Managing Contradictions:
The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding

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⁜ research partnership on postwar statebuilding

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CONTENTS

Postwar Statebuilding

Statebuilding has become a central focus of multidimensional peace operations in war-torn societies. But efforts to construct legitimate, effective state institutions are rife with tensions and contradictions. Understanding these tensions and contradictions is essential for anticipating many of the practical problems that international agencies face in the course of statebuilding operations and for devising more nuanced and effective statebuilding strategies for future missions.

Introduction

Statebuilding—the construction of legitimate, effective governmental institutions—is a crucial element in any larger effort to create the conditions for a durable peace and human development in countries that are just emerging from war. In recent years, statebuilding has emerged as a central goal of multidimensional United Nations peace operations in war-torn societies, and for good reason. Without functioning and legitimate state institutions, postconflict societies are less likely to escape the dual "traps" of violence and poverty.

But the record of postwar statebuilding operations has been mixed, and in many respects disappointing. In Liberia after 1997 or Timor Leste after 2002, international agencies prematurely reduced their efforts to secure peace in the wake of conflict. In other cases, including Bosnia and Kosovo, international statebuilding efforts have lingered on in seeming perpetuity, while reconciliation and institutional reform efforts have stalled and irritation at the large international presence has mounted. In Afghanistan and Iraq—both unusual cases of statebuilding after an external invasion, rather than after a negotiated settlement to a civil war—the task of constructing effective and legitimate governmental structures is facing extraordinarily difficult, perhaps even insurmountable, challenges. But even in the most "successful" statebuilding operations such as Cambodia, Burundi or the Democratic Republic of Congo, the outcomes of institutional reform efforts may be more superficial than sustainable.

One explanation for these less-than-stellar results may be that expectations for these operations have been too high. Institutional reform is a complex and arduous task even in the most favorable settings—and

even more so in countries that are just emerging from civil wars, where social cohesion is shattered and existing governmental structures tend to be weak, factionalized, or even non-existent. Nor can statebuilding actors rely on any universally applicable, surefire formulas for creating the conditions for lasting peace in postwar societies, because there are none. Each mission necessarily involves a large measure of improvisation in order to respond to variations in local conditions. This combination of complexity and variability gives the entire peacebuilding enterprise the quality of an enormous experiment—one that is important and necessary, but also prone to unanticipated consequences and failure.

There is, moreover, a deeper problem that may have contributed both to the excessive expectations and the disappointing results of recent statebuilding efforts: **insufficient knowledge and analysis of the intrinsic tensions and contradictions of externally-assisted statebuilding**. Scholars and practitioners have only recently begun to explore the competing (and sometimes contradictory) imperatives facing those who attempt to reconstitute effective and legitimate governmental structures in war-torn states. These tensions and contradictions have manifested themselves as vexing policy dilemmas—that is, difficult choices that involve trade-offs between multiple imperatives where there are no obvious solutions. Conceiving of postwar statebuilding as an inherently contradiction-filled enterprise, rather than a linear sequence of cumulative or mutually reinforcing steps, allows us to think more carefully about the characteristics of the tensions and contradictions themselves. In so doing, we can also gain a better understanding of the practical policy dilemmas that face statebuilding practitioners.

This report summarizes the research findings of the Research Partnership on Postwar Statebuilding (RPPS), a collaborative research project of thirteen scholars from six countries who have sought to disentangle and scrutinize some of the key dilemmas of statebuilding.[1] The contributors to this project believe that improving the effectiveness of statebuilding as a method of postwar peace consolidation requires more than simply identifying "lessons learned" from previous missions. Rather, it also demands more awareness and analysis of the tensions, contradictions and dilemmas of statebuilding.

Our hope is that such an analysis will ultimately

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[1] The RPPS is supported by a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

help those who are seeking to improve the strategies of statebuilding. We do not, however, purport to offer solutions to the difficult dilemmas that face the practitioners of statebuilding. There are no solutions—or, to be more precise, there are no simple or fully satisfying ones. This is precisely what makes the dilemmas so vexing and the operations so inherently complex. However, greater knowledge of the tensions and contradictions of statebuilding should make it easier to *manage* the dilemmas in a more informed, nuanced, and effective manner. In particular, the challenge for statebuilding practitioners is (1) to analyze and understand the dilemmas, (2) to make a series of informed policy choices that carefully balance competing imperatives, and (3) to do so in a way that not only serves short-term needs but also furthers the long-term goal of establishing sustainable, functioning and legitimate state institutions.

