

Paradoxical Operations: International Peacebuilding and the Triangulation of Violence



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Abstract: In the post-Cold War era, collapsed states pose the greatest challenge to international stability. Peacebuilding operations were conceived in order to rehabilitate war-torn states and establish the conditions requisite for lasting peace. Peacebuilders prescribed a liberal institutionalist formula to foster sustainable peace: democratization and economic liberalization via international organizations. Empirical evidence demonstrates, however, that peacebuilding operations often relapse into violence, consequently failing to achieve their aspired goal. Reconfiguring peacebuilding operations requires an understanding of the root causes behind the operational, and more importantly, conceptual problems. This research project examines how each aspect of the liberal recipe—democratization, economic liberalization, and international organizations—paradoxically forges an opportunity structure propitious to civil violence.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War marked the beginning of a new era in international relations. The collapse of the Soviet Union decisively tilted the balance of power, both geopolitically and ideologically, in favor of the West. With the demise of international communism, political scientist Francis Fukuyama proclaimed that “the end of history” had arrived (Fukuyama 2). For Fukuyama, democracy and free-market capitalism represented the ideological culmination of mankind. Shortly thereafter, many national governments and international organizations began espousing free-market democracy as the most adequate political model for the post-Cold War era.

With the end of the great power rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union, the gravest threat to the new international order emanated from weak and failed states (xi). Without significant international support, failed states often spiraled into civil wars—violent intrastate disputes along ideological, socioeconomic, or ethnic lines. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of armed conflicts during the 1990s were civil wars (Paris 1). Since civil conflicts challenged the prospects of a peaceful world order, the international community began devising an overarching formula to rebuild and manage war-torn states.

With the “end of history” freshly etched in the minds of scholars and policymakers, international peacebuilding operations came into fruition. In essence, these operations aim to inhibit violence from resurfacing in war-torn states (Jackson 229). In order to do so, a vast repertoire of global actors—intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), international financial institutions (IFIs), international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs), and regional development agencies—work together to rebuild state institutions. These international actors partake in a number of ambitious activities, from providing humanitarian aid to constructing physical infrastructure, funneling investment funds, training security and government officials, and monitoring or even conducting elections.

Former United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali stipulated that “peacebuilding missions seek to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.” More often than not, these structures mirror the political and economic institutions of Western states. As such, international policymakers and activists consistently employ the central tenets of liberal institutionalism, one of the predominant International Relations theories, when managing peacebuilding operations.

According to liberal institutionalism, peaceful relations among and within states are more likely when three conditions are met. The first condition is that states must have democratic governments. Democracies are more transparent than autocracies and consequently more cordial vis-à-vis other democracies. The second condition is that cooperation is bolstered when states are economically interdependent with one another. The third condition is that states are less prone to fight wars when they

belong to a web of international organizations. Together, these three conditions reinforce each other to promote peaceful relations among like-minded states (Russett and Oneal 26).

The rationale behind peacebuilding operations is that if the three liberal conditions are artificially replicated in postconflict states, then there is a genuine opportunity to mitigate the principal sources of international instability in today's world. Peacebuilding operations are thus huge "social engineering" projects that involve transposing the Western models of democracy and capitalism into war-torn states, thereby mitigating the likelihood of civil conflict (Paris 5). But has this predominantly Western approach to peacebuilding been effective at consolidating peace in war-torn states?

A number of scholars and practitioners certainly think so. James Dobbins, the Director of the RAND International Security and Defense Policy Center, claims, "UN nation-building missions have often met with success (Dobbins 24)." Despite being constantly undermanned and underresourced, Dobbins argues that the UN and other IGOs do surprisingly well at promoting democracy, generating economic growth, and fostering peace (218). According to a study conducted by the RAND Corporation, seven out of eight UN peacebuilding operations have been successful: Namibia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Cambodia, East Timor, and Bosnia. The only failed mission occurred in the Congo during the Cold War (27).

The way in which success is measured, however, makes an enormous difference in how the outcome is recorded. If successful peacebuilding is defined as not only the absence of fighting while international actors are present (à la RAND), but also as the establishment of institutions that will allow peace to last even after the withdrawal of peacebuilders, then the record of these operations is far more grim (Paris 6). Countries that Dobbins labeled "successful" missions, such as Cambodia, East Timor, and Bosnia, actually reverted to violence soon after peacebuilders departed. Even the former adviser to the UN Secretary-General, Lakhdar Brahimi, acknowledged this reality: "It is rather embarrassing for the international community in general, and for those individuals like myself who were directly involved in particular, that about half of the countries where peace operations were said to have ended in success, fell back into conflict within five years or less." When the definition of success is broadened to encompass *self-sustaining* peace, only two peacebuilding operations have been successful.

The liberal institutionalist blueprint contrived by the international community has yielded, on balance, deleterious long-term results. Given the geopolitical challenges war-torn states pose to the current international system, peacebuilding operations must be reassessed and reconfigured. Prescribing an effective strategy, however, requires a thorough understanding behind the root causes of the operational, and more importantly, conceptual problems. This research project sets out to answer two related questions: Why do states hosting peacebuilding operations regress to violence so often? And, is the current peacebuilding formula paradoxically responsible for reigniting civil strife in these states? Addressing these questions is the first step in forging a better institutional framework that redresses the overly ambitious, yet underresourced and poorly coordinated peacebuilding operations.

