Improving International Responses to Armed Conflict

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Executive Summary

Despite nearly two decades of active involvement in the management and resolution of conflict and reconstruction in its wake, the international community's toolbox leaves much to be desired. Several reform efforts have sought to improve international responses to armed conflict, but have run up against persistent obstacles. The 2008 IPI New York Seminar brought together participants from forty-six Permanent Missions to the United Nations and four nongovernmental organizations to examine the shortcomings in international responses to armed conflict and to debate new strategies for strengthening them.[1] This report summarizes and reflects on the key points that emerged at the seminar.

The discussions highlighted two core challenges that, while recognized in international policy circles, are not effectively addressed by the institutional mechanisms at our disposal. The first of these is that all conflicts are fundamentally rooted in political dynamics, which highlights the critical importance of understanding local context and finding solutions that resonate with local actors. The second is the lack of a coherent and strategic approach by international actors in any given conflict or postconflict situation. Departments, agencies, and organizations within and beyond the UN continue to operate in silos and often at cross-purposes, failing to fully leverage their collective strength.

Although the UN is slow to change, several concrete steps across peacemaking, prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding have been taken to improve multilateral responses to armed conflict. Seminar discussions touched on efforts to strengthen mediation support capacity and preventive action; integrated mission planning and expanding cooperation between the UN and regional and subregional organizations in peacekeeping; and improvements in joint assessments and planning, as well as the UN's newly established peacebuilding architecture. Ultimately, however, the presentations and discussions at the seminar emphasized that while these efforts represent important strides, stubborn obstacles remain, particularly in addressing deficits of strategy and contextual knowledge.

On the political front, efforts to improve international responses to armed conflict are hampered by lack of political commitment, divergence of goals among the key players, and mistrust among member states and between the UN Secretariat and member states. On the bureaucratic front, effective action is constrained by a lack of strategic planning capacity within the UN, confused accountability and authority structures for departments, agencies, funds, and programs, and cumbersome, disharmonious management policies. Political and bureaucratic obstacles are rooted in fundamental conceptual dilemmas as to the desired end-goal of international intervention in armed conflicts, and contradictions in means and ends. This is particularly acute in the values that international actors articulate versus the policies pursued in the field, and in the tension between short-term and long-term imperatives and objectives. Seminar participants agreed that recent reform efforts across prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding have made important advances but have so far failed to meet their full potential because of these obstacles.

In discussions about ways to address these shortcomings, several common suggestions emerged:

- improve the UN system's political analysis capacity to underpin all its efforts;

- address the diverging incentive and accountability structures that drive the actions of UN entities in separate directions by pursuing a consistent approach in the entities' authorizing bodies;

- rebuild trust among member states by improving the relationships between the UN's main organs;

- harmonize administrative rules and procedures across departments, agencies, funds, and programs, including human resources, budgeting, and procurement;

- strengthen mechanisms and initiatives that already exist, rather than creating new entities or expanding existing mandates in order to address these obstacles.

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1 The 2008 IPI New York Seminar, "Improving the International Response to Armed Conflict and State Fragility," took place at the Tarrytown Estate, New York, on May 5-8, 2008. See Appendix for full agenda.

Introduction

Although the incidence of civil war has declined in recent years,[2] the international community continues to grapple with the devastating effects of conflict on local, regional, and global security and development. The notion that armed conflict is a problem of global concern is now widely accepted in international policy circles. And yet, the situations in Afghanistan, Haiti, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and elsewhere continue to lay bare the shortcomings in our existing toolbox of responses. The 2008 IPI New York Seminar brought together participants from forty-six Permanent Missions to the United Nations and four nongovernmental organizations to examine these shortcomings and debate new strategies for strengthening them.

The seminar was organized in two parts. The first day was designed to assess the nature of the problem through the lens of cross-cutting challenges, including nonstate armed groups; coherence and coordination; and ownership and legitimacy.[3] These topics were chosen to provide the basis for a discussion that would cut across time, space, actors, and issues and serve as useful entry points to examine the inherent tensions and contradictions in international responses to armed conflict. Beginning from the premise that many efforts have already been undertaken to address these challenges, the second day of the seminar centered on examining the shortcomings in recent reform efforts focusing primarily but not exclusively on the UN system.

This report summarizes the key points that emerged from the seminar, situates them in recent research on international responses to armed conflict, and provides some thoughts on how to strengthen the multilateral architecture for mounting an improved response. Discussions at the seminar highlighted two core challenges that, while recognized in international policy circles, are not effectively addressed by the institutional mechanisms at our disposal. The first of these is that all conflicts are fundamentally rooted in

political dynamics, which highlights the critical importance of understanding local context and finding solutions that resonate with local actors. Although this theme is often repeated as a mantra, international efforts continue to operate without a nuanced understanding of context and tend to marginalize local actors, preventing them from becoming the true drivers of their own recovery. The second is a lack of a coherent and strategic approach by international actors in any given conflict or postconflict situation. Departments, agencies, and organizations within and beyond the UN continue to operate in silos, often at cross-purposes, and fail to fully leverage their collective strength. The proliferation of actors and interests that results from the growing multidimensionality of peace operations and peacebuilding activities seems only to exacerbate the problem.

The first section of this paper explores these two challenges. The second section highlights recent reform efforts and reflects on shortcomings in current practice. The third section analyzes the core obstacles faced by these reform efforts. The final section offers suggestions for overcoming these obstacles.

The Nature of the Challenge

The New York Seminar covered a range of topics and entry points for analyzing international responses to armed conflict in order to provide participants with broad exposure to the dilemmas they pose. Despite the seminar's breadth, the two challenges of understanding context and developing strategy were raised repeatedly throughout the seminar. It is striking that, while these are not new concerns,[4] the international community continues to wrestle with how best to address them.

UNDERSTANDING POLITICAL CONTEXT

Violent conflicts arise from struggles over access to power and resources; by their very nature, international responses to conflict grapple with these same issues. Negotiating and implementing peace

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2 Human Security Centre, *Human Security Report 2005* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 17.

3 See Appendix for the seminar agenda.

4 See Elizabeth Cousens and Chetan Kumar with Karin Wermester, eds., *Peacebuilding as Politics: Cultivating Peace in Fragile Societies* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001); Bruce D. Jones, "The Challenges of Strategic Coordination," in *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, edited by Stephen John Stedman, Donald Rothchild, and Elizabeth M. Cousens (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 89-115.

agreements, deploying peacekeepers, and developing strategies for consolidating peace and preventing future conflict are high-stakes political processes, ones that create winners and losers. Discussions at the seminar emphasized that without an understanding of the actors, their interests, and the relationships of power in which they are embedded, any approach taken by outsiders is likely to be of limited effectiveness.

