OBSTACLES TO PEACEBUILDING REVISITED

Graciana del Castillo

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Obstacles to Peacebuilding Revisited

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Alvaro de Soto and Graciana del Castillo

*In January 1992, the economic program sponsored by the International Monetary Fund in El Salvador sacrificed the government's ability to implement the UN-mediated peace agreement on the altar of budgetary discipline and placed the country at the brink of relapsing into war. This episode turned the spotlight on a major obstacle to peacebuilding: the UN and the Bretton Woods Institutions, which frequently work elbow-to-elbow where war-torn countries struggle to move to peace, are all too often at odds and even on a collision course. This article analyzes the UN record since then; assesses whether institutional changes have improved or hindered UN capacity to support countries in overcoming such obstacles; and makes proposals for moving forward in a more effective, coherent, and coordinated way. **Keywords:** UN; war-to-peace transition; postconflict peacebuilding; Security Council; IMF conditionality.*

IN 1990–1991, WITH THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S SUPPORT, THE UN LED negotiations to end the long war between the government of El Salvador and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN), its first mediation of an internal conflict. The resulting peace agreement, initialed at midnight on 31 December 1991, included far-reaching institutional reforms and provided for UN support and monitoring of its implementation.

On 31 January 1992 the Security Council, its members represented for the first time ever by their heads of state or government, asked incoming Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali to make recommendations on how to strengthen the capacity of the UN for peacemaking, peacekeeping, and preventive diplomacy. In *An Agenda for Peace,* his report in response, Boutros-Ghali added a new field inspired by the UN's multidisciplinary mission in El Salvador: *postconflict peacebuilding*. He defined it as the activities aimed at preventing the recurrence of conflict, as opposed to "preventive diplomacy" aimed at averting a conflict's outbreak.[1]

In Boutros-Ghali's view, the political and economic realities of a war-to-peace transition required "an integrated approach to human security" and called for humanitarian, political, military, human rights, and socioeconomic problems to be addressed jointly by the UN and its agencies to ensure coherence and effectiveness and avoid clashes of competence and waste of resources. Not only was integration necessary, but the UN must be able "to mobilize the resources needed for . . . the peaceful resolution of a conflict."[2]

As we later discovered, a mere six days after the initialing of the peace accord—front-page news worldwide—and apparently oblivious to it, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) board of directors quietly approved for El Salvador a typical neoliberal economic stabilization and reform program. The program's strict fiscal provisions effectively prevented the government from complying with the financial requirements of the peace accord. Under its harsh terms, the IMF's program basically pulled the rug out from under the peace accord.

Neither the UN nor the FMLN knew that the government had a clear understanding with the IMF that peace-related expenditure would have to be financed by additional public savings (including from a reduction in military outlays), reallocation of public expenditure, or external resources. Given that military expenditure during the war was largely foreign financed, this not only was an unrealistic scenario, but it paid no heed to John M. Keynes's dictum that peace has high economic consequences.[3]

Two years into the El Salvador operation, in a *Foreign Policy* article entitled "Obstacles to Peacebuilding," we questioned the capacity of the UN to tackle the new institutional challenges as the organization emerged from the Cold War. As Boutros-Ghali anticipated, new multidisciplinary missions set up to support war-to-peace transitions went far beyond the military aspects of traditional UN peacekeeping and included diverse civilian activities and a variety of actors.[4]

While many analysts and practitioners interpreted our *Foreign Policy* article as simply calling attention to the lack of coordination between these institutions, our message went far beyond. We argued that preventing recurrence of conflict should override all other goals.

To the difficulty of effectively integrating political and economic issues to make peace sustainable was added the fact that by and large the Security Council was, and continues to be, all too ready to put an end to field missions devoted to peacebuilding and shift responsibility to development bodies, usually the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

The first purpose of the UN is the maintenance of international peace and security, with the Security Council identified as the primary organ responsible for that mission (Article 1 of the UN Charter). It is hard to imagine an area of activity more central to the Council's responsibility than ensuring that a conflict—once the guns have fallen silent—does not recur.

Yet notwithstanding lip service in praise of Boutros-Ghali's insight that there is an intermediate phase between conflict and normalcy, the idea has not been metabolized. The danger of relapse remains high, and preventing that must be the overriding priority. The Council's distaste for supporting countries during the critical phase of peace consolidation has been nakedly evident and has had grim consequences.

The purpose of the article is to assess how the obstacles to peacebuilding that we identified in 1992 have evolved since and whether the UN

capacity to overcome them has improved. The article proceeds as follows: First, we address the need for national ownership and economic reconstruction as basic ingredients of peacebuilding. Second, we analyze the record, the practices, and the challenges with regard to UN peacebuilding. Third, we examine the difficulties involved in moving from the conceptualization to the operationalization of peacebuilding activities. Fourth, we assess whether the "Peacebuilding Architecture" of 2005 improved or hindered UN efforts at peacebuilding. Based on experience, we make a few proposals for moving forward in a more effective, coherent, and coordinated way.

