

Ending Wars and Building Peace: International Responses to War-Torn Societies¹

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Scholars and practitioners of international relations have devoted increasing attention to how cease-fires, 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 peacebuilding. The creation in 2006 of a UN Peacebuilding 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 peacebuilding, relating them to new thinking about fragile states. It then analyzes the international architecture for addressing post-conflict peacebuilding, 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: peacebuilding, peacekeeping, post-conflict reconstruction, state building, civil war, nation building

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 peacebuilding 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

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in 1991 and Rwanda in 1993–1994. 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).²

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).³ 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; Lacină 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 peacebuilding 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 peacebuilding, along with a few dedicated UN “Peacebuilding Support Offices.”⁵

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 peacebuilding, including the creation in 2006 of a new UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and its related mechanisms, a Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and a Peacebuilding Fund.

Both experience and scholarship point, however, to a series of chronic weaknesses 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 peacebuilding.

This article reviews what we know and do not know about post-war peacebuilding, arguing for the importance of state institution building to peacebuilding, provided this is approached with sensitivity to specific configurations of state-society relations. We focus on peacebuilding after the cessation of armed conflict (rather than a more expansive concept of peacebuilding that includes efforts undertaken amid active wars).⁶ We focus on a macro level that could be

²Weak states are often seen as a primary “vector of transmission” for such cross-border threats. For a critical analysis, see Patrick (2006).

³Although the various data sets of post-1945 civil wars conflict in some dimensions, all agree on the dramatic increase in percentage of wars ended without victory or defeat.

⁴Licklider finds civil wars that ended through victory (between 1945 and 1993) recurred only 15% of the time, whereas those that ended differently (through both negotiated settlements and petering out) recurred 50% of the time. Lacină finds similar figures for internal armed conflicts from 1946 to 2004: 15% for victories and 42% for negotiated settlements, excluding petering out, which recurred more often.

⁵These missions are identified on the UN Department of Peacekeeping official web page.

⁶We thus use the term “post-conflict” as a short-hand since the alternative—“post-war”—would be misleading in relation to some of the contexts, which do not rise to the level of war, we discuss.

described as peacebuilding “grand strategy” rather than on specific functional areas of post-conflict peacebuilding about which there is an extensive and growing literature (e.g., security sector reform, transitional justice, or economic recovery). We review the evolution in international peacebuilding architecture and assess its main shortcomings and prospects, arguing that further changes will likely be necessary to successfully meet peacebuilding challenges in coming years.

What Is Peacebuilding?

Considerable ink has been expended wrestling with the concept of peacebuilding 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 peacebuilding in relation to a conflict continuum that passed from pre-conflict prevention through peacemaking and peacekeeping. Peacebuilding 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 peacebuilding 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 “peacebuilding” 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 peacebuilding 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 peacebuilding while referring to a confusing and overlapping mix of goals, activities, timelines, and contexts. Turf battles within the UN system and in governments further fueled terminological inflation and operational confusion (see Table 1). 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 peacebuilding. 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 understanding of the standards by which outcomes should be evaluated.

Recent years have seen greater rigor in discussions and scholarship about peacebuilding, especially as several waves of international peace operations now allow observation of longer-term patterns of success and failure.⁷ We adopt

⁷A relatively small number of scholars have driven this trend, several of whom, importantly, have also served in the UN or other practitioner institutions, including Paul Collier, Michael Doyle, Andrew Mack, Roland Paris, and Stephen Stedman.

TABLE 1. Related Concepts and Terms

Peacebuilding—Actions undertaken by international or national actors to institutionalize peace, understood as the absence of armed conflict and a modicum of participatory politics. **Post-conflict peacebuilding** is the subset of such actions undertaken after the termination of armed hostilities.

Peace implementation—Actions undertaken by international or national actors to implement specific peace agreements, usually in the short-term. Where operable, usually defines—and either enables or constrains—the framework for peacebuilding.

State building—Actions undertaken by international or national actors to establish, reform, or strengthen the institutions of the state which may or may not contribute to peacebuilding.

Nation building—Actions undertaken, usually by national actors, to forge a sense of common nationhood, usually in order to overcome ethnic, sectarian, or communal differences; usually to counter alternate sources of identity and loyalty; and usually to mobilize a population behind a parallel state building project. May or may not contribute to peacebuilding. Confusingly equated to post-conflict stabilization and peacebuilding in some recent scholarship and popular political discourse (as in President George W. Bush’s injunction: “no nation building”).

Stabilization—Actions undertaken by international actors to reach a termination of hostilities and consolidate peace, understood as the absence of armed conflict. The term of art dominant in U.S. policy, usually associated with military instruments, usually seen as having a shorter time horizon than peacebuilding, and heavily associated with a post-9/11 counterterrorism agenda.

Reconstruction—Actions undertaken by international or national actors to support the economic, and to some extent social, dimensions of post-conflict recovery. Also a familiar term in the World Bank and U.S. policy circles (e.g., Office of Stabilization and Reconstruction) and reflects roots in the experience of post-war assistance in Europe after World War II.