In exploring this subject, the RPPS project builds upon the International Peace Academy's research on statebuilding, peace implementation, transitional administration, post-conflict economic reform and the security-development nexus.[2] Indeed, Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatieff and Ramesh Thakur helped to define postwar statebuilding as a research field in an IPA report published in 2004.[3] Their observation that "it is only through a more nuanced understanding of the state as a network of institutions that crises of governance may be properly understood and, perhaps, avoided or remedied" offers a point of departure for the RPPS project and our investigation into the great dilemmas of statebuilding.[4]

Background: From Peacebuilding to Statebuilding

As the Cold War came to an end, a new type of international peace operation emerged as the dominant security activity of the United Nations: missions aimed at helping war-torn countries make the transition from a fragile ceasefire to a stable peace, or what became known as "post-conflict peacebuilding." Although this form of intervention was not unprecedented—the UN had stumbled into playing a

similar role in the Congo during the early 1960s, when a mission designed to oversee the departure of Belgian colonial troops from the newly independent Congo got caught up in a civil war—post-conflict stabilization was a new area of focus for the world body in the period immediately following the Cold War. Between 1989 and 1993 alone, eight peacebuilding operations were deployed to countries just emerging from civil conflicts: Namibia, Nicaragua, Angola, Cambodia, El Salvador, Mozambique, Liberia and Rwanda.

These missions were quite unlike the traditional peacekeeping operations which had been the UN's main security function during the Cold War, and which typically involved monitoring ceasefires or neutral buffer zones between former combatants. Rather, peacebuilding now involved the implementation of multi-faceted peace agreements, which often included humanitarian, political, and economic elements, in addition to more traditional monitoring of a ceasefire. As then-Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali wrote in his 1992 *Agenda for Peace*, the goal of peacebuilding was "to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict." This typically included monitoring or even administering post-conflict elections as well as other activities such as the demobilization of former fighters, resettlement of refugees, human rights investigations and economic reform. Furthermore, the UN shared these responsibilities with several other international actors, including major regional organizations, international financial institutions, national and international development agencies and a host of international non-governmental organizations.

By the mid-1990s, however, there were growing concerns that these first-generation peacebuilding missions had been too brief, too limited, and too focused on speedy political and economic reforms to consolidate peace in the host states. In some cases, peacebuilders rushed ahead with post-conflict elections, declared success, and departed. This "quick and dirty" approach failed in Angola (where elections were a catalyst for renewed violence), Rwanda (where

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[2] For example, Charles Call with Vanessa Wyeth, eds., *Building States to Build Peace* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, forthcoming 2008); Stewart Patrick and Kaysie Brown, *Greater than the Sum of its Parts? Assessing 'Whole of Government' Approaches to Fragile States* (New York: International Peace Academy, 2007); Kirsti Samuels and Vanessa Hawkins Wyeth, "State-building and Constitutional Design after Conflict," International Peace Academy, New York, August 2006; James Cockayne, "Commercial Security in Humanitarian and Post-Conflict Settings: An Exploratory Study," International Peace Academy, New York, March 2006; "Security-Development Nexus: Research Findings and Policy Implications," *Security-Development Nexus* Program Report, International Peace Academy, New York, February 2006.

[3] Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatieff and Ramesh Thakur, "Making States Work: From State Failure to Statebuilding," International Peace Academy, New York, July 2004.

[4] Ibid., p. 2.

overly optimistic assumptions about the willingness of the parties to implement their peace settlement were shattered by genocide), and in Cambodia and Liberia (where elections yielded superficial democratization and a quick return to authoritarianism—and, in the case of Liberia, resurgent war).

Learning from the shortcomings of these early missions, the UN and other international agencies began to shift their focus towards more far-reaching approaches to postwar peacebuilding. This strategic reorientation was especially visible in the Bosnia operation, created in late 1995 to buttress the Dayton Accord. The Bosnia mission was originally scheduled to last one year (until the end of 1996) and in this sense it echoed the "quick and dirty" approach that defined peacebuilding in the first half of the 1990s. But the need for a longer-term deployment in Bosnia quickly became apparent and the termination date was eliminated in order to give more time for institution-building and economic reform to progress. By the late 1990s, new missions were being launched with broader mandates, now focused on longer-term statebuilding efforts, including in Burundi, Kosovo, Timor Leste, and Sierra Leone.

A similar evolution also took place in the study of peacebuilding. The first generation of peacebuilding research was comprised primarily of descriptions of the new "multifunctional" missions of the early-to-mid 1990s and a preliminary assessment of lessons learned. The second generation of studies (in the latter part of the 1990s and early 2000s) offered more systematic cross-case analyses and reflections on the record of peacebuilding to date. One of the findings that emerged from this second generation of writings—crystallized in several publications that appeared in 2004—was that more durable peacebuilding outcomes would require more focused attention on building up governmental institutions in formerly warring states.[5]

These findings coincided with policy shifts in several major international organizations, including the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, which led all of these organizations to place greater emphasis on the goal of building up the "governance capacity" of developing countries, particularly those just emerging from conflict. *Statebuilding* thus emerged as a central objective of peacebuilding—to the point where discussions of postconflict reconstruction in the UN and elsewhere are now commonly replete with references to enhancing state capacities as a foundation for war-to-peace transitions and, more generally, for development.

Statebuilding, however, raises its own set of challenges. As mandates and time-frames of postconflict missions expanded to accommodate the requirements of institution-building, the problematic aspects of externally-assisted statebuilding became more apparent—and troubling. To be sure, practitioners of statebuilding in the United Nations and other international organizations have been aware of many of these problems. Issues such as coordination and coherence, local ownership, legitimacy, capacity-building, dependency, accountability, and exit are now commonly discussed in meetings of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and elsewhere. But each of these problems emerged from deeper tensions and contradictions that are less well understood: outside intervention occurs in order to create self-government; international control is required to affect local ownership; universal values clash with local peculiarities; long term goals may contravene short term imperatives; and peace may require both a break with the past and a reaffirmation of local history.