National Ownership, Economic Reconstruction, and Peacebuilding

The demands on the UN to support war-torn countries, both in terms of financial resources and expertise, have greatly increased in the past quarter of a century. As Thomas Weiss notes, picking up the pieces after the dust of conflict has settled "has become *the* growth industry in the United Nations."[5]

In our 1994 *Foreign Policy* article we posited that, as a general rule, it was the role of sovereign governments to harmonize policies and set priorities as they embarked on the war-to-peace transition. We argued that "an arbitrary model of nation building" should not be imposed on reluctant countries. We envisaged transitions in which the sovereign government would be in the front seat designing and implementing policies in which it would have "strong ownership"—even if some were constrained by donors' conditionality and by the demands of undefeated nonstate actors that became partners in peace. We envisaged the UN system and the Bretton Woods Institutions seated behind, close enough to facilitate, coordinate, and monitor the international technical and financial support.[6]

This was largely the pattern of the early 1990s in countries such as El Salvador and Mozambique. Not all wars ended by negotiation, however: starting in the mid-1990s, the transition often occurred in a radical and unpredictable way through military intervention. After the human tragedies in Rwanda and Srebrenica, Boutros-Ghali's *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* noted that a new breed of intrastate and ethnic conflicts presented the UN with operational challenges not encountered since the Congo operation in the early 1960s.[7]

A key feature of these crises was the collapse of state institutions. The ensuing international intervention extended beyond security, humanitarian, human rights, and national reconciliation tasks to strengthen governance and reactivate collapsed economies. This was the case in Rwanda and Burundi and also, by the turn of the century, in Kosovo and East Timor. In the latter, the Security Council gave the UN a transitional and intrusive mandate to carry out all executive and legislative functions until a final status on sovereignty was established.

By contrast, the UN's role was marginal following the attacks of September 11 in Afghanistan, where the organization initially opted for a "light" operational approach, and in Iraq where the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority was supreme.[8] In all four cases, national governments had little policy ownership, a factor we had not anticipated in our 1994 article.

The period following military intervention to end war or to effect regime change, like the one following peace agreements, involves a multidisciplinary path to return to peace, including simultaneous security, political, social, and economic transitions. These four transitions are closely interrelated and should be mutually reinforcing. Failure in any of them puts the others at risk, as has indeed happened.

In particular, the economic transition—also referred to as "economic reconstruction" or the "economics of peace"—should be a strong pillar in peacebuilding efforts, but it has mostly been the neglected factor. The economics of peace is an intermediate phase between the "economics of war" and the "economics of development"; that is, development as usual in countries not affected by war. These phases are not necessarily sequential. In fact, they often overlap in various ways at different times and places. Irrespective of the shape it takes, the main objective of economic reconstruction must be to avoid relapsing into conflict.

Economic reconstruction will not succeed unless the government takes on or accommodates as soon as feasible potential spoilers who benefit from war and do not necessarily welcome the arrival of peace. Spoilers tend to have an economic stake in illicit activities, including drug production and trafficking, smuggling, extortion, and the many other racketeering activities that thrive during wars, including aid manipulation.

One of the major factors that has obstructed peacebuilding and delayed countries from standing on their own feet as wars end is the wrongheaded practice of moving directly from the war economy to development as usual—where economic policymakers aim at optimal policies and practices. Although it is true that war-torn countries face the development challenges that other poor countries do (e.g., alleviating poverty and complying with the UN development goals), and will have to confront them in the transition from war, these are long-term propositions.

In the short run, the primary challenge of economic reconstruction—fundamentally different from development as usual—is the consolidation of peace, so as to avert a relapse into war. Absent consolidation, which must be constructed brick by brick, peace will not last. Without peace, development will not be sustainable.

Besides the conceptual tangle, there is considerable confusion as to the taxonomy of the term *economic reconstruction*, since it is often used interchangeably with "nation-building" (the construction of a national identity), "statebuilding" (the construction of a functioning state), or simply "devel-

opment." The US State Department refers to it as "post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction," UNDP as "early recovery," and the World Bank as "post-conflict reconstruction." The UN uses the term *peacebuilding* to cover all reconstruction-related activities, including political, security, social, and economic ones.

Economic aid is critical to war-torn countries during the reconstruction phase since their savings capacity is low and there is little to tax in terms of production or exports. In countries such as Liberia, Haiti, and Afghanistan, donors channel a large part of their aid outside the government budget and according to their own agendas. This has led to parallel government structures, to weak national ownership, and to a fragmented and highly ineffective use of reconstruction aid. This phenomenon, well documented in the literature, not only has been a major obstacle to peacebuilding but has also led many countries into an aid trap.[9]

Another major obstacle has been the lack of preparedness of the international community[10]—particularly the UN and the US government—to support economic reconstruction and peacebuilding effectively.[11] As Mats Berdal and Hannah Davies note, the growth of these activities over the past decades has magnified the tensions built into the UN system. They cite the conclusion of the 2006 High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence that the UN has become "fragmented and weak . . . [with] a proliferation of agencies mandates and offices creating duplication and dulling the focus on outcomes with moribund entities never discontinued."[12]

US-led operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have highlighted similar tensions within the US government—not unlike those faced by the UN. As Stuart Bowen, former special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction, points out, "The Iraq experience exposed the truth that the United States is not well structured to carry out overseas contingency rebuilding operations." He argues that the interagency integration essential to such operations was lacking, and that "scattered pieces of the current inchoate system needed to be pulled together under a single roof."[13] Afghanistan, of course, was also affected by this lack of interagency integration.

Unfortunately, despite the large amount of resources—military and financial—allocated to peacebuilding, the evidence, as we now attempt to demonstrate, reveals that the obstacles to peacebuilding remain largely unsurmounted.