Peace operations—Operations undertaken by international actors in the midst of or after armed conflict, usually consisting of peacekeeping but may also encompass a range of civilian and political tasks (“multidimensional peacekeeping” and peacebuilding).

a definition of peacebuilding that reflects the trend among scholars of armed conflict, as well as some practitioners, which is: actions undertaken by international or national actors to institutionalize peace, understood as the absence of armed conflict (“negative peace”) and a modicum of participatory politics (a component of “positive peace”) that can be sustained in the absence of an international peace operation. If there is a trade-off between these goals, the immediate absence of conflict, in our view, should take priority if peacebuilding is the frame of reference. This definition has the merit of defining outcomes that are analytically clear—to an extent, even measurable—and modest enough to make practical sense as an objective for international actors. For purposes of this paper, we focus only on post-conflict contexts and on external actors. While we devote attention to state building in that regard, we do not address in detail the broader question of fragile, weak, or failed states in the absence of civil war, nor do we address questions of democratization and democratic transition, though this, we feel, remains a gap in both analysis and practice, in which the healthy trend to greater focus on states has nonetheless tended to eclipse thinking carefully about regimes.

Measuring Success

Divergent concepts of peacebuilding have meant that there is not yet a generally accepted criterion for “success.” Different yardsticks yield different results, though by almost any measure the record is mixed. It is also important to distinguish what we know about peacebuilding’s signal aim—avoiding relapse to war—from what we know about whether international peacebuilding activities have anything to do with it.

What Do We Know about War Recurrence?

Scholarship is increasingly consensual about patterns of war termination and recurrence, though there is considerably less attention to finer-grained analysis of causal dynamics by which peace relapses to war.

First, the total number and intensity of wars have globally declined by roughly half since the very early 1990s. Contrary to conventional wisdom and anxieties, this downward trend includes internal wars, even though these represent a larger proportion of total wars than in the past (Marshall and Gurr 2003; Harbom, Hogbladh, and Wallensteen 2006). This overall decline has occurred mainly because more old wars have ended than new wars begun (Hegre 2004:244),⁸ which reinforces the argument that successful peacebuilding may be as—if not more—important than conflict prevention in reducing the fact and toll of war. The trend toward negotiated settlements after the Cold War also created entry points for international peacebuilding: between 1946 and 1990, twice as many conflicts ended through victory than through negotiation, whereas between 1995 and 2004, negotiated settlements were three times as likely to end war as outright victory.⁹

Second, however, an unfortunate number of wars that end have recurred. There is some divergence in research about the rate of recurrence, which is partly due to the difficulty of determining whether any given conflict is better understood as the recurrence of an old fight or the outbreak of a new one, and partly due to scholars' defining the universe of relevant conflicts and data differently. Most argue, however, that between one-fifth and one-third of all ended conflicts revert to warfare within 5 years (Collier and Hoeffler 2004). Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Måns Söderbom (2006), for instance, indicate a 23% chance of reversion within 5 years and 17% in the subsequent 5 years.¹⁰ By way of comparison, a poor country that has not yet experienced war has a 14% risk of conflict in any given 5-year period. Barbara Walter suggests a similar rate of 36% of civil wars that ended between 1945 and 1996 ever experiencing renewed warfare (Walter 2004). Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis (2006), in the most serious quantitative study of international peacebuilding to date, find that 69% of civil wars that began and ended between 1945 and 1999 failed by a higher standard, either undergoing organized violence of any sort or experiencing political authoritarianism. Mack's paper in this series indicates a higher reversion rate of 43% within 5 years for armed conflicts that ended with a negotiated settlement (Mack 2007:5).

Third, several factors appear correlated with failed peace processes and/or war recurrence. These include number of warring parties, absence of an inclusive peace agreement with sufficient buy-in from all parties, presence of spoilers, degree of collapse of state institutions, number of soldiers, availability of lootable natural resources, hostility of the neighborhood, and whether a war is one of secession (Downs and Stedman 2002). Stedman and Downs use these factors to characterize the "degree of difficulty" of specific post-conflict environments which they persuasively argue also needs to qualify judgments about the relative success or failure of international peace operations. A simpler, but compatible, set of risk factors is offered by Doyle and Sambanis for

⁸Hegre also notes that the duration of wars declined, and the rate of war onset remained relatively constant in the 1990s.

⁹Between 1995 and 2004, out of 48 wars ended, 36 concluded with negotiation compared to victory. Note that these figures exclude conflicts that petered out (Kreutz 2006).

¹⁰Paul Collier, V. L. Elliott, Havard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis's (2003) previous—and still widely cited—work gave a higher rate of 39% risk of reversion within the first 5 years and 32% within the second. For the updated statistics, see Collier et al. (2006).

whom degree of difficulty is defined by two composite measures: one, “degree of hostility,” which incorporates the type of war, number of parties, type of settlement, and level of casualties, and two, “local capacity,” which is derived primarily from economic indicators but which they treat as a partial proxy for institutional capacity (Doyle and Sambanis 2006:84). For both Stedman/Downs and Doyle/Sambanis, the greater the difficulty of the situation, the more is required from international actors in terms of troops, money, political engagement, and sustained attention. Doyle and Sambanis make this the third leg of what they describe as a triangular “ecology” of peacebuilding.

Fourth, we have good general indications that international peace operations can help reduce a country’s risk of reversion to war. According to Doyle and Sambanis, the vulnerability of negotiated settlements to renewed conflict can be offset if a settlement is comprehensive and if its implementation involves a multi-dimensional peace operation. Importantly, this positive correlation between international efforts and enduring peace is strongest for peace operations that include a range of peacebuilding components and not those—such as traditional peacekeeping or more limited diplomatic efforts—that do not (Doyle and Sambanis 2006).