The ostensibly pacifying forces of democracy, free-market economics, and international organizations have undermined the very peace these missions were meant to consolidate. Consequently, this paper argues that war-torn states are *more* likely to relapse into armed conflict due to the current peacebuilding framework: democratization, breakneck economic liberalization, and the interaction of a dense network of international organizations. Democratization is an inherently lengthy and erratic process that creates a political opportunity structure propitious to the outbreak of violence. The opening of a postconflict state to the global economy may also be tumultuous because it promotes intense commercial competition and the subsequent redistribution of income may further inflame strained relations (6). A state with a shattered society magnifies political and economic volatility, increasing the propensity for civil conflict. Moreover, the lack of coordination among different international organizations often delays the deployment of vital resources to the ground. As a result, the liberalist's modus operandi is largely, albeit not solely, the reason why current peacebuilding operations inadvertently forge social conditions conducive to violence.

This research project proceeds in five parts. The first part provides a review of the relevant literature on international peacebuilding, as well as the methodology used to collect relevant information and craft solid analysis. The second part defines important concepts and clarifies ambiguous terminology that will furnish the paper with greater analytical leverage. The third part presents ten post-Cold War peacebuilding cases from which the results derive. The fourth part explains why peacebuilding operations have disruptive effects in war-torn states. This part is further divided into three subsections: the first subsection looks at how democratization increases the likelihood of violence; the second subsection examines the destabilizing effects of neoliberal economic policies in war-torn states; and the third subsection explores how too many international organizations often impede the peace process. The last part of this research project is a short conclusion affording recommendations.

Literature Review and Methodology

The rising frequency of peacebuilding operations in the past twenty years has given way to a proliferation of literature on the subject matter. Most of the literature of the field read like how-to manuals that identify “best practices” for peacebuilders and policymakers alike. Indeed, this research project originally sought to either support or expand upon Ambassador James Dobbin’s findings. His well-known article, “Nation-Building: UN Surpasses U.S. on Learning Curve” as well as his two books *The Beginner’s Guide to Nation-Building* and *The UN’s Role In Nation Building: From the Congo to Iraq* delineated the conditions in which peacebuilding take place, the policies pursued, the order of priorities, and how foreign powers along with international organization deal with the competing parties in war-torn states. In addition, Dobbin’s how-to manual series provided this research project with invaluable background information for the case studies.

More recent scholarship focuses on the operational problems and inherent dilemmas encountered in peacebuilding missions. For instance, Anna Jarstad and Timothy Sisk combine democratic transition theory with post-war peacebuilding practice to flesh out the dilemmas in war-to-democracy transitions. Jarstad and Sisk split dilemmas into four types: horizontal, vertical, systemic, and temporal (11). Edward Newman and Roland Rich similarly explore the UN’s role in promoting democracy in postconflict states and the difficult trade-offs that arise during the operations. They rightly question whether the usual three years is enough time to complete the democratic transition in a war-torn state, but note that an indefinite time frame is expensive, especially for an international organization. Charles Call and Vanessa Wyeth argue that the requirements for building state institutions in the short run often conflict with broader peace scheme in the long run. Accordingly, the goal of any effective peacebuilder is to identify contentious points and make difficult choices regarding equivocal trade-offs.

Several articles also afforded unique insight into peacebuilding operations. Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis claimed that the probability of successful peacebuilding “is a function of a country’s capacities, the available international assistance, and the depth of war related hostility (Doyle and Sambanis 782).” Their statistical analysis of various explanatory variables helped frame this project’s research question and structure its design. UN documents, such as the *Brahimi Report*, provided a more intimate vantage point to peacebuilding operations. Articles from the *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* not only retraced the origins of interventionist operations, but also embraced a critical approach to postconflict peacebuilding, denouncing these social engineering projects as the epitome of Western hubris.

Most of the books and articles on peacebuilding highlighted the strengths, weaknesses, and inherent dilemmas of particular operations. Few scholars, however, have analyzed the theoretical concept and underlying principles guiding peacebuilding operations. In this sense, Roland Paris has provided one of the most comprehensive institutionalist frameworks vis-à-vis peacebuilding operations. In his seminal work, *At War’s End*, Paris argues that peacebuilding is guided by the doctrine of liberal internationalism, which transplants “Western models of social, political, and economic organization into war-shattered states (Paris 56).” This research paper echoes and advances Paris’ thesis. It echoes Paris by recognizing that certain liberal assumptions, namely political and economic liberalization, have been taken for granted when it comes to peacebuilding operations. It advances Paris’ argument by adding another variable into

the mix: the lack of coordination among international organizations. Furthermore, this paper aims to explain in greater detail the causal mechanisms that trigger war-torn states to relapse into conflict. For this reason, considerable focus will be placed on opportunity structure formation.