The Peacebuilding Record, Practices, and Challenges

The twenty-five-year record of UN peacebuilding is indeed bleak.[14] Of the twenty-one countries in which the UN set up multidisciplinary operations, twelve have clearly relapsed into conflict (57 percent) during the first decade of the transition. Some of them have avoided relapse thanks to

costly peacekeeping operations or foreign troops in place to keep the peace.[15] The Failed States Index includes eleven of these countries among its twenty-five worst performers, many of which remain at war. The Peace Index includes six among its eight worst performers.

Even those that have avoided relapse have been largely unable to regain their economic footing and thrive—despite the absence of war and the large foreign aid and technical assistance they have received—and have become highly aid dependent. For example, after two decades of peace, Mozambique, often hailed by the UN and the World Bank as a success story, remains one of the most aid-dependent, poor, and destitute countries in the world, still ranking among the ten worst performers in the Human Development Index.

To reverse such a disappointing record, it is important to analyze how economic reconstruction has been implemented during this period and under what premises. Without understanding the strengths and weaknesses of past practices and drawing from them lessons for the future, it will be difficult to find ways to minimize future obstacles to peacebuilding.

The two-way process between security and the other aspects of the transition to peace—which economists call "reverse causality" and others refer to as "virtuous" circle"—has been largely ignored.[16] Although security is indeed a precondition for the success of the overall war-to-peace transition, the reverse is also true: security will not take root without economic reconstruction, along with political reform and national reconciliation. Unfortunately, key actors in the UN system have failed to accept this fact.

Effective economic reconstruction is also critical to ensuring financing for other aspects of the transition and avoiding chronic aid dependency. Empirical evidence shows that peace operations encompassing extensive programs to rebuild economies and create jobs are particularly successful in promoting long-term peace.[17]

In the aftermath of the Cold War, however, rather than focusing on the economics of peace, the UN and other institutions wrongly assumed the best way forward was to resume normal development as quickly as possible, with the UNDP and the World Bank assuming de facto leadership. Thus, even in El Salvador, economic reconstruction was approached—by the national government and by the international community—as if it were development as usual.

El Salvador provided a glaring example that economic reconstruction amid the complex multidisciplinary transition to peace is fundamentally different from normal development. During this transition, optimal or first-best economic policies are not the best recipe for dealing with the challenge. Often, war-torn countries "have to settle for less than optimal policies in their economic reform efforts so as to accommodate the additional financial burden of reconstruction and peace consolidation." If anything, these countries

face the double burden of implementing peace-related programs in addition to addressing their normal development challenges. The imperative of peace consolidation competes with conventional development needs, putting tremendous pressure on policy decisions, especially budgetary allocations.[18]

This argument was clearly not a prescription for bad economic policies. As emphasized by James Boyce, the special features of the postconflict transition do not imply that sound economic policies are unnecessary, or that they should be sacrificed to political expediency. But in the aftermath of civil war, the soundness of policies can be ascertained only in light of the political economy of the peace process.[19]

Despite the widely recognized interdependence between peace and development, there was little systematic discussion of how economic policy should be reshaped in the special circumstances of a country emerging from civil war.[20] In fact, the UN failed "to become more immersed in the multi-disciplinary aspects of post-conflict peacebuilding [that] required major rethinking and an analytical and operational redefinition of relationships and comparative advantages."[21]

In its absence, many stakeholders were reluctant to accept the basic premise that this process requires impartial political leadership because the objective of peace (which is eminently political) should always prevail over the objective of development (which is eminently economic) since there cannot be sustained development without peace. The passion with which some of us in the Secretary-General's Office argued the point in the early 1990s was not echoed or matched by the leadership.

There was a clear difference of opinion at the time between the UN and the World Bank. At the Secretary-General's Office we maintained that war-torn countries have needs of a different nature, which has important policy consequences. Given the primacy of the political objective in economic reconstruction (to ensure nonrelapse), a different yardstick had to be used to measure success. Since first-best economic policies were often neither possible nor desirable, it was not appropriate to measure success by purely economic or financial indicators.

In the specific case of El Salvador we argued that, after twelve years of war, the objective of the arms-for-land program (the main venue for productive reintegration of former combatants) was to engage these individuals in rural livelihoods through special preferences so that they would not be tempted to return to fighting. The Bank's country team contended that there were 300,000 peasants without land and that preferences should not be given to a few.[22]

It was typical of the Bank at the time to stick to the "equity principle" of normal development—where you attend to all those in need equally—rather than to the "reconstruction principle." The latter would justify, in the immediate transition to peace, giving preferential treatment to those groups

most affected by the crisis to ensure that they give up arms, even if other groups in the country have comparable needs. To do otherwise is to act as a recruiting sergeant for spoilers.

Misguided development-as-usual policies—as if countries were unaffected by war—have since been, and continue to be, a major obstacle to peacebuilding. Indeed, one of the most daunting peacebuilding challenges is the design and implementation of an economic program for the economic reconstruction of the country through the creation of inclusive, dynamic, and sustainable growth. Such a program must take place within the constraints and financial requirements of security, political reform, and national reconciliation efforts resulting from a political agreement for peace.

The failure of the UN to promote inclusive economic policies in countries in which it has multidisciplinary operations—even when that implies openly opposing first-best policies sponsored by the Bretton Woods Institutions—has in turn been a major obstacle to its efforts to reintegrate former combatants, returnees, and the internally displaced. Indeed, reintegration has failed mainly because of the temporary and therefore unsustainable nature of many of the employment opportunities for disarming combatants, particularly through public infrastructure projects and jobs with foreign agencies.