Nonetheless, we still know remarkably little on a more specific level about which international efforts work and which do not, as well as how to calibrate international responses in contexts that are *not* characterized by comprehensive settlements or likely to attract a major, sustained level of international attention.

What Counts as a Successful Outcome?

Against that background, how high should one set the bar in defining the success of peacebuilding efforts?

A Maximalist Standard: Root Causes

The most ambitious measures are those that expect peacebuilding to redress so-called “root causes” of conflict. This is essentially the standard implied by the United Nations Security Council (2001) in a Presidential Statement on peacebuilding in February 2001:

The Security Council recognizes that peacebuilding is aimed at preventing the outbreak, the recurrence or the continuation of armed conflict and therefore encompasses a wide range of political, development, humanitarian and human rights programmes and mechanism. This requires short- and long-term actions tailored to address the particular needs of societies sliding into conflict or emerging from it. These actions should focus on fostering sustainable development, the eradication of poverty and inequalities, transparent and accountable governance, the promotion of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law and the promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence. (UN Security Council, 2001)

In *After War’s End*, scholar Roland Paris (2004) adopts a similar standard and declares only two of the major UN peacebuilding 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 peacebuilding 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.

A Minimalist Standard: No Renewed Warfare

At the other end of the spectrum is a minimalist standard. This standard represents the most readily visible indicator of success for efforts to consolidate peace.

As noted above, there is significant evidence that peace operations work to “keep the peace” in the short term whereas the record is more mixed in the medium term. In addition to a troubling rate of recurrence, war recurrence also accounts for a good portion of the world’s “new” wars. Thus, seven of the nine armed conflicts that broke out in 2005 represented renewed fighting between previous foes.¹¹ This record suggests that peace operations have yet to succeed in establishing the conditions necessary for peace (or prevention of war recurrence) in the medium run. While we do know about some risk factors for recurrence as noted above, including the correlation of increased risk with certain economic policies, levels of aid and military expenditures, we still know comparatively little about the precise circumstances and causal pathways by which armed conflict recurs. While the minimalist standard may provide a ready indicator of success and failure, more work is thus required to understand in specific cases and across them, the conditions under which war recurs and how international action might mitigate them.

Moderate Standard: No Renewed Warfare Plus Decent Governance

A more demanding definition of “success,” in which peacebuilding is assessed by looking at both war recurrence and quality of post-war governance, also shows a mixed record of outcomes.

In their major study, Doyle and Sambanis assess peacebuilding outcomes over both 2- and 5-year time frames.¹² They find that over half of all 121 civil wars

¹¹This is according to Uppsala’s reputable data set. See L. Harbom, S. Hogbladh, and P. Wallensteen (2006:620–621).

¹²This measure of peacebuilding was scored both 2 and 5 years after war termination. A low threshold and a higher threshold were also tested, with a failure rate of 65% under the higher threshold. See appendix to Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis (2000).

ending between 1944 and 1999 resulted in “failed” peacebuilding, whether one measures “success” conservatively (absence of large-scale violence) or more ambitiously (absence also of low-level violence and degree of political openness) (Doyle and Sambanis 2006).

This moderate standard is pragmatically and normatively appealing, though it is important to acknowledge that it, too, is imperfect, difficult to quantify, and leaves important issues about governance comparatively underexamined. For example, we know that the process of democratization is itself destabilizing and that this destabilization can contribute to war onset, and we know that while democracies do not go to war often with each other, they do go to war with nondemocracies at relatively high rates (Snyder 2000; Mansfield and Snyder 2001). More conceptual work and empirical testing will be necessary for this moderate standard of peacebuilding success to gain traction.

Nonetheless, the moderate threshold seems likely to best capture understandings within the policy community. Early discussion among the members of the UN PBC indicates that something between minimalist and moderate standards will be most helpful in framing their efforts, and they largely reject maximalist standards, although it must also be noted that there appear to be fairly divergent conceptions of what peacebuilding is about in the first place. Whatever standard is employed, peacebuilding is complex and vulnerable to reversal, a difficulty that increases when more ambitious indicators are included.

Does International Peacebuilding 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 peacebuilding, 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 peacebuilding, in contrast to a more lackluster performance of non-UN operations.¹³ Similarly, Doyle and Sambanis (2006:90) 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 peacebuilding” 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 peacekeeping 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

¹³They also show that this positive effect is greater in the short run, which may have implications for institutional handovers and transition.

¹⁴Their results also find differing impacts for differing types of UN operations as noted earlier and that these have divergent impact based on context variables such as the level of hostility and local capacity.

effective when compared to United States' efforts at what he calls "nation-building" (Dobbins 2005; Sambanis and Schulhofer-Wohl 2005).¹⁵ 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).¹⁶

Where Does State Building Come In?