An experienced mediator spoke of the challenges of deciding whether to engage with armed groups, choosing the right interlocutor who is empowered to speak on behalf of a group and can deliver on promises made during a negotiation, and the asymmetry in leverage that international actors have over the players in a mediation process. Others have written of the need for mediators to have a "political map" of the actors—who are the actors with the power to stop or restart war? From where do they derive support? Have they accepted the need for a negotiated solution or do they still believe they can prevail militarily? Which constituencies can they legitimately claim to represent? Which actors have been left out of the process, and what capacity do they have to act as spoilers?[5] Research on the economic agendas of factional elites emphasizes their complex political and economic motives for pursuing war.[6] Understanding each actor's cost-benefit calculus is important to devise the right combination of carrots and sticks.

But the importance of political context does not end with the signing of a peace agreement. One speaker noted that in any conflict, there is often continuity between prewar, war-time, and postwar politics and political actors. The same actors around the table for a mediation process often assume positions in a postagreement government. Political issues that remain unaddressed or only partially addressed in peace agreements require sustained political efforts after the agreement is signed. And yet, there is a tendency to treat peace negotiations as the "political" phase of an international response, requiring experienced mediators with political expertise, while everything that

follows the agreement—from peacekeeping to peacebuilding—is treated as a technocratic exercise.[7] The danger is that postconflict peacebuilding processes create new opportunities for capture and rent-seeking and thus for social exclusion and political gain. Above all else, we need to acknowledge the political nature of peace processes, and the political skills needed to manage them throughout all phases of implementation and peacebuilding. One speaker praised the UN efforts in Nepal and Palestine (post-Oslo) for maintaining continuity in leadership from the preventive diplomacy stage through peace talks and into the implementation of the peace agreements.

The notion that one-size-*does-not*-fit-all is now widely recognized in international policy circles and emerged as one of the strongest themes of the seminar. In session after session the crucial importance of understanding the local context—a country's history, politics, and people—was emphasized by speakers and participants. While any given conflict may have an international dimension, it will always be rooted in local political dynamics, often with significant variation across the country. Understanding how different actors perceive their interests and incentives, and the resources they are able to mobilize in support of their objectives, becomes crucial.

And yet, understanding and being mindful of context is easier said than done. There will always be a tendency among international actors to perceive local politics through their own historical and cultural lens. However, inattention to the nuances of context can have serious consequences. For example, as one speaker noted, international engagement with nonstate armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo has been criticized for being poorly calibrated in favor of a military response at the expense of political dialogue, on the assumption that the belligerents would only respond to a purely military solution. As a result, groups' claims and grievances have not been effectively addressed, which deters them from engaging in a constructive manner.

Another common consequence of inattention to

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5 See Lakhdar Brahimi and Salman Ahmed, "In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace: The Seven Deadly Sins of Mediation," policy brief (New York: Center on International Cooperation, May 2008), p. 5.

6 See, for example, Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, *Greed and Grievance in Civil War*, Oxford Economic Papers no.56 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 563-595; Mats Berdal and David Malone, eds., *Greed and Grievance: Economic Agendas in Civil Wars* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000); Karen Ballentine and Jake Sherman, eds., *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2003).

7 Brahimi and Ahmed, "In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace," p. 2.

context is the technocratic fix. The pitfall here is treating technical assistance as if it is delivered in a vacuum. The tendency to rely on boilerplate programs for institutional reform, oversight mechanisms, and training can exacerbate imbalances and generate impractical and unsustainable solutions.[8] Institutional reform is not just about structures and functions: it is fundamentally about the distribution of power among elites and the groups they represent. As one speaker noted, a lack of domestic consensus over the direction of institutional reform is often perceived by external actors as a lack of capacity. Moreover, as we note above, the products of technical assistance—training, equipment, travel, and even stipends—are susceptible to capture. Blindness to political prerogatives and relationships risks allowing these goods to be channeled by the local authorities to loyal supporters rather than to those most in need, further exacerbating grievances and undermining reconciliation.

A great deal of research on postwar peacebuilding that has emerged in recent years argues that a key factor in promoting national reconciliation, peaceful politics, and a firm basis for economic recovery is the development of an effective and legitimate state.[9] This basically comes down to establishing an agreement on the rules of the game, a political process that is fundamentally an internal one. Discussions at the seminar emphasized that external efforts that seek to support this process constructively should be mindful of what will resonate with local customs and mores, even while they promote reconstruction and reform. For peacebuilding efforts to be effective, they must be relevant to a country's history of state-society relations and its prevailing modes of governance and justice (both formal and informal). When international actors misunderstand or ignore political context, their interventions may adversely affect peoples' perceptions of state legitimacy.

International policy discussions about legitimacy invariably make reference to the concept of "ownership." The underlying logic is that if the peace agreement and peacebuilding process are "owned" by national actors, they will be seen as more legitimate in the eyes of the people.[10] While this logic makes intuitive sense, seminar participants noted that it is problematic because it is based on confused and contested understandings of ownership—specifically, who owns what, and to what end? Are we referring to ownership by the governing elite, by the upper middle class, or by a broad cross-section of society? Are we referring to ownership of policies proposed (or imposed) by outsiders, or a homegrown vision? Too often, international efforts have tended to sound the trumpet of ownership without effectively bringing local people into policymaking processes, which risks undermining the organic development of legitimate political processes.

Finally, it is important to be mindful that international actors are themselves motivated by political agendas. This involvement—the political pressure that they bring to bear in order to achieve certain aims, the incentives and constraints they create, the leaders they favor, the preferences they communicate—can have an enormous impact on the choices made by national actors, and on the legitimacy of both national and international efforts to end conflicts and build peace. Too often, international efforts are treated as value-neutral exercises motivated by purely altruistic motives, when of course this is rarely, if ever, the case. Equally dangerous is the tendency to overestimate the ability of international actors to influence decisions made by national leaders. It is vital that the policies and programs developed by international actors are underpinned by a realistic assessment of their opportunities and constraints.

A STRATEGY DEFICIT

As peace operations and peacebuilding activities have become increasingly complex and ambitious, and as governments have become more concerned about the threat posed by state fragility, the number

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8   Charles T. Call and Elizabeth Cousens, "Ending Wars and Building Peace," Coping with Crisis Working Paper Series (New York: International Peace Academy, March 2007).

9   See Charles T. Call with Vanessa Wyeth, eds., *Building States to Build Peace* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008); Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, "Managing Contradictions: The Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding," paper produced jointly by the Research Partnership on Postwar Statebuilding and International Peace Academy (New York: International Peace Academy, November 2007); Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

10 See Catherine Barnes, ed., "Special Issue: Owning the Process: Public Participation in Peacemaking," *Accord* 13 (2002); Simon Chesterman, "Ownership in Theory and in Practice: Transfer of Authority in UN Statebuilding Operations," *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 1, no. 1 (March 2007): 3-26.

of institutional actors has grown significantly. This includes new departments and units at bilateral aid agencies, the new peacebuilding architecture at the UN, and a proliferation of international and national NGOs focused on peacebuilding. With each new actor comes their associated interests and objectives, as well as bureaucratic frameworks, toolkits, best practices, and funding cycles—all frustrating efforts to pursue a coherent strategy. Discussions at the seminar highlighted this strategy deficit, which leaves international actors working at cross-purposes and undermines local capacity for reconciliation and reconstruction.

