held by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations as "a unique and dynamic instrument developed by the Organization as a way to help countries torn by conflict to create the conditions for lasting peace". Peacekeepers monitor and observe peace processes in post-conflict areas and assist ex-combatants in implementing the peace agreements they may have signed. Such assistance comes in many forms, including confidence-building measures, power-sharing arrangements, electoral support, strengthening

the rule of law, and economic and social development. Accordingly UN peacekeepers (often referred to as **Blue Berets** because of their light blue berets or helmets) can include soldiers, police officers, and civilian personnel. The United Nations Charter gives the United Nations Security Council the power and responsibility to take collective action to maintain international peace and security. For this reason, the international community usually looks to the Security Council to authorize peacekeeping operations.

Most of these operations are established and implemented by the United Nations itself, with troops serving under UN operational control. In these cases, peacekeepers remain members of their respective armed forces, and do not constitute an independent "UN army", as the UN does not have such a force. In cases where direct UN involvement is not considered appropriate or feasible, the Council authorizes regional organizations such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Economic Community of West African States, or coalitions of willing countries to undertake peacekeeping or peace-enforcement tasks.

Once a peace treaty has been negotiated, the parties involved might ask the United Nations for a peacekeeping force to oversee various elements of the agreed upon plan. This is often done because a group controlled by the United Nations is less likely to follow the interests of any one party, since it itself is

controlled by many groups, namely the 15-member Security Council and the intentionally diverse United Nations Secretariat. If the Security Council approves the creation of a mission, then the Department of Peacekeeping Operations begins planning for the necessary elements. At this point, the senior leadership team is selected. The department will then seek contributions from member nations. Since the UN has no standing force or supplies, it must form ad hoc coalitions for every task undertaken. Doing so results in both the possibility of failure to form a suitable force, and a general slowdown in procurement once the operation is in the field.

A United Nations peacekeeping mission has three power centers. The first is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the official leader of the mission. This person is responsible for all political and diplomatic activity, overseeing relations with both the parties to the peace treaty and the UN member-states in general. They are often a senior member of the Secretariat. The second is the Force Commander, who is responsible for the military forces deployed. They are a senior officer of their nation's armed services, and are often from the nation committing the highest number of troops to the project. Finally, the Chief Administrative Officer oversees supplies and logistics, and coordinates the procurement of any supplies needed.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

War also erases the gains of development in a process that some have called "reverse development," in turn contributing to further warfare, violence, and impoverishment (Collier et al. 2003). War-torn societies, characterized by high rates of displacement, damaged infrastructure and weak or absent institutions are also more vulnerable to disease and may under some conditions provide fertile ground for other international ills like arms trafficking, transnational crime, and terrorist networks (Patrick 2006). At the same time, there is ground for some encouragement. More wars have ended than started since the mid-1980s, reducing the number and intensity of armed conflicts in the world by roughly half (Mack 2007). A majority of these (70%) have also been concluded through negotiation or petering out rather than outright victory or defeat (Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Fortna 2004). Although these tend to produce less stable results- indeed, negotiated settlements revert to conflict at roughly three times the rate of victories - at least half of these settlements stick, and they also tend to produce less retributive violence (Licklider 1995; Lacina 2006).4 International peace efforts further appear to be a significant part of this story. Of the wars ended since 1988, the UN has exercised some peace-building role in half, including in Cambodia, Southern Africa, Central America, the Balkans, West Africa, Afghanistan, and Iraq. Of the 19 UN peace operations currently in the field, at least 10 are engaged in peace building, along with a few dedicated UN "Peace building Support Offices." Growing recognition of the

possibility of success, as well as of the cost of failure, has spurred a range of efforts to reform the practice of international peace- building, including the creation in 2006 of a new UN Peace-building Commission (PBC) and its related mechanisms, a Peace-building Support Office (PBSO) and a Peace-building Fund. Both experience and scholarship point, however, to a series of chronic weak- nesses in international peace efforts, which these and other reforms are meant to overcome and which we discuss below (Durch and Berkman 2006). They also point to more fundamental questions about the complexity of post-conflict transitions, the mismatch between expectations for rapid recovery and processes that have historically taken considerably longer, and the crucial issue of state-society relations as well as the types of state institutions needed to sustain peace, especially in poorer countries where, not coincidentally, most armed conflicts occur. Whether external actors have the knowledge, tools, resources, or legitimacy to contribute to what is frequently referred to as "state building" is, in our view, central to the question of the efficacy of international peace building.