Peacebuilding:
From Conceptualization to Operationalization

Because of the political nature of peacebuilding activities, including economic reconstruction, we emphasized in our *Foreign Policy* article the leading role that the UN had to play vis-à-vis the Bretton Woods Institutions and other agencies, both strategically and operationally on the ground. However, the organization never has had the operational, technical, and human capacity needed for such a task, nor has it ever taken steps to fill that need.

In the mid-1990s, Boutros-Ghali made a tepid effort to make his concept of human security operational. Despite strong opposition from many of the development agencies, our *Foreign Policy* article helped build support for the idea that the fragile and transitory postconflict phase was not only of a political nature but was also clearly distinct from normal relief or development activities. The high-level interdepartmental task force that the Secretary-General appointed for the purpose of drawing up an inventory of postconflict peacebuilding activities acknowledged this, and so did Dame Margaret Anstee, a former UN high-level official who had headed the operation in Angola and who chaired an international colloquium on this issue.[23]

More importantly, so did Boutros-Ghali in an exchange of letters with Anstee.[24] However, despite what seemed like a commitment on his part to

create a focal unit in the Department for Political Affairs (hereafter political department) to lead peacebuilding efforts on his behalf, this unit, which was essential to make the concept of peacebuilding operational, was never created.

While the UN failed to operationalize the concept, the Bretton Woods Institutions continued with their development-as-usual approach. Only in 2005, a decade after it was first proposed, the IMF staff accepted that tax policy in postconflict situations may require policies that are not optimal or first-best from an efficiency point of view. Agreeing with the staff's assessment, executive directors at the IMF rightly included the caveat that policies that are not optimal should be phased out as soon as feasible.[25]

It took even longer for the World Bank to accept that postconflict settings "should not be simply development as usual."[26] Robert Zoellick, then president of the World Bank, reckoned that "too often, the development community has treated states affected by fragility and conflict simply as harder cases of development." Expressing concern about the poor record of war-torn countries, he finally acknowledged that "development projects may need to be suboptimal economically—good enough rather than first-best."[27] We could not have put it better ourselves.

Changing the status quo has never been easy, and these institutions have proved difficult to change. Although the Bretton Woods Institutions have somewhat improved the terms of their lending to war-torn countries, their policy remains to use advice and conditionality to create a perfect macroeconomic framework based on inflexible monetary and fiscal policies and unrealistic targets—a framework that has clearly deprived these countries of the flexibility that is so essential to them. Their policy has also been to establish microeconomic foundations based on pure laissez-faire policies that often hurt the large majority of the population that depends on rural livelihoods.

Unfortunately, while the progenitor of the peacebuilding concept failed to take the steps needed to put it into practice, Kofi Annan, who took over as Secretary-General in 1997, did little better. This was not for lack of expert opinions and commissioned reports. Although Annan had designated the political department, convenor of the Executive Committee for Peace and Security, the UN focal point for peacebuilding, there was no follow-up.[28]

Indeed, some of the reports during Annan's tenure had unintended consequences. For example, the 2000 *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,* known as the Brahimi Report, had two particularly striking features.[29] First, by allocating responsibility for the formulation of peacebuilding strategies, including both preventive and postconflict, to the Executive Committee on Peace and Security—in which neither the UN economics department nor the IMF participated (although the World Bank was invited to join)—the report essentially ignored critical economic reconstruction issues.

Second, by concluding that UNDP has "untapped potential" and that, in cooperation with other UN agencies, including the World Bank, it is best placed to operationally lead peacebuilding activities, the report legitimized a continuation of the failed development-as-usual policies that had proven so ineffective in consolidating peace. This was particularly surprising since a UNDP evaluation of its own work had recognized that "the normally close association of UNDP with governments" leaves it particularly ill equipped to deal with postconflict situations.[30] Key nonstate actors, such as the FMLN, do not generally perceive UNDP as an impartial player because of that close association.

In 2005, Annan, using the metaphor of a "gaping hole" in the UN institutional capacity, recommended the so-called Peacebuilding Architecture.[31] A matter of much debate is whether this architecture, adopted pursuant to the UN sixtieth anniversary World Summit Outcome, improved the operational capacity of the organization to assist war-torn countries to reduce the risk that conflict will recur. The answer to this question seems to be unequivocal since, by design, the new institutions lack an operational mandate. Has it had any other impact?

The architecture consists of three bodies. The Peacebuilding Commission (hereafter Commission), an intergovernmental advisory body (to the Security Council and the General Assembly), is composed of thirty-one member states making decisions by consensus—itself a recipe for paralysis and lowest-common-denominator decisions. The Commission has a specific mandate to advise countries on integrated strategies for peacebuilding and recovery, to marshal resources and ensure financing, to improve coordination and coherence, and to develop best practices and maintain support for these countries.

The Peacebuilding Support Office (hereafter Support Office) has a mandate to act as secretariat to the Commission, to coordinate peacebuilding efforts within the UN and with outside actors, and to be the repository of best practices. This office was also given some analytical responsibilities for which it was not given adequate resources.

The Peacebuilding Fund (hereafter Fund) has a mandate to provide quick impact and catalytic funding to fill critical gaps in countries at high risk of conflict relapse. Since the Support Office makes lending decisions, this deprives the Commission of the power of the purse.

While many praise the intergovernmental nature of the Commission as its most important feature, others argue that the worst that could have happened to operational peacebuilding efforts on the ground is to be directed from New York.[32] The fact that peacebuilding efforts in most members on the Commission's agenda are at various levels of disarray provides some food for thought.