Only by acknowledging and examining these tensions in detail is it possible to understand the forces that might sustain—or derail—statebuilding operations. Such knowledge is also crucial for developing more effective strategies of managing the many dilemmas that confront the international, national, and local actors involved in postwar statebuilding missions.

Defining the Contradictions and Dilemmas of Statebuilding

The individual research papers that comprise the RPPS project examine a broad array of policy dilemmas that confront statebuilding actors. Each of these dilemmas arises from underlying tensions and contradictions in the idea of statebuilding, which the authors also scrutinize in detail. (See the Appendix for summaries of the individual studies. Full-length versions are available at www.statebuilding.org.)

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[5] See, for example, Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Francis Fukuyama, *State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004); and Simon Chesterman, *You, The People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

Key Tensions and Contradictions

Among these various tensions and contradictions, five emerge from the RPPS papers as particularly important and fundamental. They are listed separately here, but in practice they overlap and interact with each other:

1. **Outside intervention is used to foster self–government.** Some of the most difficult policy dilemmas flow from this paradox: statebuilding missions seek to promote national autonomy and self–government, but they do so by means of international intervention. Even though these missions are designed to assist national authorities, the power they exercise is inevitably intrusive, no matter how well intentioned they may be. This tension is at the heart of such practical challenges as designing transitional governance structures, providing security, delivering public services, determining how long a mission should continue and in what form, and addressing questions of transitional justice.

2. **Foreigners are involved in defining "legiti–mate" local leaders.** The need for "local ownership" of political and economic reforms has emerged as a statebuilding orthodoxy. But some measure of international management is typically required to *implement* the principle of local ownership over a peace process. (If local ownership could be achieved without foreigners playing a significant role, there would have been no need for an international statebuilding mission in the first instance.) But this creates a paradox: When foreigners participate in identifying appropriate local "owners," their involvement in such decisions defies the principle of local ownership. This contradiction not only raises difficult policy choices for statebuilding agencies, but also potentially calls into question the legiti–macy and sustainability of any ensuing political institutions.

3. **"Universal" values are promoted as a remedy for local problems.** Civil wars have both international and domestic drivers, and they sometimes spill over national borders. At bottom, however, they are predominantly local phenomena, fought and experienced by individ–uals and groups who live in a particular socio–cultural context. Some of the policy dilemmas faced by statebuilding actors derive from incongruities between the universal values (predominantly those in the liberal tradition of individual human rights, democratic governance and market-oriented economics) espoused by international organizations and donor govern–ments on the one hand, and the particular social practices, political traditions and cultural expecta–tions of the host society on the other. This tension, like the previous two, contributes to the problem of defining statebuilding policies that are appropriate, effective, and legitimate, not only in the eyes of the interveners, but also for the local elites and general population of the country.

4. **Statebuilding requires both a clean break with the past and a reaffirmation of history**. Moving from war to peace entails continuity as well as change. Statebuilding operations, in other words, cannot remake war-torn societies. Indeed, international actors often underestimate the persistence and resilience of the deeply engrained patterns of political and economic life. Yet statebuilding must also involve the introduction of new approaches to conflict resolution and management, which can and do challenge traditional practices. The old and the new may blend into new hybrid forms of political and social organization, as David Roberts and Christopher Cramer argue in their RPPS studies. The combination of old and new may also generate conflicts and "transformational" tensions that are not uncommon in developing societies undergoing rapid change and can serve as a dangerous source of destabilization in the particu–larly fragile conditions of countries just emerging from civil wars.

5. **Short–term imperatives often conflict with longer–term objectives.** In the early stages of a statebuilding operation, outside actors typically face strong pressures to address short-term needs, but doing so may run counter to the longer-term requirements for establishing effective, legitimate state institutions. Preserving a ceasefire and managing potential "spoilers," for example, often involve making explicit or tacit bargains with ruling elites whose continued power (whether this power is formally recognized or informally exercised) can get in the way of building "depersonalized" state institutions and broadening political representation beyond the parties that

fought the preceding war. Similar tensions between short-term and long-term imperatives also pose a problem for the planning of economic reconstruction and aid delivery, security sector reform and transitional justice goals.

Types of Dilemmas

The tensions and contradictions outlined above exist at a relatively high level of abstraction from the day-to-day realities of statebuilding operations. Yet they are the underlying source of many concrete policy dilemmas that the practitioners of statebuilding routinely face. We use the term "dilemmas" advisedly: by definition, these are problems that defy easy solutions because they present choices between compelling but mutually conflicting imperatives, which in turn reflect the deeper tensions and contradictions of statebuilding described above.