This paper also toys with the three-cornered intellectual construct advanced by Bruce Russett and John Oneal in their liberal institutionalist study, *Triangulating Peace*. In fact, the crux of this paper's argument derives from *Triangulating Peace*: the liberal components of democracy, free-markets, and international organizations that ostensibly foster peace in the international arena actually ensnare violence in war-torn states. If it were not for Russett and Oneal's compelling results and arguments, this paper would possess no real analytical value.

The primary aim of this research project is to measure the likelihood that a war-torn state reverts to civil violence if it has been subject to a peacebuilding operation. The explanatory variables analyzed are democratization, economic liberalization, and the quantity of international organizations engaged in the operation. The formula can be modeled as:

$$\Delta\text{violence} = C_0 + \beta_1\text{democratization} + \beta_2\text{econlib} + \beta_3\text{IOs}$$

To find supporting evidence behind the causal mechanisms of each explanatory variable, the technique "backward mapping" was used. In other words, a few key books and journal entries that were heavily weighted with references to other scholars' works, allowed this research paper to acquire a variegated yet focused perspective. In addition, ten case studies were examined to add empirical support and theoretical depth. The peacebuilding operations surveyed are: Namibia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Angola, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cambodia, East Timor, Bosnia, and Kosovo. Only an acute, compact, and thorough explanation can provide fresh insight to guide transpiring peacebuilding operations.

Defining and Refining Concepts

Although international interventions predate the Cold War, the frequency of these operations has increased dramatically in the post-Cold War period. Traditional peacekeeping missions expanded in scale and scope when they began operating in war-torn states. Indicative of their increasing prevalence, Paul Diehl notes that "there has been a plethora of new terms—peace enforcement, peacemaking, and peacebuilding—that have been coined to differentiate these new missions from traditional peacekeeping (Diehl 256)." These peace operations should be interpreted as a continuum rather than mutually exclusive. In general, peacebuilding operations are the most comprehensive and therefore most resource intensive. Accordingly, they should also be the most time consuming, although this is rarely the case (257).

More significantly, the term "peacebuilding" is often used interchangeably with "nation-building" and "statebuilding" despite their operational and conceptual differences. Nation-building, the term most often used (and misused), reflects a predominantly American understanding of fabricating a new domestic order in a foreign territory without a deeply rooted culture, tradition, and civil society (Brahimi 5). But a *nation* refers to something amorphous—a society's identity—which cannot be built per se, especially by a foreign power or organization descending upon a war-torn state for a constricted amount of time. As Fukuyama notes, "Nations emerge through an unplanned historical-evolutionary process," and international organizations (often after the loss of manpower and materiel) find that their ability to shape local society is highly limited (Fukuyama 38).

In academic circles, the term statebuilding has recently acquired traction. Statebuilding is defined as the construction of legitimate and effective governmental institutions, typically in the aftermath of a crisis (Heathershaw and Lambach 270). These institutions, in turn, become instrumental in establishing and maintaining a democratic government. Although statebuilding denotes the transformation of an illiberal regime to a progressive form of government, the word "state" has a negative connotation for people who have been persecuted by an oppressive government in the recent past (Krause and Jutersonke 448). It is also looked with equal disdain from INGOs and human rights groups, whose rapport

lay firmly on the side of those individuals victimized by the state. The gradual application of the word “peacebuilding” as a universal term to describe the operations could help consolidate international support for the very same activities. Not surprisingly, the major international organizations engaged in war-torn states have adopted “peacebuilding” instead.

This paper focuses on the term “peacebuilding” because it indicates the dependent variable that is being analyzed. Building state institutions is not the goal, but rather the means to achieve the ultimate goal: self-sustaining peace. As elucidated by another former UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, “The aim of peacebuilding is to create conditions necessary for a sustainable peace in war-torn societies.” Peacebuilding thus encompasses the customary statebuilding activities while simultaneously reflecting the liberal institutionalist design applied to the operations.

Liberal institutionalists often make reference to the Democratic Peace Theory and the Liberal Peace Theory. Students of International Relations rarely differentiate between the two. The Democratic Peace Theory states that democracies are less likely to fight wars against each other. The Liberal Peace Theory stipulates that democracy, economic interdependence, and international organizations induce “virtuous circles” that reduce the likelihood of international wars (Russett and Oneal 24). In this sense, the Democratic Peace is one of the explanatory variables behind the Liberal Peace Theory. However, it is incorrect to equate the Democratic Peace Theory with the Liberal Peace Theory.¹

The Liberal Peace Theory is rooted in the writings of Immanuel Kant, the intellectual father of liberalism. In his essay *Perpetual Peace*, Kant proposed that international peace hinged around democratic republics, commercial exchange, and international institutions (90). Indeed, at the systemic level of analysis the three Kantian components work remarkably well in explaining interstate cooperation. For this reason, peacebuilders instinctively applied the central tenets of the Liberal Peace Theory into the design of international peacebuilding operations.