The Peacebuilding Architecture's Ten-Year Record

Annan's gaping hole metaphor did not accurately depict the situation at the time.[33] Rather, there was then, and remains after a decade, an archipelago of unconnected units in the UN system that deal with a variety of peacebuilding issues in a fragmented and inefficient way. The system lacks the integration of strategy and purpose that Boutros-Ghali had advocated at the outset. As Rob Jenkins rightly points out, "the *new* architecture did not supplant the *old* peacebuilding structures," including various operational units, but was "inserted on top of, adjacent to, and overlapping with preexisting organization units engaged in peacebuilding work."[34]

This was particularly true since the Secretary-General—mandated by the Security Council—had set up missions in the field (e.g., East Timor and Sierra Leone) in 2005 directed by the political department where his representative had an explicit peacebuilding mandate. Thus, the changes failed to overcome the potential clashes of competence, waste of resources, and bureaucratic hurdles that Boutros-Ghali argued were imperative to consolidate peace (which, for the record, he did not attempt to overcome himself).

The new architecture represented an effort on the part of the UN to "rethink its doctrines and organizational structures" to promote peace and build states effectively.[35] Given the worrisome record reported by Annan that "roughly half of all countries that emerge from war lapsed back into violence within five years,"[36] this was long overdue. However, by ignoring previous analytical and operational work at the UN since the early 1990s, new efforts were often wasted trying to reinvent the wheel. As discussed earlier, issues such as the need for redefinition of relationships and comparative advantages, the fundamentally political nature of peacebuilding, and the importance of strong national ownership of policies had been on the table for at least a decade. As they emerged in the new context, a sense of déjà vu and lack of progress was inevitable.

There seems to be a broad consensus among academics and practitioners, in the review processes at the UN so far as well as in recipient countries, that the Commission and Support Office have not made a significant difference, let alone improved matters in any positive way. Mats Berdal, for example, notes that the 2005 architecture "has not managed to overcome the structural and political obstacles to effective coordination and delivery."[37] Most other reviews have also been far from flattering; they mention, among other things, the "negligible relevance," "meager net value-added," and "mixed" impact of the new institutions. One refers to the "zombie" nature of organizations, which exist but do not have a life and have become symbols of "UN inaction."[38]

The 2010 intergovernmental review of the peacebuilding architecture critically concluded that the UN was still not rising to the challenges.[39] In

its response to the review, the political department produced a ten-page memorandum arguing that, rather than consolidate UN efforts to create stability and build peace, the 2005 architecture had fragmented them—an evaluation that we share. In their view, the Commission should not be focusing on developing strategies, but on marshaling resources for what had already been agreed on.[40]

Although the 2015 intergovernmental review will only be finalized at the end of March 2016 (and it is not available at the time this article goes to press), an advisory group of experts, chaired by a former vice president of the Commission, released a report in June 2015 (hereafter 2015 Report) that has been a major input into the review process.[41] The report acknowledged that at the UN, peacebuilding is "an afterthought" and that the organization continues to work in "silos." It called for a "comprehensive approach to sustaining peace" not unlike Boutros-Ghali's call for an "integrated approach to human security," but who likewise failed to propose a feasible strategy to make such an approach operational and viable.[42]

The 2015 Report also called for "inclusive national ownership" and "realistic timelines for UN operations," and posited that "peacebuilding must be understood as an inherently political process." By doing so, it added to the sense of déjà vu we mentioned earlier and detracted from its own conclusion that—ten years later—waned hopes for improved peacebuilding call for a "fresh look" at the whole approach to peacebuilding.[43]

Conspicuously absent from the 2015 Report (as well as from previous reviews) was any analysis with regard to the cost-effectiveness of the peacebuilding architecture. Yet without such an analysis and without any metric to assess whether the dismal UN record mentioned by Annan in 2005 has changed for the better, the report calls for more resources for peacebuilding. One could be forgiven for wondering whether this might not be throwing more good money after bad.[44]

It is rather perplexing that—given the broad-based consensus of the failure of the new architecture to fulfill its mandate—the 2015 Report recommends that it should do even more. The recommendation that the Commission and the Support Office, which have failed to coordinate even within the Secretariat and with UN actors on the ground, should coordinate the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Economic and Social Council is simply baffling. The same can be said for the recommendation that—despite its inability until now to advise the Security Council on postconflict matters—the Commission should also advise it on preconflict risks. Even putting aside other considerations, the assumption that the Commission would be provided with the resources to advise on the large number of countries in which preconflict risks exist is unrealistic.

In March 2015, the Future United Nations Development System (FUNDS) project put together a group of experts and practitioners to ana-

lyze whether the system is equipped for twenty-first-century peacebuilding. The report notes that the Commission has failed "to establish itself as a relevant and impactful institution" and concludes "radical changes are needed if the UN and its development system is not to become even further marginalized." In fact, almost 40 percent of respondents to a FUNDS survey found that the Commission had proved to be "inefficient or very inefficient." The report strongly calls for fixing what does not work—most importantly the UN capacity on the ground—rather than calling for new layers.[45]

Moreover, some of the successes on which Commission members and Support Office staff often congratulate themselves are a clear duplication of functions with those of the representatives of the Secretary-General on the ground. This includes supporting governments in establishing "peacebuilding strategies," "marshaling resources," and "coordinating with other stakeholders," including the Bretton Woods Institutions.[46] If those representatives, with a Security Council mandate, cannot do their work, better-qualified ones should be appointed. To install another layer above or parallel to them complicates and confuses matters and leads to more inefficiency and waste. More importantly, it imposes an unnecessary burden on weak and overstretched national governments by creating additional, and often conflicting, demands on their time, expertise, and other scarce resources.