Experience of dozens of recent international involvements has increasingly shown that rebuilding or establishing at least minimally functioning state institutions is essential to peacebuilding (Stedman et al., 2002; Krasner 2004; Woodward 2005; Marten 2004; Paris 2004). The core idea is that a minimal threshold of nationally recognized, sufficiently effective, and broadly legitimate institutions needs to be in place for peace to endure once foreign troops are withdrawn, though the form that they take may differ considerably. For some, this means principally institutions to ensure law, order, and the repression of resurgent violence (i.e., armies, police forces, and so on). For others, this means mainly the institutions of decision making and legitimation (governments, parliaments, constitutional processes, and so on). For yet others, it relates to the foundations for economic recovery in the form of revenue-generation, rule of law, and creation of stable environments for investment, or to the capacity to deliver core services to a vulnerable population. For us, the core lies in the establishment of institutions with the capacity to prevent, manage, or otherwise adjudicate disputes between groups through political process instead of violence. In particularly damaged or contentious post-war settings, the UN has sometimes been asked to take on aspects of these roles for a transitional period. More often, the UN and other actors (notably, the World Bank) are asked more to facilitate the process by which national actors can assume these roles and functions.

Historically, international peacebuilding efforts tended to neglect state building in favor of emphasis on social relations among conflicting groups or economic determinants of peace (Lederach 1997; Collier 2000). They tended to assume state capacity as a given and did not problematize contestation over state design, form, or function. More recent work has criticized this omission, calling for more attention to public institutions (Paris 2004; Call, 2005). Several factors have driven this new attention to the state, including learning from particular cases where state capacity or its absence was a particular determinant of results (e.g., Afghanistan); the UN being drawn into transitional authority roles in places like Kosovo and East Timor; the advocacy of individual political actors like Ashraf Ghani, the former World Bank official who served as Afghanistan's first post-war Finance Minister; and the convergence with a post-9/11 preoccupation with "fragile," "weak," or "failed" states as security problems.

Successful state building supports the consolidation of peace in a number of ways. First, it enhances mechanisms for security and conflict resolution at the national level that should carry legitimacy in the eyes of the populace and the outside world. Such mechanisms—be they justice systems, policing systems, or service delivery agencies—provide a credible arena and framework (or at least a foundation for a framework) for social groups to express

¹⁵Critics of the Dobbins study have noted, however, that it fails to account for the degree of difficulty of the case and includes what are arguably outlier cases of post-World War II Germany and Japan.

¹⁶Though this story is nuanced: despite the recent experience of Lebanon in 2006, the UN is less likely to go into the arguably toughest cases of major post-war environments of high strategic interest to great powers, such as Iraq or Afghanistan.

preferences and resolve conflicts nonviolently. If states work mainly to provide public goods rather than line private pockets, they reduce the incentives for populations and political elites to use violence. In post-war societies with an international presence, state building should also accelerate the orderly withdrawal of international troops and civilians, ensuring stability, and popular support for an emergent regime. From the perspective of sustainable economies, functioning and legitimate states also provide the infrastructure for sustainable development with a diminishing role for external actors. All of these factors point to a complementary relationship between peacebuilding and state building, one which exists in many circumstances and should be nourished.^{17,18,19,20}

When State Building and Peacebuilding Collide

State building processes can, however, undermine peace in a number of ways. Enhancing the power and institutional reach of the national state may create the fact or perception of insecurity or exclusion among alienated groups. Where external actors channel resources to corrupt, predatory central governments in the name of strengthening state institutions (think of Zaire during the Cold War), state-strengthening only advances abusive authority and fuels resentment and armed resistance. Conversely, peace-making efforts can undermine the emergence of a responsive and representative state, for example, where this entails making deals which bolster armed groups who seek to divide or capture state resources (as in Liberia in 2003).

Specific tensions between state building and peacebuilding are visible in the security and economic spheres. On the security front, a sustained international military presence which may be deemed essential to peacebuilding can lessen the urgency of building national capacity to control or counter violence. Alternatively, efforts to establish national coercive capacity—whether in the form of armies, police, or other forces—can empower some segments of the population at the expense of others in a way that militates against political moderation and reconciliation. Conversely, international support for armed parties believed useful for other policy goals (e.g., counterterrorism) can undermine *both* peacebuilding and state building, especially when such groups have an interest in resisting state authority politically, economically, or even militarily.

On the economic front, analysts have criticized neoliberal structural adjustment programs of the IMF and the World Bank for diminishing state resources precisely when post-conflict societies need to boost depleted state capacity (de Soto and del Castillo 1994). Others call attention to the manner in which aid agencies tend to bypass state structures which, at a minimum, misses an opportunity to strengthen state capacity and can also directly undermine it. Sometimes, this is driven by legitimate concern about corruption; other times, it is driven by

¹⁷Others question how broadly applicable Tilly's (1975) analysis is for contemporary state formation, drawing as it does mainly on the experience of state formation in early modern Europe.

¹⁸Though, of course, there are other conceivable policy responses that may no longer be normatively acceptable, such as trusteeships or protectorates. On state building see Fukuyama (2004); Chesterman, Ignatieff, and Thakur (2005); and Call and Wyeth (forthcoming).

¹⁹Other analysts have tried to develop more nuanced taxonomies of state weakness and failure, though none are as yet widely shared. For example see, Zartman (1995); Rotberg (2003); and three reports of the State Failure Task Force from 1995 through 2000, available at <http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/pitf/pitfdata.htm>.