These dilemmas are explored in detail in the RPPS studies. For the purposes of this overview, however, they can be grouped into five broad (and overlapping) categories:

1. Footprint Dilemmas

The footprint of an operation refers to its degree of intrusiveness in the domestic affairs of the host state, which in turn is a reflection of (1) the size of the international presence, (2) the scope of the tasks that external actors take on, and (3) the assertiveness of the external actors in pursuing these tasks. The dilemma is this: on the one hand, a dominant international presence (a "heavy footprint") may be required to maintain security and to oversee (or even enforce) the implementation of a peace agreement, including the process of initiating political and economic reforms. On the other hand, a less intrusive international presence (a "light footprint") may be required to allow local political, social and economic life to achieve a post-conflict equilibrium on its own terms, without the distorting effects that the presence of powerful external actors can have.

David Edelstein, in his RPPS paper, examines this dilemma as it relates to the military aspects of externally assisted statebuilding, but the footprint dilemma appears in nearly all the RPPS studies in relation to both military and non-military issues. Astri Suhrke's study, for example, finds that the *economic* footprint of the statebuilding effort in Afghanistan since the defeat of the Taliban regime

has served to weaken, not strengthen, the legitimacy and capacity of that country's government.

2. Duration Dilemmas

Difficult choices relating to the duration of international statebuilding operations are explored in several RPPS papers. On the one hand, statebuilding is necessarily a long-term enterprise. Elections can be held quickly, but the political institutions to which public officials are elected take much longer to consolidate. Similarly, economic reforms can be started right away, but in the absence of administrative capacity in the host government (and at least a minimal system to uphold the rule of law), these reforms have the potential to go awry. On the other hand, while statebuilding is a lengthy process, there are countervailing pressures against a prolonged or open-ended international presence. First, over time, important segments of the local population tend to grow increasingly disillusioned—or even hostile—towards the continued presence of powerful outside actors, which can in turn undermine externally assisted statebuilding efforts. Second, lengthy or open-ended missions can produce quite a different problem: passivity within the local population, including a lack of interest in taking on the responsibilities of self-government (see the section on Dependency Dilemmas below).

In addition, the international resources for statebuilding operations are often limited, both in scale and duration. Few donor countries or international organizations are willing to "sign up" for more than a few years of statebuilding in any given country. Nevertheless, the objectives articulated by these donors and organizations necessarily entail lengthy commitments. The tension between the goals and means of statebuilding raises questions about the credibility of the operations and the objectives articulated by statebuilders themselves, as Michael Barnett and Christoph Zuercher suggest in their study.

3. Participation Dilemmas

Factional leaders do not necessarily represent the population of their countries, yet they are typically the individuals most involved in peace negotiations, and as a result they tend to be central political actors in the period immediately

following the conflict. As Kirsti Samuels argues in her RPPS paper, a key challenge for statebuilders is to strike a balance between maintaining the cooperation of former fighters and other potential "spoilers," while simultaneously drawing a wider range of groups, and ultimately the population as a whole, into the postwar political process. If factional leaders are too powerful, new institutional structures may be viewed as illegitimate by other groups and individuals who believe that these leaders are unrepresentative, corrupt—or worse—criminal. On the other hand, alienating factional leaders can provoke renewed conflict.

Compounding this dilemma is the danger that the international presence may itself constrain political participation: first, by diverting civil society activity towards externally-defined objectives rather than allowing local groups to pursue their goals and activities to develop in a more undirected manner, and second, by exercising de facto decision-making power that is not subject to popular control and accountability. Further, as noted above, while promoting local ownership is an important and essential goal for statebuilding, there is no simple way (particularly for powerful outsiders) to determine who the "owners" should be. The very act of stimulating political participation and local ownership can lead to perverse results, no matter how well-meaning the international actors may be, simply because the very presence of an international mission will have distorting effects on economic relationships and local politics, like a powerful magnet in an electric field.

4.   Dependency Dilemmas

Related to both the footprint and duration dilemmas is the risk of fostering within the host society dependence on the international presence. The goal of postwar statebuilding is to foster the conditions for self-sustaining peace through effective, legitimate self-governance. Yet large flows of outside assistance, and the "hands on" role of international actors in facilitating the implementation of peace settlements, can create new political and economic patterns in the host society that come to rely on a continuation of large-scale external aid and guidance. If these expectations and dependencies harden, statebuilding missions can work against their own ultimate goal of fostering self-government. Worse,

they risk morphing into indefinite trusteeship arrangements that raise additional problems, which may include, paradoxically, a growing resistance to the international presence in some parts of the population.

This combination of dependency and resistance has the potential to create pernicious patterns of political and economic development that have proven unsustainable in the past, most notably in colonial societies. But if statebuilding requires both a measure of international control (particularly at the outset of a mission) and a long-term process of institution-construction, then some measure of dependency may be unavoidable. Squaring this circle is the core challenge of the dependency dilemma, which like other dilemmas described here, emerges from underlying tensions and contradictions in the idea of externally-assisted statebuilding.

5.   Coherence Dilemmas

Statebuilders face two kinds of coherence dilemmas: (1) organizational coherence and (2) normative coherence. Organizational coherence involves the need for coordination among the myriad international actors involved in these operations, including national donors, regional organizations, international financial institutions, specialized international agencies, global bodies such as the UN and non-governmental organizations. However, coordination is very difficult to achieve, due in part to the confusing or competing lines of authority and budgetary autonomy among these actors, including within the UN system itself. Further, as Roland Paris argues in his RPPS study, efforts to improve coordination can actually serve as a substitute for achieving substantive cooperation—by focusing attention on issues of process and away from the substantive and strategic challenges of statebuilding.