As the FUNDS project recommends, a reexamination is long overdue of the UN field presence in conflict-prone states, including the nature and composition of a more unified country presence, its leadership, the selection and training of suitable staff, the provision of resources, and the clear and unified delegation of authority from headquarters to the field.[47] This is essential to better prioritize activities based on comparative advantages.

Criticisms of the lack of country diversity in the Commission's agenda (all six countries are from Africa) and the fact that no new country has been selected in the past four years should not be disparaged. More importantly, however, the Commission failed to attract countries (on the Security Council agenda or not) at an early stage of the transition to peace, or at a later stage in countries about to exit from the Council. As the experience of El Salvador attests, this is a stage in which countries need support to sustain the progress they have achieved.

The two first countries included in the agenda in 2006 had made the transition years before (Burundi in 1998 and Sierra Leone in 2002) and had large Security Council–mandated operations to deal with peacebuilding issues in place. These two experiences were an early harbinger of the difficulties that the new architecture would have in coordinating peacebuilding activities.

The inclusion of Liberia in 2010 was an even more flagrant mistake, given that Liberia together with Afghanistan are the two largest recipients

of economic aid (including debt relief) in the world. During the first decade in their transition to peace, each country received on average over 50 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) per year. Moreover, the peacekeeping operation in place in Liberia was unusually large, costing the UN annually in 2009–2011 the equivalent of two-thirds of the country's GDP. Rather than using scant Fund resources for the so-called aid orphans and those in the immediate transition, the selection of Liberia was a clear aberration. The conclusion of the 2015 Report that "despite a decade of focus, financing for sustaining peace remains scarce, inconsistent, and unpredictable" seems to ignore the situation of Liberia.[48]

By coming so late into the process in most of the countries on its agenda, the Commission's mandate to create integrated peacebuilding strategies added yet another layer to the many strategies already in place (e.g., Sierra Leone already had three strategies, including one on poverty reduction).

The 2015 Report rightly—but not surprisingly, since some have called attention to it much earlier—acknowledges that the UN pays insufficient attention to building "inclusive" development processes that can sustain peace.[49] Indeed, this has been particularly true in the case of Liberia, where a continuation of "growth without development" policies of the past has left 75–80 percent of the population living at subsistence levels and excluded from any peace dividend in terms of better livelihoods or services.[50] In fact, the Commission remained silent for five years about the lack of inclusive policies and the pathetic state of social services including health—major obstacles to peacebuilding—that could become, as indeed they did, a breeding ground for disease, including Ebola.

Surprisingly, it was Karin Landgren, the departing representative of the Secretary-General and head of the peacekeeping office, who bluntly told the Commission on 5 May 2015 that the main sources of potential instability were "structural factors including Liberia's economic model." In her view, this left the country vulnerable to popular resentment and future shocks.[51]

This is but one indication that the Commission and Support Office have disregarded problems related to the inadequacy of economic policies in countries on their agenda. In fact, Landgren reported that many members of the Commission were rolling their eyes as she brought up the issue of the inappropriateness of the economic model and how, in her view, this was a major potential source of instability as the UN peacekeeping operation withdraws after maintaining security in Liberia for twelve years.[52]

It is worth pointing out that in 2011, even the World Bank had warned against the Liberia model of enclave growth in iron ore and cash crops, which had led in the past to civil war rather than to middle-income status as many thought it would.[53] Perhaps oblivious to such an ominous warning,

the Commission failed to advise the Security Council. The latter could have used its clout to influence government policies. Given the Commission's shortcomings, it is not surprising that, except in isolated episodes, the Council has not requested its advice.

Moving Forward

Judging from the record of the past quarter of a century, and despite the resources (military and financial) allocated to this purpose, the UN seems no better prepared to play an effective role in the reconstruction of war-torn countries today than it was at the end of the Cold War.

Arguably what led to the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission was the failure of the Security Council to shoulder its responsibility. Given the difficulty of going back on UN decisions in general, particularly one taken at the level of heads of state and government, namely the 2005 World Summit, the chances of undoing it are slim at best. Given the dismal record, is there any hope that the Security Council will rise to its responsibility? The concepts of preventing recurrence of conflict and maintaining peace and security are, in our view, almost synonymous. The Council has the power under the UN Charter to create as many subsidiary organs as it wishes. Could it not create one or more as necessary to deal with peacebuilding issues in countries in which it has UN multidisciplinary operations? It has to date largely neglected the Peacebuilding Commission; perhaps it will pay attention to the views of a body of its own.

If the Security Council proceeded in this direction, the Commission, with a much-reduced membership after eliminating those of the Council and contributing troops, might retain the role of advocacy and marshaling of resources for countries that either are not on the Council's agenda or are about to exit it. With such a revised mandate, the Commission would not overlap (save for a few months) or interfere with other bodies, particularly those with policymaking and operational mandates, and could become a more useful player in improving the forlorn UN peacebuilding record.