²⁰That the failed state concept emphasizes the value of order over others like justice can be seen in The Fund for Peace's Failed State Index (FSI). FSI proposes as the solution for *all* failed states the strengthening of five "core" institutions, three of which—the military, the police, and the justice system—directly reflect a concern for order and stability. See Fund for Peace Failed States Index, Frequently Asked Questions #Q9, available at <http://www.fundforpeace.org/programs/fsi/fsifaq.php#q9>.

donor requirements to use own-national contractors or more predictable bureaucratic imperatives toward competition. However motivated, international substitution for a state's service delivery capacity will likely exert a dampening effect on development of sustainable national capacities. In addition, international organizations offer salaries and status to national employees with which post-conflict states cannot compete. Consequently the most competent and best trained personnel are often drawn from the state, weakening already fragile public institutions and agencies.

All these factors can undermine not just the capacity of the state but also its legitimacy, especially via the critical vector of revenue (Rubin forthcoming). States require revenue to expend on essential services and goods for the population, including security, health care, education, and the administration of justice and the resolution of conflicts.²¹ Citizens are best positioned to monitor and hold accountable states when they are the source of state revenues. When states acquire revenue largely from external sources, then "ownership" lies with external sources (usually the IFIs or bilateral donors) rather than national actors. When service delivery occurs outside of the state, and when resources are expended independent of state channels, a crucial mechanism of state-society relations is weakened. In short, the form and functions of international assistance can themselves pose a partial impediment to building peace in weak states.

Persistent Problems with International Peacebuilding

Over the past 15 years, the architecture and mechanisms for international peacebuilding have improved considerably, as noted at the outset. There is a much greater understanding of the complexities of peacebuilding, more self-critique about the limits of international assistance, and increasing appreciation of the unique demands of specific situations, particularly over questions of state-society relations and governance. As peacebuilding has become a comparative growth industry, there have also been waves of effort to reform, streamline, specialize, or coordinate among international actors, both multilaterally and bilaterally. Within the UN system and within donor governments, agencies are much more aware of functional priorities for post-war societies, which has spurred specialization of specific international offices dedicated to tasks including transitional justice; police development; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of combatants; refugee return; and economic recovery.

On the other hand, these advances have not yet sufficiently diminished persistent and serious shortcomings in international responses to war-torn societies, which the PBC and related bodies have just been created to fill. Whether they are able to do so will be an important determinant of the effectiveness and appropriateness of international architecture on these issues for some time to come. Several issues seem to us the most pressing.

Problems of Will and Attention

Peacebuilding requires sustained political attention from actors with resources, yet this attention—whether that of the UN Security Council, key capitals, or international institutions—is generally short-lived, crisis-driven, and prone to weaken when it is needed the most. This may not be avoidable, given the interests of and constraints upon those actors, but short political attention spans

²¹See Call and Wyeth (forthcoming) for elaboration on some essential functions of states and how to "build" them.

translate into hiccups or inadequacies in resource allocation, from troops to money, which can pose major problems for peacebuilding. This compounds a related problem of ensuring that UN and other peacebuilding activities have sustained political and financial oversight from member states and relevant intergovernmental bodies.

This tendency is perhaps most visible at the UN Security Council, but also characterizes other international actors. Governments all too frequently shift bilateral funds from a country once a cease-fire appears to hold but before peace is self-sustaining, and “new” crises like Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Darfur have successively gobbled up peacebuilding resources from places like Haiti, Sierra Leone, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

A related “political will” problem is that certain crises receive more political attention and financial resources than others, generally reflecting the strategic interests of great powers. The new concern about weak states as vectors of transmission for a range of global ills such as networked criminality, trafficking, illicit arms, disease, and terrorism has made countries that might earlier have been considered peripheral to great power interests newly important. However, this does not necessarily translate into smart policy choices about how to strengthen weak states and may in fact resuscitate old habits of investing in autocratic allies or “securitizing” foreign and aid policy in ways that are counterproductive.

Need for More Adequate and Flexible Resources

Peacebuilding also requires prompt, flexible provision of resources, but these still tend to fall between the cracks of peacekeeping 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 peacekeeping 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 generate and administer state revenues. However, crucial peacebuilding 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 peacebuilding.

In the UN context, peacebuilding 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. Peacebuilding 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 S/CRS, 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 Peacebuilding 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 peacebuilding also requires considerably greater civilian expertise in critical functional areas than presently exists, as has been widely noted.²² 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).²³ 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 peacebuilding 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 context. Under any circumstances, however, this issue puts a premium on having viable mechanisms for judging who can best do what and coordinating efforts accordingly.

Challenging Interface between Civilian and Military Peacebuilders

A further challenge for peacebuilding is the interface between civilian and military international actors who have very different organizational cultures and incentives, especially as militaries have gotten more into the business of peacebuilding (and thus state building). Importantly, there are also significant differences between national militaries in their doctrine, culture, and training, but these generally are less prominent than problems in the interface between military and civilian organizations in peacebuilding.

Military organizations are primarily concerned with order. They are uniformly trained to combat enemy armed forces. Most military personnel are accustomed to distrust non-nationals, to privilege results over process, and to believe their

²²See the UN Secretary-General’s remarks during the Security Council thematic debate on Civilian Crisis Management and Peacebuilding, September 22, 2004, as well as the resultant Presidential Statement (UN Doc. S/PRST/2004/33).

²³Patrick and Brown show that this greater civilian capacity is still more aspirational than real.

organization can deliver results better than any civilian organization, thus preferring to do things themselves rather than letting or encouraging others to carry out tasks. These traits tend to be hostile to the requirements of state building which asks external actors to support processes that rest primarily with national- and local-level state builders, even when these processes may seem inefficient. These traits are compounded by the tendency of international military and civilian agencies toward mutual distrust.