At the state level of analysis, however, the Liberal Peace Theory is less compelling.² Particularly in postconflict states, where the social plane is highly fragmented, the liberal institutionalist formula employed in peacebuilding operations often produces adverse effects. While the outcomes of ten peacebuilding operations do not debunk the validity of the Liberal Peace Theory, this paper should be interpreted as a “conceptual caveat” to the theory. After all, liberal institutionalism is merely a theoretical lens, and its central tenets are more like guideposts, not ironclad laws, that explain how the world works.

Peacebuilding Operations in the Post-Cold War Era

The ten case studies gauged in this paper are the following: Namibia, Mozambique, Rwanda, Angola, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Cambodia, East Timor, Bosnia, and Kosovo. While Namibia and Mozambique achieved sustainable peace, the rest have experienced either substantial levels of domestic violence or have relapsed into an all-out civil war. The selection of case studies is an updated version of the RAND’s data set plus Rwanda, Angola, and Nicaragua. Peacebuilding operations that occurred during the Cold War have been excluded. A word of caution: the following cases do not explain in detail the entire peacebuilding missions; rather, they are snapshots that identify the underlying causes stirring renewed violence in each state.

Peacebuilding Successes

Namibia is often cited as the most successful peacebuilding operation. For more than two decades, the South African army and the South African-backed Namibian forces fought against the South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO). In 1989, the UN conducted and monitored elections that

¹ In fact, what Paris labels as the “Liberal Peace Thesis” is actually the Democratic Peace Theory; p. 41.

² See Christopher Layne, “Kant or Cant: The Myth of the Democratic Peace,” in *International Security*, Vol.19, No. 2 (Fall 1994), 5-49; R.J. Rummel, “Democracy, Power, Genocide, and Mass Murder,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* Vol.39, No.1 (March 1995).

installed SWAPO as the first party to run the newly independent state. Namibia remains a stable multiparty parliamentary democracy and is considered a paragon of freedom and progress in Africa (Economist Intelligence Unit 5). As political scientist Roland Paris rightly notes, however, Namibia is an outlier: the war was an internationalized conflict because one of the main combatants was a foreign party (Paris 140). After the peace settlement, South Africa withdrew its troops from the territory, greatly facilitating the transition to democracy and the consolidation of peace. In every other mission, “the principal factions involved in earlier fighting continue to inhabit the same state, making the task of peacebuilding considerably more difficult (65).”

Mozambique is also considered a peacebuilding success. In Mozambique, sixteen years of civil war between the Frente de Libertação de Moçambique (FRELIMO) and the Resistência Nacional Moçambicana (RENAMO) ended in 1992 after both parties signed a long-awaited peace agreement. The UN was assigned to implement the demilitarization and democratization of Mozambique—arguably the two most demanding provisions in the agreement (Dobbins 93). UN inter-agency disputes stalled the completion of the mandate for more than a year, and further strained the precarious relationship between the two parties.

Economically, IFIs required Mozambique’s national government to achieve a number of macroeconomic conditions in order to receive international funds. Reducing government expenditures—a critical condition—forced the government to cut projects that sought to rebuild schools, health clinics, and roads (Willett 37). Nonetheless, Mozambique’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) managed to grow at an astonishing nine percent per year between 1996 and 1999 (Paris 144). Aside from occasional bandit-related violence, Mozambique remains a generally peaceful developing country.

Peacebuilding Failures

Rwanda, by contrast, epitomizes a peacebuilding operation gone awry. In 1990, the Tutsi opposition group, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), waged an insurgency war against the oppressive Hutu government. Three years later, the government signed the Arusha Accords, which delegated the task of integrating the two armies, repatriating refugees, and assembling multiparty elections to the UN (71). The transition to a power-sharing arrangement, however, was poorly executed, ultimately accentuating ethnic tensions (Kaufmann 140). The peacebuilding operation collapsed in April 1994 when the government mobilized Hutu extremists to massacre Tutsi civilians. As such, the UN’s agenda for democratization had the malignant side effect of accelerating genocide.

Similarly, Angola reverted to a full-scale civil war due to the perverse effects of democratization. In 1991, international actors effectively mediated a peace agreement between the warring factions: the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) and the Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA). The agreement not only secured a cease-fire, but it also scheduled multiparty elections within the next year. The UN-sponsored elections accorded the MPLA presidential candidate with 49 percent of the votes and the UNITA candidate with 40 percent. Despite being deemed free and fair elections, UNITA’s presidential candidate, Jonas Savimbi, denounced the first-round results and resumed the war between the Angolan parties (67). Rather than serving as a channel for rapprochement, democratic elections sparked a new wave of fighting.

El Salvador’s twelve-year civil war between the right-wing military government and the Marxist guerrillas killed over 80,000 people. In 1992, the UN-mediated peace accord officially stopped the fighting and institutionalized the two warring factions into legitimate political parties: the Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) and the Frente Farabundo Martí de Liberación Nacional (FMLN). Free elections have been held on a regular basis since 1994; however, the right-wing party, ARENA, had won every presidential election, thus preserving the preexisting configuration of power. Elections in 2009, which the FMLN candidate, Mauricio Funes handily won, were blanketed by enormous political and social tensions (Seguera).