A revised mandate along these lines would be consistent with the FUNDS project, which recommends that, while the Security Council continues to focus on high-profile conflicts—understood as those representing the highest risk to global and regional peace and security—the Commission should focus on lower-profile ones (which also tend to be aid orphans).[54]

To improve the operational capacity of the UN Secretariat to deal with peacebuilding, we propose that the Support Office be integrated with relevant operational units in the political and peacekeeping departments. Once it acquires an operational capacity, rather than the merely advisory functions it now has, this office should be renamed the "Peacebuilding Office." This would improve coherence, decrease overlapping and waste of

resources, and have a larger and more focused impact on the ground. Following recommendations of previous reports and those of Boutros-Ghali and Annan, we propose that the Peacebuilding Office be located in the political department.

The Peacebuilding Office should be strengthened by hiring specific technical expertise from outside the organization critical to peacebuilding—a precondition for effective engagement with the IMF—which the UN presently lacks. Indeed, the most important element yet absent is the capacity at the UN to negotiate at a technical level with the national authorities and the IMF on how to incorporate the financing needs of peacebuilding into the economic program and fiscal budget of the country—the issue we raised in relation to El Salvador a quarter of a century ago. This is essential to change the prevailing development-as-usual approach to peacebuilding.

Most war-torn countries have lacked UN support to design conflict-sensitive fiscal and growth policies that can reactivate their economies in an inclusive and sustainable way, sine qua non for successful peacebuilding. Until a broad majority of the population benefits from a peace dividend in terms of better lives and livelihoods, or at least can see the prospect of such a dividend, the risk of relapse will remain alive. To improve its peacebuilding record, the UN needs to acquire the capacity to advise countries on how to bring this about.

In our 1994 *Foreign Policy* article, we proposed that the Bretton Woods Institutions—at the request of the Secretary-General and with support from the Security Council—should allow for preferential treatment of countries where peace was at risk.[55] While there has been some improvement in coordination between the UN and the IMF, any significant improvement in the future requires concerted action.

The pattern in recent years has been to appoint someone from UNDP as deputy to the representative of the Secretary-General who heads the UN operation on the ground, and to delegate to that person contact with the IMF. While it is conceivable that the IMF could make its policies more flexible in cases that the Security Council deems critical to the maintenance of international peace and security, the details of what that means in practice cannot be negotiated by a development organization such as UNDP. Indeed, the request should come directly from the Council, and the Secretary-General's representative on the ground should lead such a negotiation.

To this end, we recommend that the Secretary-General's representative be equipped with the economic expertise necessary to take an active role in discussions with the minister of finance and the IMF, whenever its head of mission visits the country or as deemed necessary. This would improve the chances that peace-related needs will be included in the economic program through appropriate budgetary allocations, and that economic policies

are inclusive and conflict sensitive so that the risk of returning to war is minimized. UNDP (as head also of the UN development country team) and the World Bank's top representatives on the ground—which play a key role in economic reconstruction at the technical level—should join in as observers to ensure that the development institutions understand and support the top political priorities necessary to improve peacebuilding going forward. ⊕

Notes

Alvaro de Soto is a senior fellow at the Ralph Bunche Institute and a member of the Global Leadership Foundation. He teaches conflict resolution at Sciences Po in Paris. He held senior positions at the United Nations for twenty-five years (1982–2007) and discharged a number of missions, including as mediator of the peace accord that ended the 1980–1991 war in El Salvador and special envoy for Myanmar, Cyprus, Western Sahara, and the Middle East. Graciana del Castillo is a senior fellow at the Ralph Bunche Institute, a member of several advisory boards, and a member of the Council on Foreign Relations. She was senior research scholar, associate director of the Center on Capitalism and Society, and adjunct professor at Columbia University for almost twenty years. She held senior positions at the Office of the UN Secretary-General, the International Monetary Fund, and Standard & Poor's; consulted for the United States Institute of Peace and the World Institute for Development Economics Research of the United Nations University (UNU-WIDER) and is the author of *Rebuilding War-torn States* (2008) and *Guilty Party: The International Community in Afghanistan* (2014).

1. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace* (New York: UN, 1992), pp. 11 and 32–33. For details, see Alvaro de Soto, foreword to Mats Berdal and Dominik Zaum, eds., *Political Economy of Statebuilding: Power After Peace* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2013), pp. xvii–xviii.

2. Ibid., pp. 8, 23.

3. John M. Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Howe, 1920).

4. Alvaro de Soto and Graciana del Castillo, "Obstacles to Peacebuilding," *Foreign Policy* 94 (Spring 1994): 69–83.

5. Thomas G. Weiss, prologue to Rob Jenkins, *Peacebuilding: From Concept to Commission* (New York: Routledge Global Institutions Series, 2013), p. vii.

6. de Soto and del Castillo, "Obstacles to Peacebuilding," p. 77.

7. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* (New York: UN, 1995), p. 5.

8. See Graciana del Castillo, *Rebuilding War-torn States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008) for case studies on Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq as well as on El Salvador; Graciana del Castillo, *Guilty Party: The International Community in Afghanistan* (Bloomington, IN: XLibris, 2014) for an analysis of the international intervention in Afghanistan.

9. For Afghanistan, for example, see del Castillo, *Guilty Party,* pp. 160, 190, 193, and IMF country reports (various years).

10. The term *international community* is used to include all stakeholders involved in supporting countries in the war-to-peace transition as donors or providers of technical assistance.

11. For details, see del Castillo, *Rebuilding War-torn States,* pp. 130–136, 160–161; del Castillo, *Guilty Party,* pp. 162–175.

12. Mats Berdal and Hanna Davies, "The United Nations and International State-building After the Cold War," in Berdal and Zaum, eds., *Political Economy of Statebuilding: Power After Peace,* pp. 116–117; Mats Berdal, "Peacebuilding and Development," in Bruce Currie-Alder et al., eds., *International Development* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 368.