Beyond the coordination of international actors, there is also a need for organizational coherence among the legitimate representatives of the host society itself, so that international actors can engage effectively with national leaders. The danger, however, is that efforts to identify national-level interlocutors can result in an over-emphasis on elites based in the capital, at the expense of regional and local institution-building.

A second type of coherence dilemma—at the

"normative" level—arises from inconsistencies in the values that statebuilders articulate (often drawn from universal norms) versus the values that are reflected in the actual policies that statebuilders pursue in the field and the results of these policies. Principles such as democratic accountability, national self-determination, the rule of law and good governance all tend to be compromised, to varying degrees, by the very fact of international intervention and by pragmatic imperatives to (1) cooperate with powerful local actors and (2) tailor institutional designs to reflect the distinctive patterns of political and economic life within the society.

Managing Dilemmas

The main purpose of the RPPS project is to elucidate these dilemmas and their underlying drivers through in-depth studies, and not necessarily to offer solutions to these dilemmas. Indeed, there are no "solutions" because these are true dilemmas that cannot be resolved in any definitive sense. Some RPPS contributors disagree with each other's specific policy recommendations. For instance, Robert Rotberg recommends delaying postwar elections until "a transitional administration or a new government has secured the cities and the countryside and ensured human security, disarmed and demobilized, established legal norms, stabilized and reinvigorated the economy, developed at least some rudimentary political institutions, reconstructed roads, and restored essential services, such as schools and clinics," whereas Timothy Sisk argues that delaying post-conflict elections can be deeply problematic because popular votes are an "essential step in the process of reconstituting political order after civil war."

The RPPS project, in other words, does not offer falsely simple prescriptions for what it takes to consolidate peace in countries that are just emerging from war. On the contrary, the project pointedly highlights the deep-rooted complexities of statebuilding—and the need for a better understanding of these complexities, from the unanticipated consequences of promoting political and economic liberalization in deeply divided societies, to the awkward disjuncture of international guidance versus local control. At best, the many dilemmas of statebuilding can only be *managed*, not resolved. But effective management must itself be based on a careful analysis of the underlying

contradictions and tensions which give rise to these dilemmas, as well as the interaction between these dilemmas. It must also be based on extensive knowledge of the host country and careful consideration of the long-term consequences of short-term actions.

There are, of course, limits to how "rational" policymaking can be in any organization, be it a national government, an international agency, a non-governmental entity or, for that matter, the congeries of actors involved in postwar statebuilding operations. As Charles Lindblom pointed out nearly 50 years ago in his classic examination of public administration in the United States, "muddling through" is more typical in policymaking than the rationalist archetype of means-ends planning.[6] Given the nature of statebuilding—its many actors, the scope of its task and the relatively high level of uncertainty regarding its impacts and outcomes—there will always be significant elements of improvisation and "irrationality" in statebuilding policy. This reality, however, should not be taken as license for complacency. The design and conduct of statebuilding operations can be *more* rational and *better* informed than they have been in the past. The stakes are too high, and the consequences of failure too great, to resign oneself to the limitations of muddling through.

For this reason, a primary recommendation emerging from the RPPS project is that statebuilding actors should conduct **"dilemma analyses"** prior to and during their operations. The more typical approach to mission planning involves identifying a sequence of steps to be completed at particular moments by particular actors, with the moments defined either according to a timeline or on the basis of having achieved specific prerequisite conditions. By contrast, dilemma analysis begins from the assumption that many of the elements of statebuilding will not fit together easily. Rather, they will often work at cross-purposes. In fact, some of these elements are likely to interact in ways that have the potential to undercut, not advance, the goal of establishing legitimate, effective state institutions in war-torn countries.

Such an analysis is essential, in our view, to managing the dilemmas of statebuilding. It does not replace a more conventional planning process, but supplements it. The key questions for those who wish to do dilemma analyses of ongoing or contemplated statebuilding missions are the following:

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[6] Charles Lindblom, "The Science Of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review* 19 (1959): 79-88.

1. To what extent, and exactly how, might the major statebuilding dilemmas manifest themselves in this operation?
2. What are the particular features of the local environment that make it more (or less) likely that certain dilemmas will become particularly problematic?
3. What are the underlying "drivers" of the anticipated dilemmas?
4. How might each dilemma interact with, or give rise to, other dilemmas?
5. Which of the anticipated dilemmas has the potential to be most problematic, and why?

One benefit of conducting such analysis is that it requires deep local knowledge and can therefore expose knowledge gaps that might otherwise go unnoticed in a conventional planning process. It also focuses attention on the deeply engrained continuities in the political, social, and economic life of a society emerging from war, which have tended to be under-appreciated. Further, it is a necessarily multidisciplinary exercise (due to the thematic span of the dilemmas themselves) and consequently creates incentives to bring together teams of analysts with different expertise—and from different statebuilding organizations—thereby helping to break down disciplinary and organizational silos.