Western policymakers often dub El Salvador the neoliberal poster child. The privatization and deregulation policies promoted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) helped El Salvador's GDP grow at an average rate of five percent per year throughout the 1990s (Adams 66). Nonetheless, the neoliberal policies have accentuated and widened the country's income inequality. Pockets of poverty are common in the overcrowded cities, prompting gangs such as MS-13 to kidnap, assault, and kill local inhabitants. As a direct result, El Salvador continues to exhibit one of the world's highest homicide rates, now at 77.4 murders per 100,000 inhabitants (Economist Intelligence Unit 10).

Nicaragua's recent history resembles that of El Salvador. A revolution rocked Nicaragua in 1979 when the Sandinista guerrillas ousted the country's dictator, Anastasio Somoza, from power. A bloody civil war ensued between the Sandinistas and the U.S.-backed Contras throughout the 1980s. The UN brokered elections in 1990, which brought the opposition leader, Violeta Chamorro, to power. The right-wing party governed Nicaragua for more than a decade until the ex-Sandinista, Daniel Ortega, won the 2006 presidential elections. Following allegations that Ortega had tampered with the constitution and fixed municipal elections, however, Managua burst with a series of menacing political riots that left two people dead and several others wounded (Booth).

Nicaragua is also the second poorest country in Latin America, with an income per capita of \$1000. Severe income inequality persists largely because structural adjustment funds from IFIs never reached the intended recipients; rather, the money went directly to the pockets of corrupt government officials or landowning elites. As a result, recent studies show that criminal violence has considerably increased in the last few years (Paris 68). Given that economic hardship was a salient condition before the war, the current mix of mass poverty, conspicuous economic inequality, and growing criminal activity intimate that Nicaragua could likely experience greater social instability in the near future.

In Cambodia, two former belligerents—the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) and the Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopératif (FUNCINPEC)—established a coalition government after democratic elections in 1993. The UN Transitional Authority of Cambodia (UNTAC) immediately declared victory, and as a result, prematurely withdrew its blue helmets. The prompt departure of UN troops left a power vacuum that precipitated a *coup d'état* before the 1998 elections (Bull 72). Moreover, throughout this tumultuous period, members of the Khmer Rouge perpetrated a number of crimes against humanity. After the *coup*, the coalition government disintegrated, allowing the CPP to consolidate a disproportionate amount of power (83). While Cambodia has enjoyed relatively stable elections recently, the country remains a highly illiberal democratic regime that poses challenges to Southeast Asia.

East Timor demonstrates how much peacebuilders can accomplish and how fast their arduous efforts disintegrate in postconflict societies. After East Timor declared its independence from Portugal in 1974, a protracted civil war between those who favored independence and those who preferred Indonesian integration ensued. In a 1999 UN-supervised referendum, the majority of East Timorese voted in favor of independence. Anti-independence Timorese militias—under the auspices of the Indonesian government—ignited a retribution campaign that killed over 1,400 people (Bull 186). Following the deadly campaign, the Security Council endorsed the creation of the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), a peacebuilding mission alongside the Australian-led International Stabilization Force (ISF). East Timor held elections again in 2001, and was finally recognized as a sovereign state in 2002. After peacebuilders pulled out, East Timor reverted to violence in 2006 when law and order broke down near Dili, triggering a series of military strikes (2). A new peacebuilding assignment, the UN Integrated Mission in East Timor (UNIMT), is currently operating in the country.

Soon after nationalists and extremists signed the Dayton Accords, hasty democratization prevented the consolidation of sustainable peace in Bosnia. The Dayton Accords allowed The United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) to exercise extensive administrative authority, assume a number of rule-of-law initiatives, restructure the local security, and reform the highly corrupt judicial system (24). The UNMIBH also worked alongside the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) to prepare multiparty elections. Under pressure from the United States and INGOs, the OSCE conducted elections shortly after the initial cessation of fighting. Without sufficient time to establish

legitimate pan-Bosnian institutions, militant activists divided into ethnic enclaves and eventually restarted hostilities (Borden and Kenny 14).

Kosovo, the youngest state in the international system, represents one of the most comprehensive peacebuilding missions. When Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic revoked the autonomous status of Kosovo in 1989, Kosovo Albanian leaders organized a referendum that declared Kosovo independent. The Kosovo insurgency that started in 1990 was finally quelled in 1998 by Serbian paramilitary forces (Paris 213). UN Security Council Resolution 1244 established a new peacebuilding operation in Kosovo. The peacebuilding mission was comprised of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) as the military arm, and the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) as the civilian arm. The peacebuilding operation encountered a setback in 2004 following waves of violence due to disagreements between Belgrade and Pristina (Bull 122). While fifty nation-states recognized Kosovo's independence on 17 February 2008, Serbians overwhelmingly disapprove of the secession, prompting many nationalist groups to wreak havoc within Kosovo's nascent borders.