At the heart of the strategy deficit is a fundamental disagreement over objectives. If strategy is ultimately the matching of means to ends, agreement on the ends should be an essential first step. But seminar discussions noted the challenge of forging agreement on the end-goal in conflict and postconflict situations due to disagreement over who can or should drive decision making about priorities and approach. One speaker argued that, in postconflict situations, the sovereign national government is the only actor empowered to articulate objectives, and that international actors should get behind a vision put forth by the government. The countervailing challenge is that in early postconflict environments, the ability or the willingness of the national government to articulate and implement an equitable, feasible, and prioritized strategy may be lacking. Moreover, as we note above, political leaders are often motivated by a variety of economic and political interests and incentives that may center on protecting their sources of power and wealth rather than responding to the needs of the population.

Nevertheless, regardless of the prerogatives and capacity of the national political leadership, there will be a need for a coherent and strategic approach among international actors engaged in a myriad of activities, including mediating between armed groups; delivering humanitarian relief; planning and deploying a peacekeeping intervention; and beginning to plan and implement statebuilding and reconstruction activities. Ensuring that these activities are not duplicative, working at cross-purposes, or undermining local efforts is still important. Therefore, strategic planning capacity that streamlines the international response and works as closely as possible—where possible—with national actors remains essential.

The ideal scenario in postconflict contexts is that aid coordination should rest with the national government while international efforts should aim to support the national vision for establishing and consolidating peace. Indeed, much of the recent literature on postconflict peacebuilding and statebuilding argues that donor fragmentation actually undermines the ability of the state to drive recovery by overtaxing extremely limited capacities.[11] In addition, the tendency to use a project-based approach that bypasses state institutions neglects the urgency of supporting and building much-needed domestic policy-development and implementation capacity.[12] Recently, prominent academics and practitioners have advocated for international support of government budgetary processes as the locus for developing and implementing a recovery and reconstruction strategy.[13] According to seminar discussions, the real challenge is moving from the early post-peace-agreement period, when it may not be possible to work through state institutions because of limited capacity, accountability, or both, toward enabling local actors to articulate and implement a recovery strategy. Recent literature on postconflict situations is clear about the ideal of state-driven strategy, but it is less clear on how to get from donor-driven reconstruction to state-led development.

The flipside to coherence on objectives is the ability to better match resources to those ends. Yet despite the rhetoric of national ownership and the evolution of needs-assessment tools, international assistance continues to be largely supply-driven. UN funds, agencies, and programs, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that are dependent on bilateral donors for the bulk of their funding are often compelled to "follow the money" rather than

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11 See Michael Carnahan and Clare Lockhart, "Peacebuilding and Public Finance," in *Building States to Build Peace*, edited by Charles T. Call with Vanessa Wyeth (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008), pp. 73-102; James K. Boyce and Madalene O'Donnell, eds., *Peace and the Public Purse: Economic Policies for Postwar Statebuilding* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2007);

12 Ibid.

13 See Carnahan and Lockhart, "Peacebuilding and Public Finance," as well as Ashraf Ghani, Clare Lockhart, and Michael Carnahan, "Closing the Sovereignty Gap: An Approach to State-Building," Working Paper no. 253 (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2005).

focusing on strategic priorities.

Funding decisions are a key expression of donor priorities and preferences, and funding timelines and other bureaucratic constraints often drive international decisions in postconflict environments. For these reasons, it is now widely recognized that bilateral donors and international financial institutions (IFIs) should be part of strategy development processes.[14] To date, very few UN missions have integrated the major donors and IFIs into strategic coordination. Donor coordination is common but tends to revolve around information exchange, rather than the more complex questions of strategy. As one speaker recounted, the Office of the UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East (UNSCO), during the Oslo implementation period, provides a uniquely successful example. It worked closely with the core donors, including mobilizing their interest and engagement from capitals. However, this model has not been institutionalized at the UN, where the Secretary-General's representatives often do not have the mandate, authority, or capacity to coordinate the UN system effectively, let alone the major donors and IFIs.[15]

The strategy deficit informs the logic behind the creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and its broad composition of thirty-one members drawn from the Security Council, General Assembly, ECOSOC, and top troop and financial contributors. For the time being, however, the PBC is only engaged in a few countries and has yet to demonstrate that it can drive a truly integrated and strategic approach.[16] Moreover, discussions at the seminar suggested that even if the PBC was providing the necessary political platform to corral donors around a coherent set of priorities, it would not be sufficient. The senior UN representative on the ground would still need the authority and capacity to provide day-to-day strategic direction and to change course as circumstances

warrant.

Discussions at the seminar noted that the strategy deficit is rooted in the lack of a strategic culture in the UN system. The security, political, and development actors within the system have not yet developed modes of working that leverage their collective strengths. Structurally, the deck is stacked against them: they are mandated to pursue different objectives; they are resourced from different sources; and they are accountable to different configurations of member states. Further exacerbating these conditions, they have developed vastly different ways of operating, from the administrative procedures that govern budgeting, procurement, and human resources, to the tools they use to assess needs and plan interventions. There is really no entity that looks at a conflict holistically and develops a strategy that draws on all the strengths of the UN system. Several participants felt that the Peacebuilding Support Office's (PBSO) use of Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies is a step in the right direction, but so far it has been limited to the late-recovery countries that are currently on the PBC's agenda and continues to suffer from insufficient support from the top leadership of the UN Secretariat. Among other efforts aimed at improving UN integration in postconflict situations is the Integrated Mission Planning Process (IMPP). The IMPP has made some headway, which will be further discussed in the next section (on recent reform efforts), but much work still remains to be done.

As one speaker noted, the strategy deficit is exacerbated by incoherence among the political, security, and development entities within donor governments. Interdepartmental silos and bureaucratic turf battles often foster competition over strategic focus and associated resources. For example, a defense department that prioritizes national security in its international engagements will advocate a very different approach and alloca-

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14 It has become commonplace for member states to emphasize the importance of including bilateral donors and international financial institutions in strategy processes. See, for example, the first two annual reports of the Peacebuilding Commission, UN Doc. A/62/137-S/2007/458 (July 25, 2007) and UN Doc. A/63/92-S/2008/417 (June 24, 2008); see also, Yukio Takasu, "Note for Effective Joint Endeavours for Peacebuilding," June 23, 2008, available at www.un.int/japan/jp/topics/080623_Note%20on%20Peacebuilding.pdf. The original rationale for including bilateral donors and international financial institutions in strategy processes is spelled out in the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility,* UN Doc. A/59/565, December 2, 2004, para. 226.

15 See Fafo (Institute for Applied Social Science), "Command from the Saddle: Managing United Nations Peace-building Missions," Report no. 266 (Oslo, 1999); Jones, "The Challenges of Strategic Coordination"; Espen Barth Eide, Anja Therese Kaspersen, Randolph Kent, and Karen von Hippel, "Report on Integrated Missions: Practical Perspectives and Recommendations," study prepared for the expanded UN ECHA Core Group, May 2005.