Ultimately, however, the main purpose of dilemma analysis is to anticipate these challenges at the outset and to inform the process of devising more nuanced and effective statebuilding strategies. To this end, the RPPS studies suggest, first, that navigating dilemmas should be at the center of statebuilding policy; second, that in most cases, the challenge is to find a "sweet spot" that carefully balances competing imperatives; third, that it is crucial to scrutinize both the intended and possible unintended consequences of policy action within the context of these dilemmas; and fourth, that short-term decisions must be evaluated in the light of their longer-term implications for institution-building.

More awareness, scrutiny, and understanding of these dilemmas should also yield more **realistic expectations** of what can be achieved during an initial period of postconflict statebuilding and in the ensuing period. As noted earlier, one of the weaknesses of recent missions has been the gap between the stated objectives and the actual performance and outcomes of statebuilding efforts, which can foster disappointment and perceptions of disingenuousness—or worse,

hypocrisy—that risk undermining the legitimacy of, and support for, these efforts. Greater sensitivity to the inherent tensions and contradictions of statebuilding should, among other things, highlight the limited ability of outsiders to effect profound and truly far-reaching transformations in the workings of any society. Bringing expectations into closer alignment with possibilities would itself strengthen the prospects for effective statebuilding.

Sustainable Statebuilding and "Successive Missions"

Acknowledging the limits of externally-assisted statebuilding does not mean going back to the "quick and dirty" approach that defined the peacebuilding operations of the early-to-mid 1990s. Building effective, legitimate governmental institutions remains a crucial goal in consolidating transitions from war to a self-sustaining peace—and in helping postconflict countries escape the dual traps of recurring violence and poverty. Effective statebuilding should therefore focus on *sustainability*.

Sustaining international attention on states that have hosted missions is one of the laudable goals of the new Peacebuilding Commission. However, sustainable statebuilding is equally about designing mission strategies with the longer term in mind. For statebuilding strategies, such missions need to be viewed not simply as postconflict operations, but rather as the first of many phases of international engagement in recovering countries, most of which will remain fragile long after the formal termination of the initial mission. For example, threats to a postwar democratization process can manifest themselves over many years, not only in the first or second electoral contests.

These subsequent phases of statebuilding may be viewed as "successive missions" aimed at the gradual stabilization of political and economic conditions within the country. This does not necessarily mean open-ended military or security deployments. Rather, once initial transitional tasks are completed—such as disarmament, demobilization, return of refugees, interim government, and elections—the international role should gradually shift towards a more "ordinary" international development and monitoring presence. Further analysis is required to evaluate what different types of successive missions (involving fewer military deployments but still providing for security and credible commitment to peace agreements) are best

deployed to fill the gap between the full-scale peace operation and a "normal" development presence.[7]

The idea of successive missions also calls into question the usefulness and appropriateness of thinking about "exit strategies" for statebuilding operations. As Dominik Zaum writes, "exit should best be seen as a process, not an event, and therefore does not mean disengagement."[8] According to this view, rather than exiting, external actors remain involved in promoting (and to some extent overseeing) the statebuilding process in progressively less intrusive ways. These might involve long-term international police missions, deployment of significant numbers of UN civilian personnel, further security sector reform activities, rule of law and judicial reform, working with parliament and political parties, training future elections observers, building civil society or community-level conflict resiliency, and developing the capacity and dispute resolution skills of electoral management bodies. A key challenge for international statebuilders is to incorporate planning for these subsequent phases directly into the initial design of the mission, thereby reducing some of the contradictions between short-term and long-term statebuilding needs.

Statebuilding at a Crossroads

There is more at stake in this discussion than simply refining current statebuilding practices. The historic experiment in internationally-assisted postwar statebuilding, which has been so important within the activities of the United Nations and other international agencies since the end of the Cold War, appears to have arrived at a crossroads.

Criticism of statebuilding has been mounting in recent years from several directions. Some observers claim that these missions represent a new form of colonial control over the territory of war-torn states. The strongest versions of this critique portray statebuilding as a form of neo-imperialist or capitalist exploitation of vulnerable societies. In the post-9/11 period—and particularly since the 2003 invasion of Iraq—it has become increasingly difficult to separate discussions of statebuilding in all contexts from the ill-fated "imperial" attempt to stabilize post-invasion Iraq. In spite of important differences between Iraq

and other postconflict missions (including the fact that Iraq was conquered and occupied, whereas most statebuilding operations have been launched at the invitation of local parties and following a negotiated settlement to an internal war), exasperation over the deterioration of conditions in Iraq seems to be spilling over into skepticism in some quarters about the potential effectiveness or desirability of *any* kind of postwar statebuilding operation.