Triangulating Violence

At the international level, the tenets of liberal institutionalism foster cooperative relations among nation-states. The first tenet maintains that liberal democracies rarely go to war against each other. The second tenet holds that the increased wealth from economic exchange also deters states from fighting one another. Finally, international organizations mitigate systemic anarchy and alter the conniving self-help nature among states (Russet and Oneal 90). Together, these three elements are said to triangulate peace in international relations. At the domestic level, however, the very same principles have quite destabilizing effects. In peacebuilding missions, democratization, economic liberalization, and international disorganization are the fulcrum of operational and conceptual problems.

Democratization

Liberal institutionalists have valid justifications to promote and support the creation of democracies in war-torn countries. While the Democratic Peace Theory's explanatory power resides primarily at the interstate level, historical evidence also reveals that democracies are less likely to erupt in civil wars. Bruce Russet and John Oneal attribute this phenomenon to the high degree of legitimacy in democratic governments. A democratic government's effectiveness emerges from its ability to filter and project competing social interests (70). Due to political expediency, statesmen in democratic governments must formulate policies that voice the concerns and coincide with the interests of civil society. The direct expression of rival claims allows open societies to readjust their internal alignment. By doing so, points of dissent are either sieved out or channeled through compromises rather than violence.

An interesting study conducted by Donald Horowitz demonstrates that civil violence can be modeled as an upside-down U. According to the model, violence is less likely in mature democracies *and* autocracies, but more likely in countries with an intermediate political system (Horowitz 261). Both Russet and Oneal substantiate this model: "Actually, the relationship between the character of the political system and the incidence of civil war is curvilinear. Partial democracies experience violent failures more often than either full democracies or autocracies (Russet and Oneal 70)." Yet, in contemporary International Relations theory there is a dearth of literature explaining why democratization increases the propensity for violence.

Distinguished political theorists Samuel Huntington and Robert Dahl asserted that political competition is a natural part in the state of affairs of a democracy. Dahl claims, "In democratic countries political conflict is not merely normal, it is generally thought to be rather healthy (Dahl 14)." In war-torn states, democratization is a highly and inherently conflictual process because it pits former belligerents against each other (Mansfield and Snyder). Moreover, developing democracies often lack the institutional capacity to accommodate extremists and minority groups. As such, democratization inadvertently generates a contentious political space ripe for widespread violence.

Various phases of the democratization process, particularly security reforms, media liberalization, elections, and shared governing, activate intense motives and increase the opportunities for violence. Liberal institutionalists contend that democratizing states may be averse to conflict because they are weak and cannot rely on extensive popular support. Governmental weakness, however, lowers the risks of and consequences for inciting violence. Parties not satisfied with the unfolding political system—the spoilers—will therefore attempt to disrupt the democratic process (Jarstad and Sisk 11). Paradoxically, spoilers use democratic reforms and channels, originally established to mollify civil society's rival claims, as instruments to propagate fear and violence.

Security sector reform is the initial phase during democratization that gives rise to the political opportunity structure requisite for violence. In postconflict states, insurgency groups and military extremists are usually absorbed into the security sector. Allocating the former belligerents in police or paramilitary units prevents irascible actors from being marginalized. In order to install civilian control over the military, however, peace agreements cap the size of the security sector and concurrently reduce the absorptive capacity of the security forces (Hoglund 89). When the security sector contracts faster than the rate at which political institutions are being built, new threats tend to emerge. In El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Cambodia, the reduction of the security sector was accompanied by a surge in armed robbery, kidnappings, and other forms of domestic crimes (89).

During democratization, peacebuilders implement media reforms to allow for freedom of expression, both in speech and in the press. Political parties take advantage of the greater media exposure as a vehicle for propaganda (87). As a result, the liberalization of the media creates the political space for violence to resume in war-torn states. For instance, electoral campaigns become extremely polarized along ideological or ethnic lines. Rwanda serves as a case in point, where Hutu extremists used the radio waves to disseminate their vicious anti-Tutsi message and consequently polarize the Rwandan population (Kaufmann 140). In Kosovo, inflammatory press reports precipitated heated anti-Serbian riots that killed over twenty people. Evidently, the media in postconflict states is regularly used as a powerful weapon to instill enmity and mobilize people for brutality.

Elections are generally considered the cornerstones of international peacebuilding operations. For peacebuilders, elections mark the moment in which newly established political systems transform into legitimate democratic regimes. Elections, defined as episodes of intense political competition, also mark the peak of social tension during democratization (Hoglund 85). Due to their competitive nature, elections flesh out conflictual differences. Furthermore, political parties in postconflict states are generally organized around hostile fault lines. Most significantly, elites and political leaders may run the risk of losing their power during democratic elections. As in the case of Angola, elections created the incentives for spoilers to influence the results by using threat or intimidation tactics. If the results do not match their aspirations, spoilers will resort to violence in order to overturn the outcomes.

Even when elections are successful, the new ruling government is often an amalgamation of former enemies. In peacebuilding operations such as Rwanda, Cambodia, and Bosnia, the negotiated peace accords included power-sharing provisions (Jarstad 105). Given empirical records, joint or coalition governments in war-torn states function as obstacles rather than facilitators to building long-term peace. Without well-developed institutions, coalition governments veer toward fragmentation and confrontation because one faction eventually dominates the political process at the expense of other groups. As this section highlights, various stages of democratization—security reforms, media liberalization, elections, and shared governing—are often exploited in illiberal ways that foment violence.