13. Stuart Bowen, "No More Adhocracies: Reforming the Management of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations," *Prism* 2 (March 2012): 3.

14. For data on the record and the specific indices mentioned, see Graciana del Castillo, "The Economics of Peace in War-torn Countries: The Historical Record and the Path Forward," paper commissioned by UNU-WIDER, Helsinki, September 2015, tables 1–2.

15. Michael M. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis coded "peacebuilding success" only after peacekeepers and military forces (which are keeping the peace) have left for at least two years. See Michael M. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 91.

16. For details, see del Castillo, *Guilty Party,* p. 148.

17. See, for example, Doyle and Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace.*

18. Graciana del Castillo, "Post-conflict Peace-building: The Challenge to the UN," *CEPAL Review* 55, no. 10 (1995): 29–30, 37.

19. James K. Boyce, ed., *Economic Policy for Building Peace: The Lessons from El Salvador* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner), p. 4.

20. Ibid., pp. 1–3.

21. del Castillo, "Post-conflict Peace-building," p. 27.

22. UNDP shared this view.

23. UN, *An Inventory of Post-conflict Peacebuilding Activities* (New York: UN, 1996); UN, *International Colloquium on Post-conflict Reconstruction Strategies: The Chairman's Synopsis and Conclusions* (Stadtschlaining: Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, June 1995).

24. For details, see del Castillo, *Rebuilding War-torn States,* pp. 30–33.

25. Sanjeev Gupta et al., "Rebuilding Fiscal Institutions in Post-conflict Countries," Occasional Paper No. 247 (Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund, 27 December 2005); IMF, Public Information Notice (PIN) No. 05/45 (29 March 2005).

26. Paul Collier, "Postconflict Economic Policy," in Charles T. Call, ed., *Building States to Build Peace* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2008), p. 103.

27. Robert B. Zoellick, "Securing Development," speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, Geneva, 12 September 2008.

28. See UN, *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform,* UN Doc. A/51/950 (14 July 1997), as cited in Jenkins, *Peacebuilding,* p. 53.

29. UN, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,* UN Doc. A/55/305, S/2000/809 (21 August 2000), p. 8.

30. UNDP, *Sharing New Ground in Post-conflict Situations: The Role of UNDP in Support of Reintegration Programmes,* DP/2000/14 (New York: UNDP, Evaluation Office, January 2000), p. 13.

31. UN, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All,* UN Doc. A/59/2005 (21 March 2005), p. 31. For an analysis by insiders, see Jenkins, *Peacebuilding;* Ejeviome Eloho Otobo, *Consolidating Peace in Africa: The Role of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission* (Princeton: AMV, 2015); Judy Cheng-Hopkins, "The UN Peacebuilding Architecture: Good Intentions, Con-

fused Expectations, Faulty Assumptions," epilogue to Cedric De Coning and Eli Stamnes, eds., *UN Peacebuilding Architecture: The First 10 Years* (London: Routledge Global Institutions Series, forthcoming).

32. See, for example, Lise M. Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), cited in Jenkins, *Peacebuilding,* p. 39.

33. Cheng-Hopkins, "The UN Peacebuilding Architecture."

34. Jenkins, *Peacebuilding,* p. 12.

35. Ibid., p. 4.

36. UN, *In Larger Freedom,* p. 31.

37. Berdal, "Peacebuilding and Development," p. 368.

38. For these and other views, see Jenkins, *Peacebuilding,* pp. 75–77, 108–109.

39. UN, "Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture," UN Doc. A/64/868-S/2010/393 (21 July 2010).

40. UN Department of Political Affairs, as quoted in Jenkins, *Peacebuilding,* pp. 67–68, 140–142.

41. Advisory Group of Experts, "The Challenge of Sustaining Peace: Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture" (New York: UN, 29 June 2015).

42. Ibid., pp. 7, 8, 26, 33, 56.

43. Ibid., pp. 8, 13, 21.

44. When money is thrown at a problem, something always sticks, even if the effect is marginal. This was the policy of the US military in the reconstruction of insecure areas in Iraq and Afghanistan, which has proved so expensive and ineffective. It has also been the policy of the UN.

45. Stephen Browne and Thomas G. Weiss, eds., *Peacebuilding Challenges for the UN Development System* (New York: Future United Nations System, 2015) pp. 1–2, 17.

46. See various Commission and Support Office reports, including on the six countries on its agenda.

47. Browne and Weiss, pp. 2, 25.

48. Advisory Group of Experts, p. 42.

49. Ibid., pp. 19–20.

50. For details on Liberia, see Graciana del Castillo, "Aid and Employment Generation in Conflict-affected Countries: Policy Recommendations for Liberia," Working Paper No. 2012/47 (Helsinki: UN/WIDER, 2012).

51. UN, "PBC Liberia Configuration Meeting: Chair's Summary" (New York: UN, 5 May 2015), p. 2.

52. Comments at "Liberia in Transition—A Special Representatives of the Secretary-General Event Featuring Karin Landgren of UNMIL," International Peace Institute (IPI) (New York: 7 July 2015).

53. World Bank, "Liberia: Growth Diagnostics for Inclusive Growth," paper presented at the High-Level National Economic Forum, Monrovia, September 2011.

54. Browne and Weiss, pp. 3, 17.

55. de Soto and del Castillo, pp. 81–82.