16 See IPI and Center on International Cooperation (CIC), "Taking Stock, Looking Forward: A Strategic Review of the Peacebuilding Commission," (New York, April 2008).

tion of resources than a development agency that prioritizes poverty reduction and economic development. Several donor countries have initiated a process of harmonizing their defense, diplomacy, and development bureaucracies—coined as the "3D" approach—to facilitate more coherent support to postconflict and fragile countries.[17] However, these efforts are still relatively new and confined to capitals. Efforts to develop internal coherence and coordination also risk crowding out coordination among donors and other international actors—if a national position is the product of an internal compromise, it may not lend itself to negotiation over strategy among bilateral and multilateral actors.

In an ideal world, an effective strategy would be anchored in national leadership, be based on an assessment of local needs and capacities, provide a framework for prioritization and for calibrating short-, medium-, and long-term objectives and activities, and guide the actions and funding decisions of all international actors. However, donor fragmentation, competing and contested objectives and interests, and the lack of strategic planning capacity and authority in the UN system militate against effective strategy. This is often expressed as a problem of coordination and coherence, but lack of agreement in the first instance on objectives and goals, and lack of transparency and flexibility in the resources available to meet those goals, is at the core of the strategy deficit.

UN Institutional Responses

These points about context and strategy are not new. They have been highlighted many times by prominent policymakers and practitioners, as well as in reports sponsored by the UN itself.[18] Although the UN is slow to change, several concrete steps across peacemaking, prevention, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding have been taken to improve multilateral responses to armed conflict. The presentations and discussions at the seminar emphasized that

while important strides have been made, stubborn obstacles remain.

Several noteworthy reforms and innovations have been undertaken within the last five years.[19]

PEACEMAKING AND PREVENTION

The UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) has been historically underresourced, even as other parts of the system have expanded in terms of funding, staffing, and scope. A 2007 evaluation of political affairs by the UN Office for Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) notes:

> One constraint identified by OIOS as hampering the work quality of regional divisions [in DPA] is the lack of staff and resource allocations commensurate with expanding mandates and demand; desk officers cannot adequately follow developing events around the world because they lack adequate time for monitoring, research and analytical work. On average, regional divisions are able to focus on fewer than half of the countries in conflict, or potentially in conflict, that should be receiving coverage, and they provide only limited substantive support and attention to some of the special political missions.[20]

These constraints notwithstanding, important steps have been taken in recent years. A Mediation Support Unit was established in DPA in 2006, followed by a Standby Team of Mediation Experts in 2008, to provide timely technical expertise and support for high-level UN and regional mediators. In addition, DPA has established regional offices in West Africa and Central Asia to support the UN's mediation, good offices, and prevention efforts. These offices are meant to work closely with regional and subregional organizations and to focus on cross-border security concerns, such as the trade in small arms and light weapons and organized crime. The establishment of these offices represents a concerted effort by the UN to cross institutional silos in dealing with these security issues. As one speaker highlighted, the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA) works closely with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the country-based

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17 See 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).

18 See Call and Cousens, "Ending Wars and Building Peace"; Conflict, Security, and Development Group, *A Review of Peace Operations: A Case for Change* (London: Kings College, 2003); United Nations, *Report of the Panel on Peace Operations* (Brahimi Report), UN Doc. A/55/305, August 21, 2000.

19 This is not meant to be an exhaustive list; rather, it represents those topics that were highlighted at the seminar and that seek to address, among other concerns, the deficits of strategy and contextual knowledge discussed here.

20 Economic and Social Council, "Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the In-Depth Evaluation of Political Affairs: Summary Report," UN Doc. E/AC.51/2007/2, April 13, 2007.

Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs), and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to combat narcotrafficking in the region. The rationale for providing more substantial regional support in mediation and in dealing with cross-border security concerns represents recognition of the highly context-specific nature of the challenge. However, while this rationale is largely undisputed, these offices continue to be constrained by a lack of resources on the one hand, and a lack of leverage within the regions and among their UN counterparts, on the other. On the question of DPA's capacity overall, the Secretary-General put a $21 million reform package before member states in the spring of 2008, but it failed to pass.

On the prevention front, efforts to operationalize the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) have intensified. At the UN World Summit in 2005, the gathered heads of state and government unanimously affirmed the "responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity."[21] Specifically, paragraphs 138 and 139 of the Summit Outcome Document state that the responsibility to protect rests on three pillars (1) the responsibility of every state to protect its own population from these four crimes and violations; (2) the responsibility of the international community to help states build the capacity to exercise this responsibility; and (3) the responsibility of the international community to take timely and decisive action if national authorities are manifestly failing to protect their populations from these four crimes and violations. Over the last year, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser focusing on RtoP has been working with member states and within the UN bureaucracy to clarify the concept—emphasizing that it should remain focused on the four crimes and violations—to operationalize the concept, and to build political support. As discussions on this topic have progressed, the focus has shifted decisively to the first two pillars, emphasizing the preventive elements of RtoP.

PEACEKEEPING

In the field of peacekeeping, the most significant

innovation developed to address the strategy deficit is the Integrated Mission Planning Process (IMPP) established in 2006. The IMPP aims to get all the right people from across the UN system around the table as early as possible to determine what type of UN intervention may be required, conduct a technical assessment mission, carry out operational planning for the mission, and reconcile the organizational mandates of the different departments and agencies that may be involved. By providing an institutionalized mechanism for actors across the system to come together at an early stage, the IMPP has improved joint planning. However, it has tended to emphasize integrated structures rather than integrated strategy. It speaks more to how the UN will organize itself on the ground than to how it will prioritize efforts and implement a common approach.[22] Moreover, as one speaker noted, the trend toward integration has fostered the belief that the UN presence should always be fully integrated, regardless of context. Yet, in some cases it may serve a particular purpose to maintain a certain level of separateness, provided that all parts of the system are working toward common goals. This speaker highlighted the case of Nepal, where a focused mandate for the DPA-led mission, separate from the UN Country Team, serves an important political purpose by reassuring the government that the UN will not expand its mandate unnecessarily or stay on indefinitely.

In recent years, the UN has also worked in various configurations with regional and subregional organizations to mount a peacekeeping response. Expanding cooperation in this area has been undertaken for several reasons. First among these is the notion that regional and subregional organizations are closer to the conflict and, consequently, will have a better understanding of, and sensitivity to, the historical, cultural, and political context. In other cases, interested regional organizations have mounted targeted operations to support ongoing UN or AU efforts, as in the case of the European Union in the DRC and in eastern Chad and Central African Republic. As one speaker highlighted, the increasing involvement of regional organizations in peacekeeping also represents a certain amount of burden-shedding from the North

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21 High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, *A More Secure World*, paras. 138, 139.

22 See Rahul Chandran, Bruce Jones, and Natasha Smith, with Yoshino Funaki and Gigja Sorensen, "Recovering from War: Gaps in Early Action," report prepared for the UK Department for International Development (New York: Center on International Cooperation, July 2008).

to the South. Discussions at the seminar emphasized that these relationships are still very experimental. There is still no clear sense of how these levels of response should be sequenced and coordinated. Nor is there a clear delineation of the comparative advantages of the UN versus regional and subregional responses or what the appropriate division of labor should be. Fundamentally, these decisions are political as they often relate to countries' and regions' willingness to engage and commit resources, rather than to strategic appropriateness.