Economic Liberalization

G. John Ikenberry characterized the post-Cold War international order as “open, integrated, and rule-based, with wide and deep political foundations.” At the core of the current world order lie capitalism and the principle of economic liberalization. Economic policies that fostered liberalization and integration managed to boost the income levels of Western states to unprecedented heights. In addition, political economists determined that economic performance and warfare covary. After all, Western European

states had managed to avert war for more than half a century. When peacebuilding operation came to the fore in international affairs, the notion that economic liberalization and sustainable peace go hand-in-hand was especially salient.

Neoliberal policies dictated how the war-torn state's economy would be restructured. Despite clear situational differences between war-torn and low-income states, peacebuilders approached postconflict states with the same development formula (Collier 103). Economic liberalization entailed both free trade and free markets (Stiglitz 12). More specifically, liberalization implied the privatization of government enterprises, the deregulation of the private sector, and the dissolution of trade barriers and capital controls. In order to receive vital international donor funds, IFIs require that war-torn states make macroeconomic adjustments and meet neoliberal conditions (Paris 75). Neoliberal policies in postwar economies magnified financial volatility and exacerbated income inequality, thereby increasing the propensity for armed conflict.

According to economic theory, widening economic inequality follows spurts of rapid economic growth. In the short run, privatization, or the transfer of corporate ownership from the public sector to the business sector, exacerbates income inequality (Stiglitz 54). Privatization tends to benefit only a small, usually elite, group. If the economy of a postconflict state starts booming, the benefits associated with economic growth accrue disproportionately to the business-owning elite. The highly unequal distribution of wealth may stir resentment among people who belong in lower socioeconomic groups. In a democratizing state, where the nascent government is rather weak, economic frustrations are vented through violence. Even the World Bank admits that its own structural adjustment programs have unequally distributed wealth and strained social relations in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Mozambique (World Bank).

Economic liberalization is also pernicious in war-torn states because it promotes predatory competition. Competition is fostered by policies such as deregulation and trade liberalization. Deregulation, for instance, curtails the role of government in the economy. If a company acquires monopolistic power and starts charging higher prices, the government must remain idle at the expense of society (Stiglitz 72). Similarly, if a war-torn state's industrial capacity is frail, then trade liberalization may have the adverse effect of putting infant industries at a competitive disadvantage (17). When socioeconomic factions vie with each other in postconflict states, the opportunity cost of raising arms is dangerously low for those disenfranchised in the new economy.

Although civil society expects the government to ameliorate the fraught effects of competition and mitigate income inequality, neoliberal conditionality prevents the government from doing so. Government welfare is instrumental in redistributing wealth. However, fiscal policy restrictions limit government subsidies as well as curtail public sector projects that provide jobs (11). In peacebuilding operations, the government sits in the sidelines when it comes to structuring the economy, and thus loses legitimacy vis-à-vis civil society. If economic dislocation is sufficiently acute, neoliberal policies may very well undermine the democratic process in war-torn states.

International Disorganization

The ideological shift that trailed the demise of international communism had important reverberations for the nature of peacebuilding operations. Many of the world's major international organizations overtly adopted democracy and economic liberalization as the principles propping a new liberal agenda. By 1991, the UN General Assembly had passed a resolution that linked human rights with democratic elections (Paris 61). A few years later, Boutros-Ghali promulgated the new liberal vision, "Democracy is one of the pillars on which a more peaceful, more equitable, and more secure world can be built." The UN actively supported the idea that democracy and capitalism are prerequisites for progression toward a peaceful world order, and international organization would serve as the vehicles to achieving that goal.

Once the international behemoth endorsed democracy, other prominent IGOs, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Organization of American States (OAS), and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), followed suit. IFIs like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank also endorsed the liberal institutionalist formula, affording loans to only those countries that fulfilled the conditions of a fiscally conservative and market-oriented democracy. Finally, hundreds of “progressive” INGOs would serve as intermediaries between IGOs and local institutions. Together, the broad range of organizations sympathetic to liberal institutionalism would form the complex constellation that runs peacebuilding operations.

While the vast repertoire of international actors should be a beneficial factor for peacebuilding operations, the reality is that the lack of coordination among so many organizations impedes the efficient deployment of aid and materiel to the ground (Brahimi 19). Although international actors adopted a common theoretical approach to perform peacebuilding functions, the absence of an overarching coordinating body has resulted in poor communication among organizations. Limited communication gives rise to two inter-organizational problems: “redundancy” and “operational gaps”. Redundancy refers to a situation in which two or more organizations ultimately perform the same task, squandering resources that could have been used more efficiently elsewhere. Operational gaps occur when two international organizations coincidentally assume that the other organization will carry out a specific task. The mistaken assumption leaves the task unattended until another organization recognizes the gap and fulfills the task. In Mozambique, for example, operational gaps delayed the deployment of vital resources for more than a year, increasing political tension between FRELIMO and RENAMO (Dobbins 96).