Others have leveled more measured criticisms. Some, for example, point to the mixed record of statebuilding and wonder whether it is worth the resources and sacrifice. Most countries that have hosted these missions have not reverted to war, but, as previously noted, the durability of peace even in the most successful cases is less clear. How should we judge, for example, the outcome of peacebuilding in Central America when the missions did little to address deep socioeconomic inequalities in those societies, which have arguably been among the root causes of the region's violent past? What about the utter failure of peacebuilding in Rwanda prior to the 1994 genocide, or the on-again, off-again progress in Angola or Sierra Leone? And what should we make of the burst of renewed political violence in Timor Leste in 2006, in a country that was widely touted as one of the most notable peacebuilding successes? Such outcomes have raised doubts about the prospects for peacebuilding and statebuilding even in relatively favorable settings. Although most experts hold that these operations have, on the whole, done considerably more good than harm, serious doubts persist about the ability of international agencies to foster conditions for sustainable peace. These doubts have, in turn, contributed to arguments favoring a major scaling-back of international statebuilding in order to give war-torn societies the opportunity to pursue their own "autonomous recovery."[9]

In the face of these diverse criticisms and doubts, the future of the statebuilding experiment seems uncertain. A widespread loss of confidence in international statebuilding would make it more difficult to provide assistance to countries just emerging from war. In the most extreme case, a rejection of statebuilding could effectively abandon tens of millions of people to lawlessness, predation, disease, and fear. Beyond their humanitarian effects, state

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[7] The concept of "successive missions" and its application to statebuilding will be examined in the next phase of the RPPS project.

[8] Dominik Zaum, "The Politics of Exit: Transition and Exit from Post-Conflict Statebuilding Operations," paper presented at the annual conference of the American Political Science Association (Chicago, IL August 2007).

[9] Jeremy Weinstein, "Autonomous Recovery and International Intervention in Comparative Perspective," Center for Global Development Working Paper 57, Washington, D.C., April 2005.

weakness and state failure are global concerns because their effects often spill over the borders of the affected country.

Making statebuilding more effective and sustainable, are therefore critical objectives at this moment in history. To do so, however, practitioners of statebuilding need to focus more attention on the inherent tensions and contradictions of this type of intervention, as the RPPS project makes clear. The dilemmas of statebuilding will never go away, but they can be managed more successfully than they have been in the past. The first step is to deepen existing understandings of the dilemmas, their underlying causes, and their interactions and implications.

Appendix

RPPS WORKING PAPERS

Below is a list and brief descriptions of the working papers prepared by members of the Research Partnership on Postwar Statebuilding (RPPS). Full-length versions of these working papers may be downloaded from the RPPS website: http://www.state-building.org.

Several of these studies will appear in revised form in a forthcoming volume edited by Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk entitled *Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London: Routledge Security and Governance Series, 2008). The book will also include a commentary on the future of statebuilding, written by Miles Kahler of the University of California, San Diego.

Robert Rotberg (Harvard University), "Creating Robust Institutions: Preparing Secure Governance Foundations."

> *If political institution-building is prosecuted haphazardly or cavalierly, it will prove neither effective nor lasting. Among the fundamental precursors for successful political institutional development are demonstrable national and personal security, a modest degree of good governance and an inkling of prosperity. In postconflict situations, these political goods need to be provided, usually through the kinds of outside assistance and outside support that reinforce positive initiatives on the ground. But the sequencing and achievement of these reforms pose significant challenges.*

Michael Barnett (University of Minnesota) and Christoph Zuercher (Free University Berlin), "The Peacebuilder's Contract: How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Statehood."

> *International peacebuilders have adopted strategies that have reinforced previously existing state-society relations—weak states characterized by patrimonial politics and skewed development. One explanation for this outcome is that the peacebuilders and domestic elites strike an informal "contract" whereby each gets something they need. Peacebuilders recognize the interest, power, and authority of local elites, (although this may not be compatible with the objective of building the good peace) and state elites acknowledge the legitimacy of the reforms proposed by peacebuilders but are intent on minimizing the possible risks to their fundamental interests. Peacebuilders and local elites pursue their collective interest in stability and symbolic peacebuilding, creating the appearance (and opening up the possibility) of change while leaving existing state-society relations largely intact.*

Astri Suhrke (Chr. Michelsen Institute), "The Dangers of a Tight Embrace: Externally Assisted Statebuilding in Afghanistan."

> *International assistance to post-Taliban statebuilding in Afghanistan has had negative as well as positive effects, which together have created severe internal tensions in the statebuilding project itself. For all the achievements cited in removing the Taliban and launching an ambitious policy of reconstruction and modernization, the intervention in 2001 and subsequent aid strategies have also created a "rentier state" that has weak legitimacy and governance capacity and which is deeply dependent upon foreign funds and outside military forces for its survival. In short, international actors have not struck the right balance between intrusiveness and assistance in Afghanistan.*

David Edelstein (Georgetown University), "Foreign Military Forces and Statebuilding: The Dilemmas of Providing Security in Post-Conflict Environments."

> *Foreign military forces engaged in statebuilding operations face two key dilemmas. First, although military*

forces may play an essential role in providing security, they face an "obsolescing welcome" over time as populations seek to regain full sovereign control over their territory. Similarly, while larger and more intrusive intervention forces may be better able to establish and maintain security (at least in the short run), over time they risk provoking nationalist resistance against the foreign presence, which could undermine the larger goals of statebuilding. Balancing these imperatives is a crucial challenge for foreign military organizations involved in statebuilding missions.

Deborah Avant (University of California, Irvine), "Opportunistic Peacebuilders? International Organizations, Private Military Training and Statebuilding after War."