RECOVERY AND PEACEBUILDING

In the last five years the UN and World Bank have collaborated on Post-Conflict Needs Assessments (PCNA) in an effort to promote a common sense of purpose through joint assessment and planning. As one speaker noted, the development of the PCNA methodology has served to improve the sense of partnership among international actors and has gone some way to streamlining their interaction with the nascent national authorities in the countries where they have been undertaken. The PCNA produces an overview of needs and their costs for presentation at a donor conference; a sense of priority areas for intervention; delineation of the types of activities that will be required to meet those needs; and a sense of the expected results. Although this tool represents an important step toward joint strategy, it has been criticized for producing a laundry list of needs and activities without clear prioritization and sequencing.[23] Since resources are scarce, the lack of prioritization means that certain activities might receive funding while other, arguably more urgent or fundamental priorities, may go unsupported. In addition, by capturing a snapshot of a country's postconflict needs, the PCNA does not provide much analysis of the causes of conflict or the underlying political dynamics that should inform an assistance strategy and, consequently, may run the risk of suggesting areas or modes of intervention that undermine local capacities or exacerbate political tension.

Following its endorsement in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, a new peacebuilding architecture was established at the UN comprised of an intergovernmental Peacebuilding Com-

mission (PBC), a bureaucratic entity within the Secretariat called the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), and a Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). The PBC was established to marshal and sustain international attention and resources in postconflict countries as well as to drive an integrated and strategic approach among all international actors involved in postconflict peacebuilding. The PBSO is meant to support the work of the PBC and to play a coordinating role among the UN's departments, agencies, funds, and programs, providing a more streamlined response from the UN system as a whole. The PBF was intended to provide fast-disbursing funds in support of immediate peacebuilding needs and catalytic activities that might leverage more substantial and sustained support.

The PBC officially began its work in June 2006 and has so far engaged in four countries, one of which was added less than six months ago, which means it is still quite early to judge the PBC's impact. Notably, however, the PBC has demonstrated positive potential in two areas. It has provided a much-needed platform for security, political, and development actors, including bilateral donors and the IFIs, together with the host government to discuss peacebuilding priorities. It has also helped to sustain international attention on the countries on its agenda. However, it has not yet demonstrated that it can drive a more integrated and strategic approach among international actors, nor has it marshaled a significant amount of additional resources to the countries on its agenda.[24]

This is indeed an impressive list of reform efforts, many of which are at the very early stages of implementation and could, with further learning and refinement, make some serious headway in addressing the two dilemmas highlighted in this paper. However, discussions at the seminar emphasized that their progress and chances of success are severely hampered by several very stubborn obstacles.

Persistent Obstacles

The obstacles that prevent the international community from mounting a more effective

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23 United Nations Development Group, *In Support of Peacebuilding: Strengthening the Postconflict Needs Assessment*, UN/World Bank PCNA Review, January 2007.
24 See, IPI and CIC, "Taking Stock, Looking Forward," April 2008.

multilateral response to armed conflict can be broken down into three categories: political, bureaucratic, and conceptual.

POLITICAL

If conflicts are ultimately rooted in politics, responses to them are equally political. Any government's willingness to commit diplomatic, financial, and military resources will pivot on whether or not it perceives the effort to be in its national interest. In a post-9/11 world of "interconnected threats,"[25] where the "spillover" effects[26] from internal conflicts threaten the interests of powerful states, this calculus may be more likely than ever to spur states to respond to conflicts in distant lands. But it is important to remember that these decisions always come down to a state's assessment of its interests.

There may be an emerging consensus that the international community has an interest in helping to prevent and resolve conflict, and to rebuild societies in its wake, but multilateral efforts are still hampered by a lack of political commitment from major players. This lack of political will can result in delays or impediments to taking action as well as a lack of sufficient resources to effectively implement a course of action once it has been decided upon. We are all familiar with the devastating effects of a Security Council that was unwilling to act decisively in Bosnia and Rwanda. While the Security Council still moves at a glacial pace on many issues, a problem also arises when the Council acts by mandating a response (usually peacekeeping) without ensuring that the minimal conditions are present and that the necessary resources will be forthcoming. Thus, even when internal planning processes may be working well, the UN system is often hampered by extreme delays in deploying troops, police, civilians, and equipment.[27] While some of these delays may be caused by bureaucratic problems, which will be addressed below, they often derive from unfulfilled donations from member states, as well as a tendency to apply technocratic solutions to thorny

political problems.

Problems are also created when there is common interest but also a divergence of goals. Afghanistan is an illustrative case, where UN-led peacebuilding and statebuilding objectives are being pursued in parallel with ongoing US-led counterterrorism operations against the Taliban. This divergence of interests also manifests itself in several detrimental ways in important decision-making bodies like the UN Security Council. For example, as one speaker pointed out, in 2005 the Security Council was pursuing contradictory policies toward the government of Sudan. On the one hand, the Council was trying to get the government to engage in and implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement with the South. On the other hand, the Council was taking a punitive approach regarding Darfur by making referrals to the International Criminal Court and by setting up a sanctions panel.

Another problematic consequence of the confluence of conflicting interests and the lack of will is vague or inappropriate mandates. Diplomats often find ways to smooth over disagreements on contentious issues such as the protection of civilians through cleverly worded resolutions. However, when those resolutions are translated by SRSGs and Force Commanders into mission mandates in the field, these ambiguities can create significant confusion surrounding the parameters for the use of force and the mission objectives.[28]

In postconflict environments, interests also drive the allocation and delivery of assistance. This prevents tools like the PCNA from realizing their full potential. As one speaker noted, donors have often decided how much they will commit and in which sectors, prior to the PCNA's completion, and in some cases donors will have preselected their implementing partners. This was one of the main factors driving the creation of the PBC. By facilitating a systematic dialogue on priorities between the national government and all its international partners, and by fostering a sense of mutual accountability on all sides for commitments made

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25 See, High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, *A More Secure World*.

26 Stewart Patrick, "Weak States and Global Threats: Assessing Evidence of 'Spillovers,'" Working Paper no. 73 (Washington, DC: Center for Global Development, January 2006).

27 Although this challenge was pointed out in the 2000 Brahimi Report, it continues to plague UN operations in places like Darfur or in instances like the Secretary-General's efforts to mobilize support for a multinational force for Somalia. See, for example, Security Council Report, "Somalia Forecast," October 2008, available at www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.glKWLeMTIsG/b.4559909/.