## What Is Peace Building?

Considerable ink has been expended wrestling with the concept of peace building since the term first entered public usage in Secretary-General Boutros Ghali's 1992 Agenda for Peace. Boutros Ghali, drawing on work by Johan Galtung (1975) and other peace researchers, initially defined peace building in relation to a conflict continuum that passed from pre-conflict prevention through peace- making and peacekeeping. Peace building was associated with the post-conflict phase and defined as "action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict" (Secretary-General of the United Nations 1992). Over the 1990s, the concept of peace building became more expansive arguably, to the point of incoherence. This was driven partly by growing awareness of the complexity of post-conflict transitions and the multiple, simultaneous needs of post-conflict societies, and partly by bureaucratic imperatives as more and more international agencies, parts of the UN system, and nongovernmental organizations began to incorporate "peace building" into their roles and missions. Boutros Ghali's Supplement to an Agenda for Peace (1995) dropped the notion of phases and extended the term across the conflict spectrum of pre-conflict prevention, actions during warfare and post-conflict measures. Many also asked that peace building not just seek to ensure against conflict relapse but also redress "root causes," and not only of the war just ended but of all potential conflict. While scholarship on civil wars still tended to emphasize the more minimalist outcome of "negative peace" i.e., no armed conflict, the practitioner and advocacy community and some scholars increasingly emphasized a more ambitious goal of "positive peace" i.e., inclusive of justice, equity and other core social and political goods. This conceptual breadth came at the cost of analytical and practical utility, compounding

the more authentic challenge of assessing how to prioritize among a wide array of competing needs in particular post-conflict contexts. Practitioners and scholars debated peace building while referring to a confusing and overlapping mix of goals, activities, timelines and contexts. Turf battles within the UN system and in government's further fueled terminological inflation and operational confusion. While there were consistently also voices calling for greater clarity and strategic focus, in general, strategy tended to lose out to "laundry lists" and what could be called a "no agency left behind" notion of peace building. There were no consistently reliable mechanisms to exercise judgment about priorities and the mobilization of resources behind them, nor clarity about ultimate goals or specific objectives or a shared under- standing of the standards by which outcomes should be evaluated.

In After War's End, scholar Roland Paris (2004) adopts a similar standard and declares only two of the major UN peace building operations since 1989 to be successes: Namibia and Croatia. Cases like the Central American peace processes and Mozambique - usually included among the success stories of the 1990s - are judged to be mixed outcomes since underlying causes of the wars viz., poverty and land inequality persisted alongside the lack of armed conflict.

There are three fundamental problems with such an ambitious standard. First, the focus on removing underlying, or "root," causes tends to reinforce simplistic understandings of why specific conflicts occur: many societies are characterized by deep poverty, social exclusion, and other inequities, but relatively few of these experience armed conflict and civil war (Kanbur 2007). Second, while these underlying factors almost certainly increase a society's vulnerability to armed conflict, they are arguably less remediable by the actions of international third parties, especially over relatively short time frames. Third, as Stedman notes, by conflating qualified successes like El Salvador with unmitigated disasters like Angola and Rwanda, such a standard fails to differentiate among very different types and degrees of failure or acknowledge the value of more modest goals, let alone capture a sense of meaningful difference among specific contexts. As such, it does not provide a useful framework for setting priorities or motivating donors and other external actors to mobilize resources for engagement. A maximalist standard of peace building may be philosophically appealing, but as with any ideal standard for a social good - think of "democracy," "freedom," "justice," - it is too blunt to differentiate between modest progress and outright failure and therefore unhelpful for practitioners.