In recent years, international military forces and civilian agencies have worked hard to improve their cooperation in post-conflict or weak states (Weiss and Collins 2000; Flavin 2004). Communication and coordination are much improved in donor capitals and within organizations like the United Nations and NATO. Both sides of this interface understand the mindset and skills of the other, thanks to years of meetings, workshops, and accumulated field experiences. There are also obvious comparative advantages and complementarities to exploit. Establishing and maintaining security—for which military capacities are generally required—is a vital condition for any civilian agency to operate. International military actors are also well-suited to train other military personnel in military skills and practices. Where specific military units are trained in policing, they have a particular contribution to make in post-conflict contexts and they have often also been trained to work with civilian populations and interface with civilian authorities (Perito 2004; Williams 2005).

Despite progress, risks persist that, due to their greater resources, institutional interests or to genuine security problems, military organizations will end up playing a role in state building for which they are less well suited than civilian agencies, that generally better comprehend the logic of state building and are more flexibly able to work with national or local actors in the driver's seat.

Gaps in Contextual Knowledge of Specific Post-Conflict Societies

International actors now recognize the need to avoid “cookie-cutter” approaches in favor of strategies tailored to specific contexts.²⁴ This requires investing in a different type of knowledge and society-specific expertise beyond functional skills. External actors need to understand the history, politics, and cultures of the countries in which they are attempting to “build peace,” whether societies are emerging from statelessness, institutionalized authoritarian regimes, or highly informal predatory states. Without understanding something about how state-society relations have evolved, how war may have changed things, or who has power and how power works, any generic peacebuilding strategy is likely to be a poor fit. In particular, traditional sources of authority and governance must be well understood—both their assets and liabilities. This may mean that external actors need to involve national staff more integrally in peacebuilding planning and implementation, or that they need more actively to engage historians, anthropologists or other observers who speak local languages and are deeply knowledgeable about local culture and context. Given the importance of supporting rather than supplanting national and local actors, knowledge of the local is particularly important.

However, several factors impede context-sensitive peacebuilding. First, the very growth of peacebuilding and its increasing professionalization, ironically, makes

²⁴One of the more egregious examples being the United States Government's 2003 strategy for de-Ba'athification, which reportedly copied its 1945 strategy for dealing with the Nazis so closely that the word “Germany” was mistakenly left in the Iraq planning documents.

cookie-cutter approaches more likely. The UN has worked hard in recent years to develop standard operating procedures that allow it to act quickly at the beginning of a post-conflict transition, largely in response to criticism that the organization acted too slowly in the past, particularly in peacekeeping. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has worked to evolve general doctrine in order to reduce latitude for lapses in judgment and to build upon and integrate lessons from prior operations. Yet standard procedures are essentially templates, and doctrine tends to give universal guidance that works against case-specific approaches.

Second, the real or perceived urgency of decision making after conflict also inclines institutions like the UN to rely not just on standard procedures but also on a small number of “standard people,” who also cannot be expected to be knowledgeable about every unique context.

Third, in the UN setting, there are serious resource constraints that limit its ability to develop context-specific knowledge. Within the system as a whole, there is probably more context-specific expertise than in virtually any other international institution, given the multinationality and considerable field experience of its staff. But the human resource systems within the UN, along with bureaucratic stovepipes, make it exceedingly difficult to identify and mobilize these people in a timely way. Moreover, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), to which the UN looks formally for “country expertise,” rarely has the necessary level of detailed knowledge for strategy and planning for field operations. Many desk officers cover multiple countries and regional organizations, few have had desirable field experience, and most have principally diplomatic training which tends to underappreciate social, economic, or cultural dynamics. They are also strikingly few in number: in 2004, DPA had fewer staff actually monitoring country developments (52 desk officers) than the nongovernmental organization Human Rights Watch (65 country monitors). The World Bank had more staff based in Indonesia (66) than all of DPA’s country officers combined (Call 2005).²⁵

Problems in Evaluating State Capacity, Legitimacy, and Effectiveness

Aside from measurement problems generated by unclear overarching aims, international actors confront specific problems in measuring progress in building state capacity and, especially, state legitimacy. Given the conceptual abstraction of the “state,” measuring progress in state building is challenging. Taxes, of course, provide one measure. How much revenue does the state collect as a portion of all monies spent on public goods? How agile is the state in tracking and expending that money? Similar measures of core state competencies also offer some indicators: to what extent does the state exercise a monopoly over the legitimate use of coercion in the territory? To what extent do informal, nonstate sanctioned forms of authority exist alongside formal state institutions? To what extent are basic goods like education and health provided by a system overseen, even funded, by the state? These indicators do not preclude state-regulated private mechanisms of state functions. Even if the data described above exist—and most of it does not, on a discriminating, detailed, comparative scale—it is difficult for analysts to agree on how to combine these for an overall indicator of state effectiveness.

Legitimacy poses other problems. Even if polling data exist on public attitudes about the state, these are only viable to the extent that people feel comfortable

²⁵This paragraph draws on Call (2005). DPAs 52 desk officers included non-payroll Junior Professional Officers and research assistants.

reporting their preferences. The more afraid they are of the state, the less reliable this sort of data, posing a special dilemma for weak or divided states. And even where reliable polling data exist for public attitudes about state performance, public support for state institutions, or popular images of the state, it remains difficult to discern the extent to which such results reflect external or internal deliberate attempts to bolster state legitimacy. These obstacles to measuring state building outcomes pose challenges for garnering and retaining support for such programs.