Private security companies (PSCs) have become increasingly common tools of postwar statebuilding, both for the host states and for the external sponsors of statebuilding missions. But the effects of employing PSCs on the longer-term prospects for democratic institution-building have been mixed—in some cases they have contributed to state capacity, while in other cases they have exacerbated the difficulties of creating effective and democratic governmental institutions. One possible explanation for the differences in these outcomes is the degree to which international organizations are involved in carefully supervising the activities of PSCs in statebuilding missions. To examine this hypothesis, the experiences of Sierra Leone and Croatia are compared.

Christopher Cramer (University of London), "Trajectories of Accumulation through War and Peace."

The widely shared assumption that "war is development in reverse" is misleading and flawed. The economic conditions in postconflict states typically reflect war-time economic patterns that are carried over into the peacebuilding period. These may be sources of threat or opportunities for statebuilding efforts. The challenge, therefore, is neither to ignore such patterns nor to view them all as pernicious to peace or development. Rather, it is to understand and develop policies that can consolidate those dimensions of the "war-to-peace economy" that have the greatest potential to contribute to longer-term structural change, economic development, and institution-building.

David Roberts (University of Ulster), "The Superficiality of Statebuilding in Cambodia: Patronage and Clientelism as Enduring Forms of Politics."

More than a decade after the major statebuilding operation in Cambodia, the impact of statebuilding efforts (including the promotion of democratic norms, the rule of law and market-based principles) has yielded only superficial changes in the political and institutional structures of the state and society. Cambodia's political and economic arrangements continue to be characterized and dominated by informal, socially-ruled systems of patronage and clientelism. In some areas, these long-standing practices and institutional structures have adopted elements of the externally-promoted statebuilding model to produce "hybrid" results which display only superficial resemblances to the democratic and market-oriented ideals of statebuilding. Statebuilders, in general, should be more willing to recognize local forms of political and economic development and to allow these forms to develop in response to local dynamics and needs.

Kirsti Samuels (International IDEA), "Paradoxes and Compromises in the Design of Postconflict Constitutions."

There are competing and sometimes contradictory imperatives in the design of constitutions in postconflict environments: first, to end or prevent a return to violence, and second, to provide a normative framework for the future governance of the state. A difficult tension exists between what is required to secure peace in the short term and what is required for longer term stability and legitimate governance. Constitution-building can provide a forum and process for the negotiation of divisive issues and yield a future vision of the state and a road map of how to get there, but it can also undermine the creation of a sustainable peace and a legitimate state. A phased process of constitution-building, which is increasingly inclusive and participatory over time, may offer an answer to this dilemma.

Timothy D. Sisk (University of Denver), "Pathways of the Political: Electoral Processes after Civil War."

Electoral processes are essential to statebuilding because they give a modicum of legitimacy and credibility to postwar regimes. However, when such processes go awry and power is captured by a narrow faction that was party to the war in the first place, electoral processes inhibit the mutually enforcing state-society relations needed for effective states. Much depends on how elections are sequenced in terms of providing security, how they are related to power sharing pacts that limit state capture and how they are designed in terms of institutional choice. The transition sequences and institutional choices made in war-settlement negotiations often determine the nature and timing of initial postwar elections, and these electoral processes, in turn, deeply affect the nature of the state that emerges for years to follow.

Jens Narten (University of Hamburg), "Dilemmas of Promoting Local Ownership: Statebuilding in Postwar Kosovo."

Without a successful handover of control and competencies from external statebuilders to local actors following an essential period of international involvement, statebuilding missions would either become open-ended and extraordinarily costly, or would come to a sudden end without generating sustainable and self-sustaining local structures. But promoting "local ownership" faces a dilemma. If the transfer of powers to local actors takes place too early and in an all-encompassing way, most postwar societies will be unable to take over relevant functions due to a lack of their own capacities. But if the transfer occurs too late or is too limited, the statebuilding process runs the risk of losing popular support and generating domestic resistance. The case of Kosovo provides an opportunity to investigate the competing and sometimes contradictory dilemmas of promoting "local ownership."

Roland Paris (University of Ottawa), "Understanding the 'Coordination Problem' in Postwar Statebuilding."

The need for better coordination among the myriad international actors involved in postconflict operations is widely recognized—and indeed was one of the principal reasons for creating the Peacebuilding Commission within the United Nations in 2006. Too often, however, problems of statebuilding are misdiagnosed as "coordination failures" because they manifest themselves, superficially, as disorderliness or ineffectiveness in the field, whereas in fact they reflect deeper frustrations, tensions, and uncertainties in the statebuilding enterprise. And too often, greater coordination is put forward as a remedy without considering the difficulties and risks of the treatment. If coordination involves excessive centralization, for example, it can squelch the ability of individual statebuilding agencies to adapt to shifting and unexpected conditions. But too much reliance on decentralized "network" models of coordination, while preserving flexibility, can fail to address the problem of statebuilding agencies acting at cross-purposes. Effective coordination requires a balance between centralized and "networked" management and should be based on a shared analysis of the substantive dilemmas that confront statebuilding actors in the field.

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