Does International Peace building Make a Difference? By either minimalist or moderate standards, there is increasingly robust evidence that international involvement can be an important factor in success, though we would argue that the evidence remains largely correlative rather than causal and therefore wanting for finer grained analysis of causality and impact. First, there is a macro correlation in the dramatic rise in international peace activities, including mediation and peacekeeping, alongside the dramatic drop in number and intensity of wars. Andrew Mack makes this argument particularly forcefully (Mack 2005, 2007). Doyle and Sambanis (2006), who focus expressly on peace- building, also tell a positive story. Equally interesting are findings about the comparative effectiveness of the UN. Nicholas Sambanis and J. Schulhofer- Wohl (2005) find that the United Nations significantly increases the prospects for successful peace building, in contrast to a more lackluster performance of non-UN operations. Similarly, Doyle and Sambanis (2006) show that 2 years after war termination, civil wars with any form of UN operation were nearly twice as likely to enjoy success in the form of "participatory peace building" as conflicts without a UN presence (13 out of 27, or 48%, compared to 24 out of 94, or 26% of conflicts). They find that UN missions, especially those with multidimensional peacekeeping mandates, significantly reduce the chances of large-scale violence and enhance chances for minimal political democratization (Doyle and Sambanis 2006:114).14 Collier et al. (2006:14) develop a model that indicates that doubling peace- keeping expenditures would reduce the risk of war reversion from 40% to 31% within 10 years. Former U.S. official James Dobbins also finds the UN more effective when compared to United States' efforts at what he calls "nation-building" (Dobbins 2005; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2005). This is even more impressive if one factors in that the UN is often sent into tough cases where national or regional actors are less likely to tread (Gilligan and Stedman 2003; Doyle and Sambanis 2006).

Need for More Adequate and Flexible Resources Peace building also requires prompt, flexible provision of resources, but these still tend to fall between the cracks of peace- keeping and development. The UN system's principal way to marshal quick resources, for example, is its funding mechanism for peacekeeping. However, the Peacekeeping Support Account, which was naturally designed to support the special requirements of mounting peace keeping missions, is restricted to funding peacekeepers and the things they need but not the programs necessary to jumpstart state functions in the weeks and months following the end of a conflict. A few specific programs recognized as a priority for post-conflict peace operations have been granted exceptions - disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR, with emphasis on reintegration); justice and security sector reform (including a minimal foundation for the rule of law); transitional justice; and some activities to help

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generate and administer state revenues. However, crucial peace building activities still heavily rely on extra-budgetary mechanisms, which are ad hoc, slow, and risk undermining even the effectiveness of peacekeeping, let alone longer-term peace building. In the UN context, peace building activities have alternatively been treated from a budgetary perspective as part of the UNs development functions or its routine political work, but these budgets lack flexibility and speed in marshaling resources. Peace building activities are similarly constrained by bilateral aid budgets. The UN system, international financial institutions and bilateral donors have increasingly adopted new mechanisms to overcome these limitations and enhance post-conflict interventions, including the creation within existing bureaucracies of new units designed to focus on transitional contexts e.g., the U.S. Department of State's SCRS, the World Bank's Post- Conflict Unit and Fragile States Group, UNDPs Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery), new initiatives to get cross-agency coherence (e.g., the range of ''whole of government'' initiatives in several donor capitals); the development or adaptation of tools such as joint assessment missions and planning processes (e.g., Post-Conflict Needs Assessments, Integrated Mission Planning Processes, or Integrated Peace building Strategies); and new funding mechanisms to get appropriate levels and forms of financing. These efforts have helped bridge the so-called ''relief-to-development'' continuum, but much remains to be done.

Gaps in Civilian Capacity Post-conflict peace building also requires considerably greater civilian expertise in critical functional areas than presently exists, as has been widely noted. This is particularly urgent where state building activities are concerned, which requires specialized knowledge in areas ranging from DDR, justice and security sector reform, transitional fiscal systems, civil service administration, basic service delivery, and transitional justice, among others. Bilateral donors have begun to enhance capacities in these areas, though still often insufficiently and through the ad hoc use of contractors (Patrick and Brown 2007). Though the UN's capacities have also grown, it lacks depth in many areas which will need to be bolstered both at headquarters and especially in the field, whether through building this expertise in-house or devising a creative arrangement to mobilize it from elsewhere (Executive Office of the Secretary-General 2006). Importantly, the knowledge needed is more than just technical expertise and should be understood as embedded in the inherently political context of international peace building and state building assistance. Some analysts have raised concerns about potential waste and competition generated by overlapping capacities and suggested that international actors ought to invest in specialized capabilities that, over time, will allow them to play more ''niche'' roles. In our view, this would only be helpful to a limited extent. While wasteful duplication should be reduced, the current problem is not too much capacity but too little. Some degree of duplication is not only inevitable but probably also desirable, since the roles

afforded to international actors - whether the UN, the African Union, the European Union, or the OAS - will often be shaped by political considerations, and a minimal capacity will be necessary to handle such eventualities. A useful way to think about capacity development might be to think in terms of flexible, modular capacities that can be put at the service of different institutions depending on con- text. Under any circumstances, however, this issue puts a premium on having viable mechanisms for judging who can best do what and coordinating efforts accordingly.

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