Recent Institutional Reforms—What Prospects?

These patterns have prompted various reforms to the international peacebuilding regime over the past 10–15 years. Among donors, recognition of these and other weaknesses propelled moves toward integration or at least tighter coordination between development and political and security actors in addressing conflict-vulnerable contexts (Patrick and Brown 2007).²⁶ Many of the leaders in this trend are governments for whom fragile or failed states are major policy priorities.

In the UN community, recognition of these weaknesses underpinned a core recommendation made by the UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change that there needed to be a center of strategic gravity on peacebuilding that would bring leading external actors together around the table with national actors. The panel specifically recommended establishment of a new intergovernmental PBC that would bring together all the actors deemed critical to successful peacebuilding—the UN Security Council, troop contributing countries, IFIs and leading donors, and other key member states and relevant regional actors. The panel also recommended creation a PBSO and a Peacebuilding Fund.

Expectations were initially high for the 31 member commission, which began to function in mid-2006, though these observably lowered after the protracted negotiations in 2005–2006 about who would be a member and obstacles to hiring sufficient staff for the PBSO. It was arguably unfair to judge progress at a time when UN leadership was itself in transition, which seemed to incline some member states and UN officials to go into a holding pattern on multiple issues, including peacebuilding. As of mid-2007, the best case outcome is that the two cases on the commission's agenda—Burundi and Sierra Leone—will attract a high quality of strategic engagement in a timely fashion and result in the mobilization of sufficient and well-targeted resources to support consolidation of peace and, in addition, that a year of start-up experimentation will help the new body to become more focused and effective in extending its reach beyond its two initial cases.

The bigger picture gives cause for concern, however, if the larger worry is about global recurrence of war and the toll this exacts on development, human welfare, and global security. If the PBC is likely to have a carrying capacity of two to three small to mid-sized conflicts—even if it handles them superbly—what does this imply about the wider universe of conflict contexts, from East Timor and Haiti through Afghanistan, the DRC, Sudan, Lebanon, and potentially Iraq?²⁷ Of course, the PBC does not have to directly handle all such cases in order to succeed. Success in improving international assistance in a few cases

²⁶Patrick and Brown's study reviews the track record of these efforts among seven international donors.

²⁷The PBC and affiliated mechanisms are unlikely to play much of an effective role in dealing with weak, nonconflict states compared to bilateral and regional actors (as well as private and nongovernmental entities) who are likely to have far greater leverage.

like Burundi and Sierra Leone might exert a “demonstration effect” that improves responses elsewhere.

Future Challenges

Looking ahead, our concern is that the PBC and related reforms will be limited to making only marginal contributions unless there are more substantial policy shifts among key capitals and agencies that significantly enhance international peacebuilding capacity, will, and skill. Two dominant concerns: the first related to persistent inability of international actors to address important regional dynamics; the second related to constraints on crisis management mechanisms in dealing successfully with the range of post-conflict or turbulent situations.

Location, Location, Location

Resurgent conflict and/or protracted state weakness can enable, accelerate, or exert spillover effects that increase the vulnerability of others to a wider range of global risks. We know about the regional dynamics of certain conflicts, even if these are not widely written about by analysts or incorporated into operational plans (for exceptions, see Rubin and Armstrong, 2003; Pugh et al., 2004). Networks of armed groups, traffickers, and commercial actors, and flows of arms, population and disease can powerfully accelerate and amplify vulnerability to armed conflict as well as resistance to its resolution. Think of the linkages among the countries along Africa’s Mano River basin or the Great Lakes region, or consider the regional conflict formation of Afghanistan, Pakistan and parts of Central Asia, or the crucible of instability in the North Caucasus. Failure to build peace in Côte d’Ivoire may put Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone at risk. These risks also extend to linkages with other security threats if we think of disease (e.g., the role of peacekeepers in spreading HIV/AIDS in Africa), terrorism, or the spread of conventional or nuclear arms.

Conversely, success in Liberia might exert a positive spillover effect. Regional factors seem undeniable in the longevity of “zones of peace,” at least for inter-state war, in Europe and South America. Nevertheless, the drivers of peace are generally more fragile than those of criminality and war, and deadly internal conflicts can clearly afflict Europe and South America. Negative regional linkages also tend to be more potent where states are weak and cannot exert control over their full territory or population.

Where the strategic interests of extra-regional players are at stake, the costs of peacebuilding failure in a country with such regional linkages is that much greater. Thus, a peacebuilding failure in Lebanon puts not only Lebanese and their neighbors at risk, but could destabilize the broader Middle East, with obvious escalatory potential. A similar level of risk may be present if peacebuilding fails in the neighborhood of weak but populous or otherwise strategically significant states—for example, Nigeria, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia—and, though this paper does not address state failure in the absence of armed conflict, the reverse dynamic is equally worrying in which an imploding Pakistan or Nigeria could draw smaller neighboring countries down with it.