28 Although the problem of ambiguous mandates was highlighted in the Brahimi Report (para. 56) and Fafo's "Command From the Saddle" (p. 32), recent comments at an IPI meeting by a former UN Force Commander indicate that this is still a pressing problem for UN leadership in the field.

in support of those strategies, the thinking was that donors would be persuaded to ensure that their funding decisions would support a strategy driven by the government.[29] As we note above, it is too early to tell whether this is taking place in the first countries on the PBC's agenda. However, initial signs indicate that donors are not aligning their support with the strategic frameworks developed through the PBC's engagement, and remain as unwilling as ever to subject their aid commitments to public scrutiny.[30]

The dearth of political will also extends to the postconflict period and is manifested in a lack of commitment to stay the course. Although there is often a period of euphoria and international goodwill that follows the signing of a peace agreement, international assistance drops off significantly two years out, just as the national government is developing the capacity to absorb this assistance.[31] Discussions at the seminar noted that consolidating peace and putting a country on the path to development requires sustained multiyear support. The present drive among donors to see immediate results and the short planning horizons that dictate their commitments do not lend themselves to the kind of slow and sustained support required for postconflict peacebuilding. Again, this is a problem that the PBC was created to solve, although it is too early to tell how successful it will be in sustaining the international spotlight on the countries on its agenda.

The final political obstacle is mistrust among member states and between member states and the Secretariat. The mistrust among member states is rooted in several concerns. First is the long-standing frustration over the unrepresentative Security Council and the failure of any efforts to make its composition or its working methods more inclusive. Discussions at the seminar reflected the perception among some that Northern countries make the decisions while Southern countries are expected to put their soldiers at risk. Notably, the Security Council still holds country-specific deliberations without giving the country concerned

a permanent seat at the table. Second is the perception that, as the Security Council has become more active since the end of the Cold War, issues of security have eclipsed issues of development and with them the role of the General Assembly.[32] Third is wariness among countries of the Global South that the Responsibility to Protect is a Trojan horse for the advancement of the intrusive national interests of the Global North.[33] This mistrust permeates debates and negotiations across all issues at the UN. However, it is most detrimental when it causes a watered-down response or, worse, complete paralysis on acute peace-and-security issues.

The mistrust between member states and the Secretariat is illustrated clearly by the limited support provided to DPA, but it is certainly not confined to DPA. As the UN's peacekeeping activities have grown in size and scope in the last two decades, its political and analytical capacities have not kept pace. Member states have been historically wary of building DPA's capacity for political analysis, viewing it as potentially undermining their own intelligence efforts. In addition, some member states see DPA as being captured by the Security Council and therefore serving a discreet set of powerful masters. As a result, important recommendations—such as the Brahimi Report's suggestion that a strategic information and analysis section be created—have never been taken up.[34] Most recently, this mistrust manifested itself when DPA's efforts to expand its capacity at headquarters and regionally stalled in the Fifth Committee on budgetary grounds. DPA would be the logical place in the UN system for housing in-depth, country-specific knowledge of history and political dynamics that should inform all UN interventions, but this has not been possible under the present circumstances.

BUREAUCRATIC

One of the central bureaucratic obstacles emphasized by several speakers at the seminar is the lack of strategic planning capacity in the UN system at headquarters and in the field. As one

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29 See Amy Scott, "The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission: An Early Assessment," *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 4, no. 2 (2008): 7-19.

30 See IPI and CIC, "Taking Stock, Looking Forward."

31 See Paul Collier, et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

32 See Scott, "The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission," p. 13.

33 Gareth Evans, *The Responsibility to Protect: Ending Mass Atrocity Crimes Once and for All* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2008).

34 Edward C. Luck, "Prevention: Theory and Practice," in *From Reaction to Conflict Prevention: Opportunities for the UN System*, edited by Fen Osler Hampson and David Malone (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), pp. 251-271.

speaker pointed out, there is simply a lack of strategic culture in the UN. Although there have been a number of efforts over the last decade—including the establishment of the Strategic Planning Unit within the Secretary-General's office and the Policy Planning Unit in DPA following the 1997 reforms, and more recently the establishment of the Policy Committee in the Secretariat—there is still no consistently reliable system for consolidating analyses, resolving contradictions, developing priorities and options, and mobilizing resources.

This translates into strategic deficits in implementation as well. Although the IMPP has made significant strides in planning for an integrated UN presence, interagency planning processes often focus on negotiation and compromises over various agency prerogatives rather than producing an approach that is truly strategic. Planning efforts are also often unevenly distributed between political, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding functions. According to one speaker, when preparations were underway for the deployment of the hybrid UN-AU presence in Darfur, there were three officers working on the peace process while thirty-six officers were planning the peacekeeping response. These factors militate against the development of a balanced and comprehensive strategy. Moreover, whatever planning capacity exists at headquarters is rarely mirrored at the country level, leaving the SRSG and Deputy SRSG with little or no support for rethinking and recalibrating the UN's approach as circumstances change.[35]

The second bureaucratic obstacle is confused accountability and authority. As we note above, the various departments of the UN Secretariat and the funds, agencies, and programs are all accountable to different configurations of member states that may or may not be concerned with whether that entity's activities are strategically aligned with other actors in a given country. The United Nations Development Group (UNDG) agencies report to

large boards that review each agency's work as a whole, looking at individual country programs' contributions to the overall strategic direction of the agency. The UN's Secretariat presence—usually fielded by DPKO or DPA—is typically accountable to the Security Council for implementation of a specific mandate. Although the SRSG, as the senior UN representative in the field, nominally has authority over all UN activities on the ground,[36] he or she is rarely empowered to exercise this authority over the UN Country Team because of these confused lines of accountability.[37] Moreover, as we note above, the UN agencies, funds, and programs are largely dependent on voluntary contributions from bilateral donors and are, therefore, accountable to these donors for specific programmatic results. The bottom line is that agencies' incentives are skewed away from strategic coordination and the SG's top representative in the field is not endowed with the authority to bring them into line. Recent efforts to promote a "One-UN" approach at the country level certainly have some promise but have yet to be applied in conflict and postconflict countries.

The third bureaucratic obstacle relates to cumbersome and inharmonious management policies and structures across the UN system. As one speaker noted, one of the greatest challenges faced by the IMPP is reconciling the diverse rules and procedures related to procurement, recruitment, and budgeting that must be activated to deploy an integrated UN presence in the field. As a basic, striking example, the UN Secretariat is on a different information technology platform than UNDP, raising serious barriers to communication between their administrative systems. Procurement and recruitment are also notoriously slow, sometimes taking over six months to get the necessary people and assets in place following the authorization of a peace operation.[38] Even if a focused strategy is in place, its implementation would be seriously constrained by deployment delays.

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35 Chandran, Jones, Smith, et al., "Recovering from War."

36 See *Note of Guidance on Integrated Missions: Clarifying the Role, Responsibility, and Authority of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General/Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator*, issued January 17, 2006, available at www.undg.org/docs/8483/8039-SG_s_Note_of_Guidance_on_Integrated_Missions__Feb__2006.pdf.

37 In a 2007 IPI survey of SRSGs (unpublished), only eight out of the thirteen SRSGs interviewed felt that their role was adequately understood by all UN entities in the field.

38 According to the United Nations, *Report of the Secretary-General on Recruitment and Staffing in the United Nations: Strategy Going Forward*, UN Doc. A/63/285, August 14, 2008, the average number of days from the issuance of a vacancy announcement to the selected candidate's start date in a field mission was 139 days. This was seen as a vast improvement from an average of 275 days for system-wide recruitment in 2000-2001 (as noted in the *Proposed Programme Budget for the Biennium 2004-2005*, UN Doc. A/58/6, sect. 29C, March 17, 2003).