International activists contend that the UN should play the overseeing role in peacebuilding operation. Given the number of UN agencies participating in peacebuilding operations, the UN is certainly the most engaged IGO. If too many UN agencies are deployed to a single operation, then inter-agency disputes arise. Inter-agency disputes prevent decisions from being made in a timely manner, mirroring the sclerotic process that characterizes bureaucratic politics. In order to redress such a dire problem, the UN created the Peace Building Commission (PBC) and the Peace Building Support Office (PBSO) in 2005 to standardize peacebuilding operations. It yet remains to be seen whether the PBC and the PBSO improved the strategic direction, efficient deployment, and operational support.

International organizations undermine their own peacebuilding efforts by funneling aid through IGO – INGO channels instead of relying on the newly created government. Peacebuilders are well aware of the corruption percolating through governments in war-torn countries. Consequently, international organizations establish parallel mechanisms that, in effect, circumvent governmental institutions (Carnahan and Lockhart 84). But by doing so, international organizations inadvertently de-legitimize the political system they are building. IGOs also recruit highly skilled and educated locals to help with peacebuilding tasks, and indirectly impel the new government to hire less talented staff members. Finally, international organizations usually opt to deliver their services in densely populated areas in order to cut costs and accelerate the delivery of programs (87). They are also stationed in the safest parts of the country. As a result, foreign funds will only benefit certain areas within a war-torn state. According to Michael Carnahan and Clare Lockhart, “This disparity is likely to fuel existing political and security tensions and inhibit progress in bridging these critical divides.”

The vicious cycle induced by international organizations create economic disparities that, in turn, undermine the credibility of the new democratic government. As such, international organizations, economic liberalization, and democratization consistently reinforce each other to engender conflictual opportunity structures in postconflict states.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned

Postconflict peacebuilding picked up in frequency after Francis Fukuyama published his seminal article, “The End of History?” International actors involved in peacebuilding operations adopted and tweaked Fukuyama’s precept that failed states, over time, naturally evolve into democracies. By artificially initiating this process, peacebuilders contradicted their own intellectual foundation. Moreover, a natural

evolution presupposes a gradual, lengthy, and often tumultuous process. Peacebuilders, however, devalued the importance of time to establish homegrown institutions—institutions that curtail political volatility. Instead, peacebuilders set a compressed, one-to-three year time frame to hold elections in war-torn states. From the outset, an ill-conceived design undergirded peacebuilding operations.

Currently, peacebuilding operations are guided by the central tenets of liberal institutionalism. Contemporary liberal institutionalists claim that the democratic and free-market forces, under the direction of international organizations, create “virtuous circles” in international relations. The dynamics within war-torn states are highly complex and their internal structures are radically different from the anatomy of other low-income countries. Consequently, applying a one-size-fits-all formula delivers negligible, if not detrimental, results.

This research paper explained why the current peacebuilding recipe—democratization, economic liberalization, and international organizations—incites violence rather than generate sustainable peace. Democratization is a volatile process because political power is redistributed among new social players. Those who stand to lose from the democratic process find that the opportunity cost of inaction outweighs the cost of armed conflict, especially if the government is weak. Thus democratization increases the opportunity and probability for violence. While democratization takes its toll on a small, albeit elite, group of nationals, economic liberalization works the opposite way: it benefits only a small group of already wealthy elites at the expense of the rest of society. When income is distributed unequally, middleclass urban groups organize themselves and challenge more affluent groups with intimidation or even violence. Moreover, economic liberalization promotes competition in societies where the threshold for violence is much lower than in well-functioning societies. Finally, the disorganization among international organizations prevents tasks from being accomplished and resources from being deployed. When war-torn societies have expectations that are not met, nationals and former extremists may rise against the international actors.

Rebuilding a war-torn state is a complex and delicate undertaking. No two territories, peoples, nor situations are alike. For this reason, three simple, albeit fundamental, measures should be taken even before peacebuilders are launched to a war-torn state. First, it is imperative that an overarching organization be established in order to coordinate the vast resources peacebuilding operations necessitate. While the PBC and the PBSO are important strides toward the right direction, these commissions will be largely ineffectual if they are confined to managing UN-based agencies only. Without inter-IGO oversight, many of the same mistakes will continue to be made. Second, peacebuilding operators need to focus more on building robust institutions rather than organizing hurried elections. Establishing a functioning and transparent political system—while more costly in the short run than simply holding elections—will yield sustainable results, and reduce the likelihood that international peacebuilders return to an already managed state. Finally, greater dialogue must be fostered between international and local actors. While international bureaucrats tend to have key theoretical models and technical expertise, it is important to balance those skills with the situational understanding of the indigenous population in the target state. This will help international actors to determine the appropriate sequencing for opening a war-torn state’s economy without exacerbating social tension. Rest assured, without redressing the conceptual problems currently embedded in peacebuilding operations, civil strife in failed states will continue to undermine the stability of the entire international system.

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