There is a further distributional concern which relates to the disproportionate concentration of conflict in Africa, where most recurrent wars or wars that resist termination have been in the last 15 years. Several factors argue for some continuation of that trend, having largely to do with an unfortunate clustering of risk factors and the vicious circle of probability created by already having a high concentration of armed conflicts, weak states, and dependence on primary commodities. Failure to begin to reverse these trends can have a variety of ripple

effects in terms of human suffering, disease, criminality, and lost opportunity for development.

Are We Heading in the Right Direction?

To anticipate scenarios that test the sufficiency of existing mechanisms requires looking at both “demand” and “supply.” Let us start with the demand side. As noted earlier, many analysts have observed the decline in armed conflict over the past 15 or so years, but the durability of this trend is a question, especially if one sees at least a portion of that decline as attributable to larger shifts in world politics such as the end of the Cold War, the drying up of proxy conflicts that were otherwise not sustainable, and the possibility of new cooperation among global actors in resolving those that remained. If we head further into a period in which proxy war (against terrorists or groups described as such) comes back into style, or prospects for cooperation between major players diminish, there is a risk that this trend is shorter-lived than hoped.

It takes little stretch to imagine a cascade of demand for peacebuilding in the Middle East, for instance, between the war in Lebanon, failed state building in Palestine, the vortex of conflict in Iraq, and the risk of turbulent regime change and/or state collapse in the broader region (e.g., Syria, Iran, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia). Afghanistan and Pakistan are another center of potential instability. In Asia, there are questions about whether relatively small-scale conflict in places like Nepal, southern Thailand, the Philippines, and Myanmar will escalate or dampen. There are risks of new rounds of conflict in Latin America after comparative stability in 1990s, and, of course, this paper does not even touch on the question of interstate conflict or the question of state failure in strategically pivotal states.

Let us then turn to the question of the “supply” of international peacebuilding efforts in relation to this uncertain demand: how confident can we be in the existing machinery? We have already noted the disproportion between the expectations for the UN’s new peacebuilding institutions, which are likely to have a carrying capacity of just a few, relatively small-scale, strategically peripheral conflicts and the much larger universe of post-conflict cases. This is less worrying if one looks to the UN more to demonstrate a better approach than to implement it, but the question then becomes one of alternative peacebuilding providers, their relative capabilities, and the intelligence of mechanisms to ensure that suppliers are appropriately matched to demand.

Here the prospects are also mixed. Regional organizations are potentially important actors, though the African Union is far from having resources or operational capabilities that begin to match needs on the continent; the Organization of American States has high regional credibility but is largely untested operationally; and most other regional actors were not conceived to play operational roles of this type. The European Union and NATO are potentially more promising as regional actors with global reach, and both institutions can command greater resources than most other actors, including the UN. However, their operational engagements have to date been relatively limited, and an obvious question is whether European populations would accept the EU, in particular, taking on a more robust and internationally extended role, with all the risks that might entail.²⁸ The Bretton Woods Institutions (BWI) and regional development banks are another locus of policy

²⁸The 2006 G8 Declaration cited above emphasizes the importance of working with the UN and the PBC, though apparently only after being raised by a single G8 government.

and financing, though still questionably “joined up” with political, security and other operational actors. The BWIs slow and insufficient reformulation of neoliberal recipes for the requirements of state building reminds us that systemic-level factors—such as neoliberal pressures from the international financial system and global standards favoring the free flow of conventional arms—offer an unappreciated arena for enhancing the possibilities for post-conflict state building.

Overall, there remain real constraints of will and capacity across this range of institutions, which relate variously to resources, flexibility, ability to scale up or down in relation to need, and ability to partner with other institutions. In policy-making settings, there appears to be a crude rule of thumb that each can only handle two or three crises at a time. As a former official in the U.S. National Security Council staff recently put it, “the worst thing to happen to Darfur in 2006 was Lebanon.”²⁹ It is not at all clear that we are anywhere close to having international policy machinery or instruments that can reliably handle multiple high-profile peacebuilding operations successfully, especially if these are in difficult environments, let alone turn its attention simultaneously to the prevention of or response to state collapse. Civil war or state collapse in a country like Nigeria or Pakistan or North Korea would require a stabilization and reconstruction effort that would almost certainly overwhelm existing net peacebuilding (and peacekeeping) capacities.

Finally, all of the above remains premised on what we propose is still insufficient evidence about the impact of international peacebuilding efforts on war-to-peace outcomes. While there has been considerable deepening of analysis about conflict trends in recent years, both data and analysis of the dynamics of war recurrence remain surprisingly limited. This “evidence deficit” is compounded by a tendency to look for conclusions based on the policy instruments one already has. Thus, analysts and practitioners tend to neglect the regional level of analysis because international actors have few policy tools to engage regionally, even though this is the level at which one is likely to see a clustering of knock-on effects of failed peacebuilding in terms of state fragility, imploding or criminalized economies, displacement, and disease. And missing from virtually any analysis of international peacebuilding—including, frankly, our own—is discussion of economic policy instruments that could have a powerful effect in combating state fragility and reversion to war, such as terms of trade, monetary policy, management of currency fluctuation, and so on. Over the long term, these and other more systemic issues may exert a greater effect on the vulnerability to war or state weakness, but such issues tend to be decided or driven by considerations of interest and power having little to do with the risk of recurrent war.

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²⁹Remarks at conference on Executive Crisis Management in Governments and International Organizations, Center on International Cooperation, New York, September 29–30, 2006.

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