CONCEPTUAL

The final obstacle relates to a fundamental conceptual dilemma surrounding the desired end-goal of international responses to armed conflict. Different actors operate with different definitions of "success," which affects short-term decisions about priorities and resources that later have consequences over the long term. The record of international involvement also demonstrates important contradictions in means and ends, particularly in the values that international actors articulate versus the policies pursued in the field.[39]

As one speaker pointed out, efforts to build peace may actually contradict or undermine efforts to rebuild a capable and functioning state and vice versa. For instance, measures taken to establish stability by bringing warring factions into the government, as we saw through the Bonn process for Afghanistan, later tied the hands of the Karzai government by producing ministries that served certain parochial interests rather than the reconciliation and reconstruction needs of the country as a whole.[40] On the other hand, efforts to build up state institutions without sufficient oversight may reignite conflict by strengthening predatory structures. In other words, postconflict peacebuilding and statebuilding seek to achieve two different objectives: rebuilding the capacity of the state by strengthening institutions, while simultaneously constraining those same institutions through democratic oversight and the rule of law.

Experience from across many cases suggests that these tensions and dilemmas cannot be resolved, but should be managed.[41] Early decisions made during peace processes or the early days of a transition can create problems further down the line. Or, the use of transitional mechanisms that help resolve short-term problems for either peace or state capacity may later create difficulties for both. The point is not that we can avoid these tensions and tradeoffs, but that we need to do a better job of calibrating short-, medium-, and long-term objectives, understanding feasible goals, and recognizing that the groundwork for medium- and long-term activities may need to be laid in the short term. This is precisely why good strategic planning capacity and in-depth understanding of context must underpin all international efforts.

Conclusion

The conclusion that emerged from discussions at the 2008 New York Seminar was that there is widespread agreement on the nature of the problem, but efforts to improve international responses to armed conflict continue to be stymied by national interests as well as intergovernmental and bureaucratic politics. The two core challenges identified during the seminar discussions—the need to take into account political context and to overcome the strategy deficit—are widely acknowledged, but inadequately addressed by the tools at our disposal. Participants agreed that recent reform efforts across prevention, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding have made important strides but have so far failed to meet their full potential because of these underlying obstacles. In discussions about ways to address these obstacles, several common suggestions emerged, including the following:

- The UN system needs an improved political analysis capacity to underpin all its efforts. As the centerpiece of this capacity, DPA should be reinforced. In order to do so, relationships between member states and the Secretariat must be repaired. While reopening discussions in the Fifth Committee on the DPA reform package may be a way forward, alternative strategies for improving DPA's capacity for political analysis should also be considered while the bonds of trust are being rebuilt.

- The incentive and accountability structures that drive the actions of UN entities in diverging directions must be addressed. Member states have a critical role to play because of their various memberships in bodies to which these entities are accountable, including the Fifth Committee, the Security Council, the General Assembly, the PBC, the boards of the funds, agencies, and programs (including the IFIs), and as donors and troop contributors. Driving a consistent approach

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39 See Simon Chesterman, *You, The People: The United Nations, Transitional Administration, and State-Building* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); as well as Paris and Sisk, "Managing Contradictions."

40 See Jake Sherman, "Afghanistan: Nationally Led Statebuilding," in *Building States to Build Peace*, edited by Charles T. Call with Vanessa Wyeth (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2008), pp. 303-334.
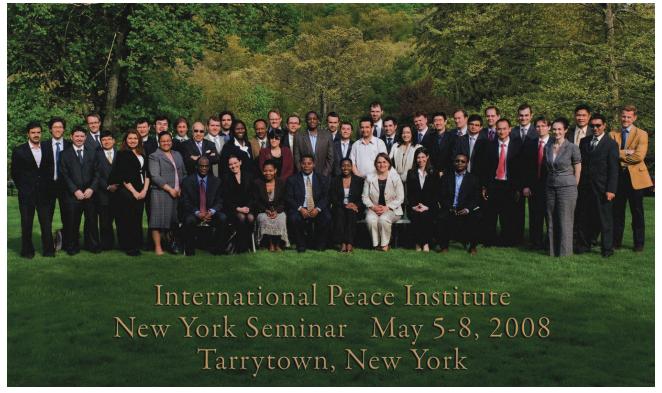
41 See Call and Wyeth, *Building States to Build Peace*.

through all these bodies would be an important improvement.

- Rebuilding trust is widely discussed but rarely addressed around the UN. Steps in this regard could include rethinking the role of the General Assembly as a platform for consensus-building on certain issues. The flexible approach adopted by the Peacebuilding Commission's country-specific configurations, which allows for flexible membership, a single-country focus, and a permanent seat at the table for the country in question could also be replicated elsewhere in the system.

- Within the UN bureaucracy there is a well-recognized need to harmonize administrative rules and procedures across departments, agencies, funds, and programs, including for human resources, budgeting, and procurement. This will require increased interagency efforts as well as support and initiative from member states, to which these various entities are accountable.

- Creating new entities or expanding mandates will not address the obstacles raised here. Rather, participants agreed that efforts to strengthen mechanisms and initiatives that already exist, such as the Integrated Mission Planning Process and the role of the PBSO in leveraging the collective strength of the UN system for peacebuilding would be the most appropriate way forward.

The conceptual obstacles are the most difficult to grasp from a policy-response standpoint. When dealing with the day-to-day operations of a multifaceted peacekeeping and peacebuilding mission, what clear policies will help us to manage the tensions between the twin imperatives of building peace and building the state's ability to sustain it? Relative to the other challenges addressed at the seminar, this is probably the most underexplored area. However, the evidence suggests that a comprehensive understanding of the political context and an ongoing awareness of how it changes, are crucial to managing these tensions and driving a responsive strategy. For that, the UN system needs the authority, capacity, and support to develop and implement strategy in partnership with the host country. Such authority, capacity, and support can only be endowed by member states.

International Peace Institute
New York Seminar   May 5-8, 2008
Tarrytown, New York

Seminar participants

Appendix: Seminar Agenda

Improving the International Response to Armed Conflict and State Fragility
Tarrytown Estate, New York

May 5-8, 2008

May 5, 2008

13:00   **Lunch and Introductory Remarks**
(777 United Nations Plaza)

Edward C. Luck, *Senior Vice President and Director of Studies, International Peace Institute*

14:00   Departure for Tarrytown by bus

15:00   Arrival and check-in at the Tarrytown Estate

16:00   Orientation and tour of Tarrytown Estate

17:00   Group photo

18:30-19:30   Welcome reception

19:30   **Dinner and Keynote Address**

Introduction
Terje Rød-Larsen, *President, IPI*

Keynote Address
Ali Jalali, *Distinguished Professor in the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies and Distinguished Visiting Fellow in the Institute for National Strategic Studies, National Defense University; former Interior Minister of Afghanistan*
"Responding to conflict and state fragility in Afghanistan"

May 6, 2008

The Nature of the Challenge

09:00-09:15   **Introduction**

Speaker
Terje Rød-Larsen

09:15-10:45   **Nonstate Armed Groups**

International interveners face difficult choices in dealing with nonstate armed groups. Who sits at the table? What are their interests? Under which circumstances are nonstate armed

groups viable partners for peace? How can the threat posed by spoilers be mitigated? In cases where nonstate armed groups are providing essential services, what are the benefits and pitfalls to engaging them?

Chair
Terje Rød-Larsen

Speakers
Nicholas Haysom, *Director for Political, Peacekeeping, and Humanitarian Affairs, Executive Office of the UN Secretary-General*
"Overview"

William Reno, *Associate Professor of Political Science, Northwestern University*
"Incentives and strategies of nonstate actors"

Daniela Kroslak, *Deputy Director of Africa Program, Crisis Group*
"Dealing with nonstate armed groups in the DRC"

10:45-11:15   Coffee Break

11:15-13:00   **Coherence and Coordination**

What are the challenges associated with the multiplicity of international and domestic actors and their associated time horizons, mandates, funding windows, capacity, and interests? In a system where no institution or individual has the authority or enforcement capability to coordinate others, how can coherence be forged between and within institutions? How can interests and incentives be aligned to drive coherence?

Chair
Edward C. Luck

Speakers
Alastair McKechnie, *Country Director for Afghanistan, The World Bank*
"Overview"

Stewart Patrick, *Senior Fellow and Director, Program on International Institutions and Global Governance, Council on Foreign Relations*
"Joining up defense, diplomacy, and development"

Elizabeth Cousens, *Director of Strategy, Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue*
"The challenge of coordination in political missions"

13:00-14:30   Lunch

14:30-16:00   **Ownership and Legitimacy**

In situations of armed conflict, who holds legitimacy? How does international action affect legitimacy? How can legitimacy be reinforced? How can processes that privilege the interests of elites be broadened and made more inclusive? What can international actors do to foster national "ownership" of political processes?

Chair
John Hirsch, *Senior Adviser, IPI*

Speakers
Ole Jacob Sending, *Senior Researcher, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Adjunct Professor, Christian Michelsen Institute*
"Overview"

Graeme Simpson, *Director, Thematic Programs, International Center for Transitional Justice*
"Legitimacy and ownership in transitional justice"

16:00-18:00   **Breakout Groups**

Consider the three cross-cutting challenges discussed in the previous three sessions in the context of either peacemaking, peace operations, peacebuilding, or prevention/RtoP, depending on your group allocation.

Breakout Group Leaders (IPI Staff)
Peacemaking/Mediation   John Hirsch / Jenna Slotin
Peace Operations   Adam Smith / Francesco Mancini
Peacebuilding   Nur Laiq / Vanessa Wyeth
Prevention/RtoP   Rachel Davis

19:00   **Reception and Dinner**

Introduction
Terje Rød-Larsen

Keynote Address
Margaret Vogt, *Deputy Director, Africa 1 Division, UN Department of Political Affairs*
"Meeting the challenge: improving UN responses"

How is the UN organized to address these challenges? What tools are missing from the UN arsenal? What reforms are needed over the medium term?

May 7, 2008

Institutional Responses

09:00-10:45   **Choosing How to Respond: Entry Strategies**

What factors or criteria should be taken into consideration when the international community seeks to intervene in a conflict? How is the decision made? What is the range of options for international response in cases of armed conflict or state failure? How do initial perceptions/expectations play a role in the success or failure of a peace operation? How should the international community choose its interlocutors? How can interventions be made more sensitive to issues of national ownership?

Chair
Ebenezer Appreku, *Legal Adviser, Permanent Mission of Ghana to the United Nations*

Speakers
Colin Keating, *Executive Director, Security Council Report*
"Decision making in the Security Council"

Thomas Weiss, *Director, Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies, CUNY*
"The responsibility to protect"

Fabienne Hara, *Vice President (Multilateral Affairs), Crisis Group*
"The case of Darfur"

10:45-11:15   Coffee Break

11:15-13:00   **Implementing the Response: Assessment and Planning**

What is missing from current planning efforts? How can assessment and planning across political and economic institutions be better integrated and mutually reinforcing? How can planning efforts address longer-term challenges of ownership and legitimacy? How can the international community promote a coordinated response from the outset? What is the best way to ensure that interventions build on existing capacities in the society?

Chair
Heidi Schroderus-Fox, *Deputy Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations*

Speakers
Amjad Abbashar, *Humanitarian Affairs Officer, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*
"Planning for humanitarian response"

Nishkala Suntharalingam, *Political Affairs Officer, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations*
"Integrated mission planning"

Paul Hulshoff, *Chief, Recovery and Risk Reduction Section, Office of Emergency Operations, UNICEF*
"Postconflict Needs Assessments"

13:00-14:30   Lunch

14:30-16:00   **Levels of Response: Regional and Subregional Initiatives**

How can regional, subregional, and local responses be harmonized with UN efforts? Under what circumstances should regional efforts be subsidiary to UN efforts, and when are they complementary? How should different levels of response be sequenced and coordinated? What are the comparative advantages of the UN vs. regional and subregional organizations in planning and overseeing responses to conflict and state fragility, especially as regards the challenge of ownership and legitimacy?

Chair
Edward C. Luck

Speakers
Renata Dwan, *Senior Partnerships Adviser, Division of Policy, Evaluation, and Training, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations*
"UN partnerships with the AU and EU"

Brian Vitunic, *Political Affairs Officer, UN Department of Political Affairs*
"DPA's regional efforts and experiences"

16:00-18:00   **Breakout Groups: How to Improve the International Response**

Each breakout group will be asked to provide recommendations on what policy and institutional reforms are needed to improve current international efforts bearing in mind the challenges highlighted in the previous day's discussions. What strategy is needed to achieve these reforms? Results of the break-out groups will be presented at the morning session of the following day.

19:00   Reception and Dinner

May 8, 2008

09:15-11:00   **Plenary Report Back from Breakout Group Rapporteurs**

Chair
Johan L. Løvald, *Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations*

11:00-11:30   Coffee Break

11:30-13:00   **End States and Exit Strategies**

What is the desired end state of international interventions? How do we improve transitions from peacekeeping to peacebuilding and statebuilding? When can we say that an intervention has succeeded? Can we measure the impact of international efforts? What defines the "end" of a transition?

Chair
Johan L. Løvald

Speakers
Charles T. Call, *Assistant Professor of International Relations, American University*
"Building states to build peace?"

Dominik Bartsch, *Senior Strategic Planning Officer, UN Peacebuilding Support Office*
"The role of the Peacebuilding Commission"

Kenneth Menkhaus, *Associate Professor of Political Science, Davidson College*
"(Re)building governance in fragile states"

13:00-14:30	**Closing and Presentation of Certificates**
	John L. Hirsch
14:30-15:30	Light Lunch
15:30	Departure for NYC
16:30	Arrival NYC

The **INTERNATIONAL PEACE INSTITUTE (IPI)** is an independent, international institution dedicated to promoting the prevention and settlement of armed conflicts between and within states through policy research and development.

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